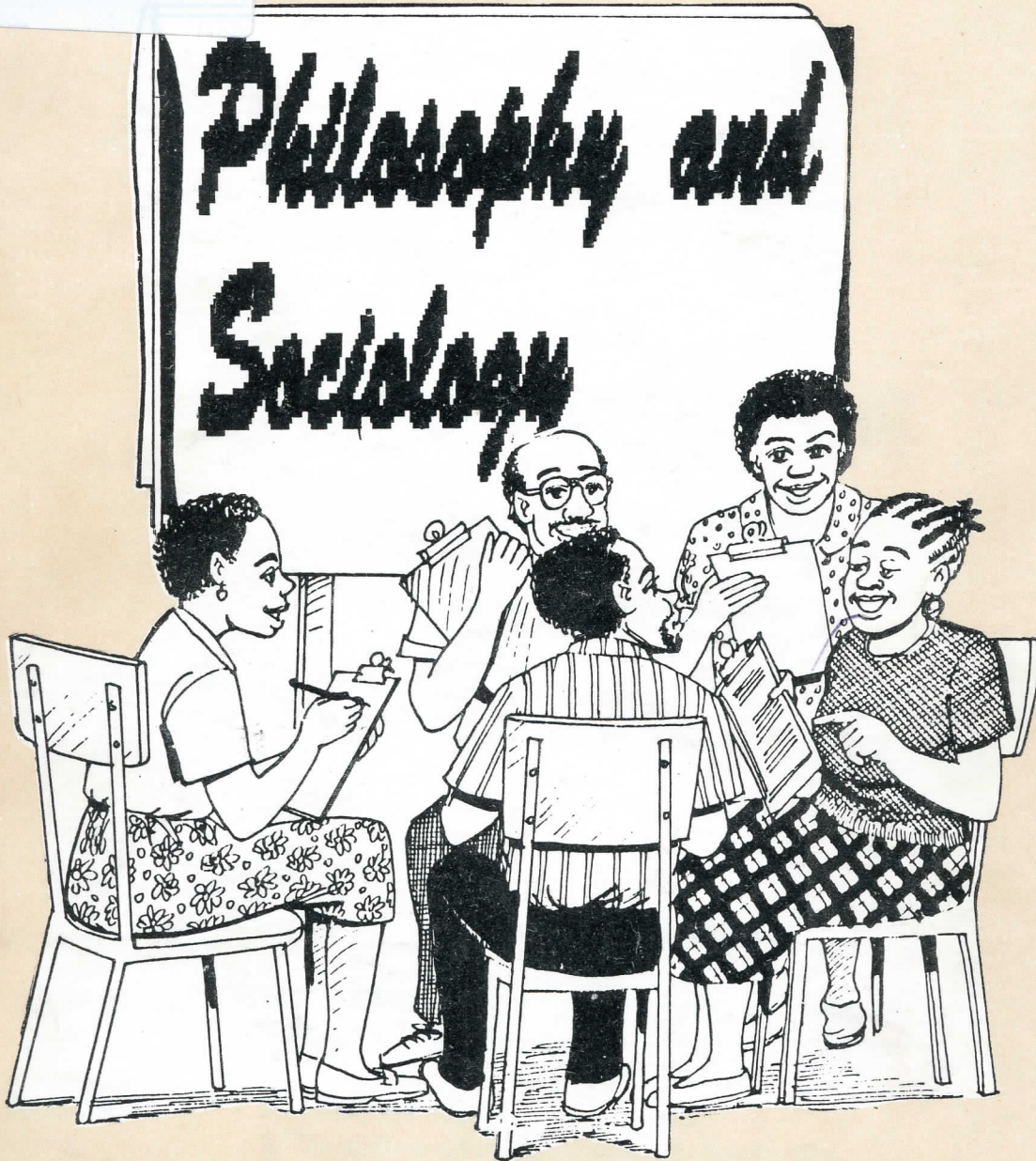


Health Teachers Diploma



Supplementary Reading Material



Ministry of Health and Child Welfare

210 PHH
1980

Philosophy and Sociology

Foundations of Education

Supplementary Reading Material

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How to Use the Supplementary Reading Material

This is a supplement to the module on Philosophy and Sociology, which goes into more depth of the theories introduced in the module, as access to philosophy and sociology books is difficult. **The subject matter dealt with in the reading material is not part of the final examination of the Health Professions Council.** We regard it as reference material which will help you to widen your horizon and answer the assignment in more depth. To facilitate understanding and 'digesting' of the material it does also contain in-text questions and self-test exercises. We hope you enjoy studying this material. There are a number of symbols in the module that guide you as you study.



This tells you there is an in-text question to answer or to think about in the text.



This tells you to take note of or to remember an important point.



This tells you there is a self-test for you to do. It is not to be handed in.

Introduction

In the module we looked out that philosophy is about... Being conscious of the better... understanding the philosopher's... why it's so important to have a...

This course philosophy... This course philosophy... This course philosophy...

UNIT 1

MORAL PHILOSOPHY

The Nature of Morals

When we make moral or ethical... The first... We express... which express our values... 'norm'... Hence value... In other words... to which we judge... in the case of abortion... can say this abortion is a good thing... our particular judgments... is so because in most of our... without justification or without... whether that we use... theory... in everyday cases... in accordance with our...



Particular judgments... particular judgments... take and they serve as justification... principles and rules which often help...

Introduction

In the module we pointed out that philosophy involves:

- Being conscious of the human activities we are involved in within our normal lives;
- understanding the principles underlying those activities;
- ultimately assessing the validity of such principles. Some of the fundamental principles underlying issues in health and health education are moral principles.

Thus moral philosophy, the area of philosophy that deals with the formulation and critical analysis of moral principles, takes up an important role in our attempt to understand and act on these issues. In this supplementary reading therefore, we wish to discuss the nature of morality in general, and how some moral principles can be applied to issues in health and health education.

The Nature of Morals

Value Statements versus Factual Statements

When we make moral or ethical statements, such as 'Abortion is a good thing', or aesthetic statements, such as 'The Great Zimbabwe is a beautiful structure', we are making what are known as *value judgements*. We express these judgements through value statements. These are statements which express our values, either of artistic or moral goodness. The other term equivalent to 'value' is 'norm'. Hence value statements are also known as *normative statements*. They express our norms. In other words they evaluate. Such statements express criteria, or principles, according to which we judge whatever we wish to evaluate.

In the case of abortion, the above statement presupposes a moral principle in light of which one can say that abortion is a good thing. There is a criterion of goodness which is used here. Thus our particular judgements or actual actions tend to be informed by certain value principles. This is so because in most of our actions and judgements we do not want to be seen to be doing things without justification or without guiding principles. If we ask what the justification for the guiding principles that we use are, we would have to give some justifying account which is the justifying theory. In many cases, we do not use principles directly. Rather we formulate rules which are in accordance with our principles.



Think of a rule and an underlying principle in your personal life.

Particular value judgements are, as their name denotes, particular. *Rules* are more general than particular judgements and in turn, *principles* are even more general and more fundamental than rules and they serve as justification for the rules. Lastly, *theories* are integrated systems of principles and rules which often help in making decisions about the correct action to take.

We shall consider *utilitarianism*, *Kantian ethics* and other examples of ethical theories. Below is a diagram of the different levels of justification that we have discussed above.

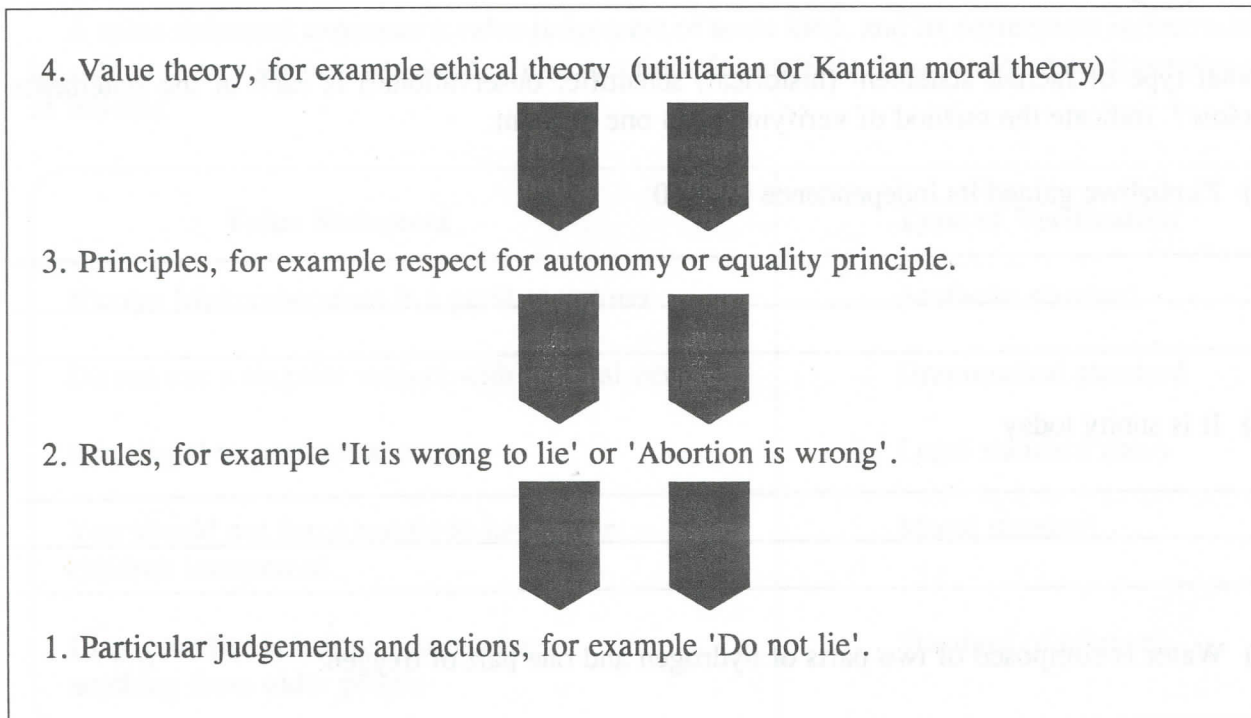


Fig 1.1 Levels of justification of moral judgement

In order for us to clarify the nature of moral statements in particular and value statements more generally, we need to make a distinction between *value statements* and *factual statements*. Factual statements describe facts, that is, they tell us what is the case; for example 'There was war in the Persian Gulf'.

Factual statements can generally be verified by observation, experiment or research, historical or scientific. The following are examples of factual statements:

- Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980;
- it is sunny today;
- water is composed of two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen.

Saying that factual statements describe what is the case does not mean that all factual statements are true. 'It is sunny today' is still a factual statement whether it is in fact sunny today or not.



Self-Test 1.1

What type of factual statement (historical, scientific, observational) is each of the statements below? Indicate the method of verifying each one of them.

a) Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980

b) It is sunny today

c) Water is composed of two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen

2. Think of a particular judgement and the underlying rule, principle and the value theory (level of justification of moral judgement)

Summary on Value and Factual Statements

A value statement expresses a value judgement of some kind, and its correctness is determined by reference to a norm or standard, (rules or principles underlie those standards). Examples are as follows:

Value Statement	Type of Verification
Nicolas Mukomberanwa is a great sculptorer	Aesthetic standard
Do not use a singular subject with a plural verb	Grammatical standard
It is illegal to perform abortion	Legal standard (law)
You should not force people to have their children immunized	Moral standard
Clap your hands before you receive anything from older people	Standard of etiquette

Table 1.1 Summary of value statements

In contrast to value statements, factual statements make claims that are shown to be correct or incorrect by experiment, observation, or research:

Factual Statements	Type of Verification
Ghana was the first African country to gain independence from Britain	Historical research
The sun is shining	Observation
Water is composed of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen	Scientific research

Table 1.2 Some factual statements

Some Characteristics of Moral Statements

Moral philosophers have not been able to provide one set of qualities which uniquely identifies moral statements as opposed to other value statements. However, some general qualities have been used by many philosophers.



Moral statements express values about ideas of what is right and what is wrong, good and bad, what should/ought to be done and what should not/ought not be done.

Below are some of the important characteristics of moral statements.

Prescription of Conduct



Moral statements prescribe conduct. They prescribe how people ought to act as distinct from what they actually do. Prescription of this nature always assumes moral principles in light of which such prescription is made.

There can be fundamental differences in the moral principles that are appealed to by different people. These differences can occur even where people agree on the factual descriptions of the relevant circumstances. Using the example above, people may agree on the factual descriptions of what is involved in abortion and yet disagree on their attitudes towards it. We shall shortly look at some of the principles that have been appealed to in situations such as these. Specifically we shall look at *utilitarian*, *kantian* and *marxist* moral principles. The concept of prescription is what distinguishes moral statements from aesthetic ones. When someone says of an object that it is beautiful, s/he does not prescribe for anyone how they ought to act, whereas to say of murder that it is evil or bad, is to imply that anyone who murders should be condemned.

Impartiality



Moral statements are based on impartial considerations. In other words, people are treated equally in the sense of being shown equal concern or respect.

It is true, there is great disagreement on what counts as 'equal treatment' in specific contexts. But morality depends on the use of some criterion of equality being used in the treatment of human

and other beings which feel pain, such as animals. It is on the basis of this requirement of moral principles that tribalism, racism, sexism, speciesism or any form of favouritism is often morally rejected.

However, this idea of impartiality has been challenged by some marxists who argue that for as long as there are class societies, the attempt by moralists to be impartial will never be successful. These marxists argue that society is essentially divided into classes and people tend to act in accordance with their class interests. There is nobody, the argument goes, including those who wish to appeal to moral principles, who will be able to raise himself/herself above class interests. In this context morality is often seen as the ideas of the ruling classes which are expressed as if they were universal.

Supremacy



It has been argued by many that moral considerations, are those that a person or a society accepts as supreme, final, or over-riding.

It is generally assumed that a person of moral conviction should not be dissuaded by competing interests that would compromise the moral conviction. Such dissuading would be seen as showing moral weakness. Thus self-interest, political affiliation, religious convictions or economic considerations should be subordinate to the demands of morality.

However, this characteristic of moral demands is controversial. Some people believe that there are some situations in which moral consideration could be rightly over-ridden by other considerations.



Self-Test 1.2

Briefly discuss the following concepts, clarifying what you think they mean.

Equality of human beings

Philosophy and Sociology

Impartial treatment of human beings in health care

Class morality

General Norms



Generally, morality is seen as involving the application of valid general principles to specific cases. These general rules are regarded as valid for all societies and all historical epochs.

Circumstances, either historical, economic or social, are seen as irrelevant to the application of moral principles. Some philosophers however, have argued for relativism of moral values. This approach to morality is known as *ethical relativism*.



Ethical relativism is the view that moral norms valid in one society are not necessarily valid in another society. In other words, the validity of moral principles depends on (or is relative to) the society being considered.

Given this view, it is virtually impossible to criticize other societies or individuals who do not share the same values. For example, if one adopted the position of ethical relativism, it would be impossible to criticize the racism in apartheid medical practices or Bantu Education as unjust. Given ethical relativism, racists would argue that we are using ethical values of justice which do not apply to their society. Many people do not want to accept ethical relativism on this basis. Hence our next point.

Universality



Moral values, or principles, are supposed to be universal in the sense that they are objective and ought to be accepted by anybody who rationally reflects on the appropriate facts.

This approach allows for any rational individual or society to have the right to criticize and judge any other society or individual by appealing to these objective moral values. However, what these objective moral values are, is a very difficult question to answer. Philosophers often come up with widely different answers. We shall look at some of them.

Some Views on the Nature of Moral Values

Moral Values as Divine Principles

This is a view that has appeared throughout the history of moral philosophy. It is argued, in this view, that morality is based on some religious authority, that is, God or the ancestral spirits.



Morality is seen as the laws that are given to humans by God and these spiritual beings as guidance to their conduct. Thus to ask for what one ought to do in a specific situation amounts to asking what God or the ancestral spirits want us to do.

In this view, morality depends on religion and therefore the two cannot be separated. However, religion is seen as more fundamental than morality in the sense that it is religion that determines moral principles. God is seen as the author of these moral principles.



If you take the above view, and you are a social or health worker in a particular society with a different religious view point from yours, you will obviously find difficulties in working within that society. Suggest some of the problems you would face in deciding what you ought to do in a specific situation of your own choice, such as the question of immunization, abortion, medical technology, HIV infection/AIDS:

Morality as Distinct from Religion

The Greek philosopher, Socrates, raises the problem of the relationship between morality and religion. The problem can be expressed in the following words:

Is something good because God loves it, or does God love it because it is good?

Many philosophers as well as believers are convinced that it is a disservice to God to argue that something is good because God loves it. Some of the arguments that have been used to support this view are as follows:

- ▶ If we argue that we derive our moral beliefs from divine command, then we undermine our moral autonomy since we base our moral action on the demands of an outside power. It is argued that genuine moral action implies responsibility. How can I be responsible for an action that I did not freely initiate? A true moral agent ought to be self directed. Therefore, in this view, we must reject the assertion that morals come from God, and that without God there are no morals.
- ▶ The idea that something is good because God loves it goes against much of the language used by religious people. They often praise God as good. But what does it mean to say God is good, if what is good, is what God loves? It seems to mean that praising God as good is simply to praise him for loving himself. Surely religious people are saying something more than just, that God loves himself when they praise God. Therefore they must be saying that God is good in accordance to a principle that is independent of his will or love, that is whatever God loves, he is good. Therefore goodness must be independent of God's love or command. Hence morality and moral principles which tell us what is morally good must be independent of religion in general and God in particular.

Moral Theory of Intuition

A further criticism of the definition of morality as being commanded by God is provided by philosophers known as intuitionists (especially by a philosopher called G.E. Moore). Moore argued that moral philosophy is concerned with finding out what the term 'good' means. By this, he meant that moral philosophy is concerned with finding out what the term stands for. But for Moore, 'good' cannot stand for any natural quality like pleasure or happiness.

It can be 'observed' by some 'moral sense' which other philosophers have called intuition. Moore believed that we can intuit that a particular act, or person, is evil using our moral sense. Philosophers who believe in this moral sense are called intuitionists. According to intuitionists, if we look at murder, we can intuit that it is self-evidently evil, and that love is self-evidently good.

Intuitionists believe that there are objective moral values which exist as part of the structure of the universe and that anybody who 'looks' for them can comprehend them.

However, intuitionism has been criticized by many philosophers for the following reasons:

- ▶ There are too many cases in which people will fail to intuit the same moral values when they are considering the same act or circumstance. Intuitionism has no means of resolving differences by deciding who is right in cases where people intuit differently. To insist that people ought to agree on the same values when they actually do not does not help at all.
- ▶ It is also not clear what the mysterious 'moral sense' is: it is not one of your more familiar sense, yet it is capable of 'seeing' or 'sensing' in some mysterious way. And what are these 'moral objects' which we are supposed to intuit. What kind of things are they?

Emotivism

These problems and others have inspired philosophers to challenge the assertion that moral values are objective. Instead some philosophers think moral values are *subjective* in the sense that they are determined by the feelings of those who make moral judgements. Emotivism is one such view.



Emotivists say that moral statements express the feelings or emotions of those who utter them. To say that abortion is wrong, is not to say something which is either true or false, but to express disapproval of the act.

Emotivists argue that to say 'Abortion is evil' is to say 'I don't like such an act'. Emotivists also argue that the main reason for moral judgements is to create influence, that is to influence the attitudes of other people.

This view has been heavily criticized. The basic problem with the view is that if it is true, then there cannot be any genuine moral disagreement. This is so, since according to emotivism, if someone says 'Abortion is wrong', and I say 'Abortion should be allowed', the difference between us is the same as when the other person says, 'I do not like sadza'. and I say 'I like sadza'. As we pointed out earlier, there is no genuine contradiction in this difference.

What this means is that according to emotivism, moral views are not based on principles which can be defended rationally. Moral values are seen as defending what I feel, not what I think. My feelings, not objective reasons which can be appealed to by any rational being, are the basis of my moral statements. Emotivists do not believe in the universality and impartiality of moral principles although they often argue that individuals have the right to feel what they feel and therefore they ought to be allowed to act in accordance to their feelings.



Emotivists are against being told by others how they ought to act. They see this as unnecessary preaching and unwelcome interference to their lives.

Many philosophers are not happy with the emotivist idea of separating morality from rationality. They consider that moral views ought to be defended by objective reasons. To take away reason from morals is to undermine their importance and significance.

On the view that the point of moral statements is to create influence in other people's attitudes, it has been argued that not only moral statements have that sort of influence. We can influence by intimidation, bribes and so on. It is therefore not clear how we can distinguish morality from all these ways of influencing attitudes if we accept emotivism.

Morality as Prescription: Advice versus Influence

We indicated that for intuitionists, moral discourse essentially describes facts, that is, it is informative about the moral facts in the universe. Emotivists do not think this is right. One of the reasons is the problem of how these moral facts are related to action. How does moral discourse affect the way we act if moral discourse is essentially descriptive? The emotivists think that given intuitions, morality fails to affect our actions. But such a view of morals which does not affect action must be absurd, since the main point of morality is to affect our actions. Emotivists say that in order for us to make moral values relevant to our actions, they ought to be based on our emotions. Morality must be seen as aimed at influencing our attitudes which in turn will affect our actions since we act on the basis of our attitudes.

Another philosopher, R. M. Hare, agrees with the emotivist criticism of intuitionism. However, he does not accept that the essence of moral discourse is to 'create an influence'. He thinks that the essence of moral discourse is guidance. Hare makes the distinction between guiding or advising someone how to act on the one hand, and actually causing him/her to act on the other. He believes that moral discourse only does the former and not the latter. Therefore emotivism was mistaken on this point.

The advantage of Hare's view is that moral judgements provide some answers to the questions 'How shall I act'? It is a rational answer or advice. There ought to be reasons provided for advising people one way rather than the other. Thus rationality, which emotivists had kicked out of moral discourse, is re-introduced by Hare. His view is often known as *prescriptivism*, since it regards morality as advising on how to act.



Self-Test 1.3

If you wish to test your understanding of the nature of moral values in the various theories complete in point form the table below.

Theory	Brief Summary
Morality as divine principles	
Moral values as facts experienced through intuition	
Morality as expressing emotions	
Morality as action guiding	

Moral Theories

Earlier, we indicated that philosophy requires that we have reasons for the views we hold. We also saw how for Hare, moral judgements should have reasons to support them. In this section, we wish to indicate how some moral theories attempt to give reasons for particular judgements made within those theories. We shall pursue some of the implications of those judgements to issues in education and health.

Theory of the Ego



'Egoism' is a word which comes from 'ego' meaning the 'self'. Egoism therefore is a theory which highlights the self and its interests. As a moral theory, it is a theory of self-interest. It says that self-interest is the highest good and therefore the ultimate reason for any individual to act is their self-interest. In any situation, it is argued, self-interest should be the overriding reason for action.

The English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) took this view. He was an egoist in two senses. First, he was a *psychological egoist*. This is the view that all human behaviour is, as a matter of fact, motivated by self-interest, that is, human beings always act egoistically. In his well known book, *Leviathan*, he argues that if all the restraints of law and society were removed, and we returned to what he called 'the state of nature', there would be: 'war of every man, against every man.... and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short' (Hobbes, 1968: 186)

But Hobbes went further to prescribe that human beings should act on the basis of *self-interest*. This *ethical egoism* has been used by many, especially those who argue for unrestrained capitalism. It should be noted that as a moral theory, ethical egoism defines the right action. It says that *the right action to take is that which fulfills the interests of any person who asks the question: 'How should I act'?*

The ethical egoist asks him/herself, 'What best suits my interests'? In the social and political realm, s/he will support only those policies, regulations and institutions which will best allow her to fulfil her own interests whether or not other people's interests are also fulfilled by the same policies.



Egoists often support the political position known as libertarianism. Libertarians argue for the least possible interference from the state and its apparatus.

The best example of this position can be seen in Robert Nozick's 'Anarchy, State and Utopia'. He argues:

Our main conclusions about the state are that a minimal state, limited to the narrow functions of protection against force, theft, fraud, enforcement of contracts, and so on, is justified; that any more extensive state will violate a person's rights not to be forced to do certain things, and is unjustified; and that the minimal state is inspiring as well as right. Two noteworthy implications are that the state may not use its coercive apparatus for the purpose of getting some citizens to aid others, or in order to prohibit activities to people for their own good or protection.

(Nozick, 1974:ix)



In our discussion of some of the characteristics of morality, we asserted that the moral stand point is distinct from the point of view of self-interest, i.e. self-interest is one thing, and moral requirements are another thing (though they may sometimes coincide). Do you think this can be the basis for criticizing egoism? If so, indicate what that criticism would be.

Utilitarianism

This is another theory which tries to provide reasons to motivate our actions.



The word '*utilitarianism*' comes from 'utility', meaning usefulness. According to utilitarianism, an action is useful if it is useful in promoting happiness. Utilitarianism is thus a *consequentialist* theory, (that is it judges the rightness of actions on the basis of their consequences or results). An action is seen as morally good if it has the consequences of promoting the greatest amount of happiness and the least amount of pain.

Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill were the two main proponents of utilitarianism. They defined happiness as the sum of pleasures and the absence of pain. Pleasure is seen as the only thing that is *intrinsically* good, that is, good in itself. All other things, apart from pleasure, are only good in so far as they are means to the attainment of pleasure. This is why utilitarians believe that morally correct actions are those which are the means to the promotion of happiness and the prevention of pain.

Utilitarians often argue that the answer to the question 'How ought I to act?' is a matter of calculation. One ought to take all possible alternative actions in a specific situation and work out their likely consequences in terms of how much overall happiness they will promote. The right action is the one that promotes the most happiness and the least pain. This means that the happiness that is calculated is not only the happiness of the person making the calculation (as is required by ethical egoism), it is the happiness of everybody affected by the action being considered.



Fig 1.2 Tax: unjustified coercion or necessary for the greatest general happiness?

Utilitarians often wish to support those rules, laws, and institutions that promote the greatest amount of happiness and the least pain. When Bentham argued for this theory, he aimed to use it in reforming penal laws and to improve the prison conditions of England. Utilitarians, unlike libertarians are often liberals who argue that the state can be developed into something more than just a minimal state. The state, for the utilitarian, should be allowed to use its apparatus to promote the greatest overall happiness among its people. Utilitarians admit that this may sometimes be done at the expense of some people. Thus whereas libertarians will resist taxation as unjustified coercion, utilitarians will allow it as long as it promotes the greatest general happiness through say, the provision of educational and health facilities.

Some Problems of Utilitarianism



It is often argued that utilitarianism leads us to accept unjust actions as morally right actions to take. Thus the happiness of the minority in a society will always be subordinated to that of the majority. Individuals are treated as a means to happiness of the majority, even if what the majority wants is inhuman.

- ▶ Utilitarians will allow experimenting with human beings, human foetuses and animals or indoctrination, forcing people to accept certain views if they feel that this promotes the greatest overall happiness.
- ▶ Utilitarianism has often been criticized for not providing the basic unit for calculating pleasure. The theory cannot provide such a unit because there is no such unit. Therefore, it is argued, there is no way of calculating and weighing to find the right actions, that is, those which promote the most happiness. Utilitarians have tried to answer this criticism by pointing out that we, in our day to day lives, always make decisions on the basis of this kind of weighing up. They argue that a precise unit of measurement is not required for this job. All that is needed is the knowledge of the tendencies of our actions and roughly how much pleasure or pain is derived from those actions. If the problems of a measuring unit were a serious one, then prudence in the sense of calculating means to our goals or interests would be impossible. But prudence is possible, therefore it is not a serious problem.
- ▶ It is often asked whether we should calculate the *actual* consequences of actions, in which case we have to calculate the consequences after the actions are performed. This does not help someone who wishes to find out which action to perform. Or do we calculate the *possible* consequences? In this case, it is argued, we do not know what the precise consequences of actions are since there is always an endless chain of events. It is difficult to draw the line where the consequences of a particular action come to an end. Again the utilitarians appeal to the fact that we are always doing the kind of calculation they are talking about in our day today life. There is nothing peculiar about the requirement to calculate the consequences of actions. They also argue that we do not need the precision their critics are looking for.
- ▶ Utilitarians are often accused of not distinguishing between different kinds of pleasures. For example, does the pleasure of philosophizing have the same weight in the utilitarian calculation as the pleasure of drinking chibuku beer? If this is so, some have argued, then utilitarianism reduces the dignity of human beings since it treats their happiness as the same as the happiness of animals. It is because of objections like this that Mill introduced the distinction between *higher and lower pleasures*. Pleasures, according to this distinction, differ in quantity and quality. The higher pleasures are those which we might call *intellectual* pleasures. These include pleasures such as the ones which emanate from

reading poetry, doing philosophy and appreciating art. The lower pleasures are called *animal* pleasures. These result from satisfying our physical desires like eating, drinking, or having sex. Mill argues that we should give more weight to intellectual pleasures when we look for the right actions to take. But this distinction has been criticized for promoting elitism. Why should the so-called higher pleasures always take precedence over the so-called lower pleasures? Why should the so-called lower pleasures always be inferior?

Kantian Ethics - Respect for Persons

Kantian ethics has a view of morality which is often contrasted with utilitarianism. This theory is defended by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kantian ethics are inspired by Kant's book *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* or simply the '*Groundwork*'.

Kant begins the '*Groundwork*' by asserting that the *good will* is the only thing that is good without qualification or restriction. This means that the goodness of the good will does not depend on any circumstances, neither does it depend on the results it produces. This point is made plausible by the fact that we do not normally blame people if, through no fault of their own, their intentions lead to unfortunate consequences. For example if Chipso breaks into a flat which is on fire, to rescue her baby Tendai and because something explodes in the flat and she fails to effect her intention and is herself burnt to death, she will not have done any good at all. In fact she will have produced a further loss of life that will add the grief of her family and friends. However, in virtue of her intentions, and her efforts to realize them, she will be morally praised by many people. This normal reaction to such attempts led Kant to conclude that what is important in assessing the moral worth of actions is not so much their results, but the intention, that is whether they are inspired by the good intention or not.

Kant goes on to introduce the concept of *duty*. He believed that morality is a rational requirement. It involves asking ourselves what reason requires of us. What is moral, according to Kant, is what reason requires us to do. And this is our duty. It is because as human beings we are *rational* animals so that we must follow what our essential nature requires us to do. This is what it means to be autonomous human beings. We saw in the section on morality as divine law that duty is seen as requirements that are imposed from above, or outside, that is by God, or other divine beings. Kant was totally against this view. He argued that we must follow our duty, because it is the law that we impose on ourselves as rational beings. We therefore must follow duty for its own sake not because, as is supposed by utilitarianism, it has certain consequences. Kant therefore emphasizes following duty for duty's sake.

Kant says that the requirements of duty are distinct from those which satisfy our inclinations, emotions or self-interest. Actions have moral worth only if they are done from duty not from inclination. Duty is defined by Kant as the respect for the moral law. The moral law is the formal requirement to 'act only on the maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law'. Thus the ultimate rational law does not involve contradiction. According to this view, egoists contradict themselves since they act on maxims or laws that they would not wish to be universal, i.e. they sometimes want to do things which they would not want other people do to them. Rationality of the rules we act on, for Kant, requires that they be universalized, i.e. what

we wish to do should be universalisable. If it is, then it is rational in the sense of not involving contradictions and therefore moral, but if it is not, then it is not moral.

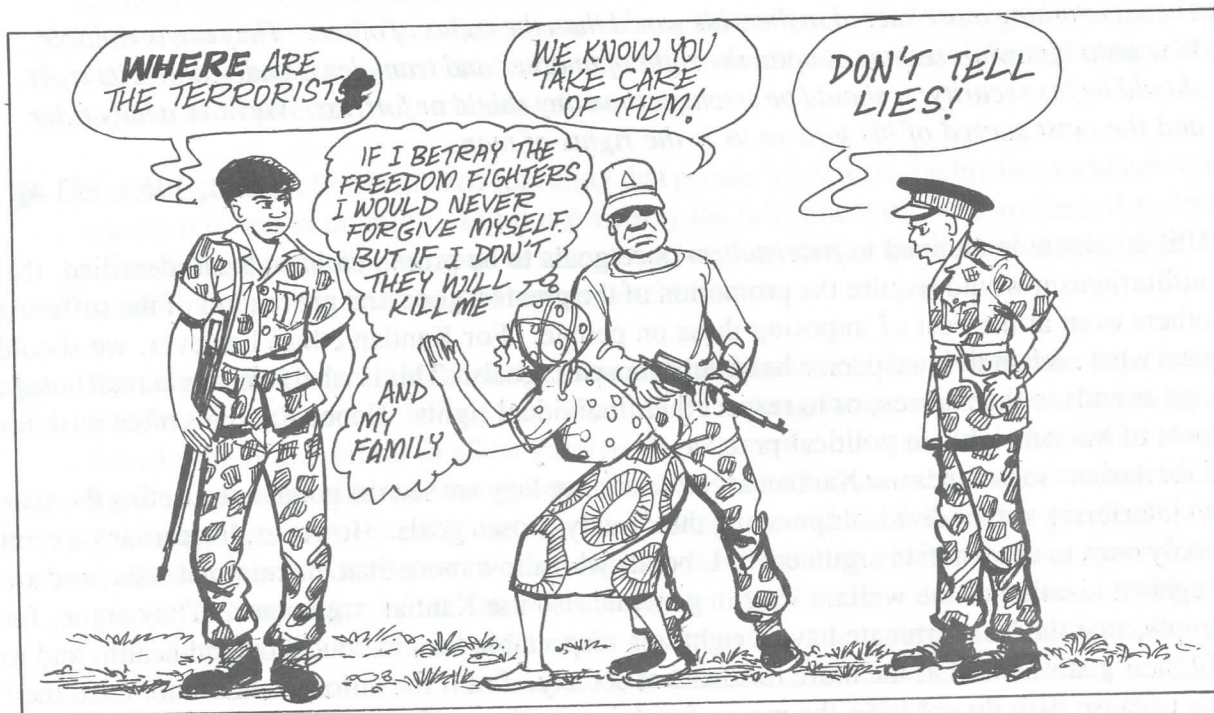


Fig 1.3 'Do your duty for the sake of duty'.

On the basis of the above, Kant says that rationality requires that the committing of suicide is not moral because we cannot universalize it. Neither can we universalize making false promises. To universalize the making of false promises undermines the very institution of promise making in the sense that nobody would believe anybody trying to make a promise. The universal law which we pointed out above is sometimes formulated in the following way: 'So act as to treat humanity whether in your own person or in that of any other, never solely as a means but always as an end'.



To treat human beings as ends involves recognizing and respecting their interests and the goals they have chosen for themselves. It means respecting individuals as capable of rational choice.

The requirements to treat people as ends in themselves directly and sometimes deliberately goes against utilitarianism. For Kant, utilitarianism allows that the happiness of one person can legitimately be sacrificed for the happiness of the majority. This, for Kant, is to treat human beings as means towards some end. And this, for him, is not moral.

The political implications of Kantian ethics (which can be regarded as the ethics of the respect for persons) can be seen in the following passage by Kant himself:

There is nothing more sacred in the wide world than the rights of others. They are inviolable. Woe unto him who trespasses upon the right of another and tramples it underfoot! His right should be his security; it should be stronger than any shield or fortress. We have a holy ruler and the most sacred of his gifts to us is the rights of man.

(Kant, 1963: 193-4)

Utilitarianism is inclined to *paternalism* once goals to be promoted have been identified, that is, utilitarianism would require the promotion of the greatest good and prevention of the suffering of others even at the cost of imposing these on people. For Kantian ethics however, we should respect what each individual person has freely chosen as goals. This is what it means to treat human beings as ends in themselves, or to respect their individual rights. Hence Kantians often push for respect of human rights in political practice.

Libertarians sometimes use Kantian arguments since they are seen as good in restricting the state from interfering with individuals pursuing their freely chosen goals. However, libertarians are not the only ones to use Kantian arguments. Liberals who allow more than the minimal state, and are not against taxation or the welfare state in general, also use Kantian arguments. They argue, for example, that the less fortunate have a right to a respectable life, to education and health, and to fulfil their goals as well as the more fortunate of society. But if the unfortunate cannot fulfil their goals because they do not have the means for doing it, the welfare state must intervene through taxation and health and social security benefits to help them.

Some marxists use Kantian arguments too. They argue that capitalism is morally objectionable because it exploits and oppresses the workers who are the majority of the population. Exploitation involves using other people, in this case, workers, as a means of creating profit which the workers do not fully enjoy. Thus capitalism is seen as treating other people as a means to the development of capitalists. Socialism is seen as the morally superior society in which individual people are treated as ends in themselves since there is no exploitation of human beings by other human beings. We shall discuss more on marxism in the next section.

Some Problems of Kantian Ethics

- ▶ The moral principle given by Kant as a formal principle does not actually tell us which actions are permissible and which are not. Because it is formal, some people argue, it is empty and therefore useless to tell us what we ought to do in specific situations.
- ▶ Kant's test for right actions is whether they can be universalized or not. This depends on how the actions are described. We can describe what has been seen by others as murder in such a way that we would be prepared to see it as a universal law, provided we made all the necessary qualifications. This point is related to the previous point which says that the moral law is empty and therefore useless.

- ▶ Kantian ethics involves judging morality by looking at the intentions of people. If the intention is right, then the action is right, whatever the consequences. Thus if a doctor prescribes medicine, or a treatment which results in the harm of his/her patients, his/her actions would be right if the intention was to save the patients. Philosophers, especially utilitarians and sometimes marxists, argue that the morality of actions depends on their consequences whatever the intentions of the actors.
- ▶ Kantian ethics is often criticized for ruling that people's interests, inclinations and emotions are not relevant to morality. But it is precisely the fulfillment of these interests that determines whether an action is moral or not. An action that fulfills some rational rules, but fails to fulfil human interests is, it is argued, useless to us.
- ▶ Kant argues that an act that cannot be universalized should not be allowed under any circumstances. For example, telling lies, cheating or making false promises, ought not be allowed even if the refusal to allow them leads to tragedy. If, as in our illustration above, there is a freedom fighter fleeing from an enemy, and I know where the freedom fighter is hiding, Kant says I should tell the truth if asked, even if this will lead to the death of the freedom fighter. Kant seems to be saying here that the telling of truth in these circumstance cannot be overridden by the freedom the fighter might bring. But this view, which says that consequences of actions are morally irrelevant is unacceptable to many people.

Utilitarianism	Kantian Ethic
Consequentialist theory, that is emphasis on results of actions as determining the rightness of actions.	Emphasis on duty and moral obligations which are seen as having nothing to do with the results of actions; duty for duty's sake.
Empiricist: we know what morality demands from us by observing the results of actions in the world. Any moral demands must be related to human happiness and pleasure.	Rationalist: reason tells us what morality demands of us. Human nature is corrupt. It must be controlled by reason.
Greatest happiness principle: do that act that promotes the greatest account of happiness for the greatest number of people and the least amount of pain	Categorical Imperative: act on the rule that you would be prepared to make a universal law
Morality: of the respect for persons as unique and autonomous individuals whose rights are sacred	Morality: of promotion of general welfare emphasis on the good for the whole of society

Table 1.3 Summary: Utilitarian and Kantian Ethics

Some Ethical Values in Marxist Writings

We will not give detailed analysis of Marx's views here since more has been said in the module. There has been a long debate on what the attitude of marxists should be towards morality and what moral principles they should use. However, in real life, many marxists have taken different views. As we have indicated, some marxists have indeed used the principles we have recounted above such as utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, amongst others. But it is useful to mention some of the basic concepts that have been utilized in the attempt to work out a marxist moral theory.

Exploitation

This is a concept often used by marxists to indicate one of the basic evils of class societies especially the capitalist society.



According to marxists, exploitation is the expropriation of surplus value by the owners and controllers of the means of production.

What they call surplus value is the amount of wealth that is produced by the workers over and above what is needed for their own subsistence. For marxists, people produce because they want food, shelter, clothes and leisure. All these things are necessary for their subsistence and further development. In order for people to produce, they need the tools, machines and resources that are necessary. These they call the means of production.

However, not all people have these means of production. In capitalism, because of the existence of the institution of private property, some people are allowed to privately own the means of production. This means that only a few people will be able to own them and the rest are forced to look for jobs and work for those who own factories and capital in general. Under this arrangement, those who work for capitalists will be forced to work and produce more than they would need to produce if they had their own means of production and they were producing for their own subsistence. The value they actually produce when they work for the capitalists is more than they need for their subsistence. The difference between the value they need and that which they actually produce is called *surplus value*. This surplus value is expropriated by the capitalists since they legally own the means of production the workers will be using.

It is this expropriation of surplus value by the capitalists that marxists condemn as unjust. Why should the people who are actually involved in production not enjoy the fruits of their labour and why should those who do not directly produce enjoy the fruits of other people's labour? In capitalism, according to marxists, exploitation occurs because of the relations of production which come about because of the existence of private property. Marxists condemn as unjust both the institution of private property and the exploitative relations of production in capitalism.

Alienation

The concept of alienation involves the separation of things which ought not to be separated. In capitalism, alienation stems from the separation of the majority of the people from the means of production which will have been claimed as private property by the capitalists. Because of this relationship, it means the majority do not control what is to be produced, how it is produced, and what happens to it when it is produced. Thus because the majority of the people are alienated from the means of production, they are also alienated from the process of production, from the products of their labour and what happens to those products. Because their efforts do not directly benefit them, the workers, tend not to enjoy labouring. They are happier when they are away from the work place. They enjoy more their animal functions like eating and drinking. This, for most marxists, is *dehumanizing* because human beings are supposed to be productive beings, who should fulfil themselves in the process of production not only in eating.

Emancipation/Freedom

An exploitative and alienating society cannot, according to marxists, be a society in which human beings can be free. Exploitation and alienation undermine human freedom. This calls for the destruction of the exploitative society with the aim of emancipating human beings. Communism stands for an emancipated society in the sense of a society without exploitation and oppression, and positively allows self-fulfillment and individual freedom.

Self-fulfillment

Capitalist society, in which exploitation and alienation prevail deny the self-fulfillment of individuals. This is why the society must be destroyed through socialist revolution. A society in which there is self-fulfillment is better than the one in which it is not there.

These philosophical concepts can be applied specifically to the problems of health and health education. If we all agreed on the nature of health and education and how they ought to be promoted, then there would have been no role for philosophy in these areas. We demonstrated in Units 2 and 5 that we do not all share coherent and unproblematic notions of health and education. Hence the necessity of philosophical discourse.

Basic Human Rights

In this section, we wish to discuss in greater detail the concept of human rights. We shall discuss how this concept has been used in discussions concerning health and education.

History of the Concept of Human Rights

The concept of human rights has attracted the attention of philosophers since the seventeenth century. Earlier, particularly during the medieval period, philosophers had been looking at political morality in terms of the *duties* people owed their land-lords, their kings or God. Thus morality was determined by people's roles, or the positions they occupied in society, (refer to Unit 2 on social roles). We have discussed how the demands of society could be seen to be mistaken from the point of view of rationality. The role or position society gives one cannot establish moral duties or obligations.

It is in line with the collapse of feudalism that the medieval concepts of duties were challenged and the concept of human rights began to be used as a tool of analyzing political institutions (especially the state): how individuals are to be treated and how they are to relate to one another. It became more common to draw lists of these rights, declaring that states and the law had an obligation to protect them. Such lists include the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, American Bill of Rights and more recently, the United Nations and African Charters of Human Rights.

Laws to protect human rights have not always existed especially at an international level. They came into existence after the horrible experiences of the first and second world wars. Then, the European countries, especially those which had been involved in the wars, came together and formed the United Nations Organization (UN) to try and prevent the recurrence of such wars and to protect individual human beings by making rules which all governments must recognize and respect. When the majority of the African nations were decolonized, they formed the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The OAU has written its own Charter on Human and People's Rights which is sometimes called 'The Banjul Charter'. As the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) in Zimbabwe explains: The Charter is a set of rules, called articles, about people's rights to freedom, safety and improving their lives. (CCJP, 1989: 3)

These rules are a moral basis for protests and justification for assessing and reforming or destroying some of our social and political institutions and policies. Below are some of the articles from the African Charter:

Article 1: States which belong to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and which agree to this Charter must recognize the rights, duties and freedoms in the Charter and make them effective by law.

Article 2: Each person is entitled to the rights and freedoms in the Charter, no matter what his/her race, tribe, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status.

Article 5: Each person has the right to respect for his/her dignity and legal status. No form of exploitation or degradation is allowed, especially not slavery, torture, inhuman or degrading punishment.

Article 16: Each person has the right to health and to medical care when sick.

Article 17: Each person has the right to education and cultural life. The state has the duty to protect and promote morals and traditional values recognized by the community.

Article 22: All people have the right to their economic, social and cultural development. States have the duty to ensure these rights.

Article 24: All people have the right to a satisfactory environment in which they can develop.

Article 27: Each person must exercise his/her rights and freedoms without disturbing the rights of others.

Article 28: Each person has the duty to respect others, no matter who they are.

The Nature of Human Rights

Discussions on human rights necessitate discussion on the kind of things these rights are. Are they, as Kant suggests, 'gifts from God'? Kant suggests that rights are objective and absolute and that they were created by God as part of the structure of this universe. However there has been much debate on this issue with some philosophers agreeing that human rights are objective (yet not absolute) and that one does not need to believe in God in order to believe in human rights. For some, human rights are human creations which are created on the basis of their desires and fundamental interests. As Isiah Berlin points out, human rights are principles:

by which social, economic and political arrangements can be criticized. Human rights, in short, are statements of basic needs or interests. They are politically significant as grounds of protest and justification for reforming policies.

(Berlin, 1967: 198-9)

Human rights are sometimes also referred to as moral rights. We will use the two phrases interchangeably. The term moral rights is used in contrast to legal rights. This contrast generally demarcates the distinction between morality and law. It is true that many laws are based on the demands of morality and most governments justify their laws using moral language. For example, governments have legislated for universal education because they feel it is the moral thing to do. Governments will also describe their commitment to 'Health for All by the Year 2000' as inspired by moral principles. However, this should not lead us to identifying law with morality. It is clear that not all laws can be morally justified.

We do have many unjust laws which we can criticize in light of moral principles.



Can you think of any laws, preferably ones which have to do with health and health education in this country which you can either defend or oppose on the basis of moral principles?

a) Law on health provision :

b) Law on health education :

Moral rights and their distinction from legal rights can be explained in the following way: Suppose the government forbids the medical staff in the country to go on strike or protest against poor conditions of service. The government can do this using constitutional means arguing that such protests endanger the health of patients. If there actually is a law against protests, then all medical practitioners lose the legal right to wage such protests. And one way of expressing anger at the government's decision would be to say; people have a right to protest against any part of government policy.

Obviously this right to protest against any government policy is not a legal right since it will be illegal to protest. Thus the right which medical practitioners can claim is not a mere legal one. Laws can be unjust. They can undermine moral or natural rights.

We have so far seen that there is a distinction between legal and moral rights. The question that immediately comes to mind is which one of the two is more fundamental, that is, when the two conflict, as in the above case, what takes precedence? Most philosophers agree, that morality is more fundamental. They take morality to be the criterion for accessing laws and legal institutions. It is in light of this point that Ronald Dworkin, in his article, 'Taking Rights Seriously' argues that civil disobedience is sometimes morally justified. He explains this by saying that,

In most cases when we say that someone has a 'right' to do something, we imply that it would be wrong to interfere with his doing it, or at least that some special grounds are needed for justifying any interference.

(Dworkin, 1977: 188)

Thus if the person has the right to education, the government would be wrong to stand in her way when she attempts to acquire it.

Moral Claims versus Charity

To emphasize the importance of human rights, it is useful to contrast them with matters of *benevolence and charity*. Many non-governmental organizations, including churches, provide education and health facilities for the people in this country. Most of these organizations claim that they do their work on a *voluntary* basis. In other words they claim that they have chosen to help Zimbabweans and do not have any *obligation* to do so. Their effort, they claim, is a matter of charity not obligation. When one has an obligation, there is no choice. One has to do what s/he is obliged to do.

This above analytical point is generally accepted. However, in Africa, some radicals have argued, not without justification, that most western non-governmental and governmental help to Africa should be seen as an obligation on the part of the people of the West since the western countries are paying back for the plunder and exploitation of Africa through slavery, colonization and unbalanced trade. An argument like this is based on the analysis of the relationship between Africa and Europe that is given by people like Walter Rodney in his book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Some have even argued that western charity is often an expression of the guilt western peoples have for what they have done to Africa (although they do not openly admit this).

Realizing Basic Rights

We have said that education and health are some of the basic human rights that have been declared to exist. We have also listed some other rights from the African Charter. The UN Charter and African Charter demonstrate that there are many more such rights. There are at least three observations that can be made in connection with these observations which will affect attempt to realize the basic rights.

Firstly, the list of basic human rights is not clearly defined. There are disagreements among philosophers as to what the complete list should include. Some philosophers continue to add new rights to their lists. Secondly, this raises the question of whether rights already exist to be discovered, or whether the rights are continuously being formulated and reformulated. And if the former is true, then how is it possible that people seem to have discovered different lists of human rights. If the latter is true, then there is a problem about what principles are to be used in formulating these rights.

If, as we pointed out earlier, rights are some form of expression of basic human interests, what happens where there are fundamental differences in human interests. For instance, if Marxists are right that human society is divided into classes and that people's interests depend on their membership of particular classes, then the rights that people will accept as fundamental will be determined by their class and class interests.

We have already indicated how those who wish to protect their property will tend to take a libertarian view which places great emphasis on the right to liberty and the less propertied will tend to recognize as more fundamental the right to equality. Both the rights we have mentioned here are recognized in the African Charter.

However sometimes a right that is recognized by some will not be accepted by others as a right at all. For example, some will recognize the right to a certain level of social existence and others will not. We shall illustrate this point by making reference to the right to health care. The question is, is there any such right? Robert M. Sade, an American philosopher argues that:

The moral foundation of the rights of man begins with the fact that he is a living creature : he has the right to his own life. All other rights are corollaries of this primary one. ... The right to live implies three corollaries :

- (i) *the right to select the values that one deems necessary to sustain one's own life;*
- (ii) *the right to exercise one's own judgement of the best course of action to achieve the chosen values;*
- (iii) *the right to dispose of those values, once gained, in any way one chooses, without coercion by other men.*

(Sade: 1983: 532)

The conclusion from all this is, for Sade, that:

In a free society, man exercises his right to sustain his own life by producing economic values in the form of goods and services that he is, or should be, free to exchange with other men who are similarly free to trade with him or not. The economic values produced, however, are not given as gifts by nature, but exist only by virtue of the thought and effort of individual men. Goods and services are thus owned as a consequence of the right to sustain life by one's own physical and mental effort.

(Sade: 1983: 532)

Applying this point to rights to medicine, Sade is adamant that the concept of medical care as the patient's right is immoral. He goes on to point out that medical care is neither a right nor a privilege. For him, it is a service that is provided by doctors and others to people who wish to purchase it. The doctor depends, for his livelihood, on offering this service and no one should have a right to this service except the doctor who offers it. Sade is determined to argue that talk of a general right of the patient to medical care undermines the doctors' right since it means that the patient is made to own the medical services without earning them or having been given charitably by the person who owns them through the fact that he has worked hard to earn them.

Sade denies that health is primarily a community or social concern. For him, it is an individual concern, that is, it is the individual's concern for his own life. The individual could either be the doctor who offers medical services as a means to maintain his own life or the patient who buys medical services for the same reasons. Thus for Sade, medical care, like any other commodity, cannot escape market forces.

The important point in this argument is that it denies that there is such a thing as the right of a patient to medical care. However, this argument overemphasizes the rights of the medical

professionals at the expense of the rights of patients or potential patients who, as human beings also, just like doctors have a right to life and a right to those things that go into maintaining that life to a reasonable standard. Because Sade's view favours medical practitioners, it is not surprising that the president of the Health Professions Council in Zimbabwe in 1985 had this to say:

The public must remember, however, that just as the patient has the choice of doctor, so the doctor has a choice of patient, and therefore may refuse to take on or keep a patient if he so wishes, in the same way that patients change their doctors if they so wish.

(Binnie: April 1985: 22)

What may be surprising however is the statement by the then Minister of Trade and Commerce in the then declared Zimbabwean socialist government, Mr Richard Hove which was read on his behalf by his then deputy Mr Landau:

... Government has endeavoured to establish and maintain policies which seek to ensure that consumers obtain maximum benefit from their economic resources. To this end, satisfactory production standards, fair business practices, informative marketing and effective protection against economic offenses are essential.

(Hove: April 1985: 11)

This view which places so much emphasis on the role of the market as a means of distributing social goods has received much attention by moral philosophers. Its plausibility depends on the moral standing of the market. Sade's view sees the market as the institution or procedure through which human rights, as he understands them can be guaranteed. Thus the market becomes, for him, the mechanism which determines what is right. Whatever is done in accordance with the rules of the market is accepted as right.

This view of justice is called *procedural justice* because it says that justice is determined by the procedure applied i.e. if the procedure is right, then the result is just. In Sade's case, the procedure is market arrangement. Thus if we apply this procedural justice to health, as Sade has done, it means whatever unfavourable results may come out of the operations of the market, as long as the rules of the market have been followed, no injustice will have been done and no further rights may be claimed even by those people who are powerless and resourceless.

Given this view, the moral issues that will be raised will centre around fair business practices that is, whether a client (patient) got value for their money or whether the patient was not cheated by the doctor. But the question of those in need of medicine, but too poor and too powerless to pay for it will not come into the picture since lack of money deprives them of the right to medical attention.



Thus this view fails to appreciate inequalities in health that may be created by the operations of the market forces. Although it appreciates the right of the doctors to have a reasonable life, it fails to appreciate the need to universalize this right and apply it to human beings who may have no money or resources to fulfil this same right. It fails to fully appreciate that human rights are attributed to human beings because of the moral need to treat human beings as human beings, not because they have money.

The important point about our challenge to Sade's view is that according to our view, there is a right to medical care or at least there ought to be such right. Thus we can see that the disagreements on what counts as human rights raises the question of whether they are made or discovered.

But apart from radical libertarians like Sade there is otherwise little disagreement among philosophers on the question of health and education as basic rights. The main disagreements are on what form of education or health do people have a right to, and what strategies are to be used to fulfil these rights.

Even if all philosophers were agreed on the complete list of human rights, we would still have another problem to deal with. We have seen that Kant sees human rights as inviolable. This means that under no circumstance can any of the human rights be allowed to be trampled. This means that we are supposed to be under obligation to uphold every right all the time. However this can only be possible if basic rights never conflict with each other.



But in our attempts to realize the human rights, we will find that they will often conflict. Therefore it is impossible to respect each and every basic human right all the time. Sometimes we are forced to weigh rights against each other to find out which one will be more fundamental in a specific situation.

It is not impossible to reach a situation, where say, the right to health conflicts with the right to education. This point should be looked at in connection with what follows below.

Governments may recognize the need to respect all human rights, and yet there may not be enough resources to realize them all. Sometimes it makes no sense to make moral demands when such demands cannot be fulfilled. Thus our understanding of human rights must be placed in socio-economic context. However, this raises the question as to whether human rights are dependent on what is socio-economically possible or whether they are dependent on the fact that human beings are what they are irrespective of which society they live in. If legitimate demands made on the basis of the concept of human rights should necessarily be determined by what is economically possible, then we may end up saying that the people in the United States of America have more rights than those in Zimbabwe.

However, if rights should be the same all over the world irrespective of the society or the social epoch, then demands might be made even where it is known that those demands can not be met. This is odd.

The implementation of the human rights charters, (both those of the UN and the OAU) has been difficult, particularly in Africa. It is generally and relatively easier to implement Article 28 of the African Charter than Article 1.



There does not seem to be adequate mechanisms to force Governments (especially the most powerful ones like the United States) to comply with some moral demands, especially where they are not economically in their interests.

In Africa, many people go hungry, they have no shelter, education and health despite governments having agreed to complying with the African Charter.

We have pointed out how utilitarians emphasize the consequences of actions and rules. Thus they tend not to accept that human rights are good in themselves and that they ought to be respected simply because they exist without considerations of their consequences. Therefore the system of rights, often expressed in form of say the UN and the OAU Charters, are seen by utilitarians as rules which only help to promote the greatest amount of happiness.

Contemporary marxists now accept the importance of human rights and they indeed argue that their struggle is for the fulfillment of human rights.

Marxism cannot successfully reject the use of moral concepts in general, specifically the concepts of morality, justice, equality and human rights without losing the force of its critique of capitalism. Marxism's force of mobilization is enhanced by the use of the concept of human rights. Even marxists therefore can use the concept of human rights and bring it to bear on the struggle to promote health and health education in our different societies.

Justice

Principles of Justice

So far we have talked about human rights as moral claims in determining what human individuals can legitimately claim and expect from society. We also indicated how these principles determine what society expects from them as well. For us, the institutions we are mainly concerned with are the health delivery system and the educational system. However, these institutions occur along side other social, political and economic institutions which affect them in many ways. The government, for example, determines the national budget, the salaries of the people who work in government as well as in other institutions. Now, when we deal with the question of how institutions distribute basic rights and duties, we are in the realm of social justice, as Rawls has already indicated.

Justice is the first virtue of social institutions,...

(Rawls, 1971: 7)

According to Rawls, social justice has to do with the distribution of social goods, burdens and responsibilities. Thus social justice is expressed in terms of distributive principles according to which social goods are distributed.



Principles of justice direct how social goods are to be distributed.

These principles may be formulated in many different ways. The social goods that are to be distributed include valued individual states like happiness, the satisfaction of wants or needs; or resources external to the individual (wealth, education, health, houses, transport facilities etc.).

The distributive principle itself may either state simply how the good is to be distributed (equal division is the most straight forward example), or it may specify some property of the individual which will determine what his/her share of the good shall be (for instance, the allocation of medicine according to need). Finally, the principle may either be formulated in such a way that it specifies a complete distribution of all the resources available, or in such a way that it specifies only a partial distribution, leaving certain resources to be allocated on another basis.

(Miller, 1976: 19-20)



Self-Test 1.4

1. Below is a list of some principles of justice that have been used by some philosophers. Indicate whom or which theory you would attribute them to.
 - a) To each according to his/her rights:
 - b) To each according to his/her deserts:
 - c) To each according to his/her needs:
 - d) To each according to his/her merits:

e) The principle of equal distribution of social goods; for example:

- equal treatment,
- equal pay,
- equal opportunities,
- equality before the law.

Utilitarianism, we have seen, is concerned with the production of the greatest aggregate of pleasure over pain. It is thus an *aggregative principle* as opposed to a *distributive principle*. As such, Rawls has argued that utilitarianism does not give us principles of justice because, for him, only distributive principles are, strictly speaking, principles of justice.

Rawls is greatly influenced by Kant, especially the idea of treating people as ends in themselves. Thus one of the main reasons why Rawls prefers distributive principles of justice to the utilitarian aggregative principle is that, with the former, distinctions between individuals are recognized and their individual needs attended to. To do this, is to take individual persons and their rights seriously, a thing he does not believe will happen if we take the utilitarian view of justice.

Summary

In this section, we have dealt with the concept of justice as a moral virtue which guides us to distribute social goods fairly. Thus we have considered justice as distributive as opposed to aggregative. However we have seen that there are a number of different views or conceptions of justice. Each conception of justice can be described by a theory of justice. Each theory of justice is determined by the specific principles of justice that are selected as principles of justice. Not all of them can be used at the same time. Most of them conflict with one another. This requires that whatever selection of principles is made, may require principles of priority indicating which of the selected principles of justice are more important than others. Selection of different principles will usually be informed by political position or attitude of the selector. This has been dealt with in the module.

UNIT 2

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

Introduction

This section provides you with a deeper insight into sociology than the module which was only an introduction, or appetizer (designed hopefully to make you interested in the subject and want to learn more). We now want to discuss in some detail different sociological theories and the sociologists whose names are associated with each theory. We give you quite a lot of information in this section as we realize most of you do not have access to sociological text books.

Definition of Theory



A theory is a set of ideas which provides an explanation for something. A sociological theory is a set of ideas which provides an explanation for human society.

Like all theory, sociological theory is selective. No amount of theory can hope to explain everything, account for the infinite amount of data that exists, or encompass the endless ways of viewing reality. Theories are therefore selective in terms of their priorities and perspectives and the data they define as significant. As a result they provide a particular and partial view of reality. There is no firm agreement as to the actual number of theories in sociology, although it is generally considered that the three most important types of theories are: *functionalism*; *social action theories*; and *structural theories*.

Sociological Theories

Functionalism

Functionalist analysis has a long history in sociology. It is prominent in the work of Auguste Comte (1789 - 1857) and Herbert Spencer (1820 - 1903), two of the founders of the discipline. It was developed by Emile Durkheim (1858 - 1917) and refined by Talcott Parsons (1902 - 1979). During the 1940's and 1950's functionalism was the dominant social theory in American sociology. Since that time it has steadily dropped from favour, partly because other approaches are seen to answer certain questions more successfully, and partly because it simply went out of fashion.



Functionalism views society as a system, that is a set of interconnected parts which together form a whole. The basic unit of analysis is society and its parts are understood primarily in terms of their relationship to the whole.

Thus social institutions, such as the family and religion, are analyzed as a part of the social system rather than as isolated units. In particular, they are understood with reference to the contribution they make to the system as a whole. The early functionalists often drew an analogy between society and an organism such as the human body. They argued that an understanding of any organ in the body, such as the heart or lungs, involves an understanding of its relationship to other organs, and in particular of its contribution towards the maintenance of the organism. In the same way, an understanding of any part of society requires an analysis of its relationship to other parts and most importantly of its contribution to the maintenance of society. Continuing this analogy, they argued that just as an organism has certain basic needs which must be satisfied if it is to survive, so society has basic needs which must be met if it is to continue to exist.

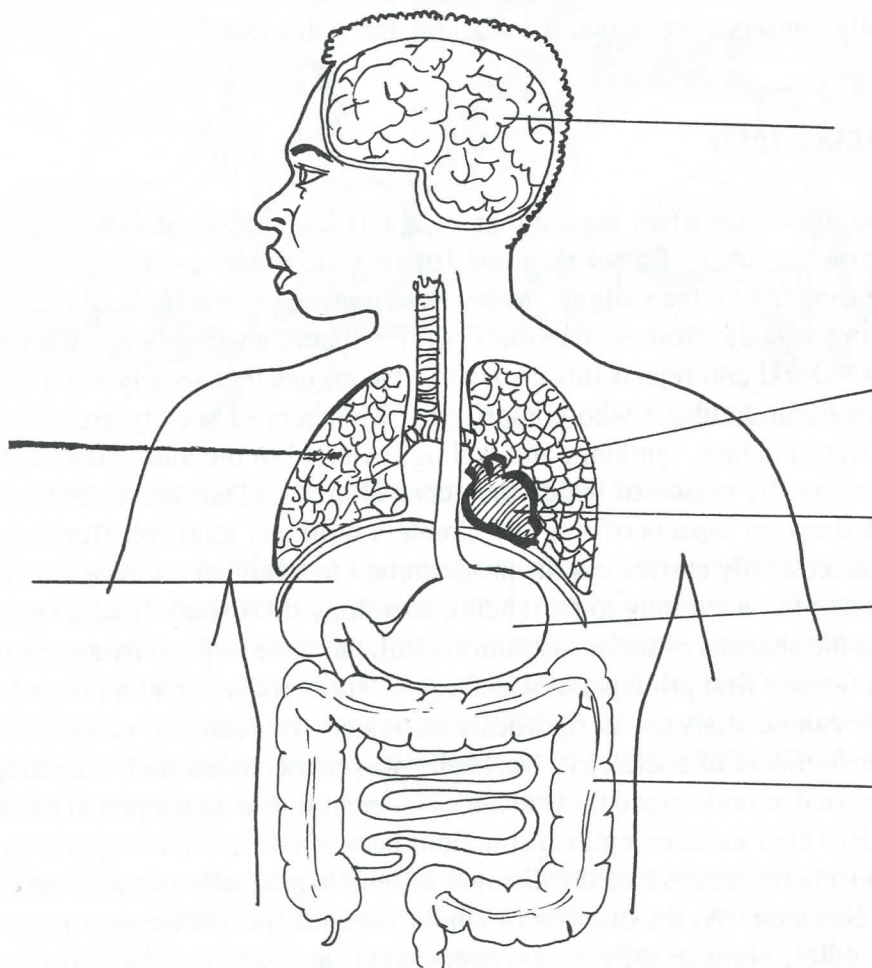


Fig 2.1 In functionalism all parts of society have a function just as organs of the body

Functionalist analysis has focused on the question of how social systems are maintained. This focus has tended to result in a positive evaluation of the parts of society. With their concern for investigating how functional prerequisites are met, functionalists have concentrated on functions rather than *dysfunctions* (that is, those factors which lead to the disintegration of society). This emphasis has resulted in many institutions, such as the family, religion and social stratification, having been seen as not only beneficial, but indispensable. This view has led critics to argue that functionalism has a built-in conservative bias which supports the status quo. The argument that certain social arrangements are beneficial, or indispensable, provides support for their retention and rejects proposals for radical change.

If we go back to the quotation by Ezewu on page 48 of the module, for a moment, we see that his definition of a social institution assumes that society is a *functional* whole with people co-operating with each other for the good of society. Later we shall see that the functional definition of health is essentially conservative in that it maintains the status quo.

Emile Durkheim (1858 - 1917)

Critics of functionalism have often argued that it depicts the individual as having little or no control over his/her own actions. Rather than constructing their own social world, members of society appear to be directed by the system. Many have questioned the logic of treating society as if it were something separate from its members, as if it shaped their actions rather than being constructed by them. Durkheim rejects this criticism. He argues that society has a reality of its own, over and above the individuals who comprise it. Members of society are constrained by 'social facts', by 'ways of acting, thinking, and feeling, external to the individual, and endowed with a power of coercion, by reason of which they control him'. (Durkheim, 1982)

Durkheim's work drew on aspects of Auguste Comte's writings, although Durkheim thought that Comte had not successfully carried out his programme - to establish sociology on a scientific basis. To become scientific, according to Durkheim, sociology must study 'social facts'. That is to say, it must pursue the analysis of social institutions with the same objectivity as scientists study nature. Durkheim's famous first principal of sociology is 'study social facts as things', by this he means that social life can be analyzed as rigorously as objects, or events in nature.

Like all the major founders of sociology, Durkheim was preoccupied with the changes transforming society. He tried to understand these changes in terms of the development of the *division of labour* (the growth of ever more complex distinctions between different occupations) as part of industrialization. Durkheim argues that the division of labour gradually replaces religion as the main basis of social cohesion. As the division of labour expands, people become more and more dependant on one another, because each person needs goods and services that those in the other occupations supply. According to Durkheim, processes of change in the modern world are so rapid and intense that they give rise to major social difficulties, which he linked to anomie.



Anomie is the feeling of aimlessness, or purposelessness, provoked by certain social conditions. Traditional moral controls and standards, which used to be supplied by religion, are largely broken down by modern social development, and this leaves many individuals in modern societies with the feeling that their day-to-day lives lack meaning.



Fig 2.2 Anomie is the feeling of aimlessness, purposelessness...

One of Durkheim's most famous studies is concerned with the analysis of suicide (Durkheim, 1952, originally published 1897). For many of us, suicide seems to be a purely personal act: it appears to be entirely the outcome of the extreme personal unhappiness. Durkheim shows however, that social factors have a fundamental influence on suicidal behaviour, anomie being one of these influences. Suicide rates show regular patterns from year to year, and these patterns have to be explained sociologically. Many objections can be raised against aspects of Durkheim's study of suicide, but it remains a classic work in sociology.

One of Durkheim's main concerns (and that of other functionalists) was, how society can continue as an integrated whole and not disintegrate into a 'mass of warring individuals'. Their answer to this 'problem of social order' is in terms of socialization into a consensus of norms and values.

(Bilton et al, 1981 : 22)

Talcott Parsons (1902 - 1979)

During the 1940's and 1950's Talcott Parsons became the dominant theorist in American sociology. Like Durkheim, Parsons begins with the question of how social order is possible. He observes that social life is characterized by 'mutual advantage and peaceful co-operation rather than mutual hostility and destruction' (Parsons, 1951). A large part of Parsons' sociology is concerned with explaining how this state of affairs is accomplished.

The importance Parsons places on *value consensus* (that is, his belief that there is an overarching system of values, on which there is consensus) has led him to state that the main task of sociology is to analyze the 'institutionalization of patterns of *value orientation* in the social system' (Parsons, 1951). By value orientation, Parsons means the system by which individuals are orientated towards, or taught, the agreed or dominant values within society. When values are institutionalized and behaviour structured in terms of them, the result is a stable system. A state of 'social equilibrium' is obtained and the various parts of the system are in a state of balance.

There are two main ways in which social equilibrium is maintained. The first involves socialization by means of which society's values are transmitted from one generation to the next and internalized to form an integral part of individual personalities. In western society, the family and the education system are the major institutions concerned with this function. Social equilibrium is also maintained by the various mechanisms of social control which discourage deviance and so maintains order in the system. The processes of socialization and social control are fundamental to the equilibrium of the social system and therefore to order in society.

Parsons views society as a system. He argues that any social system has four basic functional prerequisites - adaptation, goal attainment, integration and pattern maintenance. These can be seen as problems which society must solve if it is to survive. The function of any part of the social system is understood as its contribution to meeting the functional prerequisites. Solutions to the four survival problems must be institutionalized if society is to continue in existence.

Functionalists, such as Parsons, who see the solution to the problem of social order in terms of value consensus have been strongly criticized. Their critics argue that:

- Consensus is assumed, rather than shown to exist. Research has failed to show a widespread commitment to the various sets of values which are seen to characterize western society;
- the stability of society may owe more to the absence rather than the presence, of value consensus;
- consensus in and of itself will not necessarily result in social order.



Self-Test 2.1

What do you consider to be the main characteristics of functionalism?

Social Action Theories

Social action theorists are critical of functionalism and structuralism as these theories place emphasis on explaining the cause and unintended consequences of action in terms of features of the social system which are external to the individual.



Social action theories argue that behaviour is the result of conscious and meaningful activity on the part of individuals. These individuals, or actors, (as social action theorists prefer to call them) are creative, thinking persons who control their own actions through thought. This thought draws on shared values and assumptions which are held by the member of the actor's social group.

Two theories of social action are described here in detail to give you an idea of the approach they adopt.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism pays more attention to the active, creative individual than any of the other theoretical approaches. Because of its emphasis on the individual, symbolic interactionism is an example of a micro-sociological theory. It developed from the work of a group of American philosophers who included John Dewey, William I. Thomas and George Herbert Mead. The origins of the perspective are in the individualistic orientation of American social science with an emphasis on individual explanations of behaviour, or on moral constraints, neglecting material social structures.



Symbolic interactionism uses human thought, experience and conduct as being essentially social. It argues that human beings interact in terms of symbols, the most important of which are contained in language. A symbol is something which stands for something else. The word 'tree' is a symbol by means of which we represent the object, tree. Once we have mastered such a concept, Mead (1934) argues, we can think of a tree even if none is visible. We have learned to think of the object symbolically. Symbolic thought frees us from being limited in our experience to what we actually see, hear, or feel.

Symbolic interactionists argue that virtually all interaction between human individuals involves an exchange of symbols. When we interact with others, we constantly look for 'clues' about what type of behaviour is appropriate in the context, and how to interpret the behaviour of others.

Symbolic interactionism directs our attention to the detail of impersonal interaction, and how that detail is used to make sense of what others do and say. For instance, suppose an occupational therapist comes for a job interview with the Ministry of Health. Both the interviewer and interviewee are likely to spend a good part of the interview sizing the other up, and assessing how the candidate will fit into the institution - if at all. No-one wishes to be seen doing this too openly, although everyone recognizes that it is going on. Both the candidate and the interviewer are careful about their behaviour, being anxious to present themselves in a favourable light but, knowing this, they are likely to be looking for aspects of each others' behaviour which would reveal their true opinions. A complex and subtle process of symbolic interpretation shapes the interaction during the interview.

Sociologists influenced by symbolic interactionism usually focus on face-to-face interaction in the context of everyday life. Symbolic interactionism yields many insights into the nature of our actions in the course of day-to-day social life. But symbolic interactionism is open to the criticism that it concentrates too much on the small scale. Symbolic interactionists have always found difficulty in dealing with the more large-scale structures and processes - the very aspect which some of the other theories most strongly emphasize.

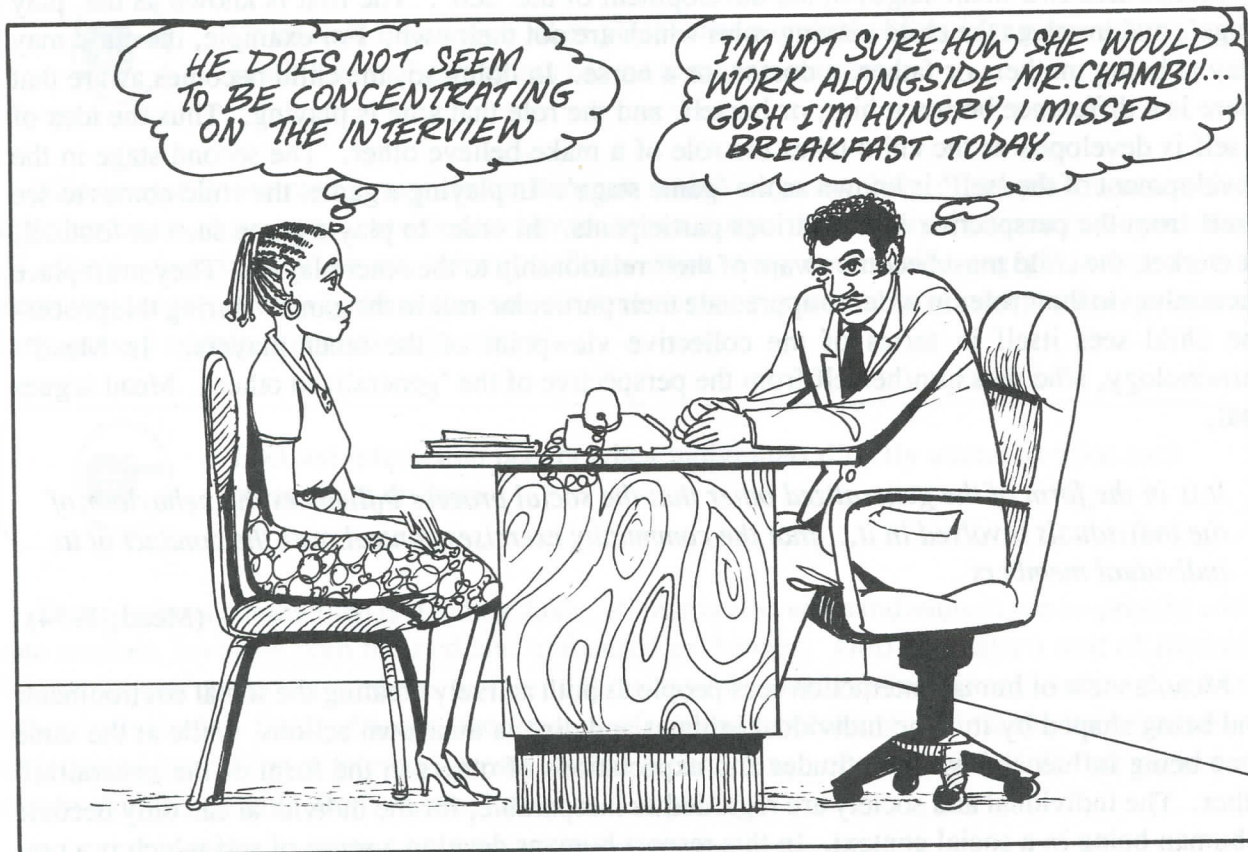


Fig 2.3 Sizing each other up

George Herbert Mead (1863-1931)

Common symbols provide only the *means* by which human interaction can be accomplished. In order for interaction to proceed, each person involved must interpret the meanings and intentions of others. This is made possible by the existence of common symbols, but is actually accomplished by means of a process which Mead calls *role-taking*. This involves the individual taking on the role of another by imaginatively placing themselves in the position of the person with whom they are interacting. (The process of role-taking, or playing, has become an important educational tool for health workers in Zimbabwe).

Mead argues that through the process of role-taking the individual develops a concept of 'self'. By placing themselves in the position of others they are able to look back upon themselves. Mead claims that the idea of a self can only develop if the individual can 'get outside himself' (experimentally) in such a way as to become an object to himself'. To do this they must observe themselves from the standpoint of others. The notion of self is not inborn, it is learned during childhood (or, as we saw earlier in Unit 4 of the module it is *achieved*.)

Meads sees two main stages in the development of the 'self'. The first is known as the 'play stage', and involves the child playing roles which are not their own. For example, the child may play at being mother, or father, a doctor, or a nurse. In doing so, the child becomes aware that there is a difference between him, or herself, and the role that s/he is playing. Thus the idea of a self is developed as the child takes the role of a make-believe other. The second stage in the development of the 'self' is known as the 'game stage'. In playing a game, the child comes to see itself from the perspective of the various participants. In order to play a game such as football, or cricket, the child must become aware of their relationship to the other players. They must place themselves in their roles in order to appreciate their particular role in the game. During this process the child sees itself in terms of the collective viewpoint of the other players. In Mead's terminology, s/he sees him/herself from the perspective of the 'generalized other'. Mead argues that,

It is in the form of the generalized other that the social process influences the behaviour of the individuals involved in it... that the community exercises control over the conduct of its individual members .

(Mead, 1934)

Mead's view of human interaction sees people as both actively creating the social environment, and being shaped by it. The individual initiates and directs their own actions, while at the same time being influenced by the attitudes and expectations of others in the form of the generalized other. The individual and society are regarded as inseparable, for the individual can only become a human being in a social context. In this respect humans develop a sense of self which is a pre-requisite for thought. They learn to take the roles of others, which is essential both for the development of self and for co-operative action. Without communication in terms of symbols whose meanings are shared, these processes would not be possible. People therefore live in a world of symbols which gives meaning and significance to life and provides the basis for human interaction.

Erving Goffman (1892- 1982)

Goffman and more recent studies of symbolic interactionism, have looked at various aspects of day-to-day life, such as the analysis of ordinary conversations. Goffman's work on civil inattention, is a good example: civil inattention is the process whereby individuals who are in the same physical setting of interaction demonstrate to one another that they are unaware of each other's presence.

Studying every day talk has shown how complicated the acquisition and mastery of language is. The immense difficulties involved in programming computers to do what human speakers are able to carry out without effort, drives home the level of this complexity. In many social situations, we engage in what Goffman calls 'unfocused interaction' with others.



Unfocused interaction takes place wherever individuals in a given setting exhibit mutual awareness of one another's presence.

This is usually the case in any circumstance in which large numbers of people are assembled together, as on a busy street, in a theatre crowd, or at a party. When individuals are in the presence of others, even if they do not directly talk to them, they continually engage in non-verbal communication. In their bodily appearance, movement and position, facial and physical gestures, they convey certain impressions to others.



Focused interaction occurs when individuals directly attend to what each other says, or does.

Except when an individual is standing alone, all interaction when individuals are co-present with one another, involves both focused and unfocused exchanges. Goffman calls a unit of focused interaction an 'encounter' and much of our day-to-day life consists of continuous encounters with other individuals - family friends, workmates - frequently occurring against the background of unfocused interaction with others present on the scene. Much of social life, Goffman suggested can be divided up into '*front regions*' and '*back regions*'.



Front regions are social occasions or encounters in which individuals act out formal, or stylized, roles - they are 'on stage performances'. The back regions are where they assemble the props and prepare themselves for interaction in the more formal settings. *Back regions* resemble the 'backstage' of a theatre, or the 'off-camera' activities of filming. When they are safely behind the scenes, people can relax, and give vent to feelings and styles of behaviour they keep in check when on front stage.

Thus a doctor may be polite when talking to a patient, but make derogatory remarks about the patient when speaking to colleagues after hours. Despite the Hippocratic Oath and laws about confidentiality, information about patients is often freely discussed in social settings where health workers are present.



Self-Test 2.2

What do you consider to be the main characteristics of symbolic interactionism?

Ethnomethodology



Ethnomethodology is the study of how people make sense of what others say and do, in the course of day to day social interaction.

All of us apply methods of making sense of our interactions with others, which we normally employ without having to give any conscious attention to them. We can only make sense of what is said in conversation by means of knowledge of the social context that does not appear in the words themselves.

The study of conversations has been strongly influenced by Goffman's work. But the most important figure influencing this type of research is Harold Garfinkel, the founder of ethnomethodology.

Harold Garfinkel

Garfinkel argues that mainstream sociology has typically portrayed man as a 'cultural dope' who simply acts out the standardized directives provided by the culture of the society. Garfinkel states that by cultural dope he refers to:

...the man-in-the-sociologist's society who produces the stable features of society by acting in compliance with the pre-established and legitimate alternatives of action that the common culture provides.

(Garfinkel, 1984)

In place of the 'cultural dope' the ethnomethodologist pictures the skilled member of society who is constantly attending to the particular and specific qualities of situations, giving them meaning, making them knowable, communicating this knowledge to others and constructing a sense and

appearance of order. From this perspective, members of society construct and accomplish their own social world, rather than being shaped by it.

Ethnomethodologists are highly critical of other branches of sociology. They argue that 'conventional' sociologists have misunderstood the nature of social reality. They have treated the social world as if it had an objective reality which is independent of members's accounts and interpretations. Thus they have regarded aspects of the social world such as suicide and crime, as facts with an existence of their own. They have then attempted to provide explanations for these facts. By contrast, ethnomethodologists argue that the social world consists of nothing more than the constructs, interpretations and accounts of its members. The job of the sociologist is therefore to explain the methods and accounting procedures which members employ to construct their social world. According to the ethnomethodologists, this is the very job that mainstream sociology has failed to do.



Self-Test 2.3

What do you consider to be the main characteristics of ethnomethodology?

Structural Theory

The work of both Karl Marx and Max Weber is characterized by a determination to specify the historical origins, character and future of contemporary capitalism. Marx argues for a general principle of the primacy of economic relations over other aspects of social structure which apply to all unequal societies. Weber was opposed to such a general theory of history, and stressed the equal or greater importance of culture and politics.



Marx and Weber share the concern to distinguish types of social structure by specifying material structures (economic, ideological and political) and thus avoid ahistorical generalizations about the 'universal' features of society, or of 'modern' or 'traditional' societies.

Further, whilst Marx and Weber disagree over the evils of capitalism, they both agree on the fact that societies are stratified, that is, divided into a patterned structure of unequal groups. These inequalities tend to exist across generations.

Philosophy and Sociology

The issue of *inequality* is central for sociology, not only because of moral and political implications, but also because of the crucial place of stratification in the organization of society. Every aspect of life, of individual and household, is affected by stratification, whether or not we are aware of it. There are three basic forms of advantage that privileged groups may enjoy:

- *Life chances* - all the material advantages which improve the quality of life of the recipient, for example, education, wealth, income, health or job security;
- *social status* - that is, prestige or high standing in the eyes of other members of society;
- *political influence* - that is, the ability of one group to dominate others, or to have influence over decision making, or to benefit advantageously from decisions.

Privileged social groups are advantaged in all three of these areas, whilst subordinate groups have poor life chances, low status and little political influence. In some countries, such as India with its caste system, people who are born into low status positions have no opportunity to change their situation. If you are born a Brahmin (your ascribed social role) you are born into a privileged group and consequently will enjoy the benefits for the rest of your life. Similarly people born into the untouchable caste are limited in the jobs they can do and remain under-privileged. In other countries where social organization is based on class differences, (that is, the relationship of a social group to the mode of production) the ownership of wealth becomes the most important factor in terms of privilege, power and life chances.

Many critics of functionalism argue that it lacks an analysis of *power* within society. Some groups have more power than others and therefore they are able to impose their views on others and to define what values within society should be upheld. In most instances this power is institutionalized so that the legal system and the police have the power to determine what is correct behaviour for, what they consider to be, the good of others. Under capitalism, these institutions (the judiciary and the police) have been referred to by Althusser (1972) as *repressive state apparatuses* and the educational and social welfare systems as the *ideological state apparatuses*. They both work to ensure that capitalist production continues to run smoothly. The effect of this is that capitalist social relations are reproduced by the everyday actions of people who uncritically accept the world as it is, as 'natural', 'normal' and 'inevitable'. Something that we as philosophers and sociologists would want to take issue with.

Marxism

Marxists, of course, all trace their views back in some way to the writings of Karl Marx, but numerous interpretations of Marx's major ideas are possible, and there are today schools of marxist thought which take very different theoretical positions, (for further information see Giddens, 1989).

Broadly speaking, marxism can be sub-divided along the lines that correspond to the boundaries between the other theoretical traditions.

Many marxists have implicitly, or openly adopted a functionalist approach to historical materialism (Cohen, 1978). Their version of marxism is quite different from that of marxists

influenced by structuralism, the most well known writer developing such a standpoint being the French author Louis Althusser. Both these types of marxist thought differ from that of marxists who have laid stress on the active, creative character of human behaviour (Fromm, Marcuse).

In all of its versions, marxism differs from non-marxist traditions of sociology. Most marxist authors see marxism as part of a 'package' of sociological analysis and political reform. Marxism is supposed to generate a programme of radical political change. Moreover, marxists put more emphasis on class divisions, conflict, power and ideology, than many non-marxist sociologists, especially most of those influenced by functionalism.



It is best to see marxism, not as a type of approach *within* sociology, but as a body of writing *existing* alongside sociology, each overlapping and quite frequently being influenced by each other. Non-marxist sociology and marxism have always existed in a relationship of mutual influence and opposition.

Karl Marx (1818-1883)

The volume of Marx's writings over a period of forty years was enormous. Many of his major projects remained unfinished and part of the material published after his death is drawn from rough notes outlining future projects. Marx's writing contains inconsistencies, ambiguities and changes in emphasis. For these reasons there are many and varied interpretations of his work.

Marx regards man as both the producer and product of society. Humans make society and themselves by their own actions. History is therefore the process of human self-creation. Yet humans are also a product of society. They are shaped by the social relationships and systems of thought which they create.



An understanding of society therefore involves an historical perspective which examines the process whereby humans both produce, and are produced by, social reality.

A society forms a totality and can only be understood as such. The various parts of society are interconnected and influence each other. Thus, economic, political, legal and religious institutions can only be understood in terms of their mutual effect. *Economic factors, however, exert the primary influence and largely shape other aspects of society.*

The history of human society is a process of tension and conflict. Social change is not a smooth, orderly progression which gradually unfolds in harmonious evolution. Instead it proceeds from contradictions built into society which are a source of tension and ultimately, the source of open conflict and radical change.

Philosophy and Sociology

This is what is often referred to as the *dialectical interpretation of change*.

People's ideas are seen primarily as a reflection of the social relationships of economic production, and they do not provide the main source of change. It is in contradictions and conflict in the economic system that the major dynamic for social change lies. Since all parts of society are interconnected, however, it is only through a process of interplay between these parts that change occurs.

Though he writes about various phases of history, Marx concentrates his attention on changes in modern times. For him, the most important changes involved in the modern period are bound up with the development of capitalism. Capitalism is a system of production that contrasts radically with previous economic orders in history, involving as it does the production of goods and services sold to a wide range of consumers. Those who own capital - factories, machines and large sums of money - form a *ruling class*. The mass of the population make up a class of wage-workers, or the *working class*, who do not own the means of their own livelihood, but have to find employment provided by the owners of capital.



Capitalism is thus a class system, in which conflict between classes is a common occurrence.

However, Marx does not see capitalism as inevitable. His vision of what humans could and should be (if social conditions would allow) is expressed in his theory of *alienation*. The basis for this theory is that what separates humans from other species is the capacity to control nature by creative activities. Work can therefore be the expression of human intellect and creative capacity, unless it is *alienated*, by being either concerned merely with survival, or organized socially in such a way that work is debased and made meaningless.

Marx argued that alienated labour reaches its worst form in industrial capitalism as workers are forced to sell their labour power to the employer. In these instances, human creativity is turned into an object, bought at the cheapest price. The product of this labour is owned and sold by the capitalist and so the harder workers labour, the more they are exploited by the capitalist. In order to overcome this alienation, Marx argued that the basic economic relations which create it must be abolished - by revolutionary means.

According to Marx, capitalism will in future be supplanted first by socialism, then later by communism and in communist society there will be no classes. Marx does not mean by this that all inequalities between individuals will disappear; rather societies will no longer be split into a small class which monopolizes economic and political power and the large mass of the people who benefit little from the wealth their labour creates. The economic system will come under communal ownership, and a more egalitarian and participatory social order be established.

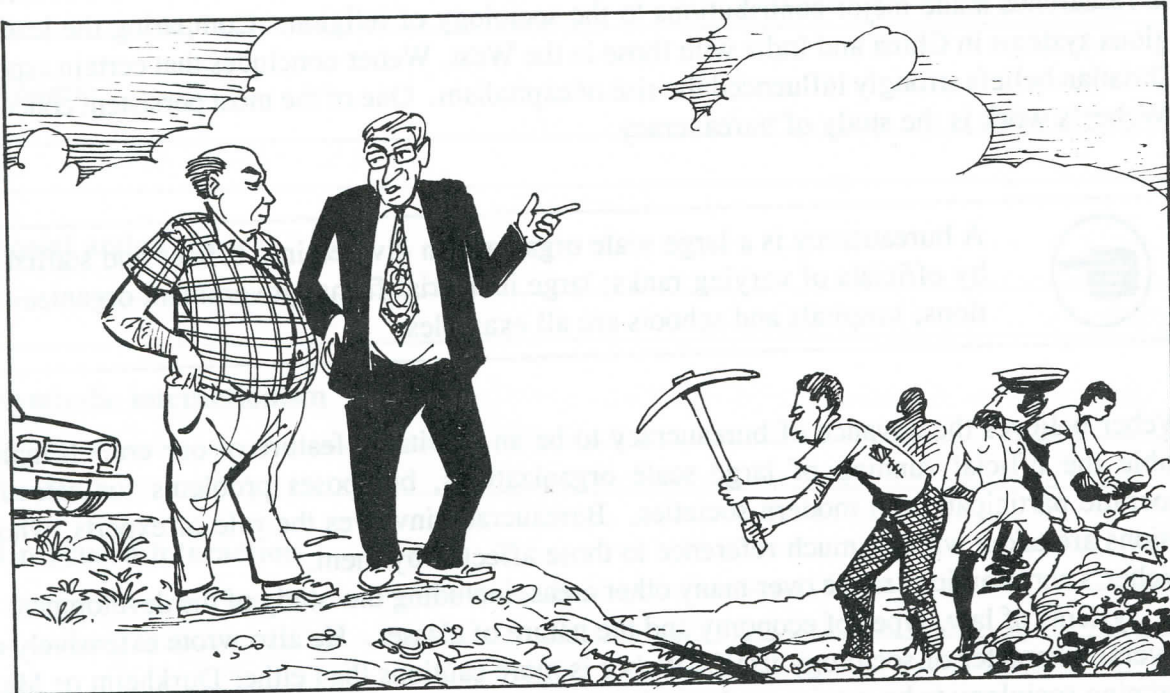


Fig 2.4 Capitalists and workers

For Marx, the study of the development and likely future of capitalism, was to provide the means of actively transforming it through political action. Marx's sociological observations were thus closely related to a political programme. However valid Marx's writing may, or may not be, this programme has had a far reaching effect upon the twentieth century world. Prior to the political upheavals in Eastern Europe in 1991, more than a third of the world's population lived in societies whose governments claimed to derive inspiration from Marx's ideas.

Max Weber (1864-1920)

Like Marx, Weber cannot be simply labelled as a 'sociologist' - his interests and concerns ranged across many disciplines. He was born in Germany and spent the whole of his academic career there. He was an individual of quite extraordinarily wide learning. His writings covered the fields of economics, law, philosophy and comparative history as well as sociology, and much of his work was concerned with the development of modern capitalism. He was influenced by Marx, but was also strongly critical of some of Marx's major views. He rejected the materialist conception of history and saw class conflict as of less significance than Marx. In Weber's view, ideas and values have as much impact as economic conditions on social change.

Philosophy and Sociology

Some of Weber's most important writings are concerned with analyzing the distinctiveness of Western society and culture, as compared with those of other major civilizations. He produced extensive studies of the traditional Chinese empire, India and the Near East and in the course of these researches made major contributions to the sociology of religion. Comparing the leading religious systems in China and India with those in the West, Weber concludes that certain aspects of Christian beliefs strongly influenced the rise of capitalism. One of the most persistent concerns of Weber's work is the study of bureaucracy.



A bureaucracy is a large scale organization divided into offices and staffed by officials of varying ranks; large industrial firms, government organizations, hospitals and schools are all examples.

Weber believes the advance of bureaucracy to be an inevitable feature of our era. It makes possible the official running of large scale organizations, but poses problems for effective democratic participation in modern societies. Bureaucracy involves the rule of experts, whose decisions are taken without much reference to those affected by them.

Weber's contributions range over many other areas, including the study of the development of cities, systems of law, types of economy and the nature of classes. He also wrote extensively on the overall character of sociology itself. Weber is more cautious than either Durkheim or Marx in claiming sociology to be a science. According to Weber, it is misleading to imagine that we can study people using the same procedures that are applied to investigating the physical world. Humans are thinking, reasoning beings: we attach meaning and significance to most of what we do, and any discipline that deals with human behaviour must acknowledge this.



Self-Test 2.4

In your own words define the following terms used in Unit 2.

Theory

Functionalism

Division of labour

Anomie

Social action theory

Symbolic interactionism

Unfocused interaction

Focused interaction

Ethnomethodology

Structuralism

Dialectical interpretation of change

Capitalism

Philosophy and Sociology

Alienation

Bureaucracy

Summary

This Unit has looked at a number of the most important sociological theories and asked the reader to identify the main characteristics of each of them. This should provide a good foundation for when we begin to apply these theories to education and health. For it is important that you as health worker recognize the relevance of these theories and are in a position to begin theorizing in your day-to-day work.

The following table indicates the main features of each of the theories discussed and acts as a summary to help you. **Remember** each of these categories is not discrete and inevitably there is some overlap between them.

Name of Theory	Main Characteristics of Theory
Functionalism (Durkheim, Parsons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Society as a harmonious system • Each part of society relates to others and contributes to the maintenance of the system • Deviance and conflict is discouraged • There is common agreement with the values of society
Social Action (Mead, Goffman, Garfinkel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour is the result of conscious activity on the part of individuals • People control their own actions through thought • Interaction involves an exchange of symbols • People must interpret the meanings and intentions of others • People both actively create their social environment and are shaped by it
Structuralism (Marx, Weber)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material structures (economic, ideological and political) are important parts of society • Society is stratified into patterned structure of unequal groups • Power is an important mechanism for maintaining control over others • Conflict is inevitable • Ideology is an important mechanism for maintaining dominant values • People both produce and are produced by social reality

Table 2.1 Summary of main characteristics of sociological theories

Look at the remarks made in the summary table and compare them with the comments you made in the Self-Tests.

Note: References referred to in this supplementary are included in the list of references on the main module 'Philosophy and Sociology', Foundations of Education.