



History of Social Theory

1. Early Historical Stages:

At its simplest definition, social theory is an intellectual effort that seeks to depict reality and subject its values, ideals, and behavioral rules to analysis in order to develop a cognitive or empirical methodology. This methodology aims to understand the present and create the ability to predict the future, at least in general terms.

In this light, the attempts of European thinkers (particularly the Greek philosophers and modern ones) fall within the roots of social theory, since most, if not all, of them tried to present theoretical conceptions, which can be characterized as follows:

Methodology: The methodology adopted by the ancients was purely philosophical and evolved alongside the development of philosophy itself.

Universality: Except for individual philosophies like Epicureanism, philosophy aimed to provide a comprehensive vision of general human thought, unlike modern social theory which cannot leap to universality without passing through research stages subjected to empirical testing.

The common point between ancient and modern thinkers is reason, though its concept varies according to different philosophical stages of development:

For the ancient Greeks up to the eighteenth century, reason had a theoretical nature, producing only theoretical knowledge. However, in the modern era, it led to empiricism and positivism. It was also marked by scientific character, which began to dominate the last stage of its development through Auguste Comte, who tried to establish the epistemological foundations of the positivist science of knowledge.

The scientific research academy in the past did not have methodological dimensions or codified frameworks as ancient philosophers had for the ideas they proposed; rather, ideas were presented according to the philosopher's own taste. This contrasts with the current scientific research academy, which adheres to research rules now known as the steps of scientific research.

Regarding the Indian concept of reason, it includes both abstraction and experimentation, with abstraction predominating over experimentation. Indian abstraction does not carry the characteristics of rationality as much as it carries traits of mysticism, and often reflects features of fantasy (imagination).



The Indian concept of reason (thought) is based on the idea of salvation. The question that arises here is: Why salvation, and from what or whom is salvation sought? To answer this question, we recall one of Buddha's sayings, "Life is suffering," and through the logical language used by the sociology of knowledge, we can infer that the reality of life experienced by Buddha — particularly the social problems, flaws, and tragedies faced by the Indian people, such as the caste system — led him to this statement. This is the same reason that drives the individual to seek salvation from the harsh reality faced by Indians. Perhaps the strong belief of Indians in their caste system prevented them from fully accepting Buddha's perspective towards it, which might explain the decline of Buddhism in India.

We can say that the Indian idea of salvation carries two dimensions:

- 1- **Deterministic:** It acknowledges the inevitability of the caste system's organization, implying there is no hope of salvation in this present life from the constraints, prohibitions, and restrictions of society.
- 2- **Wishful:** Since salvation cannot be attained in the current reality, at least one hopes for change in the afterlife — thus, salvation is deferred to the hereafter. These two dimensions of the idea of salvation explain the predominance of a peaceful tendency among Indians; they live righteously in this world, respect social rules, and so forth, to live happily in the afterlife.

Meanwhile, Chinese thought focused on defining the social reality dominated by pragmatism. The best example of this pragmatic pattern is the rules established by Confucius for selecting government officials. These rules ignored the social and class background of the applicants and made scientific ability in examinations the sole criterion for success.

The Chinese pragmatic approach was characterized by a focus on the common good, centered around what is called the "Golden Rule" established by Confucius: "Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you." Additionally, there is the concept of "universal love" as named by Mencius, which refers to the love for achieving societal welfare rather than merely dreaming of it.

Chinese thought strongly believed in the possibility of social change. Consequently, much of Chinese philosophy urged its adherents to engage in social action aimed at guiding work and society toward righteousness and general welfare. The strong emphasis on experimentation over abstraction led Chinese philosophy to prepare its followers both intellectually and militarily. Furthermore, it obligated them to immediately oppose wrongdoing whenever it was encountered in public spaces, reflecting a practical realism that sharply contrasts with the more abstract Indian mindset.

Regarding the history of theoretical inquiry among Arabs, it progressed gradually after the advent of Islam, which encouraged science and knowledge. By the end of the second century AH (eighth and ninth centuries AD), translation and transmission activities had begun, culminating in the formation of a distinctly Arab-Islamic philosophy in the third century AH (tenth century AD), which synthesized Indian, Chinese, Persian, and European philosophies.



Ilm al-Kalam (Islamic theological discourse) represents the beginnings of Arab philosophy. Historians of thought differ on the reasons for its emergence, falling into two groups:

One group holds that its origins lie in the Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah, as kalam is considered a fundamental aspect of religion requiring evidence and reasoning. This is supported by the verse: “Have you seen those who worship what they carve, while Allah created you and what you make?”

The second view holds that Islamic theology (Ilm al-Kalam) arose under circumstances imposed by socio-political factors. After the entry of multiple nations with diverse sects and religions into Islam, and the infiltration of outsiders into Islamic civilization, Muslim scholars took it upon themselves to defend the creed using the very weapon of their attackers—namely, the use of rational arguments to convince, as falsehood can be refuted from any angle.

From the core of Ilm al-Kalam emerged Islamic philosophy and its branches, such as Ash'arite philosophy, which produced Al-Ghazali and his mystical (Sufi) approach. Parallel to this, there was Arab Neoplatonism represented by Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina (Avicenna), along with the dominance of the social scientific rationalism of Ibn Rushd (Averroes) and then the social scientific realism of Ibn Khaldun. Unfortunately for humanity, Ibn Khaldun left no successor to continue his scientific path, making him the last of the creative Arab philosophers in the field of social thought until the beginnings of the Arab Renaissance.

2. The Modern and Contemporary Historical Stage:

Any effort aimed at highlighting the origins of the humanities and social sciences faces many difficulties, foremost among them the historical depth and the challenge of pinpointing a clear starting point. While the affiliation of these sciences with philosophy is one difficulty, diagnosing the idea of their emergence as distinct from philosophy is another. The birth of these sciences cannot be a sudden or cesarean one; rather, it is the development of this new science occurs through stages that may be long or short, during which the superficial layers of the new knowledge are shed until its core becomes visible in one or more works—marking the beginning of the epistemological break of the new social or human science.

One of the difficulties surrounding the birth of this science is reaching an agreement on a specific author or scholar, especially if the civilizational stage witnessing this epistemological break produced multiple influential thinkers. Among them is Auguste Comte (1798–1857), who was the first to use the term sociology. However, his work remained theoretical, blending idealism with reality, with the former predominating, especially in his proposed solutions addressing moral aspects—where sociologists were positioned as priests guiding people toward virtue—and in economic aspects—where he urged moneylenders and the wealthy to spend money to support developmental projects.

Another difficulty lies in the classification of thinkers within theoretical trends, as many scholars belong to multiple intellectual paths. For example, Alfredo Pareto can be classified within positivist organicism, conflict theory, and political



theory. Similarly, Georg Simmel is considered the pioneer of the formalist approach in sociology, while some classify him within the analytical approach, among others.

Despite the accumulation of many factors surrounding the birth of sociology, they can be summarized into revolutions and early theorists. The revolutions included:

1- Political revolutions and social changes:

Sociology emerged during a period marked by deep political and military upheavals that challenged the old system based on three estates: the nobility, the church, and the common people. In this context, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) clearly distinguished between the two conflicting orders: the old system founded on unequal and hierarchical ranks, and the new system based on equality. This rapid revolution resulted in reforms of the First Empire and new conceptions of society that the forces of law and order could no longer contain. Europe witnessed the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, supported by opposing political movements that police repression could not suppress. These revolutions led to the collapse of various regimes in France, Germany, and Austria, and created conditions that awakened minds—especially in France, where very conflicting regimes succeeded one another: an empire, two monarchies toppled by the revolutions, followed by a short-lived republic that operated on universal suffrage (1848), then a new empire, and finally a republic that lasted until World War I and beyond.

Ideologically, this era saw the clash of opposing ideologies—conservative, liberal, solidarist, and revolutionary—which some sociologists like Saint-Simon (1760–1825), Auguste Comte, and Émile Durkheim considered defenders of a stable social order. They viewed this struggle as evidence of societal weakness and a sign of sickness within the social body. On the ruins of the natural law of Enlightenment rationalist philosophers, the most reactionary theories emerged, demanding a return to the old order. Concurrently, the boldest and most utopian theories also appeared, largely characterized by reformist aims to reconstruct society.

These conflicting ideologies clashed with a range of social and economic conditions that were difficult to reform overnight, especially amid the social transition from the feudal stage to the commercial and then industrial stages. This complexity significantly influenced the variety and divergence of solutions and proposals offered by the thinkers of this period—from Comte's conservative philosophy to Marx's scientific socialism, Durkheim's ethical socialism, and other philosophies which can be categorized into three types:

Interventionist, which believes in the efficacy of science to bring about change and transition to a better state, as in the case of positivists; Neutralist, which sees a limitation in science's effectiveness, as championed by Weber and Pareto;

Moderate, which holds a middle position, believing that science must lead to tangible action but requires time to do so.

2. The Industrial Revolution and Social Decline:



While France played a major role in spreading political ideas, England was the origin of the industrial mode of production, which profoundly transformed labor organization. England became a laboratory where new production techniques and labor management methods were tested, and laws governing The political economy laws had to be taken into account by sociology, and as a result, a vibrant urban proletariat movement gradually emerged. Authorities sought to monitor it by restricting or expelling its activists.

Consequently, a genuine industrial mentality spread, leaving destructive effects felt by the working masses. These effects included the immediate loss of skilled artisanal labor, harsh and miserable exploitation of workers with meager wages that forced them to employ their children at an early age to ensure the survival of the group. This deterioration in the working class's conditions attracted the attention of charitable organizations concerned with social peace, as well as socialist movements that regarded these conditions as evidence of the inhumanity of the system. Governmental bodies also became aware of the necessity to implement political arrangements to prevent a decline in labor productivity (workforce strength). For this reason, the Industrial Age is also called the **age of social legislation**. These laws were based on scientific studies and social research into poverty, family economics in France, the lives and exploitation of factory workers in England, and the conditions of peasants in Germany. Indeed, this century could be named the **century of birth research** (the birth of sociology).

3. The Silent Revolution (Advances in Natural Sciences):

The 19th century witnessed fundamental transformations in physics, chemistry, and biology, and their applications in industrial technologies. While physics continued to use new mathematical tools driven by the needs of the English Industrial Revolution, the renaissance of chemistry and biology left a profound impact on modern thinkers, who adopted their models in sociological theories.

For instance, in chemistry, the major debate of the century concerned the atomic structure of matter—a matter questioned by positivist scientists who rejected speculative arguments about final causes. Organic chemistry was another example of this transformation, with the extraction of organic substances crystallizing in Germany into a strong chemical industry.

Comparative physics opened the door for modern biology, offering a distinguished model to the organic current in sociology, whether in France with Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte, and Durkheim's school, in England with Spencer, or in Germany with Schäffle (1831–1904), Tönnies, and many others. Gradually, a new perspective on organicism and the **“organ/function”** relationship emerged, distinguishing 19th-century medical biology, where experimental medicine studied vital functions and diseases. Thus, health, like disease, was subject to specific laws. The theory of the living organism, derived from the German Romantic tradition, employed the concepts of self-organization and circular causality.

Ferdinand Tönnies (July 26, 1855 – April 9, 1936) was a German sociologist and one of the main founders of social theory and field studies. Tönnies is best known for distinguishing between two types of social groups: **Gemeinschaft (community)** and **Gesellschaft (society)**. He also helped found the German Sociological Association and served as its president from 1909 until 1933, when he was ousted by the Nazis.



Tönnies is considered the true founder of modern sociology in Germany. He authored several sociological works, including *“Community and Society”*, and divided sociology into three branches:

1. **Theoretical Sociology:** The study of abstract social facts.
2. **Applied Sociology:** The study of processes leading to social development.
3. **Empirical Sociology:** The application of theoretical facts in interdisciplinary studies.

The aim of Tönnies's theories was to understand the true meaning of both the rationalist school and historical theories. He defined **emotional will** as *“human will that arises spontaneously from human nature,”* while **rational will** is *“the will that responds to the needs of society.”* The **arbitral rational will** is *“the one that works to establish social units.”*

Tönnies also divided social relationships into two types: **positive relationships** and **negative relationships**. He classified human aggregation into **“local community”** as an expression of emotional will and **“society”** as an expression of arbitral rational will.

The modern understanding of evolution is based on the theory of **natural selection**, fundamentally established in a seminal 1858 paper by **Charles Darwin** and **Alfred Russel Wallace**, and published in Darwin's famous book *On the Origin of Species* in the 19th century. Darwinian natural selection, combined with **Mendelian genetics**, forms the basis of the **modern synthesis** of evolutionary theory, also known as **Neo-Darwinism**.

The modern synthesis describes evolution as a change in allele frequencies within a biological population from one generation to the next. This theory quickly became the central organizing principle of modern biology due to its high explanatory and predictive power. It is currently directly linked to studies on the origins of antibiotic resistance in bacteria, eusociality in insects, and the diversity of Earth's ecosystems.

While there is scientific consensus supporting the validity and explanatory power of evolutionary theory regarding the origins of species and living organisms, it remains at the heart of religious and social debates due to its conflict with certain creationist views held by some religions.

Thomas Robert Malthus (February 14, 1766 – December 23, 1834) was an English demographer and political economist, renowned for his influential theories on population growth in the modern era. Malthus was educated at home until entering **Jesus College, Cambridge** in 1784, where he specialized in mathematics but also studied various other sciences, earning awards in English, Latin, and Greek.

It is important to note that Malthus was not the first to study population growth theory; Ibn Khaldun had discussed this as early as the 14th century, highlighting the close relationship between population size and the level of civilization, since population is a key factor in labor division and growth. This idea was shared by many sociologists who followed.



Malthus's distinction lies in formulating a comprehensive theory of population and integrating it into economics by pointing out the necessity to study population alongside production, distribution, and exchange. He emphasized the strong link between population growth and the development of production capacity.

Regarding capitalist crises, Malthus's views do not contradict his ideas on population. He asserted the inevitability of food shortages relative to population increase, arguing that population grows geometrically while agricultural production increases arithmetically, inevitably leading to shortages in food and housing.

Among his key works is *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, in which he stated a controversial thesis: the man without dependents and unable to find employment in society will find no share of food on Earth. He described such a person as a "redundant member at the feast of nature," with no plate at the table, and therefore nature commands him to leave the scene.

In summary, the transformations in natural sciences led to new forms of reconciliation between the discrete theoretical model in mechanics and the continuous model in biological organisms. Concepts such as the organism, function, equilibrium, dynamics, the atom, and the cell became foundational principles underpinning the new social sciences that emerged within the context of cultural system decline in favor of history and economics.

The above factors, however, do not necessarily represent the only explanations for the historical development of sociology. It is erroneous to fix the origin of any science at a specific historical point. While it may be possible to pinpoint certain applied sciences by particular inventions or discoveries, sociology is more complex, as ideas reflect social conditions. This leads to the conclusion that the initial delineation of sociology's origins often stems from major social changes—political, economic, or scientific revolutions—that generate evolving social conditions and sequentially produce social theories and solutions rather than all at once.

The Role of Theorists in the Birth of Sociology:

1. Karl Marx: Dialectics and Praxis

Marx's intellectual presence in the social and scientific arena is among the most significant reasons for mentioning him in the initial definition of sociology. His theory of **class conflict** was a reconciliatory and utopian attempt to address the deteriorating economic conditions of the working class, providing a social foundation for a growing social divide in industrialized countries. His vision was a dream of a society characterized by equality under communism, which was never realized.

Moreover, Marx's philosophy spread ideologically in two main directions: Western Marxist liberalism and Eastern communism. Importantly, many social studies and theories—whether directly or indirectly—were reactions to Marxist theory. Although his comprehensive economic theories did not qualify him as a sociologist, there was a sociology within Marxism itself, as Henri Lefebvre noted.



The most important sociological contributions of Marx are his **dialectical materialism** and **praxis**. Dialectical materialism can be summarized as follows:

- **Materialism vs. Idealism:** The history of ideas is essentially the history of conflict between two worldviews. Marx emphasized the primacy of the material world over the world of ideas, warning that any synthesis of the two leads to idealism, which denies this primacy.
- **Reality and Representations:** The materialist perspective emphasizes the existence of the material world independently of the representations we may have about it. However, it is necessary to distinguish between what is material and what is physical. From the standpoint of dialectical materialism, sensations and ideas relate to the material world as external to the subject (the observer), being parts that constitute the surrounding world. In other words, reality remains independent of consciousness. Yet, this presents a false duality: if the existence of the subject is independent, then exchange does not exist. Hence, Marx's famous statement:
"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness."
- **Matter as Movement:** Matter is not a static entity; rather, movement is the principle constituting matter. Stillness is merely a particular (or temporary) state of movement. This means that matter continuously develops, transforms, and decays. This renews Hegel's concepts of process and dialectics. Therefore, when studying and understanding natural (and social) phenomena, one must consider them within the organic relationships that link them to other phenomena.
- **The Principle of Contradiction:** The relationships among elements or phenomena, as well as the movement of matter (or society), harmonize within the principle of contradiction. Everything and every phenomenon is formed by the unity of opposites, meaning each element must be considered as a contradiction between two components. Contradiction finds its resolution in the disappearance of one component or its transformation into another contradiction, creating a new contradiction. This characterizes all paths of development and change. Contradiction alone is meaningless; thus, opposites must be considered in their reciprocal relationships.
- **Praxis (Practice):** Praxis indicates the validity of theory. Traditionally, the theory/practice relationship favored theory, but in dialectical materialism, this is radically transformed. Practical knowledge (sensory and direct) precedes theory (the organization of knowledge, "concrete thought," as Marx says), which in turn directs practice. Practice is meaningless unless accompanied by theory that organizes and transforms it. The link between theory and practice is organic and continuous, with mutual enrichment. This dynamic pursuit between theory and practice forms a foundation of dialectical materialism.

Praxis is also a condition for the validity of theory, which cannot be separated from it. Since objective truth exists only in its relation to reality, praxis (concrete social practice) constitutes the condition for true knowledge. Marx states:

"The question whether human thought can recognize truth in practice — that is, the reality and power of thought in this world and at this time — and the discussion about the reality or unreality of thought isolated from practice is merely a scholastic quibble."

Marx's involvement in organizing the international labor movement and the general return of the labor movement to Marxism to overthrow capitalism exemplify the role of praxis in dialectical materialism.



2. Max Weber: Sociology of Understanding between Dilthey and Rickert

Max Weber's cognitive and interpretative sociology granted him a special place in sociology. Analyzing his work positions him among the pioneers of the discipline. While Marx's sociology focused on material aspects and the transcendence of thought, treating reality as external material things forming a superstructure of humans and emphasizing contradiction as continuous change, Weber's sociology stood in direct contrast.

Weber placed the individual first, divided into two aspects:

- As a **person**, interacting with their environment based on understanding.
- As a **social being** (within a group), constructing multiple social relationships.

His family background played an important role in this formation through the family salon (a parliamentary father and an educated mother), frequented by politicians, social thinkers, economists, and specialists from other sciences. The methodological debates among the salon's leaders reflected the scientific reality of Germany and, to some extent, Europe, producing several publications on economic methodology. These debates were between supporters of the old historical school in political economy, such as Knies and William Roscher (1817–1914), and proponents of the new school, including Rühl (1817–1838) and the so-called "Socialists of the Tribune."

Supporters of the marginalist school, such as **Carl Menger (1840–1921)**, and the neo-Kantian movement led by Rickert, who sought to distinguish between the natural sciences and the sciences of the mind, shaped the intellectual context in which Max Weber lived during his law studies. Weber became deeply engaged in these debates starting from 1903. Therefore, his seminal essay on the objectivity of knowledge in social sciences and politics (1904) cannot be properly understood without considering the backdrop of the methodological crisis of that era.

Within this framework, what distinguishes academic disciplines from one another is the **adopted viewpoint**. The viewpoint of a specific social science involves a **unilateral investigation** of cultural life according to the economic-social character (or from a materialist perspective). Rather than being a temporary phase on the path to a general social science, this viewpoint has effectively become a **necessary specification**: social phenomena can only be scientifically studied through particular perspectives, with the economic perspective being one among several important ones.

Weber drew significantly from some theses of Wilhelm Dilthey and his colleague Rickert, such as **objectivity as a standpoint**, the **understanding of meaning**, and the **caution against prejudices of the naturalist school**. Weber consistently denounced the error of generalizing based on any single viewpoint, reiterating the classic example of historical materialism: while acknowledging the significant explanatory value of Marxism as an economic analysis of social phenomena, he simultaneously rejected its exclusive claim as a comprehensive worldview or materialist conception of history. The same critique applies to all other scientific approaches.



Weber's interpretive sociology and methodology profoundly influenced the direction of social theory, which later adopted **social action** as its unit of social analysis, especially in short-term theories. Among the major orientations in Weber's sociology that qualified him as a pioneering sociologist are:

1. **The fundamental emphasis on a distinctive method for the cultural sciences—and consequently sociology—similar to the natural sciences with their determinism**, where causal explanations are always subordinate to a prior understanding of the meaning of social activity.
2. **The contingent character of sociology**, nourished by a historical approach (history of religion, history of economics), which made it difficult for sociology to distance itself from neighboring sciences that also use ideal types as cognitive tools.
3. **The privilege Weber grants to rationality according to purpose**, which may reflect an economically influenced sociological approach.

Weber's epistemological distinctions, his strong rejection of value judgments in science, the essential nature of social regularities, and his insistence on the provisional and tentative character of scientific conclusions never led to the establishment of a formal school. Nevertheless, his influence was profound and he attracted scholars inclined toward historical philosophy.

3. Émile Durkheim: Society and the Social Fact

Durkheim is considered a pioneer for several reasons, including the consensus on the originality of his ideas, which remain a foundational source for social theory. Among his significant contributions is his conception of morality, for which he defended three main theses:

1. **Social solidarity is the source of morality, not a transcendental principle.**
2. Emphasis must be placed on the system of rules of conduct (in its concrete form, such as law) because **every moral act essentially rests on an established rule.**
3. The method must be empirical, starting from the study of moral phenomena (meaning the concrete mass of specific rules that effectively govern behavior), rather than some abstract general rules. Thus, moral rules are moral only in relation to specific empirical circumstances, and we cannot truly understand the nature of moral phenomena without precisely defining these conditions.

Another original idea of Durkheim is his theory of the division of labor and the evolution of societies.

Like other sociologists of the 19th and early 20th centuries (Saint-Simon, Comte, Marx, Spencer), Durkheim sought to establish a general law for the evolution of societies. He viewed the analysis of the development of the division of labor and its consequences as a fertile approach. According to him, the history of societies is marked by a transition from **mechanical solidarity** to **organic solidarity**.



Durkheim states:

"The central question of this work concerns the relationship between the individual personality and social solidarity, and how the individual moves toward greater autonomy while simultaneously becoming more connected to society. It is undeniable that these two apparently contradictory movements occur simultaneously in history, and what seems to resolve this clear contradiction is the transformation of social solidarity through the increasing development of the division of labor."

This movement is not limited to the economic sphere but also extends to political, administrative, judicial, technical, and scientific roles. It represents an increasing specialization in the evolution of living beings. This raises a serious practical problem regarding the nature of the bonds between individuals and society: whether the individual should be a self-sufficient whole or part of a larger whole—i.e., a member.

Since "law reproduces the basic forms of social solidarity," classifying different types of law allows for the identification of different types of social solidarity, especially those linked to the division of labor. Legal rules are of two types: either based on repressive sanctions or on restitutive sanctions (restoring situations to their previous state). In traditional societies, where the former dominates, solidarity is described as mechanical or based on similarity (where specialization is weak, and the community is very cohesive). This corresponds to primitive or archaic societies.

In modern societies, restorative law predominates thanks to specialized and efficient agencies. Collective consciousness is weak, and cohesion is maintained through the division of labor. Here, solidarity is described as organic, where each individual is closely linked to the work of others but simultaneously enjoys a private sphere of action.

In summary, Durkheim's key propositions are:

1. **The paradox of modern societies:** The individual becomes more autonomous while simultaneously more connected to society. This reflects the pattern of solidarity required by the division of labor. As mechanical solidarity fades, the specialization of roles maintains social cohesion through organic solidarity.
2. **Society is not alien to morality:** Humans are not moral beings merely because they exist in society; morality (**moralité**) is a form of solidarity with the group and changes as this solidarity changes.
3. **The division of labor forms the moral foundation of society and is the source of social solidarity.** The duty of the individual is thus to perform their role.

Durkheim, through his scientific approach and his view of sociology as analogous to the natural sciences—especially biology—established scientific principles for sociology.

Among the earliest of these principles is the recognition of the social fact as an objective phenomenon, which requires the exclusion of preconceived notions.

Next come the **rules related to the classification of social types**: We must begin with the simplest societies, such as the tribe or a "segmentary society" shaped like a band. Through composition, one can build a "complete



scale of social types.” Durkheim applies these rules meticulously in his work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, which focuses on religious phenomena.

The **rules related to the explanation of social phenomena** start from the premise that the **utility** or function of a social fact is insufficient to explain its existence, as this confuses cause and effect. Durkheim states:

"The necessary cause of a social phenomenon must be sought among previous social phenomena, not among individual states of consciousness."

This is the principle of the autonomy of sociological explanation, which Durkheim strongly defended.

4. Vilfredo Pareto: Residues and Derivations

Moving to Pareto, his theories of **residues and derivations**, and the **elite** dominate his sociological work, which received wide acclaim in sociology, especially for their logical coherence. He attempted to give sociology a scientific character by emphasizing the need to overcome unscientific gaps through empiricism.

In his book *The Mind and Society*, Pareto offers numerous critical observations on what he calls the false scientific tendencies of Comte and Spencer. He also sarcastically references secular “religions” such as progress, humanity, and democracy.

Pareto argues that the way to avoid these unscientific gaps is to employ the **logico-experimental method**, which relies primarily on observation and logical inference according to the rules of induction established by John Stuart Mill.

For Pareto, the **empirical world** consists of facts and relations perceptible to the senses and generally amenable to measurement.

Nevertheless, in *The Mind and Society*, Pareto also deals extensively with phenomena outside this empirical world but which play a significant role in social life—such as ideas, abstractions, opinions, beliefs, and emotions. He believes his main task is to transform these phenomena into observable facts, so that they belong to the world of facts as he defines it.

Consequently, Pareto cautions against relying on verbal procedures alone. He states that natural sciences are not built upon the study and classification of ordinary language terms but upon the study and classification of facts—and sociology must do the same.

5. Ibn Khaldun: Residues

Beyond the scope of European revolutions and transcending the early historical boundaries they define, Ibn Khaldun’s *Muqaddimah* presents a scientific achievement that, in certain respects, resembles the intellectual output of early European pioneers. While three revolutions mark the origins of European social thought, the succession of dynasties, the rise of new states, and their repercussions on the overall social reality in North Africa and Andalusia were the backdrop for Ibn Khaldun’s *Muqaddimah*. This work contains social laws for interpreting history and human society from a comprehensive perspective, alongside analytical rules concerning the meanings of nomads, urbanites, politics, religion, and science.



Among scholars who place Ibn Khaldun among the pioneers is Gaston Bouthoul. Opinions among thinkers are divided: one group champions Ibn Khaldun's precedence, while another credits Auguste Comte and Émile Durkheim.

From his epistemological basis, Ibn Khaldun's humanity is that of his residues—residues of his Islamic, regional, personal, social, political, religious, and tribal history. He did not detach himself from his era and history; rather, he chose to extract real lessons and practical insights without concessions in science or history. His work addresses his own time, previous centuries, and those to follow. This enduring truth remains despite the passage of time.

His scientific-realist vision, grounded in experimentation and observable evidence, was the light upon which he founded his new science, delineating its principles. From this foundation, he embarked on studying and explaining history, producing a vivid depiction of reality without artifice.

His well-known intelligence and sharp observation were not wasted; they accumulated through his political and scholarly activity, maturing until they bore fruit upon his retirement at the fortress of Bani Salama in 776 AH. It seems those insights came to him as inspiration.

Despite varying historians' views of his new science, the consensus remains that the fruits of his science were realistic. Ibn Khaldun defined the cognitive gap between knowledge and reality and sought to understand how this gap forms and how to resolve it, avoiding secondary issues and extracting all resulting conclusions. Thought regarding beings and their relations must be abstract assumptions closely matching perceived realities.

The new science Ibn Khaldun introduced was neither metaphysical nor tribal superstition. It was a science apprehended by his intellect and completed its construction conditions from society itself. His field of research was social thought, which represents a summary of behavior. Although he once revered philosophy as the highest science in theology as a youth unaware of life, later life experience and social-political trials led him to focus on thought grounded in reality rather than contemplation.

His thought was practical: it guided livelihood, cooperation among humans, social organization for collaboration, acceptance of prophetic messages from God, their implementation, and pursuit of the hereafter's righteousness. He was ever engaged in thought, his mind swift and lively.

Ibn Khaldun's thought is thus realistic, with variables such as livelihood, cooperation, and work—causal variables that shape social thought as his field of inquiry. Experience reinforces what he lacked in perceptions by referring to predecessors' knowledge, enhancing it or understanding it. He regarded prophets as messengers conveying knowledge which he sought and cherished.

Why the consensus on these scholars?

Four factors contribute, one being what Immanuel Wallerstein termed the culture of sociology—a set of logical assumptions and shared practices, not necessarily universal at all times but common to most individuals most of the time.



It is shared, but more importantly, it is shared **unconsciously**, such that logical axioms are rarely explicitly debated. These axioms must necessarily be very simple, even trivial, because when propositions become highly refined, precise, and intellectual, it becomes difficult for many to share them and thus form a global community of scholars. It is worth noting that there indeed exists a set of such shared logical axioms among sociologists, but these do not necessarily exist among those who call themselves historians or economists.

These logical axioms encompass three simple assumptions (issues):

- The reality of social facts,
- The persistence of social conflict,
- The existence of mechanisms of legitimacy to contain conflict.

Together, these form a minimally coherent boundary for studying social reality. These basic axioms are neither polished nor certainly sufficient in their conception of social reality. They represent a starting point that most of us internalize and generally use as unquestionable and indisputable premises. This is what is termed the **“culture of sociology.”** According to Immanuel Wallerstein, this culture constitutes the core of our sociological intellectual heritage. However, this heritage is relatively recent and, while strong, it is also fragile. This culture has created a unified source for researchers concerning this intellectual pioneering.

Second: Science

A review of the works of these pioneers reveals their insistence on describing their work as scientific and their attempts to construct logical frameworks for their visions and analytical issues. This characterization was not novel at a time when science dominated all realms of life, including social life. If we consider the scientific realities at the time of these pioneers, it becomes evident that this was a crucial factor in consolidating the concept of science.

Ibn Khaldun was, chronologically, at the end of the Arab intellectual flourishing and, with his *Muqaddimah*, provided the last brilliant illumination of knowledge before the intellectual darkness descended upon the Arab world. It was natural that scholars would return to his *Muqaddimah*, which addressed the social maladies and weaknesses with a realism acknowledged by most thinkers.

For other pioneers, three factors contributed to the rise of their intellectual creativity and the positive changes in the social development ladder in their societies. While the Arab intellectual trajectory tended toward decline, science—both in its negative and positive transformations—marked their achievements and their awareness of the originality and scientific rigor of their work during the early stages of scientific development concurrent with the Industrial Revolution.

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Third: Originality and Spontaneity

The originality of these pioneers' works lay in two aspects: subject matter and method. Sociology, as a subject, was not easy to handle as merely one topic among others due to its focus as a science. Its significance, especially regarding social reality, made the degree of originality inherent in it a proof of its scientific and social legitimacy.

The development of sociology in the United States, exemplified by Chicago as an experimental field, vividly illustrates this originality as a subject. The simultaneous emergence of Durkheim, Weber, and Pareto contributed to the interest in this originality, as their work exhibited similar traits despite their lack of direct interaction, including Marx and earlier Ibn Khaldun.