
DESPONDENT VOICES AGAINST THE MAIN CURRENTS IN SOCIOLOGICAL ENTERPRISE

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The present day sociological enterprise is in an anomalous situation. At one end, it has made contribution towards an understanding of socio-cultural realities, and on the other, it has demonstrated tendencies and inadequacies that have led to a crisis that appears almost insoluble. The former is exemplified by the works of the founding fathers of sociology who laid the theoretical grounds for the study of human relations in changing situations. Their works contributed to the understanding of European societies with their unique socio-cultural conditions which witnessed the drastic and tremendous changes during, notably, French and Industrial revolutions.

The discipline was, later on, developed to understand problems of the developments in European industrial societies. The result of this was the emergence of a number of branches of the discipline such as, to name a few, sociology of education, sociology of religion, industrial sociology, urban sociology and political sociology. Subsequent development of sociology showed a gloomy picture of the discipline itself. Despondent statements about the seeming incapacity of sociology to become a real science came from the most well-known sociologists.

Critical Voices from Within and Without

Alvin W. Gouldner has given warnings about a looming crisis in academic sociology. He points out three 'inherent contradictions' within academic sociology. First, is a contradiction resulting from the close links between sociology and its major funder –the welfare state. Second, is the emphasis of sociology on 'objectivity' as a desirable

methodological tool which "masks the underlying power-knowledge relations that characterize all sociological inquiry." Third, is a contradiction between sociology's focal assumption that society makes man, and its tacit assumption that man makes society."

Reinhard Bendix observed that "many sociologists aspire to bring their field of study to the status of a science of society. To an extent this is salutary. The aspiration to engage in empirical inquiry is an indispensable bulwark against

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speculations which are complacent towards idiosyncrasies and which take a lofty view of the merely factual. Yet today sociologists as scientists face a crisis of legitimacy”.

Lewis A. Coser identified a ‘crisis and fatigue within the discipline and its theoretical underpinnings’. Stanley Lieberman maintained that “sociology needs an appropriate epistemology.” Jonathan H. Turner said that in sociology there is no consensus on important problems, no shared goals or standards of adequacy, and no body of knowledge. His observation on American sociology is worth quoting

The problems that confront current American sociology today are not new; they have existed since the forging of the discipline, although they were less visible. In broad strokes, my argument is that sociology never had a secure resource base and this base constantly shifted; and as a consequence, the discipline was never able to consolidate itself symbolically, organizationally, or materially.

Latest criticism has come from the post modernists. They have even challenged the relevance of sociology in today’s so-called postmodern society. Radical postmodernists have questioned the claim of objectivity of its methodology and called for the celebration of differences and discarded the idea of the objectivity of knowledge. Non-Western sociologists have deplored the ethnocentric trends of Western sociology and called for the indigenization of sociology. Muslim scholars are not satisfied with the way Western sociologists study Muslims and their societies and interpret them in the image of Western man and society. Ziauddin Sardar has characterized this tendency as

“epistemological imperialism” which has a strong bearing on their studies.

Ali Shariati, for example, argues that Muslims who analyze realities prevailing in Islamic society through the Western perspective would lead them astray and suggest to them unrealistic conclusions. In his introduction for Ali Shari’ati’s *On the Sociology of Islam*, Hamid Algar notes

The analysis of existing realities (of Muslim societies, added) is possible only through recourse to the terms, expression and concepts that exist in or philosophy, culture, religion, and literature, which are in some cases, richer and more exact than their analogues in foreign languages. The translation and repetition of the stereotyped concepts of Western sociology, born of the analysis of nineteenth-century European industrial society and the aggressive, imperialist society of the first half of the twentieth century, can in no way be of value to us, for those concepts have nothing in common with our contemporary life.

With similar tone, Jamil Farooqui argues that “the western bases of sociological explanations are ethnocentric and ignore the ethical foundations that are both vital and distinguish the human and animal worlds.” The Western sociological explanations, he further maintains, when applied to concrete situations, raise certain problems.

First, basic problem is how to define “social life”, how to study and understand it, and how to find out the basic postulates that govern it. Second, the overemphasis on the inductive method where science has been reduced to the inductive explanation of the phenomena. Third, the

issue of the elimination of metaphysics from science. Fourth, relates to social transformation which was one of the motivating forces behind the emergence of sociology. Fifth, regards the study of humanity and society which would be incomplete and misleading if it were limited only to the materialistic aspect and confined to that framework.

Sociology originated as the positive science of human society and aligned itself against the metaphysical and philosophical speculations about social life. Paul F. Lazarsfeld maintains that from Comte to Quetelet, from Spencer to Mill, the idea of positivistic social science implied that straight application of the scientific method used in physics to the analysis of human society. The first challenge to this epistemological view of sociology came from Wilhelm Dilthey. He argued that human sciences were of a radically different nature, and differ from the natural sciences, and that they could not share the same method. To him, the human sciences were sociohistorical, and their objects were states of mind, or spiritual experiences, which could be apprehended only by means of *verstehen* (an emphatic understanding).

This indicates that the debate centers on the issue of the suitability natural science models and approaches to the study of human behaviour and social processes. This riddle has led to the intellectual rupture which has polarized two great traditions. "Sociology," as Henry Etzkowitz and Ronald M. Glassman suggest, "emerged twice in history, once modeled after the natural sciences, once modeled after the humanities."

Steven Seidman acknowledges the debate which is rooted in epistemological assumption. He contends that the disputes between these two traditions

show the endemic conflict which not only threatens the coherence of the discipline but endangers its legitimacy and therewith its warrant for public authority and resources.

The controversy is basically rooted in the epistemological and ontological assumptions of man and society. Tom Campbell recognizes the complexity and perplexity of the image of man and society as delineated by sociologists when he says

Man is a social being, that can scarcely be doubted. But what exactly is society? This question is just as basic and just as perplexing as the more traditional question 'what is man?' It is one of those innocent-sounding but troublesome queries about the nature of things with which we are all utterly familiar but about which we are embarrassingly inarticulate, despite their undoubted importance for our daily lives and for our self-understanding.

The baffling questions of the nature of both man and society have led to the differing conceptions on how to study human behaviour and social processes. As regards the ontological assumption, for example, two distinctive social ontological positions have emerged: social realism and social nominalism. The former contends that the social is conceived to be a force or body operating outside of consciousness and the intentions of the particular individual participants in interaction. The (social) whole is different from or greater than the sum of its (individual) parts. The latter argues that the social is only an aggregate of individuals and their characteristics and not some supra individual force or entity.

These are not merely philosophical domain. They have practical

consequences for sociological analysis of human behaviour and social processes as E.C. Cuff notes that the nature of the bedrock assumptions clearly greatly affects the kind of work done, that is, the kinds of concepts used, the sort of questions asked, the type of methods employed and the sort of 'results' obtained.

Thus, given the far-reaching consequences of particular ontological and epistemological positions in sociology, a discussion of the implications for sociological analysis is indeed needed. This is, because, as Ziauddin Sardar says, "the totality of Muslim societies, indeed the planet as a whole, is being shaped in the image of Western man." And this has led to the excesses in describing the Muslim society especially.

Challenge to Western Sociology

For the "dissidents" against the mainstream of sociological enterprise, the problems and shortcomings of sociology mentioned above serve as the rationale for the emergence of the non-Western sociological discourse. Sociology which was developed in response to the drastic changes in Western Europe is far from being free from the influences of history, socio-economic conditions, cultural value system etc. of its society. In an attempt to grasp these changes, sociology is empowered with particular visions of man and society under study. And these visions have, as mentioned above, a strong bearing to the concrete reality.

The adoption of Western sociology to study non-Western society will undoubtedly yield to a distorted outcome. This despair has been voiced by non-Western sociologists who have been questioning the inappropriateness of Western models and approaches and

called for the indigenization of sociology. According to Martin Albrow, this academic venture, which was primarily a Third World response, beginning in the 1970's, is distinguished by two things. The first is the explicit opposition to the importation of inappropriate models of social science, and especially to terminology and models developed in and for the First World. The second is an emphasis on the distinctive national cultural tradition and the possibilities of finding inspiration there for new directions in sociology.

French sociologist, Raymon Boudon, shares similar view with the proponents of indigenization. He argues that one of the factors contributing to the bias of the behavioural and social sciences is represented in the tendency of these sciences to generalize their concepts and theories from one society or from one civilization to another. In not taking often into account the particularities and the specificities of human societies and civilizations, behavioral and social sciences tend to undermine their scientific objectivity and, thus, their scientific credibility and appropriateness.

In the field of sociology of religion, Confucian approach has been proposed. James V. Spickard argues that Western sociology of religion emphasizes such issues as the changing bases of religious authority, secularization and rational choice and depends in large part on Western models of religion, of the relationship between individual and society, an on key Western values. These are not shared by other traditions. He further argues that Classical Confucianism provides sociological models, core concepts and values.

There is also a growing awareness among Muslim scholars of the need to

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find out an alternative for Western sociology. The works on it are materialized in the so-called Islamization of sociology which is the logical extension of the broader project of Islamization of knowledge. Numerous works have been made to deal with the issues in the latter.

However, the works seem to suffer from number of shortcomings and there are differences in approaches and methodologies. The same applies to the former which still lacks the interest of Muslim sociologists to address the relevant issues on it.

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KAJIAN TENTANG KELOMPOK PENEKAN/ KELOMPOK KEPENTINGAN

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Kelompok Penekan: Pengertian dan Jenis-Jenisnya

Dalam kepustakaan sosiologi dan ilmu politik dikenal konsep *interest group* atau *pressure group*. Meskipun secara harfiah arti kedua konsep tersebut berbeda, tetapi fungsinya sama yaitu melakukan tekanan kepada pemerintah. Oleh Almond *interest group* atau kelompok kepentingan diartikan sebagai "setiap organisasi yang berusaha mempengaruhi kebijakan pemerintah tanpa (pada waktu yang sama) berkehendak memperoleh jabatan publik, yaitu jabatan politik dalam pemerintahan (Almond, 1981: 50). Konsep ini dipertentangkan dengan partai politik, di mana yang terakhir ini benar-benar bertujuan untuk menguasai jabatan politik. Perbedaan penting lainnya adalah suatu partai mengikuti pemilihan umum selalu berusaha untuk memenangkannya guna menjalankan atau merealisasikan ideologi dan program-programnya. Sebaliknya, suatu kelompok kepentingan tidak

pernah ikut pemilihan umum. Usaha untuk menjaga agar kepentingannya tetap terjamin adalah dengan membangun kelompok dan melakukan tuntutan atau dukungan terhadap pemerintah. Kelompok-kelompok ini melakukan tindakan terbuka untuk menjaga kepentingannya agar tidak dirugikan oleh kebijakan pemerintah.

Pengertian kelompok kepentingan di atas sering dibedakan dengan kelompok penekan. Kelompok kepentingan menyuarakan kepentingan-kepentingannya. Di sini tindakannya benar-benar subyektif di mana tindakannya hanya untuk kelompoknya. Sebaliknya sebuah kelompok penekan melakukan tekanan kepada pemerintah bukan untuk melindungi kepentingannya semata-mata, tetapi untuk kelompok lain, baik karena kelompok itu rentan, lemah sehingga tidak mengetahui cara untuk memperjuangkan, maupun karena kelompok tersebut minoritas sehingga tindakannya