Talcott Parsons (13 December 1902 – 8 May 1979) was one of the most important American sociologist of 20th century, mainly known for his social action theory and structural functionalism.

Parsons is considered one of the most influential figures in sociology in the 20th century. After earning a PhD in economics, he served on the faculty at Harvard University from 1927 to 1973.

In 1930, he was among the first professors in its new sociology department. Later, he was instrumental in the establishment of the Department of Social Relations at Harvard.

Parsons’ sociology is based on a general theoretical system rather than smaller, empirical studies. So, he was also known as a functionalist theorist; as such, his influential work expansion many areas within sociology, including stratification, the family, education and religion.

Parsons is famous for creating a whole school of thought within sociology by connecting the discipline to clinical psychology and social anthropology.

He focused on how society achieves social stability, which he referred to as ‘dynamic equilibrium’. According to functionalists, all institutions and individuals serve a certain function in society, thus making sure of the smooth working of the whole social system.

Talcott Parsons' most influential publications are:

The Structure of Social Action (1937)

The Social System (1951)

Essays in Sociological Theory (1964)

Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives (1966)

Politics and Social Structure (1969)

Most of Talcott Parsons' writings focused on Structural Functionalism, the theory that the structure of society is shaped by its function and that social roles that individuals adopt are shaped by how these roles support the society as a whole.

Parsons established his action theory in his first book, ‘The Structure of Social Action’. It dealt with the Hobbesian problem of how social order was possible. It’s conclusion is that social action was shaped by shared norms and values rather than on individual personalities (as argued by Freud and Weber).

According to functionalists, all institutions and individuals serve a certain function in society, thus making sure of the smooth working of the whole social system. Parsons identified four functional sub-systems and their purposes in society. These sub-systems are:

economic sub-system,

political sub-system,

family sub-system, and

cultural sub-system.

These sub-systems work not only in and of themselves, but also for the other sub-systems to be able to function properly. Families can only perform their role of socialization well if the economic sub-system provides work for the family members to earn their living. At the same time, the families are responsible for socializing children well and raise suitable workers for the economic sub-system of society.

According to Parsons, stratification is an inevitable and necessary part of society. His theory was considered highly conservative, complex, and abstract; and he was seen as Political conservative. But in 1980s and after that there was resurgence in interest in Parson’s theory not only in United States but around the world.

In his book ‘The Social System’ Talcott Parsons attempted to bring together, in a systematic and generalized form, the main outlines of a conceptual scheme for the analysis of structures and processes of social system.

The social system is analyzed as a part of the larger conceptual scheme, which Parsons called the ‘theory of action’.

As such it is one of the three main differentiated sub-systems of action, the other two being personality and culture.

Though here we are mainly concerned with Parsons’ “The Social System” but to understand his present work more clearly some concepts are also taken from his other important works like “Towards a General Theory of Action” and “The Structure of Social Action”.

The following are the major concept and theories propounded by Parsons.

**Talcott Parsons' theory of Structural Functionalism**

Parsons sees society as a system made up of different parts, like institutions (family, education, government) and roles (parent, teacher, politician ). Each part has its own function or purpose, just like parts of a machine.

These parts are interconnected and depend on each other. If one part doesn't work well, it affects the whole system. For example, if the education system fails, it can impact the economy and other social institutions.

Parsons believes that society naturally tends toward order and stability. Just as a machine functions smoothly when all its parts work together, society functions smoothly when its institutions and roles are functioning as they should.

Each part of society serves a function to maintain the stability of the whole. For example, families provide socialization and emotional support, while governments establish laws and regulations to maintain order.

Parsons acknowledges that society changes over time, but he sees it as a gradual process where new parts or functions emerge to replace old ones, rather than sudden upheavals.

Parsons' theory suggests that society functions like a well-oiled machine, with each part playing a crucial role in maintaining order and stability.

Talcott Parsons' theory of Structural Functionalism is that society is a complex system composed of several stratified layers, like a machine with moving parts. Within this system, individuals have specialized roles to cooperate with other members of society to bring about a well-functioning and balanced operation of the social apparatus.

A society in good order takes care of all its members, but each member has a distinct role. Society is composed of institutions whose express purpose is their manifest function. But sometimes, there are unintended consequences, which is the latent function of an institution.

A healthy society is adaptable and can resolve conflicts between latent and manifest functions to create a healthy equilibrium. He focused on how society achieves social stability, which he referred to as ‘dynamic equilibrium’.

According to functionalists, all institutions and individuals serve a certain function in society, thus making sure of the smooth working of the whole social system.

Talcott Parsons’theory of structural functionalism is like looking at society as a big machine where every part has a job to keep things running smoothly. Here are the main ideas:

**Society as a System:** Parsons sees society as a system made up of different parts, like institutions (such as family, education, government) and roles (like parent, teacher, politician). Just like a machine, each part has its own function or purpose.

**Interconnectedness:** He emphasizes how these parts are interconnected and dependent on each other. If one part doesn’t work well, it affects the whole system. For example, if the education system fails, it can impact the economy and other social institutions.

**Social Order and Stability:** Parsons believes that society naturally tends toward order and stability. Just as a machine functions smoothly when all its parts work together, society functions smoothly when its institutions and roles are functioning as they should.

**Functionality of Social Institutions:** Each part of society serves a function to maintain the stability of the whole. For example, families provide socialization and emotional support, while governments establish laws and regulations to maintain order.

**Social Change:** Parsons acknowledges that society changes over time, but he sees it as a gradual process where new parts or functions emerge to replace old ones, rather than sudden upheavals.

Overall, Parsons’ theory suggests that society functions like a well-oiled machine, with each part playing a crucial role in maintaining order and stability.

**Talcott Parsons on stratification**

Parsons argued that social stratification is partly based on meritocracy, where individuals are rewarded based on their talents, skills, and efforts. In other words, those who work hard and have valuable abilities are more likely to move up the social ladder.

Social stratification provides motivation and incentives for individuals to strive for success. Knowing that there are rewards associated with higher social positions encourages people to work hard and achieve their goals.

Social stratification helps allocate people into different social roles and positions based on their abilities and qualifications. This ensures that individuals with the necessary skills and expertise are placed in roles where they can contribute effectively to society.

Parsons believed that social stratification contributes to social order by providing a sense of structure and stability. It helps maintain a hierarchy of authority and responsibility, which is essential for coordinating social activities and maintaining social cohesion.

In simple terms, Parsons viewed social stratification as a system that rewards merit and motivates individuals to succeed. It also helps allocate people into appropriate roles and contributes to overall social order and stability.

According to Parsons, stratification is an inevitable and necessary part of society. He believed in effective role allocation, which meant that all individuals in society get roles that were best suited to their abilities, work ethic and qualifications. They were also rewarded for their work according to the importance of their jobs.

Parsons believed that people competed on equal grounds, and they could achieve high status and high rewards if they worked hard and had talent, no matter where they came from. As such, he believed that society was meritocratic.

His ideas on role allocation and stratification were later criticized by many sociologists, who argued that individuals do not compete on equal grounds and socio-economic status determines one’s status in society much more than their work ethic and abilities.

**Talcott Parsons on the nuclear family**

According to Parsons, nuclear families are responsible for teaching children the common values and norms of society and for providing adults with emotional support. In his famous study of families, he mainly focused on the idealized, middle-class, nuclear family, which was later criticized by sociologists.

Parsons argues that families are agents of primary socialization

Parsons argued that the family has two significant functions in society: the primary socialization of children and the stabilization of adult personalities. Let us look at his findings in more detail.

**Talcott Parsons on the nuclear family**

Parsons believed that the nuclear family is central to teaching children basic values, norms, and social skills. Parents pass on cultural traditions, morals, and behaviors to their children, preparing them to function effectively in society.

The nuclear family provides emotional support and stability for its members. Parsons argued that family members rely on each other for love, care, and emotional well-being, which helps maintain social order and cohesion.

Parsons also emphasized the traditional gender roles within the nuclear family, with the father as the breadwinner and authority figure, and the mother as the caregiver and nurturer. He saw these roles as essential for maintaining stability and order within the family unit.

Parsons viewed the nuclear family as a vital institution for socializing individuals and providing emotional support, contributing to the stability and functioning of society as a whole.

**The nuclear family’s role in primary socialization:**

Parsons claims that human personalities are made and not born. They are created through the process of socialization. The main agent of primary socialization is the family. There are two separate elements to this:

the primary socialization of children and the stabilization of adult personalities.

The primary socialization of children refers to the process of teaching kids about society’s norms, rules and values, thus making them aware of what is right and wrong, and what is allowed and not allowed. They are also taught to work hard so that they can contribute to the labor force and the overall progress of society most effectively. This is how primary socialization contributes to the stabilization of society.

The stabilization of adult personalities refers to the process of families providing emotional support to their members. Life outside the home can be stressful, and one needs help to alleviate that stress and maintain their psychological well-being. Families help individuals keep stable, so society too, can remain stable.

**Talcott Parsons on education**

Parsons believed that education is a key institution for socializing individuals. It teaches them the values, norms, and skills necessary to become productive members of society. For example, schools teach children how to interact with others, follow rules, and acquire knowledge that is valued in society.

Education also prepares individuals for their future roles and responsibilities in society. It provides them with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in their chosen professions or social positions. For instance, students learn subjects like math, science, and language arts to prepare for careers in various fields.

Parsons supported the idea of meritocracy, where individuals are rewarded based on their abilities and achievements. He believed that education provides equal opportunities for individuals to develop their talents and abilities, regardless of their background. This fosters social mobility and allows talented individuals to rise to positions of influence and leadership.

Parsons' theory of education emphasizes its role in socializing individuals, preparing them for their future roles in society, and promoting meritocracy by providing equal opportunities for all.

Parsons is a crucial theorist within the sociology of education. He further developed Durkheim’s functionalist theory of education, and argued that schools are agents of secondary socialization and their responsibility is to prepare kids for adult life.

According to Parsons, society is meritocratic, which means that all people have the same chances and opportunities open to them, and they can achieve status in society based on their abilities and qualifications rather than their socio-economic background. He claimed that schools are meritocratic too, thus resembling wider society.

**Secondary Socialization**

Universalistic standards refer to principles or criteria applied universally to judge people's actions or behaviors, regardless of their personal characteristics or relationships.

Parsons emphasized that universalistic standards are based on impartial criteria that are applied uniformly to all individuals within a given social context. This means that judgments are not influenced by personal biases or favoritism.

Universalistic standards support the idea of meritocracy, where individuals are evaluated and rewarded based on their qualifications, abilities, and achievements rather than on personal connections or characteristics such as race, gender, or social status.

Parsons believed that universalistic standards contribute to social integration by promoting fairness, equality, and consistency in social interactions. They help maintain social order and cohesion by ensuring that everyone is held to the same standards of behave universalistic standards are impartial निष्पक्ष and consistent criteria used to evaluate people's actions or behaviors, regardless of personal factors. They support the idea of meritocracy and contribute to social integration by promoting fairness and equality in society.

Parsons argued that children have an ascribed status in the family, which they were given at birth. They are treated and judged in accordance with their parents' personal values. These are called particularistic standards.

In the education system, children are treated according to the same universalistic standards rather than by the particularistic standards of the family. This prepares their entry into wider society.

In wider society, people have achieved statuses, which they gain through their hard work or educational achievements. Schools play a crucial role in not only teaching children about this system but also in helping children transition from particularistic to universalistic standards.

**Value consensus**

Value consensus refers to the shared beliefs, norms, and values that people in a society agree upon. It's like a set of common understandings about what is right and wrong, good and bad, and how people should behave.

For example, in a society where honesty is valued, there's a consensus that lying is wrong. This shared belief helps maintain social order and cohesion because people know what behavior is expected of them.

Parsons believed that value consensus is essential for society to function smoothly because it provides a common foundation for social interaction. When people share similar values, they can cooperate more effectively and understand each other better.

Consensus is about the agreement among members of society on basic values and norms, which helps maintain social harmony and stability.

According to Parsons, educational institutions focus on the transmission of two key values to their pupils: the importance of achievement and the value of equality of opportunity.

Students are encouraged to value educational achievement and strive for it through hard work and through maximizing their potential. Pupils are encouraged to believe that they compete on equal terms in the classroom.

**Meritocracy**

Parsons claimed that the education system was meritocratic. By this, he meant, that pupils’ education achievement and success were the result of their abilities and mentality to work and were not influenced by the students’ social class, gender or ethnicity.

**Role allocation**

Imagine society as a big game, and everyone has a role to play. Parsons believed that each person is assigned specific roles or positions based on their abilities, talents, and qualifications. Just like players in a sports team have different positions to play, people in society have roles like being a parent, a teacher, a doctor, or a worker. Role allocation is the process of assigning these roles to individuals based on their skills and abilities. For example, someone with good leadership skills might be allocated the role of a manager, while someone with a knack for teaching might become a teacher.

Parsons thought that role allocation is important for society to function smoothly because it ensures that the right people are in the right positions, which helps society achieve its goals effectively.

In simple terms, role allocation is like assigning players to positions in a game to make sure everyone contributes in the best way possible to achieve success.

Role allocation means that people are directed towards the jobs and positions in society which suit their abilities and work ethic the most, thus making sure that everyone has a role in wider society in which they can perform the best.

Parsons saw education to be the place where children and young adults get the chance to gain qualifications for their specific roles in wider society.

**Parsons on religion**

Parsons viewed religion as a fundamental institution within society that serves important functions. He saw it as providing guidelines for behavior, promoting social cohesion, and offering individuals a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Parsons argued that religion plays a crucial role in integrating individuals into society by providing shared values and beliefs. These shared religious beliefs help maintain social stability and cohesion by offering a common moral framework for members of a society to adhere to.

Religion also serves as a mechanism for socialization, shaping individuals' identities and influencing their behavior. Through religious rituals, practices, and teachings, individuals learn societal norms and values, which contribute to their sense of belonging and identity within the community.

conditions and serve as a mechanism for addressing social tensions and conflicts. Religious beliefs and practices may evolve over time to accommodate societal changes while still fulfilling their integrative and stabilizing functions.

Parsons' perspective on religion emphasizes its significance as a social institution that contributes to the cohesion, stability, and integration of society, while also shaping individual identities and providing a framework for moral guidance.

Parsons believed that religion is closely connected to a society’s culture and its norms and values. As such, religion is a vital part of every society. It determines shared norms and rules, and it provides a widely accepted meaning for all human life.

Religion can also help to make sense of unexpected and unwanted events and experiences that will inevitably occur in humans’ lives. Religion is therefore a necessary element for social order.

**The Organic Analogy**

Talcott Parsons believed that society acts in a similar way to the human body, as social institutions interact in the same way as human organs. Both are interconnected and interdependent parts that function for the good of the whole. This is called the organic analogy

**The Social System**

**Social Action:** Parsons focuses on how people behave in social situations. He says that social action involves individuals interacting with each other, considering the goals of others, and adapting to their surroundings.

**Pattern Variables:** Parsons talks about different dimensions of social action, like how emotional or specific someone's actions are, and whether they focus on themselves or the group.

**AGIL Scheme**: He introduces four basic things every society needs to survive and function well: Adaptation (fitting into the environment), Goal Attainment (achieving society's aims), Integration (keeping society together), and Latency विलम्बता (maintaining stability and continuity).

**Social Structure:** Parsons says that society has structures that shape people's behavior, like roles and norms. These structures help keep society stable and organized.

**Role Theory:** He explains how roles guide people's behavior by setting expectations for how they should act in certain positions or situations.

Parsons' theory in "The Social System" is about how people interact in society, the things that society needs to work well, and how roles and structures help maintain order and stability.

**Functional Prerequisites (**कार्यात्मक पूर्व शर्तहरू )

Parsons also believed that societies have certain functional prerequisites things that societies need in order to survive. For example, a society must produce and distribute food and shelter, organize and resolve conflicts, and socialize young people.

Parsons believed that social systems have four needs that must be met for continued survival: adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency.

**The Four Basic needs of society**

**Adaption (Economic Function)** : Every society has to provide for the needs of its members in order for the society to survive.

**Goal Attainment (Political Function):** Parsons believed that a society is only possible when there are common standards: the society must have a collective goal, and acceptable means for achieving it.

**Integration (Social Harmony):** Specialist institutions develop to reduce conflict in society. For example, education and media create a sense of belonging.

**Latency:** The unstated consequences of actions – there are 2 types of latency: Pattern Maintenance: Maintaining value consensus through socialization and Tension Management. Opportunities to release tension in a safe way.

Parsons was influenced by many European scholars, such as Malinowski and Weber. Some have argued that Parson’s sociology addresses American society in particular, and that it is, rather than an ideological justification of the state of America contemporary to him, an attempt to identify the minimum requirements of integration in a society composed of different ethnic groups with different traditions and cultures.

This means that an action is only a social action when social purposes and standards are identified in the context of interactions that consider their finalities and rules an integral part of the social situation.

Parsons (1951) introduced the idea of a system to address the problem of integration. Parsons said that since people perform actions according to defined principles, rather than in a random way, they have a “personality system.”

Here, a system is the set of symbols that make the interaction possible and the network of relationships between people that do not act in an uncoordinated way but according to the positions assigned to them in this network of relations.

Parsons believed that the cultural, personality, and society systems all had to be the same as each other. The culture helps people to create their personality through internalizing the rules and values of a society (Parsons, 1951).

Meanwhile, the internalization of these cultural models gives order and stability to society because all of the people in a society tend to behave in a way that conforms to society’s expectations.

There are three parts of every action, according to Parsons:

**the finality** : the goal to reach and negative consequences to avoid (the “cathetic” element);

the knowledge of a situation necessary to complete an action — the knowledge element; and, finally, the ability to pick out among many possible choices — the “evaluation” element.

Parson believed that personality can only arise in the context of social relations, which can create a system of common signs and symbols for navigating symbols. These social relations take place in mutual relations among people who act according to their status and roles. While status defines the position that a person occupies in a system of relations considered to be a structure regardless of personality, roles relate to what someone does in relation to others, and what is typical of a certain status.

**Overview of Talcott Parsons' "The Structure of Social in Action" (1937)**

Talcott Parsons was an American sociologist who introduced the concept of social action in his seminal work published in 1937.

• In this book, Parsons argues that social action is shaped by a complex interplay of social structures, norms, and values.

• He emphasizes the importance of understanding how individuals' actions are influenced by larger societal forces.

**Key Concepts in "The Structure of Social in Action“**

• Parsons introduces the idea of the "social system" as a framework for analyzing how individuals interact within society.

• He highlights the role of social institutions in regulating behavior and maintaining social order.

• Parsons' work laid the foundation for modern sociological theories on the relationship between individual agency and societal structures.

**Talcott Parsons' The Social System** (1951)

Talcott Parsons was a prominent sociologist who developed the concept of the social system in his influential work, "The Social System," published in 1951.

• In this book, Parsons explored the idea that societies are complex systems made up of interconnected parts that function together to maintain stability and order.

• He emphasized the importance of understanding how social institutions, such as family, education, and government, work together to fulfill different functions in society.

**Key Concepts in The Social System**

Parsons introduced the concept of AGIL, which stands for adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency, as the four functional imperatives that must be met for a social system to survive and thrive.

• He also emphasized the role of social norms and values in maintaining social order and cohesion within a society.

• Parsons' work had a significant impact on the field of sociology, shaping the way scholars think about social systems and their functions in modern societies.

**The Structure of Social Action**

The Structure of Social Action" is a book written by Talcott Parsons, published in 1937. In this influential work, Parsons sought to develop a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding human behavior and social systems. Here's a brief overview of the key ideas presented in the book:

**Theory of Action:** Parsons introduces the concept of "action" as the basic unit of social analysis. He proposes a theory of action that emphasizes the interplay between individuals' intentions and the social context in which they act. Parsons argues that human behavior is guided by both internal motives and external influences, such as social norms and values.

**Voluntaristic Theory:** Parsons contrasts his voluntaristic theory of action with other theories that emphasize either individual motivation or external social forces. He argues that both factors are important in shaping human behavior, and that individuals exercise a degree of agency in their actions, even within social structures.

**Fourfold Scheme:** Parsons develops a fourfold scheme for analyzing social action, which includes the components of actor, object, situation, and orientation. These components help to systematically categorize and analyze different types of social behavior.

**Theory of Social Systems:** Building on his theory of action, Parsons develops a broader theory of social systems. He argues that societies can be understood as complex systems composed of various subsystems (such as family, economy, and religion) that are interconnected and interdependent.

**Pattern Variables:**

Parsons introduces the concept of "pattern variables," which are fundamental dimensions of social action that influence behavior. These variables include factors such as affectivity, specificity, diffuseness, and self-orientation, and help to explain variations in social behavior across different contexts.

Overall, "The Structure of Social Action" is a foundational work in sociology that laid the groundwork for Parsons' later theories on social systems, social order, and the role of culture in shaping human behavior. It remains an influential text in the field of social theory and continues to be studied and debated by scholars today.

**The Social System**

"The Social System," published in 1951, is a book written by Talcott Parsons, one of the most influential sociologists

of the 20th century. In simple terms, here's an overview of the key ideas presented in the book:

**Action Theory:** Parsons begins by discussing the concept of social action, which refers to how people behave in social situations. He emphasizes that people's actions are influenced by their goals, the means they use to achieve them, and the situations they find themselves in.

**AGIL Scheme:** Parsons introduces the AGIL scheme, which outlines four functional imperatives that all social systems must address to survive and function effectively. These imperatives are Adaptation (fitting into the environment), Goal Attainment (achieving society's aims), Integration (keeping society together), and Latency (maintaining stability and continuity).

**Social Structure:** Parsons discusses the importance of social structure in shaping people's behavior and interactions.

Social structure refers to the patterns of relationships, roles, and institutions that make up a society. Parsons argues that social structure provides the framework within which individuals operate and helps to maintain social order and stability.

Pattern Variables: Parsons introduces the concept of pattern variables, which are fundamental dimensions of social action that influence behavior. These variables include factors such as affectivity (emotional attachment vs. neutrality), specificity (particularity vs. diffuseness), diffuseness (broad vs. narrow focus), and self-orientation (self-interest vs. collective interest).

**Role Theory:** Parsons develops a theory of social roles, which are sets of rights and obligations associated with particular positions in society. He explains how roles help to organize social interactions, guide people's behavior, and maintain social order.

Overall, "The Social System" provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how societies function and how social systems maintain stability and continuity. It remains a foundational text in sociology and has had a profound influence on the field of social theory.

**Essays in Sociological Theory**

"Essays in Sociological Theory," published in 1964, is a collection of writings by Talcott Parsons that explores various sociological concepts and theories. Here's a simplified overview of the key ideas presented in the book:

**Theory Building:** Parsons discusses the process of theory building in sociology, emphasizing the importance of developing systematic and coherent frameworks for understanding social phenomena.

**Functionalism:** Parsons explores the concept of functionalism, which is the idea that social institutions and structures serve specific functions or purposes in society. He discusses how functionalist perspectives can help explain social order and stability.

**Pattern Variables:** Parsons elaborates on his theory of pattern variables, which are fundamental dimensions of social action that influence behavior. He discusses how these variables can be used to analyze and understand variations in social behavior across different contexts.

**Social Systems:** Parsons examines the concept of social systems, which are complex arrangements of social structures and institutions that interact and interrelate. He discusses how social systems maintain stability and adapt to change over time.

**Role Theory:** Parsons develops his theory of social roles further, emphasizing the importance of roles in organizing social interactions and guiding behavior. He discusses how individuals occupy various roles in society and how these roles shape their identities and behavior.

Overall, "Essays in Sociological Theory" provides a comprehensive overview of Talcott Parsons' contributions to sociology, including his theories on functionalism, pattern variables, social systems, and role theory. It remains a valuable resource for scholars and students interested in understanding the foundations of sociological thought.

**Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives**

"Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives," published in 1966, is a book co-authored by Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils. This book explores the development and structure of societies from an evolutionary and comparative perspective. Here's a simplified overview of the key ideas presented in the book:

**Evolutionary Perspective:** Parsons and Shils discuss how societies evolve over time, tracing the historical development of different social structures and institutions. They explore how societies progress through stages of development, from simpler forms to more complex and organized structures.

**Comparative Analysis:** The authors compare and contrast various societies from different regions and historical periods. They examine similarities and differences in social organization, cultural practices, and institutional arrangements across societies.

**Functionalism:** Building on Parsons' functionalist perspective, the book emphasizes the idea that social institutions and structures serve specific functions or purposes in society. The authors analyze how different social systems maintain stability and adapt to change.

**Cultural Patterns:** Parsons and Shils explore the role of culture in shaping social behavior and organization. They examine how cultural beliefs, values, and practices influence the structure and functioning of societies.

**Social Change:** The book discusses how societies undergo change over time, including processes of social innovation, adaptation, and transformation. The authors examine the factors that drive social change and the consequences for societal development.

**Overall, "Societies:** Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives" provides a comprehensive examination of the evolution and structure of societies, drawing on insights from evolutionary theory, comparative analysis, and functionalist sociology. It offers valuable insights into the dynamics of social change and the diversity of human societies across time and space.

**Politics and Social Structure**

"Politics and Social Structure," published in 1969, is a book written by Talcott Parsons that explores the relationship between politics and social organization. Here's a simplified overview of the key ideas presented in the book:

**Political Systems**: Parsons examines political systems as one of the key components of social organization. He discusses how political institutions and processes interact with other aspects of society, such as the economy, religion, and culture.

**Power and Authority:** The book explores the concepts of power and authority within political systems. Parsons discusses how power is distributed and exercised within societies, and how authority is legitimized through norms, values, and institutions.

**Role of Government:** Parsons analyzes the role of government in maintaining social order and providing governance. He discusses the functions of government in regulating social behavior, managing conflicts, and providing public goods and services.

**Political Participation:** Parsons examines the role of individuals and groups in the political process. He discusses mechanisms of political participation, such as voting, lobbying, and activism, and their impact on shaping political decisions and policies.

**Social Change:** The book discusses how politics interacts with processes of social change. Parsons examines how political systems adapt to changing social conditions, respond to crises, and promote social stability and continuity.

Overall, "Politics and Social Structure" provides a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between politics and social organization, offering insights into the functioning of political systems within broader societal contexts. It remains a valuable resource for understanding the dynamics of politics and governance in modern societies.

* The primary socialization of children.
* The stabilization of adult personalities.

The primary socialization of children refers to the process of teaching kids about society’s norms, rules and values, thus making them aware of what is right and wrong, what is allowed and not allowed and how they can contribute to the labour force and the overall progress of society most effectively. This is how primary socialization contributes to the stabilization of society.

* According to Parsons, educational institutions focus on the transmission of two key values to their pupils. What are these?
* The importance of achievement and the value of equality of opportunity.
* Students are encouraged to value educational achievement and strive for it through hard work and through maximizing their potential.
* Pupils are encouraged to believe that they compete on equal terms in the classroom.
* Role allocation means that people are directed towards the jobs and positions in society which suit their abilities and work ethic the most, thus making sure that everyone has a role in wider society in which they can perform the best.

Parsons believed that religion is closely connected to a society’s culture and its norms and values. As such, religion is a vital part of each and every society. It determines shared norms and rules, and it provides a widely accepted meaning of all human life.

Religion can also help to make sense of unexpected and even unwanted events and experiences that inevitable occurs in humans’ lives. Religion, thus, is a necessary element for social order.

Parsons dominated American sociology up to the 60s. Afterwards, he was largely ignored because he was rather conservative and traditionalist. He saw man as an overly socialized being, which idea was challenged and criticized by many sociologists in the second half of the 20th century.

Nevertheless, he remained as one of the most important reference points for later scholars, especially due to his studies in the topics of family, women’s place in society, race relations, sickness and role allocation and authoritarianism in politics.

Philosopher Talcott Parsons broadened Max Weber's original envisioning of social action theory by claiming that all human behaviors are informed by the tension between two forces: dynamizing and controlling. His structural-functionalist perspective incorporated the influences of larger social systems on individual conduct.

His voluntaristic theory of social action explained how human beings could make different decisions in similar circumstances based on the factors of dynamizing and controlling influences.

As a result of controlling forces (e.g., social norms, familial expectations, personal code of ethics) and dynamizing ones (e.g., injustice, an act of violence, passion, ambition), situated in the context of a specific moment and how an individual is experiencing it (the "action space"), human beings make unique decisions in their social actions.

Based on empirical data, Parsons' social action theory was the first broad, systematic, and generalizable theory of social systems developed in the United States and Europe.

Although Parsons is generally considered a structural functionalist, towards the end of his career, in 1975, he published an article that stated that "functional" and "structural functionalist" were inappropriate ways to describe the character of his theory.

A function is a complex of activities directed towards meeting a need or needs of the system. Using this definition, persons believes that there are four functional imperatives that are necessary for all systems-Adaption (A), Goals (G)Integration(I), and Latency (L), or pattern scheme. In order to survive, a system must perform these four function.

**Adaptation:** A system must cope with external situational needs. it must adopt to its environmental and adopt the environment to its needs.

**Goal attainment:** A system must define and achieve its primary goals.

**Integration:** A system must regulate the interrelationship of its components parts. It also must manage the relationship among the other three functional imperatives.

**Latency (pattern maintenance):** A system must furnish, maintain, and renew both the motivation of individual and the cultural patterns that create and sustain the motivation.

It is obvious that persons had a clear no notion of "levels" of social analysis as well as their relationship.

The hierarchical arrangement is clear, and the level are integrated in parson's system in two ways.

First each of the lower level provide the condition, the energy, needed for the higher level. Second the higher level control those below then in the hierarchy.

According to Parsons, social phenomena could be studied through scientific methods and his aim was to use scientific methods in the study of society.

According to positivism, there is a cause and effect relationship between events in a society, but according to parsons, there may be no relation to a social event due to any kind of action. This phenomenon often happens by chance.

According to Parsons, certain events in a person's social life may not be due to thought alone. Idealism believed that any event originated from thought but was rejected by parsons.

According to parsons, an individual or a society not only thinks logically, but also relies on its own conscience, social values ​​and customs.

Not only use reasoning but his norms and value is one of the most importance part of society. Conflict is not necessary to accept the social rules of society Because human moral commitment is required and it arises out of common values.

**Concept and Contribution of Functionalism**

Attempted to generate a grand theory of society that explained all social behavior, everywhere throughout history and the end result was structure functionalism.

**Functionalism**

Views society as having interrelated parts that contribute to the functioning of the whole system.

**Macro sociological theory:** focus on large scale, social pattern and social systems

**Social action theory**

* Social action theory begins with a biological, sociological conceptualization of the basic unit of study as the “unit act”.
* An “act” involve the following:
1. An agent or actor
2. Must have an end or goal
3. Must be In a situation which differs from state of affair the action is oriented
4. There exists alternative meanings to the end
5. An act is always a process in time
6. “End” impels a future reference or state that does not exist yet
7. Actions consist of structures and processes by which humans from meaningful intentions and implement them
8. Social action is preformed by an actor as an individuals or a group.

**Social system**

Parson’s described a system as a “complex” unit of some kind with boundaries, within which parts are connected and within which something take place.

The social system is an arrangement between parts and elements that exist over time, even while some elements changed. Systems are made of order and the interdependence of parts.

Systems are generally static, or move in a deliberate manner. A disruption in the normal flow of one sub-system can cause a disturbance throughout the whole system. Systems have boundaries, which may involve actual physical space, or time and distance.