

Conclusion:

Classical Sociological theories remain highly relevant in explaining power, inequality, and social order, provided they are applied critically and contextually. Functionalism helps us understand institutional stability. Conflict Theory exposes structural inequalities and power struggles, while Weberian Sociology offers a nuanced, multidimensional view of authority and stratification. No single theory sufficiently explains contemporary societies on its own; rather, an integrated theoretical approach is essential to capture the complexity of modern social realities shaped by globalization, capitalism, and identity politics.

(Q:2)

Introduction

Classical Sociological theories — Functionalism, Conflict theory, and the Weberian Perspective — emerged in response to the profound social transformation of the 19th and early 20th Centuries. Although developed in different historical contexts these ~~theor~~ theories continue to offer valuable analytical tools for understanding power, inequality, and social order in contemporary societies. However, the relevance of these ~~the~~ theories today lies not in their literal application but in their ~~adaption~~ adaptation to modern complexities such as globalization, neoliberal Capitalism, identity politics, and digital governance.

1. Functionalism: Social Order and Stability. Core Assumptions:

Functionalism associated with Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Robert K Merton, views society as an integrated system whose parts work together to maintain social order and stability. Institutions such as family, education, religion, and law perform essential functions that ensure societal cohesion.

Relevance in Contemporary Societies.

Functionalism remains relevant in explaining:

Institutional continuity

Social integration

Normative regulation

For example:

- The education system not only imparts skills but also socializes individuals into shared values such as discipline, merit, and national identity.

- During crises like COVID-19, institutions such as healthcare systems, governments and media played stabilizing roles by enforcing norms (lockdowns, vaccination drives) to restore order.

• Empirical illustration

Welfare states in Scandinavia (e.g. Sweden, Norway) demonstrate functionalist logic. Redistribution through taxation maintains social cohesion and reduces class conflict.

The criminal justice system functions to order, deter deviance and reinforce collective morality.

- Despite its strengths, Functionalism is criticized for:
- Ignoring power asymmetries: It assumes consensus where inequality exists.
 - Legitimizing inequality: Davis and Moore's theory of stratification justifies unequal rewards as functional.
 - Inability to explain social change and conflict.

Thus, while functionalism explains how social order is maintained, it inadequately explains whose interests are served.

2. Conflict Theory: Power and Inequality:

Core Assumptions:

Rooted in Karl Marx's ideas, Conflict Theory views society as a site of constant ~~arg~~ struggle over scarce resources. Power is concentrated in the hands of dominant groups who use institutions to maintain their privilege.

Relevance in Contemporary Societies:

Conflict Theory is highly relevant in analyzing

Economic inequality

Class domination

State power and capitalist exploitation.

In contemporary Capitalism:

Corporations wield disproportionate influence over politics

(lobbying, policy capture.

labour exploitation persists through gig economies and informal labour markets.

Empirical illustration:

Global income inequality: According to Oxfam, a small global elite controls a disproportionate share of wealth.

Pakistan's Class Structure: Feudal elites and industrial capitalists dominate political institutions, marginalizing peasants and labours.

Critique:

Despite its strengths, Conflict Theory has limitations:

Economic determinism: Overemphasis on class neglects gender, ethnicity, and culture.

Reductionism: Not all social relations are conflictual.

Neglect of social cohesion: Fails to explain why societies do not constantly collapse into revolution.

Nevertheless, Conflict Theory remains crucial for understanding systemic inequality and power concentration.

Weberian Perspective: Multidimensional Power and Authority.

Core Assumption:

Max Weber offered a multidimensional analysis of society, emphasizing:

Class (economic position)

Status (prestige and social honor)

Party (political power)

He also identified three types of authority.

1. Traditional
2. Charismatic
3. legal-rational

Relevance in Contemporary Societies:

Weber's approach is particularly relevant today because it.

- Goes beyond economic class
- Explains bureaucratic domination.
- Highlights legitimacy and authority.

Modern Societies are characterized by bureaucratic governance, rational-legal authority, and Surveillance.

Empirical Illustration:

- Modern States operate through bureaucracies (Civil Services, regulatory bodies.)

Corporate Organizations: Reflect Weber's

rationalization (hierarchies, efficient, formal rules)

Identity-based inequalities (race, caste, gender)

Illustrate Status distinctions:

- Caste discrimination in South Asia.
- Racial profiling in Western societies.

Critique:

Weberian theory is criticized for:

- Pessimism about rationalization (Iron cage)
- Understanding collective resistance
- offering descriptive more than prescription.

However, Weber's framework is invaluable for understanding authority, legitimacy, and complex inequalities in modern societies.

Comparative Evaluation:

Theory	Strengths	Limitations
Functionalism	Explains social order and integration	Ignores inequality and power.
Conflict Theory	Explains inequality and domination	Overemphasizes Conflict
Weberian perspective	Multi-dimensional balanced	less focused on structural change.

Conclusion:

Classical Sociological theories remain highly relevant in explaining power, inequality, and social order, provided they are applied critically and contextually. Functionalism helps us understand institutional stability. Conflict Theory exposes structural inequalities and power struggles, while Weberian Sociology offers a nuanced, multidimensional view of authority and stratification. No single theory sufficiently explains contemporary societies on its own; rather, an integrated theoretical approach is essential to capture the complexity of modern social realities shaped by globalization, capitalism, and identity politics.