

Key Ideas

Functionalism

- Purpose and Needs
- Organismic Analogy
- Consensus Theory (value consensus)
- Social Structure (Macro approach)
- Social Solidarity
- Collective Conscience
- Institutions (Functional interdependence)
- Social system
- Functional sub-systems: Economic. Political. Family/Kinship. Cultural
- Functional Imperatives (GAIL):
 - ✓ Goal Attainment
 - ✓ Adaptation
 - ✓ Integration
 - ✓ Latency (Pattern maintenance)
- Latent and Manifest functions (Merton)
- Dysfunctions

Key Names: Durkheim, Parsons, Merton, Malinowski

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Theoretical Perspectives

Key Criticisms

Functionalism

- Supports political and economic status quo (everything has a function)
- Over-emphasis upon the "beneficial" aspects of institutions, structures.
- Difficult to explain rapid social change
- Tautology (a statement that contains its own proof): "If something exists it has a function. It has a function because it exists...".
- Error of reification (Belief that non-human things like "society" can have human qualities such as "needs and purposes").

Key Critics: Any Marxist sociologist, Radical Feminists, Marxist Feminists.

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Theoretical Perspectives

Key Ideas

Marxism

- Traditional (Instrumental) and Neo-Marxist types
- Social class (economic - Ownership of the means of production)
- Class conflict
- Ruling class / Subject classes (Exploitative social relationships)
- Class consciousness and False Consciousness
- Social Structure (Macro approach) and Institutions
- Alienation
- Ideology
- "Ideological State Apparatuses" (ISAs) - Althusser
- "Repressive State Apparatuses" (RSAs) - Althusser
- Hegemony
- Economic base (infrastructure) and Political/Ideological superstructure
- Classes and class fractions
- Critical of Capitalism

Key Names: Marx, Althusser, Gramsci, Poulantzas, Milliband, Hall, Taylor, Walton and Young, Bowles and Gintis

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Theoretical Perspectives

Key Criticisms

Marxism

- Unscientific (the "Faith of Marxism" - Popper)
- Conspiracy theory (especially aimed at Instrumental Marxists)
- Communism does not appear imminent
- Left Functionalism (Jock Young: argues most "Marxism" is little more than form of Functionalism that replaces interests of "society" with "ruling class"). Especially "Instrumental Marxism" (e.g. Milliband)
- Subjective beliefs and interpretations of individuals ignored (Weber)
- Economic determinism
- Forms of (non-economic) conflict (gender, ethnic group) ignored in favour of economic conflicts

Key Critics: Popper, Weber, Dahrendorf, Young ("Left Idealism")
Any New Right Theorist, Sociobiologists, Radical Feminists.

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Theoretical Perspectives