Ethnocentric Trends in Sociology: A Critical View

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Sociology was developed in the western intellectual ethos within a distinct sociopolitical milieu rooted in a postrevolutionary Europe characterized by new trends of thought that represented serious and sharp reactions to the prevailing social situation. Social thinkers of the period expressed an intense desire to develop a new science of society that, once equipped with adequate methods and theoretical constructs, could be used to study and better understand society and social phenomena. This new tool would then be used to analyze how the construction and reconstruction of society could be carried out to ameliorate the lot of people.

During the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, European society passed through a tumultuous state and witnessed drastic changes in its social and intellectual fabrics. The expansion of trade in the seventeenth century led to the crumbling of the economic order and the emergence of its new masters: guilds and chartered corporations. The eighteenth century replaced this system with that of free labor and competitive production. The emergence of large-scale industries structured the economic organization anew and accelerated both production and profit. Competition forced industries to develop new technology in order to increase production and produce better quality goods. Markets were explored and expanded, and trade was encouraged. This economic reorganization affected the pattern of social life, as the ensuing population shift from the rural to urban areas altered the extant family structure. In addition, the rule of law began to be considered necessary for the smooth functioning of the new economic order. These developments gradually transformed the feudal order and the transitory mercantile order into a capitalist economic system that created

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new social classes and initiated changes in the thinking of people about humanity and its social environment.

The French revolution (1789) further helped overthrow the traditional feudal system that was already crumbling due to drastic and dramatic changes. Peasants were becoming landowners, and the nobility, due to their declining economic situations, had to limit their activities within the estates. The bourgeois purchased land and noble titles and ranks sold by monarchs who needed money. These changes made the French monarchy ineffective and functionless. The centralized government, while undermining feudal lords, was dominated by professional administrators and bureaucrats belonging to the bourgeois class. Independent financiers collected taxes and earned handsome returns. This helped them to emerge as major bankers and providers of loans even to the elite. These developments made it possible for a new political order to emerge.

The economic, political, and social changes eroded further the hold of religion on the people. The church–state controversy, as well as the elites' use of religion to justify and maintain their positions and privileges, continued to alienate the people from religion. As new ideas and a more comfortable life gained ground among the masses, the influence of religion declined and the feudal lords and elites could no longer justify the traditional political and social order through religious mystique.

The emerging social order forced social thinkers to ascertain the reliability and relevance of the existing thoughts, models, and paradigms to the new circumstances. Most thinkers saw the need to develop new ideas, concepts, and theoretical frameworks to cope with the new challenges and problems faced by society. Some developed new models to justify the changes. These, in turn, prepared the way for further changes, thus accelerating the alteration and modification of the social and intellectual fabrics. This initiated an intellectual struggle for a "vision of human beings and society," which dominated the thinking of the period and has since been characterized as the Enlightenment.

Issues of Intellectual Fervor

The intellectual fervor of the eighteenth century represented a continuity of the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The basis of this continuous intellectual transformation was the emphasis on science and its applicability to the study of humanity and society. The natural sciences were deemed the most suitable, for scientists had discovered laws that governed the physical world and had then invented devices and tools that benefitted humanity. Their proven potentiality helped establish their credentials.

Social philosophers, impressed by the vitality of these sciences, used them to study society and social phenomena. They considered science as the method that, used with appropriate means, could expose reality and lead to an understanding of truth. Serious efforts were made to make science more effective and to provide it with more explanatory power. Thus science came to be interpreted anew. Descartes's (1596-1650) new definition of "idea"—that knowledge is attained by ideas—came to the forefront. Ideas were considered "the images of things" and were variously described in Descartes's work (Doney 1967). New discoveries and theories led to a new explanation of science. Newton's (1642-1727) interpretation of science became popular, because his theory of mechanics established a new landmark in the history of knowledge.

It was expected that the Newtonian explanation of science could enable social scientists to establish similar landmarks in the social sciences and to discover forces governing human behavior and society. Thus "mechanics came to be regarded as the ultimate explanatory science: phenomena of any kind, it was believed, could and should be explained in terms of mechanical conceptions, and the scientific method of *Principia* could and should be extended to all fields of human endeavour" (Shapers 1967). These trends were very apparent throughout the Enlightenment that "removed 'self-incurred immaturity' and enabled man to use his own understanding without the guidance of another" (Reiss 1970). This ability was bestowed by science, which was considered to have succeeded in providing a rational explanation of phenomena and illuminating their true properties.

Science entered a new phase when the problem of dualism between reason and senses was settled, for then the philosophical and metaphysical issues involved in perceiving an object through human faculties and understanding its true essence were no longer important or relevant: the world of reason was consonant with the world of phenomena. Reason had the potentiality to develop the devices, frameworks, and conceptual schemes needed to comprehend reality. At the same time, the consistency and constancy of facts could allow reason to be more objective and analytical in discovering and exposing the souls of the objects. Newton's principle of gravity was taken as a precedent that discovered laws governing the universe, an undertaking that was of great interest to social thinkers. They were able to pursue this interest by collecting facts, undertaking systematic observation, and formulating laws, all of which require the application of reason. Physics, which provided both a model and a vision, showed the researchers how to conduct scientific enquiry in order to find out the soul of a fact and the essence of an object. Thus, the new scientific vision and method was extended to the study of humanity

and society, both of which were now considered to be subject to the same principles and laws of investigation as were natural objects.

The inclusion of the individual and society under the purview of science and scientific analysis made the old worldview, based on religion and religion-inspired morals and ethics, seem redundant. Social thinkers deemed it necessary to emancipate traditional thought about humanity and society from religious speculation and dogmas by subjecting it to scientific analysis. Their argument was that since information obtained through the scientific method was real and enabled one to understand a given phenomenon's true nature, origin, and relation to other phenomena, this same method could be used to better understand social life and human organization, which could be evaluated by reason and improved through the implementation of systematic and planned actions.

The application of scientific analysis to the study of society was first seen in Voltaire's (1694-1778) polemical historiography. He pointed out "the folly that prevails on the globe" and explained the "catastrophic consequences of obscurantism, superstition, and lack of toleration" (Szacki 1979). Others followed his lead and began to direct rationalistic criticisms against the "traditional religious system," "all those authorities that deprive(d) man of the right to verify for himself the truth of his opinions," "speculative thinking," "metaphysics," and "contemporaneous political and social institutions" (ibid.). This new scientific vision initiated the desacralization of society, a process that would be completed by the Enlightenment's thinkers and their descendants.

Desacralization was pursued for several reasons. First, thinkers treated social phenomena as similar to natural phenomena and found them guided by the same laws. They therefore decided that these laws should be studied and investigated with the same tools used to study natural phenomena. Second, science and its method were considered capable of dealing with all phenomena. The scientific method was seen as the only one that could provide true knowledge and enable one to understand the souls of objects. Third, it was believed that the researcher's access to scientific knowledge concerning humanity and society would make it possible to transform society. Moreover, it was considered the basis for planning and making a concentrated effort to improve humanity's social condition. Finally, religion was discarded: it was considered irrelevant in the wake of new choices, particularly when confronted with scientific innovation and technological sophistication. Religion was considered part of an earlier historical phase and hence incompatible with material progress. If religion were to play any role, it would have to undergo certain changes. Social thinkers saw it as a tool of exploitation, a source of obstacles to social transformation, and a roadblock to progress and

change. Religion was used to justify a status quo that favored a small elite class and its policies that kept people under control and subjugated.

The other issue of concern to Enlightenment philosophers was the "natural rights" of humanity. Scholars in France considered these rights necessary for the well-being of humanity and supported their implementation throughout the sociopolitical system. Voltaire lead and advocated the doctrine of natural rights. Rousseau (1712-78), Diderot (1713-84), and Condorcet (1743-94) followed him. As they opined that the existing social order was not conducive to the progress of humanity because it violated natural rights, they worked for its transformation.

Enlightenment thinkers also developed the vision of human progress, the idea that humanity always proceeded toward a situation better than the previous one, and that the pattern of this betterment was governed by a law. Such predecessors of sociology as Turgot (1727-81), Condorcet, and Saint Simon (1760-1825) were determined to discover the law of progress that determined human life throughout history. Turgot and Condorcet developed a theory of progress that manifested "unshakable faith in the future of human knowledge and its beneficent consequences, the belief that mankind can soon find a way of life that would be in harmony with its nature" (Szacki 1979). Turgot "set forth in clear and unmistakable language the doctrine of continuity in history, the cumulative nature of evolution and progress, and the causal sequence between the different periods of history" (Barnes 1965). Condorcet, described by Comte as the best student of social dynamics, advocated historical progress mainly in terms of increasing knowledge and the growth of scientific achievement. Saint Simon concentrated on developing a new science, *science politique*, which he used to study different aspects of society. This was a blueprint for what came to be known as sociology. According to him, "the practical conditions of social life, and not supernatural sanctions, must be made the basis of new morality, and the happiness of the race must be realized through a transformation of the present social order rather than in heaven" (ibid.) He also stressed that "this transformation requires a new industrial organization, a new social and political system, and a union of Europe in a new fraternity" (ibid).

The Emergence of Sociology

Sociology emerged amidst this intellectual surrounding as an effort to accommodate the new vision of humanity and society, to provide an adequate solution(s) to social issues, and to transform the social order into one that would benefit humanity. Auguste Comte (1798-1857) gave it formal shape by synthesizing the existing knowledge of his time. His

mind was occupied with the dominant themes of the intellectual milieu, and his thinking was shaped by the new ideas of Montesquieu, Turgot, Condorcet, and Saint Simon. Comte developed a comprehensive system based on a reliable method of acquiring knowledge and supplemented with the program for improving society. He established a positive philosophy in order to materialize his scheme of thought and to study "facts at roots" (Szacki 1979) marked by "the steady subordination of the imagination to observation" (Comte 1896). Stating that the universe is guided by invariable laws of nature and that the major task of positive science is to investigate and discover those laws, he claimed that positive science "embodies a new intellectual trend, the search for immediate laws instead of remote causes" (Freidheim 1976). He said:

> Our real business is to analyse accurately the circumstances of phenomena, and to connect them by natural relations of succession and resemblance. The best illustration of this is in the case of the doctrine of gravitation. (Comte 1896)

Comte assumed that a positive science of society would be possible when "society produces positive thinkers" who "study relatively uncomplicated things like physics and biology" (Freidheim 1976). He found the condition conducive to producing a new discipline and so prepared the blueprint of a positive science of society under the category of "social physics" (later renamed "sociology"). This science sought to uncover the broad principles that guide researchers to observe empirical realities and to determine their validity. He considered its goal to be the development of abstract theoretical principles that could a) be used while observing the empirical world and b) be tested against empirical facts.

He treated sociology as an abstract science that must develop a theoretical framework, a system of principles that guides and regulates phenomena, and that, later on, can be used to reconstruct society. Sociology was "the science of social order and progress and in a more general way ... the science of social phenomena" (Barnes 1965) and was concerned mainly with the social organism as a whole. As order and progress were the two major aspects of that organism, he stressed their study and divided sociology into two parts: social statistics and social dynamics. Sociology thus has a broad purpose and a great ambition: to study "the stable structure of [a] social organism and of its incessant growth, the laws both of spontaneous social order and of equally spontaneous social progress." This new science began to develop, and its other founding fathers—Spencer (1820-1903), Durkheim (1858-1917), and Weber (1864-1920)—gave it a sound mind and body (Inkeles 1987).

Sociology has been explained and defined in several ways. An analysis of these explanations and definitions shows that they are based on three broad themes: sociology as the study of society, of institutions, and of social relationships (ibid.). A succinct view is that sociology is concerned with the social life of humanity and its scientific study. In fact, humanity's social life determines the boundary of this discipline and constitutes the entire gamut of its perspective. To quote Bilton et al. (1988), "Sociology is a subject which consists of competing theories about what social life is and how it should be explained." The chief exponent of the above view is Giddens (1990), who defines it as a "the study of human social life, groups and societies."

Social life is also viewed in different ways. Some say that sociology "seeks to explain the nature of social order and disorder" (Inkeles 1987), while others interpret it as the "study of individuals and their social setting" (Ritzer et al. 1982). For still others, it gives "new insight into social behaviour and the processes through which social patterns can change" (DeFleur et al. 1971). Giddens (1990) also considers it as "a dazzling and compelling enterprise, having as its subject matter our own behaviour as social beings." Others interpret social life in terms of social relations: the study of social relations, and not groups or individuals, is its primary concern (Stark 1992). This view is shared by Smelser (1988), who explains it as "the scientific study of society and social relations."

In fact, sociology seeks to discover the reality that lies behind a social fact and tries to present it to the world in an appropriate form. It does not rely on the general view of the world, but rather seeks to penetrate the given phenomenon in order to understand its correct nature and the law governing it. Bilton et al. (1988) feel that "sociology, however, insists on a willingness to reject what is 'obvious', 'common sense', 'natural', and to go beneath the surface of such understanding of the world." This tendency constitutes the core of the sociological orientation and gives sociology a unique feature. To Berger (1966), "the fascination of sociology lies in the fact that its perspective makes us see in a new light the very world in which we have lived all our lives.... It can be said that the first wisdom of sociology is that things are not what they seem."

Critical Issues

These are the circumstances and issues that led to the emergence of sociology and shaped its development. It has absorbed the forces of time and space, thus projecting the western worldview that, being intrinsically materialistic, is based on immediate gains rather than long-term ethical utility. Not only are most sociological theories and paradigms derived

from western experiences, but, equally important, western thinkers have given no serious attention to others' (i.e., nonwestern) experiences and theoretical frameworks, as these are considered outdated and a product of an undeveloped phase of society. In short, they are irrelevant to modern times. On the other hand, western theoretical constructs, models, paradigms, and methodologies failed to comprehend, appreciate, and project the ethos of nonwestern, particularly Third World, societies. Western theories and concepts are therefore hardly applicable to non-western sociocultural environments having their distinct values, norms, ethos, and worldviews. The result is that western theories and concepts, when applied to concrete Third World situations, have resulted in contradictions and provided a distorted view of social realities.

Having finally realized this methodological and conceptual difficulty, Third World social scientists have sought to design theoretical frameworks and methodologies suitable to their distinct conditions rather than to continue to rely on models generated by western ethnocentric and ideological assumptions (Hughes 1961; Willier 1972; Singham and Singham 1973; Krishna 1973; Atal 1981; and Mughbane and Paris 1985). In their quest for an alternative epistemological framework that would be suitable for the goals and tasks of their societies, they undertook the indigenization of the social sciences. Park (1988) asserts that "the cultural biases of social sciences have acted as instruments of colonialism, racism and sexism disguised as universalistic knowledge" and so has sought to develop a mechanism to balance the "outsider" views with those of the "insider." He hopes that this will provide a more complete picture of the realities being investigated and more faithful methods of empirically rendering them. Thus the process of indigenization was begun as an attempt to liberate the epistemological framework of Third World societies from their intellectual dependency on western models (Loubser 1988).

Since the early decades of the twentieth century, the Muslim world has realized that western knowledge of humanity and society, as it has developed over centuries, is neither appropriate for its particular circumstances nor conducive to a proper appreciation of realities within the Muslim world. It was only realized slowly that the development of knowledge in the West was basically culture-bound: its course and nature were determined principally by the need to accommodate rapid changes in the material aspect of western societies triggered by accelerated scientific and technological advancements. Western thought, in the name of using the scientific method, divorced itself gradually from, and later discarded completely, the metaphysical, moral, ethical, and spiritual aspects of humanity and society. In the final analysis, the primacy and impor-

tance of the western frame of knowledge stemmed from the fact that it moved the material advancement of humanity to the center.

But Muslim scholars felt that material fulfillment alone is neither adequate nor sufficient for the overall development of an individual's personality or for his/her peaceful and meaningful existence. They felt that it should be supplemented with ethical, moral, and spiritual fulfillment, if only in order to ensure the advancement of both body and soul as well as eternal peace and harmony on earth. As the bases of western epistemology were viewed as different from those of Islam, Muslim scholars began to work for the revival of the ideological framework of Islam and to present it as an adequate solution to modern social evils. In recent times, an intellectual movement known as the Islamization of knowledge was started to project the Islamic worldview and to inject it into the various social science disciplines in order to project a correct and balanced view of humanity and society.

Since sociology is a science, its epistemological bases should be universalistic and encompass all possible parameters and paradigms necessary for ascertaining truth and reality. Clearly, the western bases of sociological explanations cannot meet this condition, for they are ethnocentric and ignore the ethical foundations that are both vital and distinguish the human and animal worlds. Thus western sociological explanations, when applied to concrete situation, raise certain problems.

The 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. Can it be studied like such natural objects as solids, liquids, or gases, which are above and apart from the perceptor's existence and do not involve him/her in any way? Furthermore, these objects can be comprehended easily by a normal person's perceptive faculties and sense organs. Different people can draw similar inferences and reach similar conclusions. But this is hardly the case with social life, about which people have different views, opinions, and perceptions. There are therefore great differences among social scientists about humanity's and society's origin, evolution, and *raison d'être*. Humanity's perceptive faculties seem helpless when it comes to ascertaining the bases and reasons for the existence of so many social life patterns. Although social scientists use reason and logical explanation to describe a certain social phenomenon, their conclusions may differ. These differences should, in the ultimate analysis, be attributed to the way one looks at the given phenomenon and the meaning he/she attaches to it.

In reality, social scientists have two ways of dealing with social phenomenon: they rely on the view and will of the majority, or they seek to

ascertain the truth while taking into consideration the frequency and consistency of facts relating to a certain phenomenon. First of all, it is hardly possible to find or arrive at a consensus when dealing with social phenomena. Some researchers see consensus in one place or another at a given time, but it is quite probable that the consensus of people at one place may not be identical with another consensus somewhere else. This is also true with the factor of time. Second, it is not necessary that the conclusion reached and drawn by consensus or the majority view will be valid in all cases and in all circumstances. Even in nature, factors that affect a phenomenon may be valid in most, but not all, cases. Third, in the case of a social system, human beings and their activities are organized to attain certain purposes. It lays down a particular pattern consisting of similar sets of actions considered genuine, good, and necessary for the accomplishment of desired goals. The system demands priority and preference for those actions to bring about these objectives and to make the system effective. Such actions are painful, though momentarily, to those who may have an opposite understanding and view. In such a situation, no one can rely on the majority's views, for it might be considered detrimental to humanity and its organization. However, the ultimate truth, the final purpose of life, and the concepts of righteousness, good and bad, justice and injustice cannot be determined by consensus.

The second issue is the overemphasis on the inductive method. Science has been reduced to the inductive explanation of phenomena. In the seventeenth century, Francis Bacon (1561–1620), who proposed the method of modern natural science, laid the foundation of empirical tradition based on "a sure and reliable inference from observation and experiment" (Stanesby 1985). The amelioration of humanity's lot on earth, he argued, can be "best achieved not by detached speculative thought but by the collection of facts through organized and systematic observation and deriving theories from them." He believed that this method, based on the systematic collection of facts and experimentation, would provide the correct sense-derived knowledge of the natural world and that it would make possible the transformation of existing conditions for the betterment of humanity. Bacon was against scholasticism and found syl-logistic logic inadequate as a tool for providing new empirical knowledge. He agreed with Plato (ca. 427–347 BC) and Aristotle (384–322 BC) that the mind is tainted by error and false belief. However, he departed from them when he claimed that the source of true knowledge is nature itself. In his opinion, the mind

has to be purged from all anticipations, conjectures, and guesses which are the source of error and impurity. The scientist is thus

urged to observe the world round him in order to prepare his mind for the unbiased interpretations of nature. (Ibid.)

Thus, "Bacon replaced the authority of religious or philosophical conviction, that is the external authority of revelation or the internal authority of reason, with the authority of the senses" (ibid.).

The problem here is how to determine the limits of the senses' genuine authority. As the senses are governed by the mind, they receive the information of the external world or environment, which is on the way to one's mind, and thus makes the individual aware of his/her immediate surroundings. The mind, by way of the sensory organs, also recognizes such changes in bodily conditions as pain, the movement of muscles or joints, and cold and warmth. In fact, the mind is the actual receptor of knowledge, for it manipulates the information provided by sense organs. It often looks at the external world according to its preconceived notions, anticipations, and conjectures. It judges the sensory-derived information by its own standard, as well as from its conceptual preoccupation, and tries to accommodate the results in its own framework. Thus, an individual's sense-derived information about the external world is shaped ultimately by one's "psyche." This is why similar objects or incidents give different degrees of pain or pleasure to different persons.

In the late nineteenth century, the German scientific community initiated an intellectual movement known as Logical Positivism. This school set forth a commonsense view of science, which it interpreted in three philosophical forms (Suppe 1977). The first one was Mechanistic Materialism, which "viewed the world as a mechanical system, and science as the search after the mechanisms at work in this objective material world. Empirical investigation yields knowledge of the mechanistic laws governing the working of the world. Observation is central to this exercise; philosophical speculations and a priori knowledge have no place" (Stanesby 1985). Ludwig Buchner, the chief exponent of this approach, stressed that the task of science was to discover the mechanical laws inherent in things themselves. He discarded all supernatural elements in the exploration of natural events, arguing that "there is no force without matter, no matter without force" (Passmore 1957). This view was challenged on the grounds that he did not take into consideration "the thinking subject" when dealing with the growth of knowledge.

This challenge led to the emergence of neo-Kantianism, which laid emphasis on phenomenal structure rather than immediate sensations. Kant (1724–1804) believed that there is no "neutral observer of phenomena." There is the "thinking subject" that links sensibility to understanding. Following Copernicus (1473–1543), who found that "the apparent

movement of the stars is really in part the movement of the observer" (Stanesby 1985), Kant explained that "our observations of the phenomenal world were the product of the enquiring mind and the world itself" (ibid.). Thus, the dictum that the observer is the direct recipient of empirical scientific knowledge was rejected. The further reaction to Mechanistic Mechanism was expressed by Ernest Mach, who did not like to place "a priori" elements in science. Known as neopositivist, he emphasized the observer's sensations in his analysis of science and considered them fundamental to all scientific knowledge. Alexander (1963) termed Mach's sensationalism "epistemological atomism," for it reduced scientific statements to basic "atoms" of experience or sensation. Accordingly, scientific generalizations were grouped into "statements about these atoms and the relations between them" (ibid.).

Mach's sensationalist analysis reduced scientific explanation to a description of the phenomena under study, for any explanation related to the metaphysical aspect would have to consider the process and the role of forces by which a thing came into being, operated, and how it affected, or was affected by, others. Thus science was considered descrip-tive rather than explanatory, and scientific theories were regarded "as instruments or tools for deriving one set of observation statements (predictions) from other set of observation statement (data)" (Stanesby 1985). Instrumentalism therefore "avoided questions of the truth or falsity of theories by insisting that theories do not correspond with reality. The function of a scientific theory is simply that of a useful instrument for making predictions about phenomena" (ibid). It is difficult to uphold this view, for if a theory or a piece of knowledge is not real or, at least, not closer to reality, it is neither valid nor useful. How can the prediction be of any relevance or use if it is wrong and based on false assumptions?

It is generally assumed that a scientific theory contained some irreducible theoretical components that could not be explained without causing problems for positivists and empiricists. How could they be comprehended? Hempel (1965) faced this problem and identified it as the "theoretician's dilemma." He treated theories as explanatory contrivances and observed that "theoretical terms could not be eliminated from theories" (Stanesby 1985). This dilemma emerged "from the acceptance of the necessity of theoretical terms but a denial that they have any meaning or reference to the real world" (ibid.). Generally speaking, knowledge of the world provided by induction is considered reliable, for it is based on observed instances from which general conclusions are drawn. In the inductivist tradition, one conducts an experiment, records observations, and corroborates data with other data observed by others and in the same field of research. The resulting data, accumulated during

experiments, show general characteristics that allow one to formulate hypotheses that indicate the nature of observed phenomena and any causal connection between them. The hypothesis' confirmation and reconfirmation allows researchers to discover laws governing the field under investigation. Thus, there are three important functions of science—"the classification of facts, the recognition of their sequence, and relative significance" (Pearson 1936)—and any knowledge devoid of them is considered bad science (ibid.). Based on the observed instances and evidence, the inductivist formulates theories and laws that permit predictions via deductive reasoning, as this is required to explain and describe even the laws established by induction. The heliocentric system was regarded by Newton as a true description because it was deduced from the phenomena (Hesse 1961).

Confronted with the same problem, David Hume found induction unable to ascertain the truth of a generalization based on observed instances. According to him, inductive proof can be relevant only when an argument's premises contain the induction hypothesis relating to the uniformity of nature. The difficulty here is that the induction hypothesis is a type of contingent generalization that requires proof or justification. The justification is only possible through induction, which, in turn, requires further inductive justification. The process is infinite (Hume 1951).

Popper also rejects induction as a means of acquiring scientific knowledge, for he is concerned with the means through which one gets knowledge from the world. He explains two vital processes: commonsense realism and the commonsense theory of knowledge. His basic assumption is that although individuals acquire knowledge through commonsense views, it is through criticism that its validity is proven, its truth ascertained, and its true nature discovered. According to the commonsense theory of knowledge, one receives information about the external world through the senses. Popper (1959) calls this the "bucket theory of the mind," because it treats the mind as a receptacle in which knowledge accumulates. This view's end result is antirealism, for it views the world as made up of "'contents of the mind,' that is ideas resulting from sense-impression." He rejects the commonsense inductive theory of knowledge and concentrates on descriptive epistemology, which he says is the basis for the growth of knowledge. He believes that "knowledge is conjectural rather than imposed on us from without.... The mind, instead of being a passive receptor or 'bucket,' is more like a 'search light' which plays an active part in the process of perception" (Stanesby 1985).

These problems, posed and indicated by the philosophers of science, impress on our mind that induction is not the only and the best way to get true knowledge of the world, particularly of the more complex and

complicated social world. In most cases, it seems unable to provide true knowledge about social life viewed from the ethicocentric point of view.

The third issue is the elimination of metaphysics from science. In the modern era, science ignores all metaphysical issues involved in the study of social phenomena, chiefly because of the overwhelming view of the scientific community that only observation or sense experience can provide authentic knowledge. Moreover, the metaphysical aspect of a phenomenon is considered to initiate an unending discussion that will never reach a concrete result: it is an intellectual exercise that creates confusion and leads to nihilism. Social scientists decided not to study a phenomenon's metaphysical aspect(s) because such an undertaking was seen as pointless. They prefer to study the apparent facts and phenomena confronted in daily life and the ensuing relationships. However, observable phenomena are the outcome of some cause, and one cannot comprehend their true nature and operation unless the reason why and the purpose for which they came into being is known. The metaphysical study of a phenomenon is necessary, for it provides complete knowledge of the phenomenon, thereby enabling one to understand its operation. Thus, eliminating metaphysics from science has resulted in researchers concentrating on a given phenomenon's outer framework and ignoring its inner nature. The ensuing partial study creates confusion and a misleading interpretation of the truth of the situation being studied.

The fourth issue relates to social transformation, a popular topic among social thinkers and philosophers. This was one of the motivating factors behind the emergence of sociology. Contemporary social scientists use the concept in terms of a better and adequate means of subsistence and a high standard of living. Similarly, one's social life is measured by the criteria of adequate facilities of life and the satisfaction of one's urges, comfort, and material aims. Societies that exploited natural resources, directed human efforts, and channelled their institutions to achieve these objectives are "developed." From the Renaissance to the present, social analysts have based their theories and models on this assumption and have condemned and discarded all knowledge that decreases the importance and devalues the pompousness and charm of material comfort and the luxuries of life. They ignored religion, because it reined in one's desire for material gains and was thus considered a retarding factor in human progress.

But the concept of a good individual or social life cannot be limited to material comfort and the adequate satisfaction of human urges alone. While material comfort takes care of one's physical aspects, it fails to cater to one's spiritual needs. Material comfort satisfies one's bodily needs and urges, but it ignores and avoids altogether the individual's need

for the peace and comfort of mind and soul. After all, each individual lives in this world for certain basic purposes to which he/she not only gives priority over others but also often sacrifices his/her comfort and worldly pleasure in their pursuit. Great works are done, and significant actions are performed because of an individual's high measure of dedication and commitment to such purposes and a resultant lower degree of interest in satisfying personal desires and urges. Only persons characterized by such qualities tend to make history.

Finally, the study of humanity and society would be incomplete and misleading if it were limited only to the materialistic aspect and confined to that framework. Human existence is not just a struggle for survival and for producing the means of subsistence: it is also a struggle for a meaningful survival—a survival in a distinct way—and for producing those means of subsistence that will further the achievement of humanity's ultimate purpose. If that purpose is only to produce the means of subsistence and make an effort to survive, there is no difference between humanity and animals. Human beings have always attached meaning to life and have acted in the world accordingly. They select priorities, give preference to some objects and actions, and ignore others. The actions of humanity and society are judged according to their desirability and utility to the system at large, which humanity and society cherish and consider beneficial to individuals and all humanity. This explains why such importance has been attached to the ethical aspect of humanity and society. In fact, society originates because of the compelling need to enthrone ethical values that "require the existence of others, interaction with them, and conditions under which there are needs to which the moral subject responds if ethical action is to take place" (al Fārūqī 1982). As such, society is considered "necessary for morality" (ibid.).

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