

Outline of the Theorists

Karl Marx: Turned Hegel on his head by arguing that the foundation of all societies, human lifeways, and historical change was based in material concerns, our real life issues. A functionalist. Change occurs when the current mode of production and relations of production break down. Ideas don't matter.

Society is composed of: **Base & Superstructure**

The **Base** is composed of **Mode of Production** and **Relations of Production**:

The **Mode of Production** (Foraging, Horticulturalism, Pastoralism, Agriculturalism, Industrial Agriculturalism [Capitalism]) is the foundation of society. It is the system by which you produce all the necessary material needs of life. It gives rise to:

The **Relations of Production**: The set of social relationships that attain within a given **Mode of Production** (in Capitalism—>owners and wage-workers; in Agriculturalism—>Nobles and Peasants/Serfs). Provides the social/labor fabric through which the material needs are produced, distributed, and consumed.

The **Superstructure** is composed of art, philosophy, politics, religion, the cultural ethos, and other ideologies. These social ideas exist to hide or naturalize the real inequalities that are inherent in a given **Mode of Production** and the resultant **Relations of Production**. Two classic examples: The Divine Right of Kings and Preachers using the bible to naturalize slavery in the American South.

Max Weber: Argues with Marx. Ideas may have a powerful effect on the current **Mode of Production and Relations of Production**. These ideas move, in modern society, toward the greater and greater rational organization and bureaucratization of daily life. The classic example: Luther—>Calvin—>Predestination—>The Calling—>altered productive and social relationships—>Capitalism.

For Weber, society exists, and changes occur, in the following manner:

There is a synthesis between **new ideas** <—> **current Mode of Production and Relations of Production**.

For Weber, ideas and material both matter, but new ideas may be the driving seat.

Emile Durkheim: The most complex & wide-ranging of the early sociologists. I will only give a brief overview of a few pieces. A functionalist. The basis of society is embedded in value systems.

Society types: Mechanical Solidarity (Society) & Organic Solidarity (Society). **Mechanical Solidarity** is found in simple societies. Simple division of labor, common ethos, common language, common knowledge, common religion, common morality, and common ethics. Organic societies are held together by the far weaker bonds of **Interdependence**. They share little else and feature many of the tensions we associate with our society when we try to figure out who belongs.

Social Facts: Things in the mind that are real because they have an effect on not just one mind but many. Not caused by genetic inheritance, so they are cultural and learned. Durkheim demonstrates the power of social facts by studying suicide and proving that rates of suicide are related to the presence of social facts.

Definition of Religion: A unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite in one simple moral community called church, all those who adhere to it. Based in the dichotomy of **Sacred & Profane**.

The Four Functions of Religion: It is **Disciplinary**, creates **Cohesion**, is **Euphoric**, and **Vitalizes**. In the last of these Durkheim proposes that these powerful value systems also provide a foundation for the social system and individual consciousness. Durkheim thus believes that societies and humans are driven by non-rational thinking and forces.

Bronislaw Malinowski: He was the first participant-observer. Spent four years among the Trobriand Islanders. Opposes Durkheim's theory of group function and argues for society as functional for individual needs. A functionalist.

He believed that the basis for all society and religion was the need of individuals to feel security. This is sometimes called **Psychological Functionalism**. His proof of this also shows how people living in small scale societies are just as rational as we are. Studies the use of magic in fishing and gardening. Individuals are filled with anxiety and the need to control the unsure elements of life.

Evans-Pritchard: He was the transitional figure between functionalist analyses and the modern focus on meaning and **Agency**. He argued that anthropology wasn't a science and calls for a return to the consideration of history and locality. He rejects functional analysis as being narrow and overly reductive.

Instead, he believed that we should approach the study of religion as a moral and symbolic system in which each of the constituent parts gains its meanings from its relation to other parts and to the interpretations of the natives. (Geertz and Bourdieu both adopt this as central to their thinking). He argued that we should be more concerned with the human interests, meanings, and values of the participants.

Leads to the belief that **emic** analysis is more important than **etic** analysis. The group and people get to speak and be taken seriously.

Victor Turner: One of the **Symbolic Anthropologists**. Not really interested in what symbols and rituals meant to people. Instead, he was interested in the work that symbols and rituals performed in the making and maintaining of society and individual identity/consciousness. How are boys made into men? Citizens into Soldiers? Outsiders into Members? Fallen into Risen? Sick into Healed? How does a normal man become a president? How is a criminal rehabilitated (and which ones can be rehabilitated)? How do societies transition?

Rituals and symbols do the work in these processes. They move people and groups from one category or state to another.

Clifford Geertz: Another famous **Symbolic Anthropologist**. Geertz was interested in what symbols meant to people. In addition, he was interested in the manner in which meaning and a meaningful life were gained through socialization and motivation in a complex interconnection of the symbols and rituals of everyday life. These symbols and rituals gain their meaning from their place in the larger system (web), not from any particular and necessary meaning of their own. The only way to get at meaning was through **Thick Description**.

Because meaning is gained in and through a particular social system, there is no point in comparing individual symbols from one society to another. The point of ethnography is to translate, as much as is possible, a unique, whole culture in such a manner that we could understand and sympathize with its denizens.

Claude Levi-Strauss: Levi-Strauss inaugurates the theoretical orientation of **Structuralism**. A small part of this set of analytical tools is focused on how the human mind structures the environment. The world, which is grey, is divided into Binary Oppositions, in which key elements are divided irrevocably from each other: White/Black, Good/Evil, Safety/Danger, Male/Female, Intellectual/Emotional, Dry/Moist, Clean/Impure. Ambiguity is avoided because ambiguity is dangerous. We then see the world in these categories and subsequently act on the world, making the world in their image. We also tend to conflate and confuse the categories, leading to complex combinations of the above.

This division and patterning of the world is necessary if we are to live and act individually and socially. This was brilliantly demonstrated by **Mary Douglas** in her book *Purity and Danger* (a portion of which you have in her article).