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SOCIOLOGY – ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

Saida Rehamnia*

Yasmina Ketfi**

Abstract. Sociology was once viewed as the "study of social philosophy," and later evolved into the "science of social physics." However, it became evident that studying social phenomena scientifically is quite challenging, as they are subject to human variability and constant change. This compels researchers to rely on metaphysical, philosophical, and religious notions- subjects that cannot be approached through scientific methods based on observation and experimentation. Consequently, sociology came to be regarded as the science of studying human relationships. This paper seeks to explore this transformation by addressing the following questions: What is the concept of sociology? How did it emerge and evolve into a science that studies social phenomena using the tools, concepts, measures, methods, and approaches of modern science? In the continued existence of modern and Western society, the importance, and status of sociology rest in the development of scientific research, in research centers, in academic institutions, and in the formation of scientific elites and qualified personnel. It contributes to preparing effective human resources capable of engendering change, progress, and development on which a society depends.

Keywords: Sociology, social sciences, social phenomenon, society, individual

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СОЦИОЛОГИЯ – ПРОИСХОЖДЕНИЕ И РАЗВИТИЕ

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Абстракт. Социология когда-то рассматривалась как «изучение социальной философии», а затем развилась в «науку о социальной физике». Однако вскоре стало очевидно, что изучать социальные явления научными методами чрезвычайно сложно, так как они подвержены человеческим изменениям и постоянной динамике. Это вынуждает исследователей обращаться к метафизическим, философским и религиозным концепциям, которые невозможно анализировать с помощью научных методов, основанных на наблюдении и эксперименте. Таким образом, социология стала рассматриваться как наука, изучающая человеческие отношения. Настоящая статья направлена на исследование этой трансформации и ставит следующие вопросы: каково понятие социологии? Как она возникла и превратилась в науку, изучающую социальные явления с использованием инструментов, понятий, методов и подходов современной науки? В существовании современного и западного общества значение и статус социологии заключаются в развитии научных исследований, деятельности исследовательских центров, академических институтов и подготовке научных элит и квалифицированных кадров. Социология способствует формированию эффективных человеческих ресурсов, способных обеспечивать перемены, прогресс и развитие, от которых зависит общество.

Ключевые слова: социология, социальные науки, социальное явление, общество, индивид

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SOSIOLOGIYA – MƏNŞƏYİ VƏ İNKİŞAFI

Səidə Rahəmni*

Yasəmən Kətfi**

Abstrakt. Sosiologiya bir zamanlar “ictimai fəlsəfə”nin öyrənilməsi kimi qəbul edilirdi, sonralar isə “ictimai fizika elmi” kimi formalaşdı. Lakin tezliklə aydın oldu ki, sosial hadisələri elmi şəkildə öyrənmək kifayət qədər çətindir, çünki onlar insan amilinə və daim dəyişən sosial şəraitə tabedir. Bu səbəbdən tədqiqatçılar müşahidə və eksperimentə əsaslanan elmi metodlarla tədqiqi mümkün olmayan metafizik, fəlsəfi və dini anlayışlara istinad etməyə məcbur olurlar. Nəticədə, sosiologiya insan münasibətlərini öyrənən elm kimi qəbul edildi. Bu məqalə bu çevrilməni araşdıraraq aşağıdakı suallara cavab tapmağa çalışır: Sosiologiyanın anlayışı nədir? O, necə yaranmış və müasir elmin anlayışları, üsulları, vasitələri və yanaşmaları ilə sosial hadisələri öyrənən elmə çevrilmişdir? Müasir və Qərb cəmiyyətinin davamlılığında sosiologiyanın əhəmiyyəti və mövqeyi elmi tədqiqatın inkişafı, tədqiqat mərkəzlərinin və akademik institutların fəaliyyəti, eləcə də elmi elitənin və ixtisaslı kadrların hazırlanması ilə müəyyən olunur. Sosiologiya dəyişiklik, tərəqqi və inkişafı təmin edən bilən effektiv insan resurslarının formalaşmasına mühüm töhfə verir.

Açar sözlər: Sosiologiya, sosial elmlər, sosial hadisə, cəmiyyət, fərd

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1.Introduction

Sociology is an ever-young social science that distinguished itself from philosophy mainly at the beginning of this century. It has moved through many and different phases, beginning with Ibn Khaldun's exertions of trying to form a science that studies change and urban phenomena in human society. Western attempts at forming such a science to explain social issues and persistent crises came next. At that point, sociology was even referred to by certain academics as "the science of crisis."

Research and practice in sociology are conducted in an academic institution and are given the theories developed by the study of society as well as the study of its problems and needs.

From this, we were led as researchers to a study into the origin and development of sociology. What is the concept of sociology? How did it come into being and evolve into a science that philosophically represents the actuality of sociological research and practice within society?

2.The Concept and Origins of Sociology

2.1.The Concept of Sociology

- **Etymological Concept:**

In French, "Sociology" is referred to as Sociologie, while in English, it is called Sociology. This term comes from the Latin word Socius, signifying "social," and the Greek word logos, which translates to "science" or "study" at a broad level of abstraction.

Auguste Comte is regarded as the first person to use the term Sociologie. For him, it consists of logie which signifies science or knowledge, and Société which represents society. Sociology is thus characterized as the science of human societies, the examination of human communities or groups, or the exploration of social phenomena, facts, or processes using a scientific, positivist, and empirical methodology (Durkheim,1995, p.25).

- **Technical/Terminological Concept:**

Auguste Comte described sociology as the science that examines issues previously tackled by earlier sciences before the establishment of sociology. He also recognized the challenge of accurately defining social phenomena because of the intricate and intersecting factors influencing them. He viewed human social phenomena as the focus of this emerging science and stressed the importance of the pursuit of truth (Al-Mu'ti, n.d, p.60).

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) characterized sociology as the examination of objective social phenomena. He argues that social facts are not just simple things existing separately from human awareness and actions; instead, they are collective constructs like family and religion. According to Durkheim, sociology seeks to identify underlying patterns or models in the analysis of

phenomena (Ritzer 2006, p.162).

Max Weber (1864-1920) characterized sociology as the discipline aimed at attaining an interpretive comprehension of social action to elucidate its origins and effects.

Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) defined sociology as the discipline that analyzes social phenomena and their general interactions while investigating the roles these phenomena fulfill due to their relationships or connections.

Sociology is the empirical investigation grounded in organized inquiry focused on uncovering the fundamental principles directing social occurrences. This indicates that the focus of sociology is knowledge based on research, thorough examination, and rigorous methods. It eliminates chance, spontaneity, conjectural or subjective interpretations, individual preferences, and viewpoints (Zaimi 1997, p.42).

In conclusion, sociology is the discipline that examines human and social connections within a community or, more extensively, the scientific examination of society.

2.2.Origins and Development of Sociology

Numerous scholars assert that Ibn Khaldun is the genuine originator of sociology as a scientific field. Auguste Comte, a French sociologist, was the initial individual to use the word "sociology" in 1839. He stated that the focus of this emerging science is social sciences or social phenomena, and that sociology's role is to uncover the principles that regulate the origin, evolution, and transformation of these phenomena (Ghaith 2002, p.24).

- **How did the term Sociology emerge?**

Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) was the pioneer in recognizing the essential need for developing a science of society, which he referred to as *Ilm al-‘Imran* (the science of civilization). He was the first to advocate for the autonomy of this science in examining social phenomena and their related laws. Many modern sociologists, including Gumplowicz, Gaston Boutoul, Witirim Sorokin, Howard Becker, and Barnes, have confirmed this.

In the wake of Ibn Khaldun's intellectual heritage, numerous titles were assigned to this domain prior to the emergence of the term "sociology." Historically, it was linked to political science, given that there was no distinct division between sociology and philosophy. In Germany, the concept of *Staatswissenschaft* (state sciences) emerged, yet it did not succeed in creating a distinct separation between science and art.

Sociology — 1839 — Auguste Comte — Auguste Comte

Social Physics — 1835 — Adolphe Quetelet

Social Physics — 1822 — Saint-Simon and Comte

Science of Society — 1785 — Condorcet

Science of Human Civilization — 14th Century — Ibn Khaldun

The above reflects the historical development of the naming and conceptualization of sociology over time.

A new concept emerged in the contemporary age: Political Economy, in the writings of Adam Smith. This term encompassed theoretical evaluations along with efforts to reform social issues. Subsequently, the term Statistics emerged, encompassing not only numerical analysis but also the descriptive and analytical exploration of human lives. Nonetheless, statistical research stayed limited to examining social phenomena, treating them as comparable to concrete natural events.

In 1785, the phrase Art of Society or Science of Society (art society) was introduced in the writings of Condorcet (1743–1794). He additionally employed the phrase Social Mathematics, which he viewed as a method for explaining phenomena and forecasting them. Nevertheless, because of improper use, this term became obsolete. Subsequently, Saint-Simon (1760–1825) coined the phrase Social Nature, endorsed by Auguste Comte (1798–1857) and Adolphe Quetelet. However, after the French academic Garcin de Tassy published several articles in Paris in 1824 discussing Ibn Khaldun's contributions to the study of civilization, Auguste Comte dropped the term Social Physics and substituted it with Sociology between 1835 and 1839.

2.2.1.Sociology and Ibn Khaldun:

Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) was born in Tunisia and was part of a faction of the Kinda tribe. His forebears resided in Hadramaut prior to the advent of Islam. His family relocated to Andalusia, and following the fall of Seville, they moved to Tunisia. Ibn Khaldun examined Arabic, the Quran, jurisprudence, Hadith, and rational disciplines such as logic.

He resided in a politically unstable setting with rival and opposing emirates. His aspiration drove him to occupy various roles: he served as the secretary to Ibn Ishaq, Sultan of Tunisia in 752 AH (1351 AD), later as secretary to Abu Anan, Sultan of Fez in 756 AH (1355 AD), and he also held other significant positions, including secretary to the sultans in Granada in 764 AH (1362 AD). He subsequently relocated to Béjaïa in 766 AH (1364 AD), went back to Granada in 776 AH (1374 AD), but his visit was brief, and he ultimately returned to Tunisia, where he withdrew from politics and dedicated himself to scholarly pursuits, secluding himself in the fortress of Ouled Slama for four years, during which he composed his renowned Muqaddimah. He subsequently journeyed to Cairo in 784 AH (1382 AD), which was the primary Islamic hub at that time, visited the sacred locations in Hijaz, and returned to Cairo once more (Al-Saati, n.d., p.30).

Ibn Khaldun created a new field known as the Science of Human Civilization or Human Social Science. He outlined its topics, its relationships to other disciplines, its area of research, and its methodology.

Contributions to Human Sociology:

Ibn Khaldun is regarded as the first to convert prior social ideas into a distinct science, which he referred to as the Science of Human Civilization.

• **The Science of Human Civilization:** He described it in the following way: *“This field of study stands alone, focusing on human civilization and society, and its goal is to elucidate the phenomena and conditions sequentially, similar to every other discipline, whether based on observation or theory”*. (Ibn Khaldun, 2010, p.31)

He categorized the urban science into six distinct types:

- Human urbanization, its categories, and a specific area of land, examining the effects of the environment on human urbanism.
- Bedouin urbanization citing clans and primitive societies.
- Nations, caliphates, and empires, examining the hierarchy of leaders.
- City life, urban areas, and regions.
- Hobbies, subsistence, income, and occupations.

He also discussed sciences and their acquisition and learning, categorizing them into transmitted sciences and rational sciences.

The State According to Ibn Khaldun:

Ibn Khaldun considered that states pass through three stages similar to human life stages (growth, youth, decline), with the lifespan of each generation being about 40 years (Ketfi 2025, p. 14).

Ibn Khaldun’s Method:

Ibn Khaldun was distinguished by his broad knowledge of earlier writings and human conditions, his ability to review and critique opinions, and he introduced a unique scientific method in his study based on analysis, observation, criticism, scrutiny, and comparison.

2.2.2.Sociology and Auguste Comte:

Auguste Comte (1798–1857) was a French philosopher and social theorist born in Montpellier, France, to a traditional family. He dismissed their conventional beliefs and adopted innovative inclinations. He developed a connection with Saint-Simon, backing him strongly before ultimately separating. In 1824, Comte initiated a new phase known as the Positivist Stage, during which he established Positivist Philosophy. He began giving talks titled Lectures on Positivist Philosophy and released the book Positive Politics (Al-Mu’ti, n.d., p.59).

Contributions to Sociology:

Auguste Comte is regarded as the pioneer of Western sociology. He developed the idea of social science and is recognized for inventing the term Sociology (Sociologie). Comte sought the principles that he thought regulated the development of the human intellect. He regarded social thinking as a unified entity whose principles could be unveiled through the collection of

facts. His concepts impacted researchers in historical theory and criminology research (Al-Mu'ti, n.d., p.60).

Comte's Positivist Philosophy:

Comte's philosophy relies on an evolutionary account of history. He claimed that human thinking goes through three phases, which he outlined in his six-volume work named *Course of Positive Philosophy* (1830–1842), also referred to as *Comte's Positivist Philosophy*. The theory describes social evolution as a slow advancement from basic primitive types to increasingly intricate forms.

Comte posits that human societies evolve through three distinct phases (Ketfi 2025, p. It seems you haven't provided the text you would like to be paraphrased. Please share the text you'd like me to work on.

- The Theological Phase:

Individuals initially look for supernatural, religious interpretations. At this phase, existence is described concerning the deeds of divine entities.

• The Metaphysical Phase:

This phase encompasses theoretical and conjectural interpretations that investigate the reasons and core principles underlying phenomena.

• The Positive or Scientific Phase:

This is a scientific account founded on the objective analysis of observable phenomena. Individuals employ the positivist approach to interpretation, which depends solely on deduction derived from observation.

Comte divided sociology into two parts:

- **Social Statics:** The study of the stable laws governing social order.
- **Social Dynamics:** The study of the laws of social change and movement.

Comte's Scientific Method:

Comte emphasized the importance of applying the positivist approach in every scientific investigation, encompassing the examination of human nature. He claimed that human nature ought to be examined through biology and sociology, with the goal of establishing social authority- a societal condition grounded in science and the "religion of humanity." He portrayed himself as the High Priest of this new faith and thought philosophers ought to create this social system founded on positivist ideas.

His scientific approach is grounded in observation and experimentation, employing logical comparisons between phenomena and societies, succeeded by historical analysis that studies and examines ideas as an initial step to grasp social development.

2.3.1.Sociology and Herbert Spencer:

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) was born in Derby, England, to a traditional Catholic family. Initially, he did not attend formal government schools; rather, his father and uncle directed his early education, emphasizing especially

mathematics and natural sciences, which intrigued him before he shifted to the humanities and social sciences. Spencer possessed a unique fascination with biology. He started his career as an educator, then became a railway engineer, before stepping away to focus on literature, politics, and social issues.

Some of his important writings include:

- *The Origin and Evolution*
- *Man versus the State*
- *Social Darwinism*
- *Social Statics*
- *Principles of Sociology*
- *Social Stability*

Contributions to Sociology:

Spencer characterized sociology as the science that outlines and clarifies the emergence and evolution of social systems, like the family. He conducted several comparative analyses across various types of societies to comprehend their development.

He drew inspiration from Darwin's theory of evolution and utilized it in the context of societies. He thought that society undergoes the same phases as an individual, striving to achieve the ideal state of human nature. This conviction prompted him to highlight the role of education in his work on intellectual, moral, and physical education, designed to provide individuals with scientific understanding and to prepare them for life in its entirety (Ali, 2003, p. 94).

In his work *Social Statics*, Spencer aimed to elucidate advancement in both living organisms and society. He characterized this as a progression from situations where comparable components carry out similar roles to scenarios where parts or organs differ and serve distinct functions — in other terms, from uniformity to diversity, or from homogeneity to heterogeneity. The principle of evolution is the true foundation of Spencer's doctrine. In his book *First Principles*, he formulated three fundamental laws:

- The law of the persistence of force, which refers to the existence of a persistent form of final cause that eludes knowledge.
- The law of the indestructibility of matter.
- The law of the continuity of motion, which means that energy transforms from one form to another.

2.4.1. Sociology and Max Weber:

Karl Emil Maximilian, known as Max Weber, was born on April 21, 1864, in Erfurt, Germany. He was one of the most important German philosophers, legal scholars, political economists, and a founding father of modern sociology. Weber remains one of the most influential sociologists for contemporary writers and researchers (Giddens, 2006, p. 51). His contributions were enormous by all standards. He provided the necessary philosophical

foundation for the social sciences and a general theoretical framework for sociology, conducting numerous studies covering all major world religions and ancient societies (Weber, 2011, p.97).

Among his most famous works are *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, *Politics as a Vocation*, and his best-known work *Economy and Society*, which entered the field of sociological thought after his death in 1920 (Ketfi, 2025, p.18).

Karl Emil Maximilian, commonly referred to as Max Weber, was born on April 21, 1864, in Erfurt, Germany. He was among the most significant German philosophers, legal theorists, political economists, and a key figure in the establishment of modern sociology. Weber continues to be a highly significant sociologist for modern authors and scholars (Giddens, 2006, p. 51) His contributions were significant by all measures. He laid the essential philosophical groundwork for the social sciences and established a broad theoretical framework for sociology, carrying out extensive research on all significant world religions and ancient cultures (Weber, 2011, p.97).

Some of his most renowned works include *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, *Politics as a Vocation*, and his most celebrated work *Economy and Society*, which became part of sociological thought following his passing in 1920 (Ketfi, 2025, p.18)

Contributions to Sociology:

In *Economy and Society*, Max Weber defined sociology as: "The science concerned with understanding social action, interpreting it, and explaining its occurrence and outcomes."

Philippe Cabin and Jean-François Dortier argue that, for Weber, sociology is the science of social action. Weber rejected determinism that confines humans within unconscious social pressures. Such determinism is relative and directional, always leaving room for chance and individual decision. He viewed society as the product of individuals acting according to values, motives, and rational calculations. Weber said:

"What we call sociology is the science whose task is to understand social activity through interpretation" (Dortier, 2010, pp.47–48).

This means society consists of individuals performing behaviors and actions that are the core of sociology. Thus, Weberian sociology focuses on studying individual social action in its interpretive context- that is, the study of social action (the interaction and mutual influence of individuals through their behaviors and subjective meanings) which must be purposeful and influential on the behavior of others (Hamdaoui, 2015, p.15).

Therefore, sociology for Max Weber is defined as the study of individual actions within a given social system and the various types of social interactions, focusing on the relationships of influence and response.

Max Weber's Method in Sociology:

In *Economy and Society*, Weber outlined his sociological method: "We call sociology the science that undertakes to understand social activity by interpretation, then to explain causally its course and effects." This means his method consists of three methodological steps: **understanding, interpretation, and explanation.**

- **Understanding:** Grasping an individual's action within the theory of mutual influence and social interaction, i.e., understanding the meanings that individual action assumes within a given society.
- **Interpretation:** Recognizing the reality behind the objective world, meaning that understanding an individual actor requires knowing the prior judgments, background knowledge, and researching all sources that help comprehend that action. Interpretation reveals the meaning behind the action, considering the observable circumstances and conditions where the action occurs (Ketfi, 2025, p. 20).
- **Explanation:** Scientific causal explanation linking the action to the social structure or explaining social phenomena correlatively and causally. Weber adopted an explanatory model to understand social phenomena on a scientific and relative basis.

This is an abstract scientific construction to describe and explain phenomena to reach truth. In this context, Pierre Bréchien states:

"Understanding the logical process that leads a social actor to make a decision in a specific situation" (Hamdaoui, 2015, pp. 18–20).

Branches of Sociology according to Max Weber:

Weber covered multiple areas, with the most significant being:

- **Political Sociology:** Weber is regarded as the pioneer of political sociology, which pertains either to the examination of the state or of authority. For Weber, it signifies examining power, governance, authority, and leadership across all societies.
- **Sociology of Administration:** Weber is considered one of the pioneers of contemporary administrative science, thoroughly exploring administrative and organizational ideas like authority and legitimacy. He offered the initial systematic account of how modern organizations came into being.
- **Sociology of Religion:** Weber was a trailblazer in founding the sociology of religion. He examined Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Taoism, and Islam. His sociology of religion is based on three fundamental concepts: the influence of religious beliefs on economic behaviors; the connections between social theory and societal concepts; and the unique traits of Western civilization to comprehend the changes influencing Eastern societies. This is evident in his writings including *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, *Ancient Judaism*, *Hinduism*

and Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism (Ketfi, 2025, p. 21)

2.5.1.Sociology and Émile Durkheim

Émile Durkheim was born on April 13, 1858, in Épinal, Lorraine, into a Jewish family. He passed away in 1917. He served as a professor of sociology at the University of Bordeaux, where he was promoted to full professor in 1896. At the same time, he completed his doctoral research on the *Division of Labor in Society*. Among his most important works are: *The Division of Labor in Society*, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, *Suicide*, *Primitive Classification*, and *The Elementary Forms of Primitive Life* (Ritzer, 2006, pp.162–163).

- His Contributions to Sociology:

Durkheim emphasized that sociology, like many social sciences, has various branches corresponding to the diversity of social phenomena. Despite his insistence on the importance of specialized fields, he viewed sociology fundamentally as the science of studying societies.

He outlined the main branches of sociology as follows:

1.General Sociology:

This branch encompasses the examination of personality on both individual and group scales. A central idea in Durkheim's study is the collective conscience, which he described as the sum of beliefs and feelings shared by members of a community. This shared consciousness assumes a concrete existence, endures through time, and strengthens connections among generations. Durkheim asserts that societal influences mold individual conscience, and when we express ourselves, "it is society that communicates through us" (Dortier, 2010, p.93).

2.Sociology of Religion:

Durkheim's study of religion was based on the distinction between religious phenomena, which he divided into:

- **The sacred:** Refers to anything that religions consider fundamentally different from the ordinary world, such as holy texts and divine concepts. This includes beliefs and their associated doctrines.
- **The profane:** Encompasses rituals, customs, and practices related to sacred beliefs, such as prayer, almsgiving (zakat), fasting, and other religious acts.

3.Legal and Moral Sociology:

As early as 1886, Durkheim asserted that society must be held together by strong moral bonds. While society is an organic entity, it does not maintain equilibrium spontaneously. He argued that in the absence of a strong moral center, society disintegrates. From a sociological positivist perspective, society is understood as a system of social facts whose unity is achieved through moral action. For Durkheim, social cohesion is not merely the result of environmental

or structural factors, but rather of the moral dimensions inherent in social facts themselves (Jalabi, 1998, pp. 187–188).

4.Social Organization:

Durkheim regarded social organization as an organized framework that facilitates adjustment and stability. Its key feature is equilibrium—when a change happens, society strives to adjust to the new conditions to regain balance. Instances of such organizations encompass entities that regulate marriage and family affairs.

3.Conclusion

Sociology is regarded as a crucial field that emerged from philosophy in contemporary times, owing to the complexity and pressing nature of social problems that philosophy alone could not address. It is the discipline that examines social phenomena and ongoing societal issues. The field initially appeared with Ibn Khaldun in his *Muqaddimah*, where he described it as the study of human civilization or society. Subsequently, early thinkers like Auguste Comte coined the term "sociology," which gained widespread acceptance.

In contemporary society, sociology has diversified into multiple areas and specializations, such as the sociology of education, which investigates educational issues; the sociology of organization and work, which studies institutional frameworks; and the sociology of media and communication, which examines media's impact on public perception across different formats like audiovisual, print, and digital media. Every subfield functions within its own philosophical framework to tackle particular concerns. Moreover, sociology has led to the emergence of new, autonomous fields, including media and communication studies as well as political science, which branched off from political sociology. These changes indicate the ongoing progression of sociology as it adapts to new phenomena and the swift scientific advancements influencing modern societies.

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