

1 Rethinking Modern Sociological Theories: An Analytical
2 Synthesis of Their Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology

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6

7 **Abstract**

8 No matter how different sociological ontology, epistemology and methodology are, they pull
9 together reasoning the social world for a better human understanding. So of their diverse
10 theoretical paradigms and perspectives that developed over the time make sociology a distinct
11 discipline. But so far their internal contradictions and dualism and could not be resolved, and
12 rather invites challenges for the future prospect of world sociology. The challenge is not how
13 they thrive humans on different or almost many a unique universe of meanings but to see their
14 crossboundaries of meanings. Our study also reveals that now the foundationism- the
15 theoretical narratives of Durkheim, Marx and Weber (DMW) have been reconstructed and
16 regained with a fresh lease of life in the sociological world. But the proponents for such
17 original building block are not always visible protagonists. However, in this context, the
18 neo-functional theorists buttress structural functionalism by introducing with some radicalism
19 whereas the critical theorists juxtapose the conflict theoretical perspectives uncovering many
20 missing dimensions of suppression and exclusions of sociological marginal and minorities.

21

22 **Index terms**— theoretical sociology, analogy, ontology, epistemology, approach, methodology.

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37 **3 Introduction**

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5 II. ANALOGICAL THESIS AND SYNTHESIS OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

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47 protagonists. However, in this context, the neo-functional theorists buttress structural functionalism with some
48 radicalism whereas the critical theorists juxtapose the conflict theoretical perspectives uncovering many missing
49 dimensions of exclusions of sociological marginal and minorities. There is also hardly any visible attempt to break
50 loose their compartmentalization in sociology. But why this so happens props up many queries in contemporary
51 sociological theorizing. This paper reflects upon the juxtaposition of functionalism versus neo-functionalism and
52 of conflict versus critical theories especially looking into their theoretical ontology, epistemology and methodology
53 for future of sociology. The theoretical contrast and continuum deconstructed through analytical paradigms in
54 creative figure formats promote perspective optimism for an epistemological synthesis in the paper. Thus, the
55 author argues it to be an inevitable prerequisite for the future of world sociology. Just two and a half decades
56 later the subject Sociology will commemorate her two century old disciplinary origin in the European world.
57 So of its theoretical eclecticism has been proved incredible worldwide. However, its retrospective history does
58 not uphold the common disciplinary concerns because its theoretical analogy, ontology, approach, epistemology
59 and methodology are distinctly perceived as divergence theses in sociology. Of most sociological theories the
60 significant theories like structural-functionalism, conflict theory, critical theory and neo-functional theory are
61 usually taken as for instance, to explore such dynamics.

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63 In this context, both theoretical building blocks-the functional theory and conflict theory are largely unique
64 although not indifferent to one another. Historically, the much of functional analysis was active from 1940s
65 to 1950s and remained dominant till 1960s (see, Turner, 2013; Allan, 2013). However, the functional theories
66 developed by Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, Brown and Parsons retrospectively were debated and contested in 1970s
67 and severely criticized in 1980s. Consequently, the functional theorizing reveals its weakness as well as threat to
68 the growth of sociology worldwide. On the other hand, Marx's ideas on materialistic reductionism, historical and
69 dialectical materialism, radicalism, revolutionary change, etc, were taken as alternative dimensions of thinking
70 on society contrary to that of structural functionalism in sociology. Karl Marx as the chief architect of conflict
71 sociology had prospective impact on the writings of G. Simmel, Mitchel, C.Wright Mills, Ralf Dahrendorf,
72 Lewis Coser, Irving Louis Horowitz and Randal Collins in sociology (Turner, 2013; Abraham and Morgan,
73 2010; ??ottomore and Nisbet, 2004). Further, going through the history of sociology we can assume that since
74 the structural-functional and conflict theories have been rectified and revised, a need of rethinking for their
75 theoretical synthesis is greatly solicited. There may be three groups of sociologists such as One the theoretical
76 protagonists-functionalists or conflict theorists themselves who argue for their respective theorizing, Second the
77 theoretical antagonists-the functionalists and conflict theorists who argue against each other and third the
78 protagonistsantagonists' dualists who have the tendency of dualism. This antagonist dilemma and dualism
79 not necessarily polarize the sociological theorizing but become potential possibilities for a theoretical synthesis.
80 In this context, the sociological theorists with sociological background (insiders) and the social theorists with
81 non-sociological backgrounds (out siders) largely contribute to the growth of theoretical ontology, epistemology
82 and methodology in sociology. Thus, this stimulates intellectual debates and deliberation worldwide. This is
83 also true that, the theoretical oppositions are no more contradictory but complementary to one another as
84 no dichotomised theoretical assumptions remain sacrosanct at present. Indeed each one's boundary has been
85 crossed and the peculiarity it used to hold has been criticised, liberalised and secularised to a large extent.
86 To address such dynamics at this juncture of world sociology a rethinking on their contrast, continuum and
87 synthesis is indispensable. In this context, we have a The critical reflection on the issues related to ontological,
88 epistemological and methodological contrast, continuum and synthesis between functional theorists and conflict
89 theorists, between functional and nefunctionalists theorists, between conflict and critical theorists in the sociology
90 has been comprehended in the article. The theoretical literatures mostly developed in macro sociology have been
91 critically analysed in this paper. ?? Crapanzano, 1992;Haralambos;1980; ??erton, 1968; ??arsons, 1937Giddens,
92 1979; ??oudner, 1976;Gouldner, 1970; ??ills,1959; ??adel,1957). Before exploring a theoretical synthesis a
93 theoretical contrast and continuum have been deconstructed in the article through different analytical paradigms.
94 The major objective of this article, therefore, is to find out not simply the contrast and continuum between
95 functional and conflict perspectives, between structural-functional and neo-functional perspectives, between
96 conflict and critical perspectives and also among all perspectives themselves. In this backdrop, we have developed
97 a creative cross-Figure Format using SWOT analysis in detail.

98 5 II. Analogical Thesis and Synthesis of Sociological Theories

99 In fact, in order to give a progressive push to the academic development in the crises of European societies the early
100 functionalists promptly accepted organic analogy as established by Greek philosophers (Hobbes and Rousseau)

and Biology as an already established scientific subject in the western world at that time ??Rizter,2004). The organism analogy was germinated in functional theorizing by Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, Brown and Parsons accordingly (Turner, 2013; Allan, 2013). Such functional analogy was greatly reflected in the field studies undertaken by the social anthropologists who developed unique structuralfunctional theories in a comparative analysis. In this context, contribution of Durkheim, Brown and Malinowski are par excellence (Garada, 2013;Macionis, 2006; ??izter, 2004; ??isbet and Bottomore, 2004). The functionalists using organic analogy view the society as a living organism where its parts-families, classes and cities and communities were compared with that of cells, tissues and organs of a living organism. While Comte conceived society like living organic system Spencer conceived it as a super organic system as how it organizes human social life in the line of functional arrangement of biological organism (ibid). He distinctly analyzed the uniqueness of inorganic, organic and super organic analogies. Durkheim conceives the society as *sui-generis* (something more than the mere combination of its parts) along with its causal functional requirement of society. Later period, the extension of Spencer's functional analysis was found in Bronislaw Malinowski's understanding of biological system, social system, and cultural systems ??1913, ??944) while the Durkheimian tradition was sustained in A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's understanding of structural functionalism ??1914, ??922, ??924, ??935, ??952). The functional theorizing was further, revived and sustained by Parsons and Merton greatly till 1960s as a dominant theorizing in America. The structural functionalism developed by E.Durkheim and L.Strauss in France, Malinowski and Nadel in Britain and Parsons and Merton in America explains its intellectual specialization differently (Turner, 2013; Upadhyaya and ??andey, 1993; ??erton, 1968; ??arsons, 1937). Interestingly, the cross-countries intellectual extension from Comte and Durkheim in France to Radcliff Brown in Britain and from Spencer to Malinowski from Britain and Parsons from America could establish the core of functional paradigm over the time. However, there is difference between organic analogy applied by Comte, Spencer and Brown which views society as empirical reality and system analogy used by Parsons which views society as social system-a conceptual scheme (Garada, 2013; ??erton, 1968; ??arsons, 1937). Thus, structural-functionalism is being greatly reflected from organic analogy and conceptual scheme of social system in sociology. On the other hand, the so called conflict theorizing came to sociology as a synthetic tradition of the two early western philosophies-the political philosophy developed by Machiavelli, Bodin, Hobbes and Mosca and the philosophy of classical economics developed by Adam Smith and Robert Malthus(. Karl Marx was its chief architect as A.F.). In spite of its multiplicity the conflict theories project dualistic views of social reality such as conflict between bourgeoisie and proletariat for property (Marx's understanding), elite and master for power (Mill's understanding) and the ruler and ruled(Dahrendorf's understanding) for authority (ibid). History is testimony to the fact that a fresh rethinking on Marxism by Frankfort school at the University of Frankfort in Germany helped its protagonists to revise and reconstruct the conflict theorizing with new inclusive dimension in sociology eliminating its earlier limitations and rigidity(ibid,.). In this context, the Figure-1 explicates the fundamental convictions of theoretical analogy for the future prospect of world sociology. In this Figure-1 we can observe that while organic analogy or system analogy used in structuralfunctional theorizing the descriptive/system analogy are used in neo-functional theorizing. The dialectical materialistic analogy is used in the conflict theorizing the dialectical but material and non-material analogies are used in the critical theorizing. Thus, a contrast analogical thinking is not simply there between functional and conflict theorizing but also between functionalism and neo-functionalism and between conflict and critical theorizing in sociology. However, an analogical continuum is also seems to be there between two similar block of theoretical sociology. The Figure-2 reveals that the system analogy and dialectical materialistic analogy are the potential continuum between Structural-Functional theories and neofunctional theories, and between conflict theory and critical theory respectively. Thus, it is the descriptive analogy which is followed in each theoretical sociology as we can see in the The two different theory building blocks such as the first one refers to structural-functional-neo-functional theories and the second one refers to the conflict-critical theories can be put together for an analogical synthesis in sociology. The Figure-2 clears that the system cumdescriptive analogy developed in the structuralfunctional-neo-functional theory and dialectical analogy found in conflict-critical theory reveals the possibility of analogical synthesis. Thus, the descriptive analogy, dialectical analogy and conflict functional analogy together help synthesizing the analogical theories of functionalism-neo-functional theories and conflict-critical theories in sociology. However, the dynamics of major analytical synthetic reflect their strength, weakness, opportunity and threat (SWOT) for the future of global sociology. As we can observe from the Figure-3 that the dynamics of holistic descriptive understanding and reconstruction /revisionist motivation are assumed to be the strength and opportunity respectively and the dynamics of revivalist motivation and continuity with core of functionalism respectively are assumed to be the weakness and threat respectively in structuralfunctional-neo-functional analogical synthesis. In case of conflict-critical theoretical analogical synthesis the dynamics of dialecticalism and communistic vision are assumed to be the strength and opportunity respectively and the dynamics of revivalist motivation and political motivation are assumed to be the weakness and threat respectively.

Interestingly the descriptive-cum dialectical analogy and inter and intra-theoretical motivations as the strength and opportunity respectively and hiding theoretical contradiction and theoretical endism as weakness and threat respectively are revealed in the analogical synthesis of two different theory building blocks of structural-functionalism-neofunctionalism and conflict-critical theory in their togetherness.

162 6 III. Ontological Thesis and Synthesis of Sociological Theories

163 Ontology in sociology deals with the queries of what is social reality, what really exists, the conceptions of what
164 social realities are, etc. The sociological ontology different from material ontology as visible natural objects of
165 earth, water and plants, discursive ontology as religious ethics and texts and constructed arte factual ontology as
166 constructed infrastructures, amenities and arts deals with social structures, social conventions, social norms, social
167 values, etc (see, ??leetwood,2013;Hall, 2003; ??ould, 1978). The ontology the structural-functional theorists
168 propose is the structural ontology which goes beyond individualistic ontology (individual is the reality). The
169 sociologists like Hegel, Marx, Durkheim, Parsons, Strauss, Gidden, Althusser and Bourdieu all explain like this
170 (Garada, 2013; ??urner;Doshi, 2003). In this context, the structural-functional theorists assume that there is
171 social reality that exists not simply as a thing that exterior to individuals but also coerce the individuals (Turner,
172 2013; Allan, 2013; Macionis, 2006; Rizter, 2004; Nisbet and ??ottomore, 2004;Doshi, 2003; ??itzer &Smart, 2001;
173 ??urner, 1999;Haralambos, 1980). Thus, unlike physical reality which is visible the social reality is invisible, unlike
174 discursive ontology it is factual reality and unlike ideal reality it is real reality. To the structural-functionalists
175 the invisible, factual and real social reality makes the individual as if a creature not creator of society. However,
176 it brings in its structures-harmony, stability, order and equilibrium which are indispensable for the individuals
177 as social beings to live in. The conflict theorist on the other hand though does not reject the social ontology
178 but doubt its consensus mechanism, and instead focus on its dissensus mechanism and contradictory tendencies
179 among the structural parts (Garada, 2013). They explain how the social reality is social in the sense it perpetuates
180 structural inequality, exploitation and oppression in the society. The structuralism emphasizes the underlying
181 deep structure as ontological position (Levis Strauss) whereas the functionalists see it social structure however
182 both acknowledge the structural forces behind the social actions performed by the individuals in the society. The
183 social ontology makes individual as structural dopes and critical theorists make individuals as cultural dopes
184 (Garfinkel, 1967). The conflict theorists doubting the stability and order in structural functionalism question
185 the making of individuals as structural dopes, and therefore argue the need of change for stability whereas the
186 critical sociologists argue for the emancipation and liberation of the cultural dopes. The neo-functionalists seem
187 to rectifying the over dominancy of structural over agency and instead argue for integrating the structure and
188 agency in the sociological analysis. The ontological autopsies of structural functionalism cannot be justified
189 always as without agency there will be no structure. In fact, the conflict theorists expose the ontological dualism
190 in the sociological analysis. The ontological monism as only structure as reality not agency is not rectified in
191 the structural functionalism because Durkheim himself perceived the dualistic image of society but the society
192 is perceived more than the sums of its parts (Turner; 2013; Garada, 2013 Talcott Parsons also in the beginning
193 did not visualise the dichotomy between structure and agency. Thus, the potential possibilities of this dualism
194 are somehow getting resolved through neo-functionalism for their ontological synthesis. Similarly the ontological
195 dualism in conflict theories gets resolved at their synthesis. The Marxism is never discussed without its visionary
196 process of synthesis. The ontological dualism of thesis and antithesis is thus perceived to make their synthesis
197 in course of time after passing through the processes of materialistic and historical dialecticalism. Marxism is
198 more optimistic in this sense. To Marxism it is our existence which determines our consciousness but not vice
199 versa. But in reality the consciousness was taken into consideration in Marxism as from false class consciousness
200 to true class consciousness is achievable in a circumstances of class for itself in the process of classless society.
201 Thus, our mere material existence is meaningless unless there will be class consciousness. In fact, the entire
202 critical research in Frankfort school of thought in Germany and failures of Marxism in Soviet Russia brought
203 pessimism in the sociological theories. However, the dualism and dichotomy between structure and agency can
204 be resolved through neo-functionalists like Jeffrey Alexander and Nicklas Luhmann and critical theorists like
205 Louse Althusser and Habermas in the macrosociological theories (see, Turner, 2013; Garada, 2013; Harbermas,
206 1987;Connerton, 1976). If we carefully see the critical realism evolved through the critical discourses as for
207 instance in case of Roy Bhasker's analysis of critical realism although society is created out of individual but
208 irreducible to individuals is not free from the dualism (see, ??haskar, 1997 ?? 993,1989a ??nd1989b, Collier,
209 1994). The dynamics of ontological thesis and synthesis of sociological theories can be better analyzed for the
210 comprehension of analogical debate in the sociology.

211 7 IV. Thesis and Synthesis of Theoretical Approaches

212 The sociologists tend to conduct social research in three level i.e., micro (in individual level), meso (group
213 level) and macro (institutional and structural level). At the micro level the sociologists study the experiences of
214 individuals and their interactions whereas at meso level they study the experiences of groups and their interactions.
215 But at the macro level, they examine the role of social structures and institutions related to individual and group
216 experiences. Unfortunately, there has been growing gulf between these approaches over the years in sociology.
217 There is also hardly any visible attempt to break loose their compartmentalization in sociology. But why this
218 is happened so props up significant query in contemporary sociological theorizing. The Figure ??4 explicates
219 that the functional and conflict theory explains about macro level studies and their significance whereas neo-
220 functionalism reflects upon both macro and micro level approaches. And, over the macro level approaches
221 developed in structural-functional and conflict theory explains an abstract understanding of the social structures
222 and institutions.

223 The dichotomy between micro and macro perpetuate the contrast between the agency and structure, part
224 and whole, individual and society, action and order, life world and system world, conversation analysis and
225 discursive analysis, positivists and realists, concrete and abstract, particular and general, subjectivity and
226 objective conditions, etc. However, the first and second waves of debate on 'micro' and 'macro' sociology started
227 in 1960s and 1980s respectively help bridging the gap between micro and macro sociology for a better perspective
228 of their inter-linkages and synthesis (see, ??ollins, 1998;1991; ??norr-Cetina; ??iley, 1988 ?? Ritzer, 1985 ??
229 1988 ?? Alexander et al., 1987; ??norr-Cetina and Cicourel, 1981; ??itzer, 1981). In this context, though
230 the structural-functionalism, neo-functionalism, conflict theory and critical theory focus on macro-approaches
231 but have potential possibilities of micro understanding of the social phenomena. Organic analogy, analytical
232 schemes, teleological and tautological derivatives, system pre-requisites, etc as running bloods of grand narratives
233 perpetuate the processes of macro approaches in sociology. The grand theorizing of Meta narratives is largely
234 reflected through macro approaches. The foundational, grand and impersonal contiguity go beyond the individual
235 reach. On the one hand the neo-functionalism includes both macro and micro approaches in sociology. It made
236 efforts to integrate ideas from exchange theory, symbolic interactionism, pragmatism, phenomenology, and so
237 on. In other words, Alexander and Colomby endeavoured to synthesize structural functionalism with a number of
238 other theoretical traditions (Garada, 2013;Doshi, 2003; ??itzer, 2004). The Figure-4 explains that the strength
239 of structural-functional and conflict theoretical approaches seems to be have similar Nomothetic approaches
240 as strength but non-similar system and dynamic approaches as opportunity. The Figure also explains that
241 though there has been similarity between different theoretical approaches they are in variation of SWOT analysis.
242 Similarly there is a similar macro approaches found in both critical theory and neo-functional theories but their
243 dissimilar opportunities such as historical approach and system approach is found there respectively. As a result,
244 weakness and threat are dissimilar and more severe than the strength and opportunities found in the macro-
245 sociological theories. In case of structural-functional approach the narrative approach and ahistorical approach
246 are the weaknesses whereas it is the reductionist and conflicting tendency in the conflict theory. However, such
247 weaknesses are rectified in the strength and opportunity of critical and neofunctional theories to some extent.
248 Thus, the critical and neo-functional theories have immense possibilities of a synthetic approach in sociological
249 theories. However, their synthesis cannot be free from their teleological approach and structure-agency conflict in
250 sociology. The possibility of macro and micro approaches and of post-positivism greatly signifies in the Alexander's
251 theory of neo-functionalism. However, it has neither any substantive alternative epistemological background nor
252 substantive ontological identity. Thus, the questions of ethics in neo-functionalism are yet to proved. Now, it
253 is worthwhile to note only how distinct is the neo-functionalism but also what it continues with the structural
254 functionalism. In term of SWOT analysis the synthesis between macro-micro approaches however reveals both
255 advantage and disadvantage for the sociologists. The potential synthesis between structural functionalism and
256 neo-functionalism is the Nomotheticideographic approaches whereas between Conflict theory and Critical theory
257 is the nomothetic approach as stated earlier. The Nomothetic approach against any speculative theorizing
258 in sociology is largely being accepted in sociology. Thus, the potential synthesis of the Nomothetic-Ideographic
259 approaches is assumed to be the strength but the dominating tendency of nomethotic over ideographic approaches
260 remains the weakness in sociology.

261 V.

262 **8 Epistemological and Methodological Thesis and Synthesis of 263 Sociological Theories**

264 All macro-sociological theories hardly clear about their origin, nature, extend and possibility of knowledge in a
265 certain manner. However, their knowledge claims on what social reality is and how real it is get resolved through
266 their epistemological grounds. However, the epistemological grounds they provide for their claims on nature and
267 extend of social reality as how much representative, reliable and valid is the significant questions. In fact, two
268 important inquiries can be made through objective and subjective verification for their justification. In objective
269 verification the positivistic epistemology with quantitative methods and techniques are emphasized whereas in
270 subjective verification interpretative epistemology with qualitative methods and technique are emphasized (see,
271 Law, 2004;Lin, 1998;Giddens, 1979; ??uller, 1991; ??eber, 1949). The question is that which mode of verification
272 is appropriate to unravel the origin, nature, extent and possibility of knowledge on social phenomena or social
273 reality. In fact both the objective and subject mode of verifications is important for the understanding of social
274 reality. However, the early macro-theories like structuralfunctionalism and conflict theories are perceived to
275 have the former mode of verifications neglecting the latter mode of verification. As a result, the positivistic
276 epistemology with quantitative methods and techniques has been dominating the interpretative epistemology
277 with qualitative methods and techniques. Now to deal with the ontological questions of what is reality or
278 nature of social reality the question of reliability, validity and representativeness of data whether qualitative or
279 quantitative is appropriate hardly resolved. It is because data remains and reflects through multiple ways. It
280 is also true that all ways are not exclusive in themselves as it is very difficult to say that positivism is entirely
281 different from interpretivism. Both qualitative and quantitative data are also related to one another. These two
282 data are analysed in statistical measures and non-statistical interpretation differently. The structural functional
283 theories based on the positivistic epistemology are applied with objective methodology and quantitative methods

8 EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL THESIS AND SYNTHESIS OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES

284 (Garada, 2013; Macionis, 2006; Brady, 2004;.). Their ontological claims are proved because it is based on verifiable
285 facts and universal law. It is logical and empirical in nature. The structural functionalists argue that social reality
286 exists out of our influences and true because it is verifiable and governed by general law. But this perspective
287 failed to explain the empirical possibilities in the society. The structural-functional explanation is therefore not
288 scientific in true sense of its application (see, ??arada, 2103 Homan, Doshi;). Probably, it is therefore R.K.Merton
289 reminded the norms of science that has not been institutionalized in the early functional theorizing. Sociology
290 like any other social science to what extent institutionalizes in itself the general norms of science such as norms of
291 disinterestedness, norms of communism, norms of universalism and norms of organized skepticism is still a matter
292 of scrutiny. Dealing with a structure it becomes vague, unclear, and ambiguous theoretical project in sociology
293 (see, for example, ??brahamson, 1978; ??ills, 1959). In fact, as a grand theory it claims to study all societies
294 is an illusion. And further comparative analysis is not possible in case of structural functionalism ??Turner,
295 2013; Garada, 2013; ??itzer, 2004). Antiempiricist bias is found to be there in structural functionalism as it is
296 more concerned with abstract social systems instead of real societies as stated earlier.

297 Like structural-functional theory the conflict theories are also perceived through positivistic epistemology.
298 But unlike structural-functional theory its methodology and methods are assumed to be both objective and
299 subjective and both quantitative and qualitative in nature. For instance, Marx's economic theory is largely
300 based on empiricism and G.Simmel's conflict theory emphasised the anti-positivistic stand like that of Weberian
301 interpretivism (Turner, 2013; Abraham). Thus, the conflict theorists not only react to the positivistic traditions of
302 structural -functionalism but also continued with the positivistic tradition but with correction. Thus, the conflict
303 theorists are more flexible and changeable with their outlook studying social realities. The methods applied
304 in both structural-functional theories and conflict theories are largely non-experimental such as comparative
305 and case studies, observation and statistical analysis, etc. Since both theorists belief that the knowledge about
306 the social reality/ phenomena based on objective facts their methodologies are nomothetic in nature. As for
307 instance, individual entity is denied infavour of collective entity that is society. The theorists largely belief
308 that the idiographic methodology (individual case/ experience) and speculative methodology (conjectural logic)
309 cannot help visualising true social realities. In fact, the epistemology, methodology and methods nurtured through
310 macrosociological theories are positivistic, objective and quantitative in nature respectively as explained earlier.
311 In this regards Garada (2013) rightly observes that "the psychic levels of all classical theorists were seemed to be
312 positivistic and rationalistic in the beginning. In fact, what could be studied objectively charged with the battery
313 of "etic methodology" and "collective rationality" became the subject matters of sociology" (Garada, 2013). In
314 real life situation the emperistic values of science hardly hold any truth in the use of static analogies-organismic,
315 linguistic and system which was the original defect of early sociology. It run through organic analogy emerged
316 through the ideas of Comte and Spencer together. The positivistic and interpretative epistemology of conflict
317 theories are better expressed in the post-positivistic framework of thinking in the critical sociology. As a result,
318 the sacrosanct tendency of positivism is broken with subjective methodology and qualitative methods in sociology.
319 The critical theorists or Frankfort school of thought are largely anti-positivists. However, the means and ends of
320 conflict theories are improvised through critical theories in great respect. They argue that positivism has been an
321 ideology for sustaining dominancy and exploitation in the society. The social phenomena or social reality cannot
322 be understood without their interpretations. The status quoist assumption of structural functional theories,
323 deterministic theory of Marxism hardly has any scope for interpretative epistemology. The critical theorists argue
324 without understanding the social reality we cannot verify and predict the social phenomenon. The stereotypes
325 of the positivism-representativeness, reliability and validity of epistemology, methodology and methods are no
326 longer resolved in the contemporary societies. It is the epistemology of post-positivism which justified in this
327 sense resolve the crisis of positivism in the sociology. The anti-dote of positivism -phenomenology and symbolic
328 interactionism hold up the true existential epistemology, methodology and methods in sociology. Furthermore, the
329 Figure-7 also explicates the strength of post-positivism in neo-functional theory. The neofunctionalism includes
330 objective /subjective methodology and both quantitative and qualitative methods in exploring the social realities.
331 The more the macro-sociology becoming flexible more flexible are epistemology, methodology and methods used
332 in the sociology. If we see the origin, nature and extent of macro-sociological theories there are many instances of
333 their continuum and synthesis among them in sociology. The Figure-7 in this respect visualise that the tradition
334 of positivism is the continuum between all the theories. The sense of positivism explains the intra and inters
335 theoretical juxtaposition. For instance, within structural functionalism Parsons' analytical functionalism and
336 Merton's empirical functionalism explain both theory and facts as equally important provided these are grounded
337 through positivistic epistemology, methodology and methods in sociology. And between structural functional
338 and neo-functional theories the traditions of positivism is reflected. Similarly within conflict theories the use of
339 positivism is revealed although not like the use of traditional positivism as inbuilt in structural-functional theory.
340 The tradition of positivism is also reflected between conflict theory and critical theory. Broadly the tradition
341 of post-positivism is germinated by the critical theories and neo-functional theories in sociology. It is therefore,
342 a synthetic understanding between the macro-theories can be visualised in the Figure -8. For a synthesis of
343 all theories in sociology it is important to see that there is a post-positivism tendency found in neo-functional
344 theory and critical theory help synthesising the epistemology, methodology and methods of structural-functional
345 theories and conflict theories in sociology. The SWOT analysis explores the possibly and extent of theoretical
346 epistemology and methodology for the future prospects of sociology. The positivism cum interpretivism and post-

347 positivism are assumed to be the strength and opportunity in the process of epistemological synthesis among
348 macrosociological theories in the sociology. By empiricism and experience the social reality will be realized in this
349 synthesis. However, the epistemological dualism spoils the established status of sociology as a scientific discipline.
350 And by realizing this positivistic epistemology gets revitalized over its associate-interpretative epistemology in
351 the process of synthesis in sociology.

352 **9 VI.**

353 For instance, in the name of positivism the empirical functionalism gets revitalized over analytical functionalism
354 whereas in the name of realism the terror of objectivity remains intact in sociology (Garada, 2013). Thus, the
355 objective methodology cannot be jeopardized in the process of methodological synthesis in sociology. However,
356 the objective cum-subjective synthesis adds an appropriate value to the sociology. Addition to that the critical
357 realism emerged in critical theories can better promote the future prospect of sociology. The Figure-9 also clears
358 that the quantitative-cum qualitative methods are more practical approach to research question. But in applying
359 so the sociologists overlook the limitation of their exclusive methods. The liberalism in neo-functionalism is an
360 inevitable correction of conservatism built in the theory of structural-functionalism whereas the radicalism in
361 conflict theory is rectified in political liberalism of critical theory. The radicalism of conflict theory challenges
362 the conservative collectivism and extreme individual liberalism. If we put the sociological theories into two
363 block-rightist and leftist then the structural-functionalism belongs to former block whereas the conflict theory
364 belong to latter block. But in fact, the radicalism may take shelter either in extreme economic conservatism for
365 instance in term of economic reductionism or extreme liberalism for instance in term of capitalism. However, the
366 ideological continuum between the major theories in sociology explains the needs of their rethinking. For instance,
367 the Parsons's action frame of references, the voluntaristic theory of action and pattern variables epitomise a
368 continuum of positivism, utilitarianism and idealism. It is thus, the neo-functionalism was developed on the
369 Parsons's functionalism. In fact, Parsons' attempt to capturing the essence of rationalism has been revised in neo-
370 functionalism. Because of this tendency there has been a possibility of ideological synthesis between structural-
371 functional and neo-functional theories. The Figure-10 explains that the prospect of liberalism is assumed to
372 be there in the connection of structural-functionalism with neo-functionalism. There are also an ideological
373 continuum between conflict theory and critical theory. For instance, the early Marxist Hegelianism/Humanism
374 developed in Marx's conflict theory is largely reflected in the political liberalism of critical theory (Turner, 2013).
375 Thus, the political liberalism might be the theoretical continuum exists between the conflict theory and critical
376 theory in sociology . The Figure-12 also clears that it is the political liberalism which explains the possibility
377 of synthesis between two theories in sociology. Thus, taking all these four theories together their possibilities of
378 ideological synthesize can be deconstructed in the sociology. And it is the liberalism in each theory however of their
379 different degrees can be the common factor of synthesis. The SWOT analysis of ideological synthesis as assumed
380 to be there in four theories explains different reflections. The synthetic tendency between structuralfunctionalism
381 and neo-functionalism and between conflict and critical theory are assumed to be of proidealism and pro-realism
382 respectively. The functionalism-neo-functionalism and conflict -critical theory therefore, can be synthesized
383 through the inclusion of idealism and realism as they are already promoted in them. Thus, the inclusiveness
384 of idealism with realism or vice-versa and of rationalization of neofunctionalism is assumed to the strength and
385 opportunity in the ideological synthesis. However, the moving/partial equilibrium and dualism of consensus and
386 dissensus mechanism perpetuate weakness and threat in the ideological synthesis.

387 **10 VII.**

388 **11 Conclusion**

389 Thus, we can conclude that the dimensions of theoretical contrast, continuum and convergence reflect a mixed
390 result on the prospect of sociology. The SWOT analysis exposes the dualism and dilemma of synthesizing
391 the kernels of sociological theories at present context. However, such dualism and dilemmas need to be
392 critically analysed through different dimensions that include-analogy, ontology, ideology, approach, epistemology,
393 methodology and methods as the most common conceptual measures of theoretical significance in sociology.
394 The descriptive-cum dialectical analogy and inter/intra-theoretical motivations as the analogical synthesisers
395 of sociological theories bring forth their strength as well as opportunity for the future prospect of sociology.
396 However, SWOT analysis also reflects the weakness and threat of theoretical endism in the process of analogical
397 synthesis of two different theoretical building blocks-the structuralfunctionalism-neo-functionalism and conflict-
398 critical theory in their togetherness. The ontological autopsies of structural functionalism cannot be justified
399 always as without agency there will be no structure. Thus, the potential possibilities of this dualism are
400 somehow getting resolved through the neo-functionalism for their amicable ontological synthesis. Similarly the
401 ontological dualism in conflict theories gets resolved through critical theories at their synthesis. However, the
402 ontological rigidity in structural functionalism and the ontological contradiction in conflict theories and their
403 continuities in neo-functionalism and critical sociology perpetuate theoretical weakness and threat in sociological
404 analysis. In term of SWOT analysis the potential synthesis of the nomothetic-ideographic approaches is assumed
405 to be the strength but the dominating tendency of former over latter approaches perpetuate the weakness
406 in sociology. The epistemological synthesis among macrosociological theories though promotes the process of

11 CONCLUSION

407 positivism cum-interpretivism and post-positivism as strength and opportunity respectively but cannot avoid their
408 epistemological dualism. Consequently such epistemological dualism spoils the established status of sociology as a
409 scientific discipline. The methodological synthesis draws a great deal of methodological triangulation in building
410 sociological theories in sociology. Further, the objective cum-subjective synthesis adds an appropriate value to the
411 sociology. Addition to that the critical realism emerged in critical theories can better promote the future prospect
412 of sociology. The quantitative-cum qualitative methods are more practical methodological approach to research
413 question. But in applying so the sociologists overlook the limitation of exclusive methodology and methods
414 that so far are being used in sociology. Thus, the inclusiveness of the neo-functional liberalism with critical
415 realism of critical theory is assumed to the strength and opportunity in their ideological synthesis. However, the
416 dualism of consensus and dissensus mechanism perpetuates weakness and threat in the ideological synthesis. Now,
417 the sociologists have to rethink the entire epistemological discourses developed through Durkheimian positivism,
Marxian dialectical materialism and Weberian interpretivism for a better future in sociology.



Figure 1: Figure 1 :

2

Sl.N	NDTheory	Analogical continuum	Analogical Synthesis
1	Structural- Functional- Neo-functional Theory	System Analogy	System cum Descriptive Analogy
2	Conflict-Critical theory	Dialectical Materialis- tic Analogy/ Descriptive Analogy	Dialectical Materialistic/ Non- Materialistic Analogy/ Descriptive Analogy
3	All Theories	Descriptive Analogy	Conflict Functional Analogy/ Descriptive Analogy

[Note: Source: Our Own]

Figure 2: 2 :

Sl.No	Theory	Approach	S	W	O	T
1	Structural-Functionalism	System Analogies-Descriptive	Holistic Descriptive	Rivalistic Motivation	Reconstruction Motivation	Stim/Revisionist with Core Functionalism
2	Neo-Functionalism	Analogy	Understanding			
2	Conflict -	Dialectical		Dialecticalism	Revivalist	Communistic
	Critical theory	materialistic and non-materialistic			Political vision	
3	Functionalism	Analogy			Motivation	
		Descriptive	Descriptive-	Hiding	Inter and intra theoretic- cal	Theoretical
	Neo- Functionalism and Conflict -	Analogy and Dialectical	cum	theoretical contradiction	motivation	Endism
	Critical theory	Analogy	Dialectical			

Source: Our Own

Figure 3:

Sl.No	Theory	Approach	S	W	O	T
1	Structural-Functionalism	Macro	Nomothetic	Narrative	System Approach	Ahistorical
2	Conflict Theory	Macro	Approach	Approach		Approach
			Nomothetic	Reductionist	Dynamic Approach	Conflicting in Nature
3	Critical Theory	Macro	Approach	Approach		
			Nomothetic	Pessimistic	Historical Approach	Pro-Agency
4	Neo-Functionalism	Macro-Micro	Approach	Approach		
		Approach	Nomothetic	Dualistic	System Approach	Pro-Structure/Pro Agency
	Theoretical Synthesis	Synthetic				
5	Functionalism-Neo- Functionalism And Conflict -	Macro-Micro	Approach	Teleological	Ahistorical/Historical	Structural- Agency
	Critical Theory	Approach	Nomothetic-			Conflict

Source: Our Own

Figure 4:

11 CONCLUSION

5

Sl.No.	Modes of Verification	Epistemology	Methodology	Data	Analysis
1	Objective	Positivism	Quantitative Methods	Quantitative	Statistical Measures
2	Subjective	Interpretivism	Qualitative Methods	Qualitative	Non-Statistical Analysis

Source: Our Own

Figure 5: 5 :

6

Sl.No	Theory	Epistemology	Methodology	Methods
1	Structural- Functionism	Positivism	Objective	Quantitative
2	Conflict theory	Positivism/Interpretivism	Objective/ Subjective	Quantitative/ Qualitative
3	Critical theory	Post-Positivism	Subjective/ Subjective	Qualitative/ Qualitative
4	Neo- functionalism	Post-Positivism	Objective /Subjective	Quantitative- Qualitative

Source: Our Own

Figure 6: 6 :

Sl.No.	Theorizing	Ideological Synthesis	S	W	O	T
1	Structural- Functionalism-Neo- Functionalism	Liberalism	Pro- Idealism	Status Quoism	Revisionist, Reconstructionist Motivation	Elitism
2	Conflict -Critical theory	Political	Pro- Realism	Determinism and Moving/Par-	Dialectical Conflict	Hegemonic control
3	Functionalism-Neo- Functionalism and Conflict -Critical theory	Liberalism	Idealism	Rationalization of Equilibriumneo- functionalism	Consensus and Dissensus	Realism

Source: Our Own

Figure 7:

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