

# Chapter 1

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An Invitation to Sociology

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# The Sociological Perspective

# What is Sociology?



# What is Sociology?

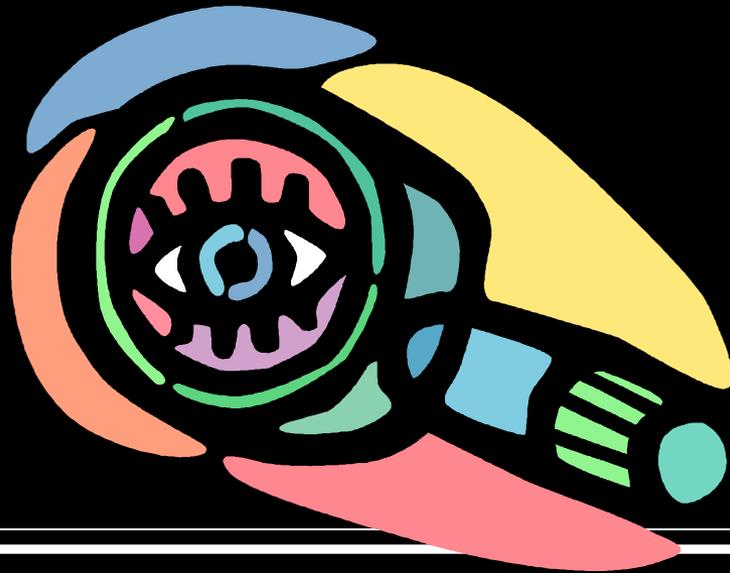
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- **Sociology** studies human social behavior.
- It assumes a group, rather than an individual, perspective.
- Sociologists look for the patterns in social relationships.
- Individuals can benefit by using their sociological imaginations to look at events in their personal lives.

# The Nature of Sociology

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- **Perspective** is a particular point of view.
- We all see what is happening around us through our own perspectives—our own point of view.



# What is unique about sociology?

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- Sociology has its own perspective– the **sociological perspective** (a view that looks at behavior of groups not individuals)



# The Importance of Patterns

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- In society you will inevitably find patterned relationships.
- **Social structure** (the patterned interaction of people in social relationships)



# How do group behavior and individual behavior differ?

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- Emile Durkheim → you should

Define something by the sum of its parts

- 1999 Super Bowl → Bronco fans rioted



# Why do people conform?

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- Members of a group think, feel and behave in similar ways.
- Conformity occurs because members value the group's ways.
- Conform when personal preferences are not that of the group

# Acquiring the Sociological Imagination

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- The sociological perspective enables us to develop a sociological imagination.
- C. Wright Mills → **sociological imagination**  
(the ability to see the link between society and self)

# What is gained by using our sociological imagination?

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- Understand effects of events
- Awareness permits to learn and get a fuller understanding of the events
- Questions common interpretations of human social behavior.

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# The Origins of Sociology

# European Origins

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- French Revolution
- Industrial Revolution

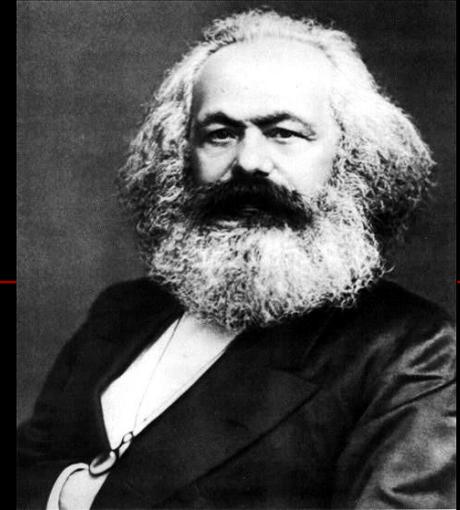
# What were Auguste Comte's major ideas?

- Sociology
- **Positivism** (the belief that knowledge should be derived from scientific observation)
- **Social statics** (the study of social stability and order)
- **Social dynamics** (the study of social change)
- *Positive Philosophy*



# Karl Marx

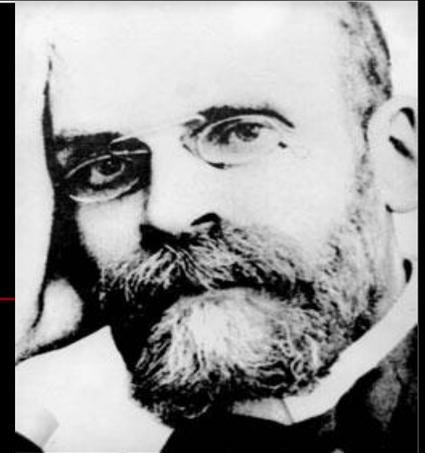
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- **Bourgeoisie** (class owning the means for producing wealth)
- **Capitalist** (person who owns or controls the means for producing wealth)
- **Proletariat** (working class; those who labor for the bourgeoisie)
- **Class conflict** ( the ongoing struggle between the bourgeoisie (owners) and the proletariat (working) class)

# Emile Durkheim

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- **Mechanical solidarity** (social dependency based on a widespread consensus of values and beliefs enforced by conformity and dependence on tradition and family)
- **Organic solidarity** (social interdependency based on a high degree of specialization in roles)

# Max Weber

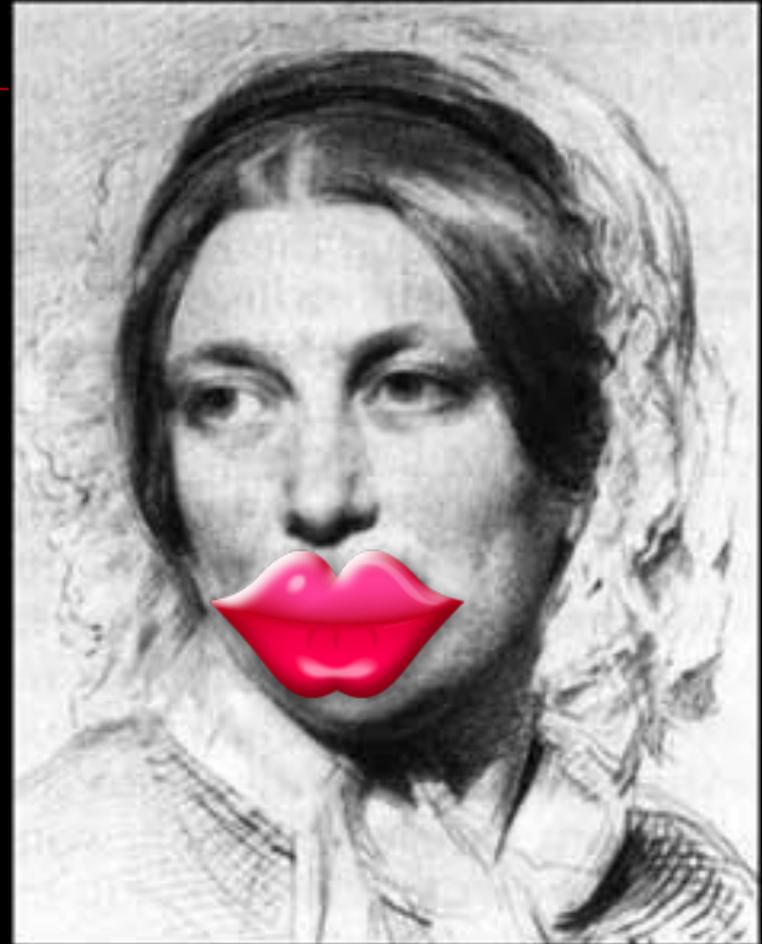
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- **Verstehen** (understanding social behavior by putting yourself in the place of others)
- **Rationalization** (the mindset emphasizing knowledge, reason, and planning)



# What were Harriet Martineau's contributions?

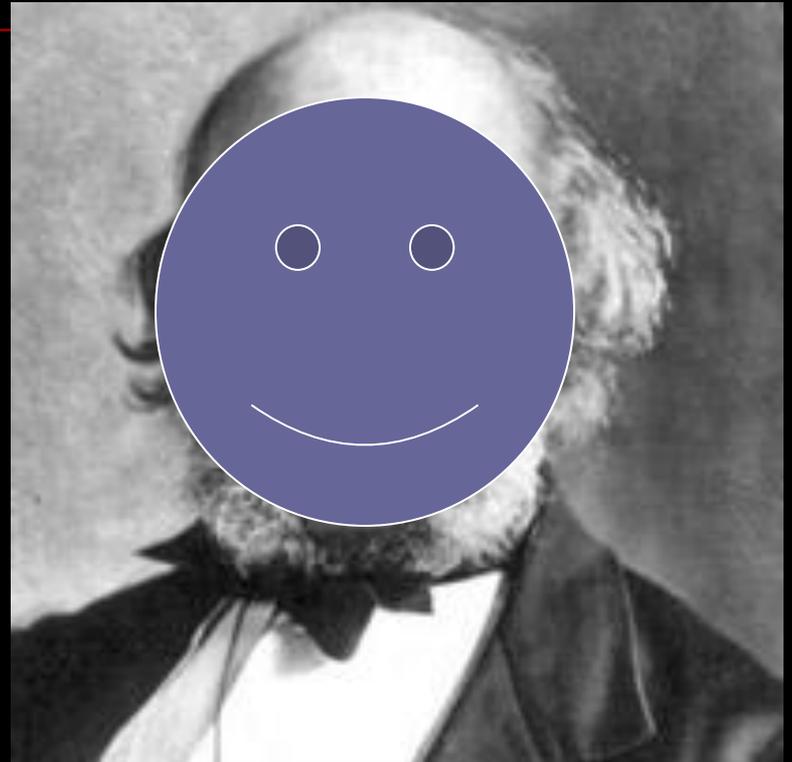
- Poor health
- Economic failure
- Translation of Comte's work
- **Society in America** → believed that women lacked economic power which kept them dependent on men



# Why did Herbert Spencer oppose social reform?

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- Self taught
- Jack of trades
- Society → Human body
- **Social Darwinism** → thought that evolutionary social change led to progress



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# Theoretical Perspectives

# The Role of Theoretical Perspectives

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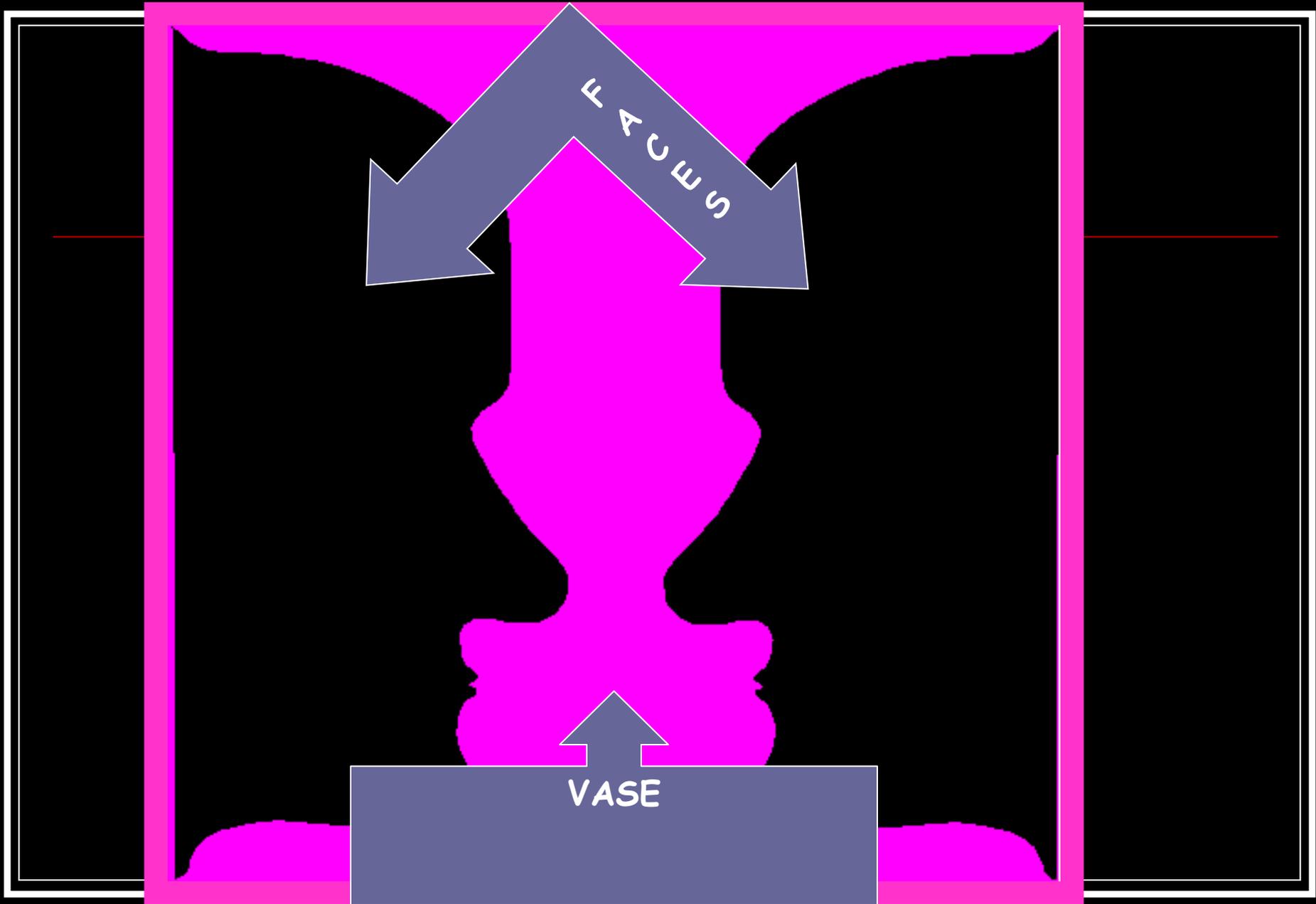
- Perception is the way the brain interprets an image or event.
- *Have you ever shared a different perception of an event from a friend?*

Youthful Face



OLD  
FACE





# What is a theoretical perspective?

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- **Theoretical perspective** (a set of assumptions accepted as true)
- Three overarching perspectives
  - Functionalism
  - Conflict theory
  - Symbolic interactionalism

# Functionalism

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- **Functionalism** (approach that emphasizes the contributions made by each part of society)
- How does functionalism explain social change?
- Examples
  - Economy
  - Concussion

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- Functionalism and conflict
  - Revolution or absorption?
  - Do all functions have a positive effect?
    - Latent functions (unintended & unrecognized)
    - Manifest functions (intended & recognized)
    - Dysfunctions (negative consequences of an aspect of society)
  - How does functionalism view values?

# Conflict Perspective

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- **Conflict perspective** (approach emphasizing the role of conflict, competition, and constraint within a society)
- What is the role of conflict and constraint?
  - **Power** (the ability to control the behavior of others)
- How does the conflict perspective explain social change?
- Which perspective is better?

# Symbolic Interactionism

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- **Symbolic interactionism** (approach that focuses on the interactions among people based on mutually understood symbols)
- What is the significance of symbolic interactionism?
  - **Symbol** ( anything that stands for something else and has an agreed-upon meaning attached to it)

# Symbolic Interactionism

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- Charles Horton Cooley & George Herbert Mead
  - Groups exist only because their members influence each other's behaviors
- What are the basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism?
  - Herbert Blumer (1. we learn the meaning of symbols from observing the behaviors of others; 2. once we learn the meaning we base our interaction on them; 3. we use the meanings to imagine how others will respond)
  - Erving Goffman → dramaturgy (approach that depicts human interaction as theatrical performances)