

UNIT – I

Functionalism

Durkheim · Parsons · Merton · Criticisms

Explanatory Lecture Slides

Recent Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology · Minor-II-3 · Semester III

RECENT THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES IN SOCIOLOGY

Topics covered in this unit

01

State the functionalist question

02

Durkheim's social facts and solidarity

03

Parsons's AGIL

04

Merton's manifest/latent and dysfunction

05

Criticise functionalism

06

Indian uses and misuses

How this unit is organised

01

The functionalist
question

02

Durkheim

03

Parsons

04

Merton

05

Criticism

06

India

The functionalist question

What does this institution do for the persistence of the whole?

- Order, equilibrium, shared values. A courtroom, a family, a caste — each is asked for its 'function'.
- Risk: whatever is, is good. That is the conservative slide.

The functionalist question

ASK

- What need does this serve?

DO NOT ASK ONLY

- Who is crushed by it?

Durkheim

Social facts; mechanical v organic solidarity; anomie; crime as normal.

- Law: from repressive to restitutive as solidarity becomes organic — a gift for a law student.
- Suicide: even a private act has rates. That is a social fact.

Durkheim

FACTS

- External.
- Constraining.
- General.

LAW

- Repressive → restitutive.

Parsons

Action system; AGIL (adaptation, goal-attainment, integration, latency); pattern variables.

- A 10-mark if you can expand AGIL with one Indian institution each (market, State, courts/law, family/school).
- Heavy, American, mid-century. Criticise as too neat.

Parsons

AGIL

- A economy.
- G polity.
- I law/community.
- L family/culture.

FLAW

- Where is conflict?
- Where is colonial India?

Merton

Middle-range theory; manifest and latent functions; dysfunctions; strain theory (already in paper I).

- A safety-valve function of a protest; a latent function of a reservation policy; a dysfunction of a ritual.
- The most usable functionalist for a KSLU answer.

Merton

MANIFEST

- Intended.
- Recognised.

LATENT

- Unintended.
- Often the interesting bit.

Criticisms

Status-quo bias; teleology; poor on power, gender, colony; over-system.

- Conflict theory (next unit) is the built-in critic.
- Indian caste: a functionalist can describe 'division of labour'; Ambedkar will not let it rest there.

Criticisms

KEEP

- Merton's tools.
- Durkheim on law-types.

DROP

- Whatever exists is functional.

Indian uses

Srinivas's village as a system (paper II) was functionalist in temper.

- Use it to read a panchayat or a joint family; then add a conflict sentence so the answer is adult.

Indian uses

WORKS FOR

- Ritual.
- Village.
- Court as integrator.

FAILS FOR

- Atrocity.
- Riot.
- Class.

Merton

Middle-range theory; manifest and latent functions; dysfunctions; strain theory (already in paper I).

- A safety-valve function of a protest; a latent function of a reservation policy; a dysfunction of a ritual.
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Cases a KSLU answer should name

CASE

Kesavananda Bharati

(1973) 4 SCC 225

A Constitution as an integrative system — a functionalist metaphor a lawyer may use once, then stop.

CASE

Sunil Batra

(1978) 4 SCC 494

Prison's latent functions (control, stigma) v manifest (reform).

Provisions & materials to quote

Art. 38

Integration as a State aim — a DPSP a functionalist would underline.

CPC / BNSS

Restitutive and repressive faces of law in Durkheim's sense.

10 / 16-mark frames from this unit

Q1

Explain the functionalist perspective in sociology. Refer to Durkheim, Parsons and Merton.

Q2

Write a note on manifest and latent functions.

Q3

How did Durkheim relate types of law to types of solidarity?

Q4

Critically examine functionalism with Indian illustrations.

Unit recap

- 1 Function = what it does for the whole.
- 2 Durkheim: social facts; law-types.
- 3 Parsons: AGIL — then criticise.
- 4 Merton is the portable toolkit.
- 5 Always add: functional for whom?