

Political Sociology

Topic : Theories of Social Change

(Linear Theories or Evolutionary Theories)

PSC-CE 305

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Evolutionary Theories

- ✓ Most of the evolutionary theories are linear.
- ✓ Among the linear theorists the more prominent are Auguste Comte, and Herbert spencer.
- ✓ Evolutionary theory is based on the assumption that societies change gradually from simple to complex forms.
- ✓ According to them social change meant progress toward something better.

- ✓ They saw change as positive and beneficial.
- ✓ To them the evolutionary process implied that societies would necessarily reach new and higher levels of civilization.
- ✓ Evolutionary theories assume that there is a consistent direction of social change carrying all societies through a similar sequences of stages from the original to the final stage of development.
- ✓ Also the evolutionary theories imply that when the final stage is reached, evolutionary theories will end.

Auguste Comte



Auguste Comte's "Law of the Three Stages"

- August Comte believed that human societies evolved in a unilinear fashion i.e. in one line of development.
- He identified three stages of social evolution/change-
 - ❖ the age of theological,
 - ❖ the age of metaphysical and
 - ❖ the age of positive.

Law of the Three Stages

**Theological
(Fictitious)**

**Metaphysical
(Abstract)**

**Positive
(Scientific)**

Fetishism

Polytheism

Monotheism

- Theological Stage:

- ✓ This is the first stage in the Law of Three Stages and continued until 1300 A.D.
- ✓ Theology means study of religion.
- ✓ In this stage, man believed that all the phenomena of nature are the creation of the divine or supernatural powers.
- ✓ Man failed to discover the natural causes of various phenomena and hence attributed them to supernatural or divine power.
- ✓ For example, If an earthquake happens, people believe that it is because of god is angry with people.
- ✓ A spark is produced when two stones strike each other.

The Theological Stage is divided into 3 sub stages. They are;

- 1) Fetishism (animism)
- 2) Polytheism
- 3) Monotheism



1. Fetishism: (Animism).

- ✓ It is primary stage of the theological stage of thinking.
- ✓ "Fetish" means inanimate and "ism" means philosophy.
- ✓ Throughout this stage, the primitive people had a belief that inanimate object had living spirit in it, also known as animism.
- ✓ The example of fetishistic thinking can be seen from the widespread belief among rural people in India that some deity resides in inanimate objects like stones. They are, therefore, seen engaged in the worshiping of stones.



2. Polytheism:

- ✓ "Poly" means many.
- ✓ At this stage people believed in many Gods.
- ✓ Primitive people believe that each natural forces were controlled by different Gods;
- ✓ A few examples would be: God of water (Varuna), God of light (Mithra), God of fire (Agni), God of air (Vayu), Goddess of earth (Bhudevi), etc.



3. Monotheism:

- ✓ This is the final stage in the theological stage.
- ✓ "Mono" means one.
- ✓ Monotheism means believing in one God or God in one; attributing all to a single, supreme deity.
- ✓ At this stage, people believed that there is only one God and he is controlling every natural phenomena in this world.



Metaphysical Stage:

- ✓ This stage started around the middle Ages in Europe, around the 1300s.
- ✓ In the metaphysical stage of society, people viewed the world and events as natural reflections of human tendencies.
- ✓ People in this stage still believed in divine powers or gods, but they believed that these beings are more abstract and less directly involved in what happens on a daily basis.
- ✓ Rationalism started growing instead of imagination.
- ✓ Rationalism states that God does not stand directly behind every phenomenon.
- ✓ Metaphysical thinking discards belief in concrete god .
- ✓ For example; Classical Hindu Indian society where the principle of transmigration of soul and the conception of rebirth were largely governed by metaphysical uphill.



Christianity



Jainism



Hinduism



Buddhism



Sikhism



Islam

Positivist Stage:

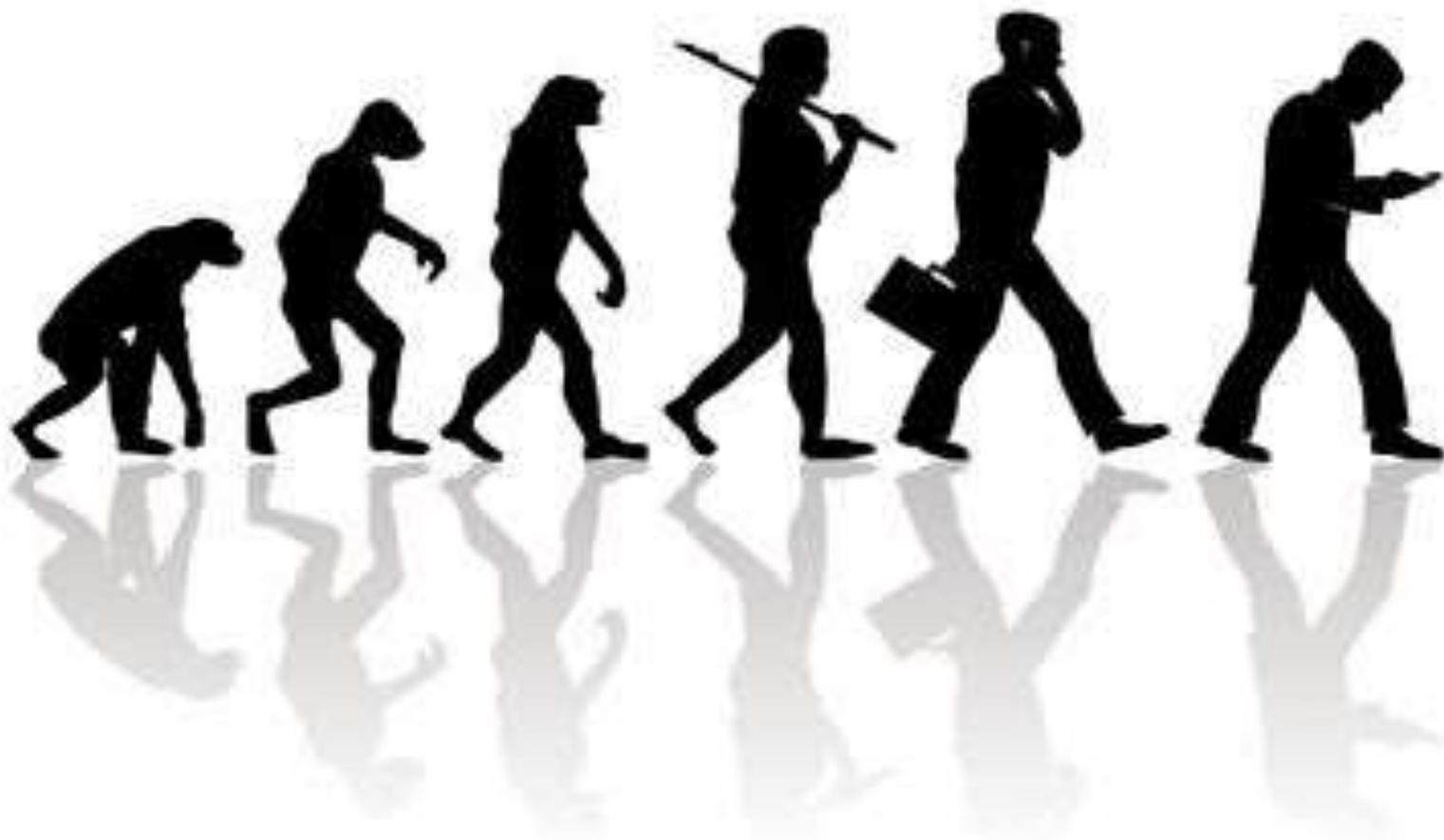
- ✓ It is also known as the scientific stage, refers to scientific explanation based on observation, experiment, and comparison.
- ✓ Today people attempt to establish cause and effect relationships i.e., purely intellectual way of looking at the world.
- ✓ For example, people believe that sickness is caused by germs and that medicine is the appropriate cure.
- ✓ If an earthquake happens, most people believe that's because of movement in the tectonic plates, not because a god is upset.

Herbert Spencer



Herbert Spencer's Social Evolution Theory:

- Herbert Spencer linked his theory of social change with organism.
- He utilized the principles of physical and biological evolution in order to elaborate and explain his theory of Social evolution.
- In biological evolution only those creatures survive in the struggle for existence who are able to make effective adjustment with changing circumstances.
- Herbert Spencer utilized these two principles, physical and biological evolution in order to explain social evolution.



- ✓ Charles Darwin developed the 'Concept of Evolution' in his "Origin of Species" in 1859.
- ✓ Spencer believed in the doctrine of the "Survival of the fittest" as expounded by Darwin.
- ✓ According to him animal has to struggle to preserve its existence.
- ✓ The struggle for existence is not confined to any one aspects of life but pervades whole of life.
- ✓ Spencer says, only strong creatures survive and evolve; only strong makes progress.
- ✓ The weak is gradually eliminated.
- ✓ A strong creature is one who has the ability to adjust himself with the ever changing conditions of environment.

EVOLUTIONARY THEORY



This theory implies that societies evolved from the simple and primitive to the more complex and advanced form. *Herbert Spencer* believed that as a society grows, the functions of the members become more specialized and better coordinated with the bigger system.

- "Spencer's Social Evolution Theory " involves two essential but interrelated trends or strains of thought:
 - I. Change from **simple to complex societies**
 - II. Change from **military society to industrial society.**

I. Change from simple to complex societies:

This is seen in four types of societies in terms of evolutionary levels.

1. Simple society: This is the most primitive society.

- ✓ These societies were predominantly small, nomadic, and lacking in stable relationship structure.
- ✓ They had low degrees of differentiation, specialization, and integration.
- ✓ Examples are the Eskimos, Guiana tribes and the Pueblo Indians.

2. Compound society

- ✓ Compound societies were presented as having generally come about through either a peaceful or a violent merger of two or more simple societies.
- ✓ They tended to be predominantly settled agricultural societies.
- ✓ *Examples:* the Teutonic peoples in the fifth century, Homeric Greeks and Ashanti Empire.

3. Double compound society:

- ✓ Doubly compound societies were completely settled, were more integrated and a larger and more definite political structure, a religious hierarchy, a more or less rigid caste system and more complex division of labour.
- ✓ *Examples :* 13th Century France and 11th Century England.

4 Trebly Compound Societies:

- ✓ It includes “the great civilized nations” such as the modern Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia.
- ✓ Spencer does not outline their traits in detail but points to their increased overall size, complexity, division of labour, popular density, integration and general cultural complexity.

II. Change from militant society to industrial society:

- ✓ According to him a society was initially a militant society which necessitated struggle for existence.
- ✓ Each one struggled to exist.
- ✓ This militant society then passed to industrialism in which there is differentiation and then comes to the next stage in which we pass from differentiation to integration.



THE END

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