

### What is Science?

The development of knowledge, ultimately in the form of laws and theories and based on a systematic examination of facts (the scientific research methods).

### What is the purpose of science?

To distinguish what is real from what is illusion.

### What is the relationship between science and social theory?

Science generates social theories and tests them using scientific research.

What do you think Collins and Makowski mean when they say:

"The social world as we know it and have known it is mostly illusion?"

Kant wrote:

We cannot really know *anything* about the world because we never *experience* anything except through our own subjective filters of understanding.

Do middle class Americans perceive things the same way as the wealthy or the poor?

Do the poor have an illusion of reality while the wealthy see reality as it actually is?

What causes Collins to choose the particular theorists and examples that he does for his book?

He chooses what he believes is important which is colored by his personal biases (Collins is a conflict theorist).

Collin's clarifies his own bias when he states:

"We have tried from time to time to discuss some applications of these theories to particular issues of today. It should be clear that these applications are made from a particular point of view, and in that sense we cannot make a claim on others to agree with us unless they happen to share our particular sets of values (p6)."



### Sources of illusions

(1.) Difficulty in distinguishing fact from perceptions (values)

Do you agree?  
Why or why not?

Our personal values and emotions are intertwined with facts so that we treat our values and emotions as facts.

### Sources of illusions

(2) Inability to recognize our own biases.

"What Marx discovered was that our own thought is a product of our social circumstances and that much of what we believe to be reality (or real) is but a reflection of our socially determined interests (Collins, p.4)."

### Sources of illusions

(3) The lack of motivation to uncover illusions.

"Not the least important aspect of an illusion is the fact that one believes it to be the truth (Collins, p.4)."

### Sources of illusions

(4) Freud has shown that "repression" prevents us "from seeing what is right before our eyes, including the motivations for our own actions (Collins, p.7)

Collins makes a distinction between "Applied" sociology and "Pure" sociology (p.5, 11).

What is it?

Applied sociology tries to apply social theories and facts to improve society.

Pure sociology tries to develop theories that provide a comprehensive explanation for social behavior and institutions.

### Chapter 1:

The Prophets of Paris:  
Saint Simon and Comte

The 1700s are sometimes referred to as the Enlightenment. Why is this (p.16)?

Reason and Science?

Religion?

French and American Revolution?

Saint Simon (1760-1825) argued for an "international council" of scientists, financiers, and industrialists to direct society (p.18)

Could this be successful?  
Why or why not?

Saint Simon believed in the rise of a perfect meritocracy.

### What is this?

- People have different innate capacities.
- Jobs distributed according to one's ability/capacity.
- Therefore, society maintains a hierarchy but people are viewed as equals.
- Those at the top work for the common good.

August Comte  
(1798-1857; p.21+)

Presented a system of "*positivism*" (the development of objectivity) where knowledge on a subject moves from theology to philosophical speculation to scientific explanation (a "positive" view).

Can you think of a subject that has moved through these stages?

Comte provided the basis for a major sociological theory or paradigm:  
"*structure-functionalism*"  
(p.23)"

- Society is like a biological organism. All the parts (family, church, state) work together to make a functioning whole
- All the parts are Interdependent

## Paradigms in Sociology

### What is a Paradigm?

A model or framework for observation and understanding which shapes both what we see and how we understand it.

### Examples for understanding a Paradigm?



### Examples for understanding a Paradigm?



## Theoretical Perspectives (or paradigms) in Sociology

There are **three social theories** that receive the most attention in sociology:

1. Structure-Function Theory
2. Conflict Theory
3. Symbolic Interaction Theory

## Comte:

Coined the term "sociology"

Argued that society remains by laws of its own while individuals come and go.

It is a cumulative culture.

Does society have a life of its own beyond the individuals that make it up?

If society is a lot of interrelated parts, what holds the parts together?

Reason  
(Saint Simon)

Faith or morale sentiments through family, church, community  
(Comte)