

A Review of Different Views about Scope of Sociology

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Abstract – Different societies in different ages have believed in different types of institutions. Sociology should isolate and test the empirical aspect of social behaviour without going into the value laden question of whether the empirical propositions are true or false. The question of ‘what ought to be’ is beyond the scope of Sociology.

A correct decision on what is empirically true is not the same as a correct decision on what ought to be. While social facts can be subjected to empirical tests, values cannot. Values and facts are two separate things, and should be kept analytically distinct Scientific enquiry should be value-free.

Key Words : Sociology, Science, Scope etc.

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INTRODUCTION

There is no one opinion about the scope of Sociology. V. F. Calberton writes, "Since Sociology is so elastic a science, it is difficult to determine just where its boundaries begin and end, where sociology becomes social psychology and where social psychology becomes sociology, or where economic theory becomes sociological doctrine or biological theory becomes sociological theory, something, which is impossible to decide."

It is maintained by some that Sociology studies everything and anything under the sun. This is rather too vague a view about the scope of Sociology. As a matter of fact, Sociology has a limited field of enquiry and deals with those problems which are not dealt with by other social sciences.

In the broadest sense, Sociology is the study of human interactions and inter-relations, their conditions and consequences. Thus ideally Sociology has for its field the whole life of man in society, all the activities whereby men maintained 'themselves in the struggle for existence, the rules and regulations which define their relations to each other, the systems of knowledge and belief, art and morals and any other capacities and habits acquired and developed in the course of their activities as members of society.

But this is too wide a scope for any science to deal with properly. An attempt has, therefore, been made to limit and demarcate the field of Sociology. There are two main schools of thought among sociologists on this issue.

One group of writers headed by German sociologist, Simmel, demarcates Sociology clearly from other branches of social study and confines it to the enquiry into certain defined aspects of human relationship. They regard sociology as pure and independent.

The other group maintains that the field of social investigation is too wide for any one science and that if any progress is to be made there must be specialisation and division and insists that in addition to special social sciences such as Economics, Anthropology, History etc. there is need also of a general social science, i.e. Sociology whose function it would be to inter-relate the results of the special social sciences and to deal with the general conditions of social life. In the opinion of this group Sociology is a general science.

Different views about the scope of Sociology.

Simmel's view:

According to Simmel, the distinction between Sociology and other special sciences is that it deals with the same topics as they from a different angle—from the angle of different modes of social relationships. Social relationships, such as competition, subordination, division of labour etc. are exemplified in different spheres of social life such as economic, the political and even the religious, moral or artistic but the business of Sociology is to disentangle these forms of social relationships and to study them in abstraction. Thus according to Simmel, Sociology is a specific

social science which describes, classifies, analyses and delineates the forms of social relationships.

Small's view:

According to Small, sociology does not undertake to study all the activities of society. Every science has a delimited scope. The scope of sociology is the study of the generic forms of social relationships, behaviours and activities, etc.

Vierkandt's view:

Similarly, Vierkandt, another leading sociologist maintains that Sociology is a special branch of knowledge concerned with the ultimate forms of mental or psychic relationships which link men to one another in society. According to him, the actual historical societies, for example, the French society of the eighteenth century, or the Chinese family are of interest to a sociologist only as illustration of particular types of relationships. He further maintains that similarly in dealing with culture sociology should not concern itself with the actual contents of cultural evolution but it should confine itself to only the discovery of the fundamental forces of change and persistence. It should abstain from a historical study of concrete societies.

Max Weber's view:

Max Weber also makes out a definite field for Sociology. According to him, the aim of Sociology is to interpret or understand social behaviour. But social behaviour does not cover the whole field of human relations. Indeed not all human inter-actions are social. For instance, a collision between two cyclists is in itself merely a natural phenomenon, but their efforts to avoid each other or the language they use after the event constitute true social behaviour. Sociology is thus, according to him, concerned with the analysis and classification of types of social relationships.

Von Wiese's view:

According to Von Wiese, the scope of Sociology is the study of forms of social relationships. He has divided these social relationships into many kinds.

Tonnie's view:

Tonnie also has supported the formalistic school. He has differentiated between society and community on the basis of forms of relationships.

CONCLUSION:

Thus, the scope of Sociology is very wide. It is a general science but it is also a special science. As a matter of fact, the subject matter of all social

sciences is society. What distinguishes them from one another is their viewpoint.

Thus economics studies society from an economic viewpoint; political science studies it from political viewpoint while history is a study of society from a historical point of view Sociology alone studies social relationships and society itself. Maclver correctly remarks, What distinguishes each from each is the selective interest. Sociology studies all the various aspects of society such as social traditions, social processes, social morphology, social control, social pathology, effect of extra-social elements upon social relationships etc.

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