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AN IDEAL INSTITUTE FOR CIVIL SERVICE EXAMS

# THE **SOCIAL FACT**

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A MONTHLY SOCIOLOGY BULLETIN



## SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION



Sivarajavel IAS Academy 's

### THE SOCIAL FACT

is a monthly bulletin for sociology current affairs which tries to give aspirants a new dimensions in their sociology preparations. The Magazine has been designed in such away that the reading experience is enriching and insightful for the readers.

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### INSIDE THIS SOCIOLOGICAL BULLETIN

#### **Connecting the dots :**

Sociology is a process in making. Everyday newspapers and weekly have many important news, which have sociological angle in subtle form. This chapter helps you to connect those dots and give a clear picture of the reality.

#### **Beyond Basics :**

Going beyond basics in studies for examinations is crucial to foster a deeper understanding of the subject matter, enabling more comprehensive and critical thinking. It allows students to tackle complex questions with confidence and adapt to evolving exam formats.

#### **Perspectives :**

Beauty of Sociology, as a social science, is its capacity to offer different perspectives of a same topic. This chapter analyses a current topic with an unique social perspectives.



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## CONNECTING THE DOTS

- *Report by SC's Centre for Research and Planning says 19.7 percent of the district courts in India do not have separate toilets for females. 19.7 percent of the district courts in India do not have separate toilets for females. Only 6.7 percent of toilets in district courts are women-friendly: **The absence of separate and women-friendly toilets in a significant portion of district courts in India is not merely a logistical issue but a reflection of deeper social inequalities and biases. Feminist thinkers like Simone de Beauvoir and bell hooks would argue that the absence of adequate facilities for women reflects the marginalization and invisibility of women's needs within institutional structures. It reinforces the notion that the legal domain is primarily designed by and for men, neglecting the realities and requirements of women.***
- *A Pro-Kannada organisation in Bengaluru engaged in vandalism of various hoardings and billboards in a bid to protest the use of the English language in advertisements and signboards. The name boards in English, installed by the shops in Chikkajala, were torn apart by the protesters. Boards of private hotels and other private establishments were also vandalised: **Urban sociologists like Sujata Patel and Amita Baviskar have studied urban spaces as sites of contestation and negotiation. The vandalism of hoardings and billboards in Bengaluru reflects the tensions and conflicts inherent in urban life, where diverse linguistic and cultural groups coexist. It highlights the complexities of urban governance and the challenges of managing cultural diversity in rapidly growing cities like Bengaluru.***

- A Chinese student who was a victim of 'cyber kidnapping' has been found in rural Utah, unharmed. The 17-year-old, Kai Zhuang, was reported missing on December 28. By the time the police traced him, his parents back in China had paid \$80,000 in ransom. : **The incident raises questions about the role of technology in both facilitating crime and enabling surveillance and control. Sociologists like Michel Foucault have examined the relationship between technology and social control, highlighting how advancements in surveillance can be used by both state and non-state actors to exert power over individuals. The use of cyber means to kidnap Zhuang and extort ransom reflects the dark side of technological innovation, where digital tools are harnessed for criminal purposes.**
- Sexual abuse in Odisha's boarding schools for tribals demotivate first generation learners. The State Minister for ST and SC Development said that over the past five years, there were 22 cases of girls who faced sexual assaults in the 188 residential high schools exclusively for tribal girls, with 34 people being named as accused. Twelve girl students had delivered babies: **The sexual abuse of tribal girls underscores how intersecting forms of oppression, including caste, class, and gender, contribute to their heightened susceptibility to exploitation and abuse within institutional settings. Feminist sociologists like Vandana Shiva and Leela Dube have examined the intersections of gender, caste, and class, highlighting how patriarchal structures perpetuate violence and discrimination against women and girls.**
- The deep penetration of caste discrimination in Christianity is a point of concern. Despite constituting a majority in the Catholic order, Dalits are rarely appointed as Bishops. The Tamil Nadu Untouchability Eradication Front had contended that the practice of caste can be found in the formation of parishes, the denial to Dalit Christians to participate in the administration of the parish, and the construction of separate chapels in the same village for Dalits and other caste Christians : **M.N. Srinivas have emphasized the pervasive nature of the caste system in India, arguing that it transcends religious boundaries and influences social interactions and institutions. The deep penetration of caste discrimination within Christianity reflects how caste operates as a social structure, shaping patterns of social exclusion and privilege even within non hindu religious communities.**

- Four infants between birth and four months died across a month in Madhya Pradesh's eastern districts of Shahdol, Umaria, and Anuppur after they were branded with hot bangles and iron sickles when they fell sick. This belief system is considered a remedy, to everything from breast-feeding difficulties to pneumonia. People believed the 'shock treatment' helps boost the baby's immunity when they are sick. : **GS Ghurye vs V. Elwin debate need to be revisited here, while it's essential to respect cultural practices and beliefs, there comes a point where harmful practices must be critically examined through a human rights lens. In this case, the traditional remedy of branding infants with hot objects resulted in tragic deaths, raising questions about the balance between cultural relativism and the protection of human rights, particularly those of vulnerable populations such as infants.***
- Chinese President Xi Jinping said China would "surely be reunified" with Taiwan during his televised New Year's address, renewing Beijing's threats to take over the self-ruled island, which it considers its own. Taiwan split from China amid civil war in 1949, but Beijing continues to regard the island of 23 million with its high-tech economy as Chinese territory and has been ramping up its threat to achieve that by military force if necessary: **Sociologists like Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner have explored the construction of nationalism and national identity. In the case of China's claim to Taiwan, the emphasis on reunification reflects nationalist sentiments and the idea of a unified Chinese identity. Anderson's concept of imagined communities can help understand how narratives of national unity are constructed and perpetuated, shaping collective perceptions of belonging and loyalty.***
- Ban on 'improper clothes' of devotees at Jagannath Temple in Puri comes into force. A dress code meant to discourage devotees from wearing "improper" clothes came into force at the famous Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri district of Odisha : **From a structural functionalist perspective, sociologists like Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons would analyze the dress code as a mechanism for maintaining social order and cohesion within the religious community. The imposition of a dress code serves to reinforce shared values and norms, ensuring that devotees adhere***

*to established rituals and traditions. Durkheim's concept of "collective conscience" and Parsons' theory of social integration can provide insights into the role of religious institutions in regulating individual behavior and promoting solidarity.*

- Following concerns raised by pilots over mounting fatigue, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has revised the norms regulating their duty hours by reducing night-time flying and enhancing weekly rest. In a significant relief, pilots rostered to fly planes between midnight and 6 a.m., which falls in the window of circadian low that can impact sleep cycles and is categorised as "night duty", cannot carry out more than two landings, instead of the six permitted earlier : Sociologist Anthony Giddens' theory of "structuration" offers a framework for understanding the interplay between structures and agency in regulatory governance. The DGCA's decision to revise norms governing pilots' duty hours represents a form of regulatory intervention aimed at addressing systemic issues of fatigue and safety within the aviation industry. Giddens would emphasize the role of both institutional structures, such as regulatory bodies, and individual agency, such as pilots' advocacy efforts, in shaping regulatory outcomes and ensuring accountability.*
- Economic woes, instead of 'happiness', set the stage as Bhutan goes to the polls . The picturesque Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan holds general elections on Tuesday with serious economic challenges calling into question its longstanding policy of prioritising "Gross National Happiness" over growth : Cultural values and symbols shape societal attitudes towards development and well-being. Bhutan's adoption of GNH as a measure of progress reflects its commitment to prioritizing holistic well-being over narrow economic indicators. However, the shift towards addressing economic challenges in the electoral discourse suggests a re-evaluation of societal priorities and values. This tension between economic growth and well-being reflects broader debates about the meaning and measurement of progress in contemporary societies.*



# BEYOND BASICS

## CIVIL INATTENTION

***“Why should we go beyond the basics?”***

*Erving Goffman was a renowned sociologist whose work focused on the intricacies of everyday social interactions and the ways individuals present themselves in different social contexts. Through groundbreaking concepts such as “impression management,” “dramaturgy,” and “civil inattention,” UPSC recently asked about dramaturgical approach.*

*Thus, the concept of civil inattention by Erving Goffman holds importance for UPSC examinations due to its relevance in understanding social interactions, governance, public policy, contemporary society, administrative services, and critical thinking. Candidates who grasp the concept of this article can better write the holistic answer about any questions related to civil inattention.*

Civil inattention is a concept in sociology introduced by the sociologist Erving Goffman in his work “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life” (1956). It refers to the social phenomenon where individuals in a public setting engage in brief and unobtrusive acknowledgment of others, indicating awareness of their presence without invading their privacy. Civil inattention is a crucial aspect of face-to-face interactions, helping to maintain social order, politeness, and personal boundaries. Here’s a detailed account of civil inattention:

## Key Elements of Civil Inattention:

### 1. Brief Glances and Gestures:

- Individuals in public spaces acknowledge each other's presence through fleeting glances or subtle gestures, such as a nod or a slight smile.
- These gestures are meant to convey a basic awareness of others without delving into more personal interactions.

### 2. Maintaining Privacy:

- Civil inattention allows individuals to respect each other's privacy in public spaces, recognizing the need for personal space and avoiding intrusive behavior.
- By briefly acknowledging each other, people strike a balance between recognizing others' existence and avoiding unnecessary scrutiny.

### 3. Cultural Variations:

- The extent and nature of civil inattention can vary across cultures. In some cultures, people may engage in more prolonged eye contact or gestures, while in others, a simple glance might suffice.
- Understanding cultural norms helps individuals navigate civil inattention appropriately in diverse social settings.

### 4. Adaptation to the Situation:

- Civil inattention is adaptable to the context and situation. In crowded places like public transportation or busy streets, it becomes more pronounced as people navigate through the crowd.
- In less crowded or more intimate settings, civil inattention might evolve into more direct interactions, such as casual conversations.



## 5. Maintaining Social Order:

- Civil inattention contributes to the maintenance of social order by preventing unnecessary disruptions or confrontations in public spaces.
- It allows individuals to coexist peacefully, minimizing potential conflicts that might arise from prolonged or intrusive interactions.

## 6. Impersonal Nature:

- Civil inattention is characterized by its impersonal nature. It involves acknowledging the presence of others without necessarily engaging in deeper interpersonal connections.
- The focus is on maintaining a degree of social order and courtesy rather than fostering personal relationships.

### **Significance of Civil Inattention:**

#### 1. Preservation of Anonymity:

- Civil inattention helps preserve a level of anonymity in public spaces, allowing individuals to go about their activities without feeling constantly observed or scrutinized.

#### 2. Promotion of Politeness:

- It contributes to the overall politeness and social etiquette within a society. By avoiding prolonged stares or intrusive behavior, individuals show consideration for others' personal space.

#### 3. Mitigation of Social Tension:

- Civil inattention helps mitigate social tension in crowded or public settings. It allows people to coexist without constant interpersonal demands, reducing the potential for conflict.

#### 4. Facilitation of Public Spaces:

- In public spaces like transportation systems, civil inattention facilitates the smooth flow of people. It allows individuals to move through crowded areas without creating unnecessary obstacles.

#### 5. Adaptability to Social Roles:

- The concept aligns with Goffman's dramaturgical perspective, where individuals play various roles in different social situations. Civil inattention is a part of the script that individuals follow in public interactions.

Thus, civil inattention is a subtle yet significant aspect of social behavior that plays a crucial role in maintaining order, politeness, and personal boundaries in public spaces. It reflects the delicate balance between acknowledging the presence of others and respecting their privacy, contributing to the smooth functioning of everyday social interactions.

While civil inattention generally serves a functional purpose in facilitating social interactions and maintaining order in public spaces, there can be instances where its prevalence or misuse may lead to dysfunctional outcomes or consequences. Here are some potential dysfunctions associated with civil inattention:

##### 1. Isolation and Alienation:

- In certain contexts, excessive civil inattention or a lack of meaningful interaction may contribute to feelings of isolation and alienation, particularly among individuals who are already marginalized or socially isolated.

- When civil inattention becomes a normative behavior in a community, it may hinder opportunities for genuine human connection and support networks, leading to social disconnection.

## 2. Missed Opportunities for Social Engagement:

- Over-reliance on civil inattention may result in missed opportunities for social engagement and community building. When individuals consistently avoid acknowledging or interacting with others, it can limit the development of social bonds and networks.

- In situations where collective action or mutual support is needed, excessive civil inattention may prevent individuals from coming together and addressing common concerns.

## 3. Normalization of Social Indifference:

- If civil inattention becomes overly prevalent in a society, it may contribute to the normalization of social indifference or apathy. Individuals may come to expect and accept minimal interaction or acknowledgment from others, leading to a lack of empathy and solidarity.

- This normalization of social indifference can erode the sense of community and shared responsibility, making it more challenging to address social issues or collective problems.

## 4. Perpetuation of Social Inequality:

- In environments where civil inattention is unevenly practiced or enforced, it may exacerbate existing social inequalities. Marginalized individuals or groups may experience heightened levels of invisibility or disregard, as others selectively apply civil inattention based on social status or perceived belonging.

- This perpetuation of social inequality can further marginalize already vulnerable populations and reinforce patterns of exclusion and discrimination.

## 5. Misinterpretation and Conflict:

- Misinterpretation of civil inattention cues or signals may lead to misunderstandings or interpersonal conflict. Individuals may perceive intentional snubs or disregard where none was intended, leading to tension or resentment.

- In situations where cultural norms around civil inattention differ, clashes or misunderstandings between individuals from diverse backgrounds may occur, further complicating social interactions.

In summary, while civil inattention serves important functions in regulating social interactions and maintaining order, its overuse or misuse can lead to various dysfunctions, including isolation, missed opportunities for engagement, normalization of indifference, perpetuation of inequality, and interpersonal conflict. It underscores the importance of striking a balance between respecting personal boundaries and fostering meaningful social connections in public spaces.



## UNLEARNING OPPRESSION

**“Why should we go beyond the basics?”**

*Understanding oppression is fundamental to sociology as it relates to core concepts such as power (Paper 1, unit -7), inequality, social stratification(Paper 1, unit – 5), and social justice(Paper 2). Mastery of these concepts is essential for success in our optional paper. It also provides an opportunity for students to apply sociological theories, such as conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, and feminist theory, to real-world examples and case studies.*

*This ‘Unlearning oppression’ by By Wayne Martin Mellinger, Instructor at Antioch University helps us understand the power dynamics at play in society, including how certain groups are privileged while others are marginalized.*

No child is brought into this world as a racist or sexist or homophobe. Oppression must be learned through our childhood socialization processes. While the home environment provided by our parents is crucial to learning both oppressive and anti-oppressive behaviors, cultural institutions such as schools, religious institutions, and mass media also play a central role.

For many years I taught classes at local colleges and universities I called “Unlearning Oppression.” While the formal titles of these classes were typically “Race, Class and Gender in American Society” I insisted on dealing with ageism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of oppression too.

In these classes my goal is to create a climate in which students can both deal with their own issues as people who are oppressed and deal with their issues as people who are oppressors.

My title derives from the pioneering work of Erica Shereover-Marcuse, a critical philosopher and educator who became well-known for leading workshops on “Unlearning Racism” in the Bay Area during the 1970s. Shereover-Marcuse was the third wife and student of Herbert Marcuse, the German-American philosopher associated with the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. While I never took part in one of Shereover-Marcuse’s workshops, her compact and insightful lecture notes formed the pedagogical core of my classes.

To unlearn oppression and to dismantle the foundations of our “dominator culture” we must acknowledge our everyday oppressive practices. Moreover, we must engage in critical self-reflection, get the correct information, deal with our negative emotions, gain insight into our own passivity and become actively anti-oppressive.

Oppression is the acts and effects of domination, including ideological domination and institutional control. Oppression operates through unequal and unjust institutional constraints which bring harm to at least one other group and which serves to the benefit of another social group. This harm comes about through coercion, or the use of unjustified force.

There are many systems of oppression in the US, including racism, imperialism, patriarchy, heterosexism, ageism, ableism. These are interlocking societal, economic, moral and religious values that keep many people down to ensure the power and advantage of a few groups of people.

There are three different forms of oppression:

institutional oppression—which occurs through the way that society operates. No individually-motivated hatred needs to be in operation for institutional oppression to work. Example: A white real-estate agent shows a young Black couple houses in parts of town he feels they’d feel most comfortable, thus enforcing racial segregation.

interpersonal oppression—which occurs between individuals and is usually based on personal prejudice. Example: a man continually interrupts a woman while she is speaking.

internalized oppression—when members of an oppressed group oppress one another and their own group. Example: a group of gay men pick on another who is more feminine.

We are all potentially both oppressors and oppressed. While we often have a dualistic logic imagining that there are those “with power” and those “without power” the reality is much more complex.

We learn oppression through our own oppression as children. Early childhood experiences are central to developing “power over” mentalities. Essentially, we hurt others because we have been hurt ourselves.

In our society we often experience mistreatment as young people—through physical violence but also through invalidation and disregard of our feelings. As a result, we tend both to internalize this mistreatment by accepting it as the way things are, and externalize it by mistreating others. Thus, adultism and the oppression of children are at the heart of my understanding of the nature of oppression in modern society.

Depending on the context, all individuals possess varying amounts of penalty and privilege. Because all of us have been children we have all been potentially oppressed. Because all of us (presumably) are adults we can all be oppressors of children. But age is just one system of oppression.

The interlocking system of oppression in which penalty and privilege vary by race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, etc. is called the “matrix of domination” by Patricia Hill Collins. Intersectionality identifies the multiple overlapping sources of penalty and privilege. So, someone may be disadvantaged by being

African American and gay, but privileged by being male and able-bodied.

Everyday oppression refers to those practices which, while so much a part of our everyday lives that they seem normal and thus go unquestioned, discriminate against members of some “minority” group. This routinely occurs within interactions and includes all actions, verbal and nonverbal, which result in negative consequences, regardless of intentionality. Thus, oppression does not have to be blatant, conscious or deliberate. Therefore, many well-intended people are unaware that their actions are oppressive.

Everyday oppression sometimes occurs through inaction rather than through overt actions. The passivity of well-meaning people, fueled by ignorance and indifference, is critical to the operation of dominator cultures. We often live in denial, refusing to acknowledge the consequences of our behavior.

Types of Everyday Oppression: stereotypes are faulty generalizations that we make about groups of people; misinformation about group differences (ethnic groups, genders, sexual minorities, ability groups) discomfort dealing with cultural and social differences; apprehension about different groups; taking privileges (as whites, or males, or temporarily able-bodied); paternalistic attitudes (“we need to help those poor people”); self-righteous liberal pride (“but I’m color blind,” “we have gay friends”)

Many people, deeply engaged in the liberation of their own group, seem not to be able to see their role in oppressing others, and how that comes full circle and perpetuates their own oppression. In my classes I urge students to become “allies”—people who stand with all marginalized people, speaking out against acts of oppression wherever and whenever they happen.







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# PERSPECTIVES

## THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

Religion is a fundamental aspect of human society that influences various social phenomena, including culture, politics, economics, and education. By studying religion, sociologists gain insights into the underlying dynamics of these social processes and their impact on individuals and communities. The sociology of religion is a subfield of sociology that examines the role of religion in society and the interaction between religious beliefs, institutions, and social structures.

A holistic analysis of the sociology of religion encompasses various dimensions, including theoretical perspectives, key concepts, empirical research, and contemporary issues. Here's a breakdown:

### 1. Theoretical Perspectives:

- **Functionalism:** Functionalists like Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons view religion as a cohesive force that provides social integration and moral guidance. They emphasize its role in maintaining social order and stability.

a. **Social Integration:** Durkheim argued that religion promotes social integration by creating a sense of solidarity and shared values among members of a society. Religious rituals and ceremonies reinforce collective identities and foster a sense of belonging.

b. **Social Control:** Religion also functions as a mechanism of social control, regulating individual behavior and promoting conformity to societal norms and

values. Parsons emphasized the role of religion in maintaining social order and moral regulation.

c. **Meaning and Purpose:** Functionalist theorists highlight religion's role in providing individuals with a sense of meaning and purpose in life. Belief in a higher power or divine order helps individuals navigate existential questions and cope with life's uncertainties.

d. **Cultural Transmission:** Religion plays a vital role in cultural transmission, passing down traditions, beliefs, and moral codes from one generation to the next. Through religious teachings and practices, societies transmit cultural values and norms that reinforce social cohesion.

- **Conflict Theory:** Conflict theorists such as Karl Marx and Max Weber analyze religion in terms of power dynamics and social inequalities. They highlight how religion can be used to legitimize or challenge existing power structures.

a. **Religion as Ideology:** Marx argued that religion functions as an ideological tool used by the ruling class to maintain their dominance and justify the existing social order. Religious beliefs and institutions perpetuate false consciousness, diverting attention away from material conditions of oppression and exploitation.

b. **Alienation and False Consciousness:** Marxian theorists emphasize how religion contributes to alienation and false consciousness among the working class. By promising rewards in the afterlife or divine intervention, religion can pacify oppressed groups and prevent them from challenging the status quo.

c. **Opium of the Masses:** Marx famously referred to religion as the "opium of the masses," suggesting that it serves to numb the pain of social inequality and exploitation. By offering hope and consolation, religion can distract individuals from their material suffering and prevent them from engaging in revolutionary action.

d. **Material Basis of Religion:** Engels highlighted the material basis of religion, arguing that socioeconomic conditions shape religious beliefs and practices. Religion reflects the economic and social interests of dominant groups, serving as a reflection of underlying power relations in society.

- **Symbolic Interactionism:** Symbolic interactionists like George Herbert Mead and Erving Goffman focus on the subjective meanings individuals attach to religious symbols and rituals. They explore how religious identities are constructed through social interactions.

- **Rational Choice Theory:** Rational choice theorists examine religion as a product of individual rational choices. They analyze how individuals weigh costs and benefits when making decisions about religious participation.

Once we understand the various theories of religion, we need to see the concept of **secularization**, which has been a topic of considerable debate and analysis within the discipline. It refers to the process by which religious beliefs, practices, and institutions lose their social significance and influence within society.

1. **Decline of Religion:** One perspective within secularization theory suggests that religion is declining in significance as societies modernize and undergo processes of industrialization, urbanization, and rationalization. Sociologists like Max Weber and Émile Durkheim argued that as societies become more rational and scientifically oriented, belief in supernatural forces diminishes, leading to the decline of religious authority and influence.

- **Critique:** While some empirical evidence supports the decline of religious adherence and church attendance in certain regions, others argue that religion remains resilient and continues to play a significant role in shaping individual beliefs and societal values. Additionally, the decline of traditional religious institutions does not necessarily equate to a decline in religious beliefs or

spirituality, as individuals may seek alternative forms of spiritual expression outside organized religion.

2. Differentiation of Spheres: Another perspective posits that secularization involves the differentiation of religious and secular spheres within society. This entails the separation of religion from other social institutions, such as politics, education, and the economy. Sociologists like Peter Berger and Niklas Luhmann argue that as societies become more complex and specialized, religion loses its monopolistic control over social life, leading to the privatization of religious beliefs and practices.

- Critique: Critics argue that the differentiation thesis overlooks the persistence of religious influences within secular institutions and the continued relevance of religious values in shaping public discourse and policy. Furthermore, the privatization of religion may not necessarily signify its decline but rather a shift in its public visibility and organizational forms.

3. Revitalization of Religion: Some sociologists challenge the notion of secularization by highlighting instances of religious resurgence or revitalization in contemporary societies. Scholars like José Casanova and Rodney Stark argue that religion remains a potent force in the modern world, with religious movements and identities asserting themselves in response to perceived social and cultural threats.

- Critique: Critics of secularization theory argue that it tends to overlook the persistence and adaptability of religious beliefs and practices in response to changing social, political, and cultural contexts. Rather than viewing secularization as a linear process leading to the decline of religion, scholars emphasize the dynamic and contested nature of religious change, which may involve periods of decline as well as resurgence.

4. **Global Perspectives:** Secularization theories developed primarily in Western contexts may not fully capture the complexities of religious change in non-Western societies. Sociologists increasingly recognize the need to adopt a global perspective that considers the diverse ways in which religion interacts with social, political, and economic structures across different cultures and regions.

- **Critique:** Critics argue that secularization theories, which emerged from Eurocentric perspectives, may not adequately account for the resilience of religious beliefs and practices in non-Western contexts. Moreover, the assumption that modernization necessarily leads to secularization overlooks the unique historical and cultural factors that shape religious dynamics in different parts of the world.

The concept of secularization, when critically analyzed through a sociological lens, reveals the complex and multifaceted nature of religious change in modern societies. While some scholars argue that religion is declining in significance, others emphasize the persistence and adaptability of religious beliefs and practices in response to changing social, cultural, and political contexts. Understanding secularization requires a nuanced appreciation of the diverse ways in which religion interacts with society, as well as recognition of the limitations of Western-centric theories in explaining religious dynamics globally.

Weber's theory of rationalization suggests that modern societies are characterized by an increasing emphasis on scientific knowledge and rationality, leading to the displacement of traditional religious beliefs and practices. Weber argued that the rise of science and bureaucracy in the modern world has led to the disenchantment of the world, whereby religious explanations and magical thinking are replaced by rational, scientific explanations. Weber

might argue that the dominance of science in contemporary society has marginalized religion and diminished its influence over individuals' lives.

Marx viewed religion as an ideological tool used by the ruling class to maintain social control and justify existing power structures. From a Marxist perspective, the ascendancy of science reflects the interests of the capitalist ruling class, who prioritize technological advancement and economic growth over spiritual concerns. Marx might argue that the capitalist mode of production promotes a secular worldview that undermines the authority of religion and fosters alienation among the working class, leading to the gradual decline of religious belief and practice.

Durkheim's theory of religion focused on its role in promoting social cohesion and solidarity within societies. However, Durkheim also recognized the potential for science to undermine religious beliefs and rituals by providing alternative explanations for natural phenomena and social phenomena. Durkheim might argue that the increasing prominence of scientific knowledge and rationality in modern societies weakens the social bonds and collective effervescence generated by religious practices, leading to a decline in religiosity and the marginalization of religion in public life.

Giddens' theory of reflexive modernization suggests that the rise of scientific knowledge and technological innovation has transformed social life and undermined traditional sources of authority, including religion. Giddens might argue that the proliferation of scientific information and expertise in contemporary societies has led to greater skepticism towards religious dogma and superstition, encouraging individuals to rely on rational, evidence-based explanations for phenomena previously attributed to divine intervention. As a result, religion loses its grip on individuals' beliefs and practices, giving way to a



more secular worldview centered on scientific rationality.

Despite these many theories and the advancement of science, religion continues to influence individuals and societies for several reasons:

1. **Existential Questions:** Religion addresses fundamental existential questions about the meaning and purpose of life, morality, and the nature of reality that science may not fully answer. People turn to religion to find comfort, solace, and guidance in navigating life's uncertainties and challenges.
2. **Emotional and Psychological Needs:** Religion provides emotional and psychological support, offering rituals, practices, and community connections that promote well-being and resilience. Religious beliefs can offer hope, meaning, and a sense of belonging, particularly during times of adversity or crisis.
3. **Cultural and Social Identity:** Religion plays a central role in shaping cultural identities, social norms, and communal bonds within societies. It provides a shared framework of beliefs, values, and practices that bind individuals together and foster a sense of collective identity and solidarity.
4. **Ethical and Moral Framework:** Religion offers ethical and moral guidelines for living a virtuous and ethical life. Religious teachings often provide moral guidance, principles, and norms that inform individuals' behavior and decision-making, even in secular contexts.
5. **Spiritual Experiences:** Religion offers opportunities for spiritual experiences and transcendence beyond the material world. Religious rituals, meditation, prayer, and contemplation provide avenues for connecting with the divine, experiencing awe and wonder, and cultivating a sense of spiritual fulfillment.
6. **Cognitive Biases and Heuristics:** Human cognition is influenced by cognitive biases and heuristics that predispose individuals to religious beliefs. These cognitive mechanisms, such as pattern recognition, agency detection,

and teleological thinking, may predispose individuals to perceive purpose, intentionality, and design in the natural world, leading to religious beliefs.

7. Socialization and Socialization Institutions: Religion is transmitted through socialization processes within families, communities, and religious institutions. From an early age, individuals are socialized into religious beliefs, practices, and traditions that become integral aspects of their identity and worldview.

8. Adaptive Functions: Sociologists argue that religion may serve adaptive functions for individuals and societies, promoting social cohesion, cooperation, and survival. Religious beliefs and practices can facilitate trust, cooperation, and reciprocity among group members, enhancing group cohesion and resilience.

Religion continues to influence individuals and societies due to its capacity to address existential questions, fulfill emotional and psychological needs, shape cultural and social identity, provide ethical and moral frameworks, offer spiritual experiences, reflect cognitive biases, and serve adaptive functions for individuals and societies. Despite the advancement of science, religion remains a significant aspect of human experience and social life.

# COMMODITIZING REBELLION

Capitalism is amazingly good at devouring the things that would seek to challenge it, then packaging that same thing up and selling it back to people through its own market tendrils. It is somewhat of a superpower. This article is a perspective of Alice Wilson, a PhD Student at University of York (UK) through the narrative of ‘irony of tiny houses’.

Tiny houses are one of the more recent examples of this. (I did a TEDx talk about people’s motivations for living in a tiny house and what your life might be like if you lived in one.) A tiny house is a compact living space, often ranging from 100 to 400 square feet, designed to provide all the essentials for daily living. These homes, which can be stationary or mobile (like those on trailer foundations), prioritize minimalism and efficient use of space. They’ve gained popularity as a response to rising housing costs and a desire for simpler living and reduced environmental footprints.

Rapacious land-banking by ultra-wealthy investors coupled with the worst wage stagnation since the Napoleonic war and an astronomically ballooning housing market means that few can afford a house—and that might lead people to riot. But no need to worry about that - look at this cute shed! It’s approximately as big as your mother’s spare bedroom, but you could buy it for just \$30,000! Yes, you would have to poop in a bucket of sawdust, but look at this snazzy skylight! Driven by Instagrammable interiors and the allure of freedom, these cosy little abodes have skyrocketed in popularity in the last 10 years. Younger folks especially seem drawn to the idea of living life on their own terms – tiny, mobile, and unburdened. My concern is that this is indeed more of

an idea than a material reality. There is a lot of value in ideas. But the tiny house idea has a few fundamental flaws.

These houses, barely the size of a traditional living room, have become popular due to their symbolic power. For many, it's the call of a different life, one where the 9-to-5 grind is just a relic from another era and success isn't measured by square footage. Plus, there's the environment to consider. With climate change being one of the defining nightmares of our era, reducing consumption and our carbon footprint is no longer a fringe or hippy consideration—it's necessary for our continuation as a species.

What this story does not capture, however, are the structural forces that are creating the situation in which tiny houses can even emerge as a solution. It is admirable and good and wise to try and reduce our own individual carbon footprints. But just 100 companies have been responsible for more than 70% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions since 1988. Data from the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), in collaboration with the Climate Accountability Institute, found that 32% of these emissions come from public investor-owned companies. The enduring narrative about taking personal responsibility for your carbon footprint obscures the much more significant responsibility of corporations.

Likewise, people are looking to tiny houses because of how affordable they are compared to traditional houses or flats. The average house price in the UK right now is £286,000 (\$365,000). The average cost for a mid-range fully fitted tiny house on wheels hovers somewhere around £35,000 (\$45,000). It's a big difference.

Many of the women I speak to in my own research explain how this huge price differential was a lifeline for them. They describe how being able to pay off a loan in 7 years rather than paying off a mortgage for 25 years meant they could work

part-time whilst still being able to afford to own their own home.

I repeatedly noticed how the women I spoke to explained their tiny living situations as a personal choice which they had made to optimize their lifestyles. They were prioritizing their free time and were rejecting the work-to-live mentality.

What was missing was a broader acknowledgement that the conditions that put these women in a position of having to either live in a house the size of a room or work 40 hours a week for the rest of their lives to service a mortgage debt for a house they will barely ever be in because they spend so much time at work is a deliberately maintained situation.

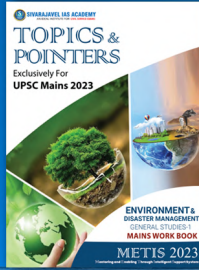
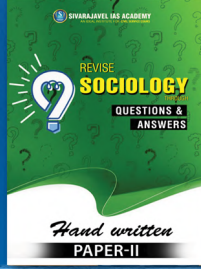
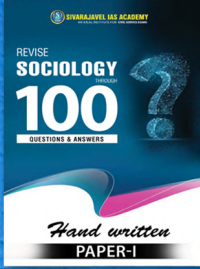
As filmmaker Bree Newsome Bass explains: Homelessness is a feature of the housing market. Not a bug. Not an unfortunate byproduct. It's a deliberate process of denying people access to a basic necessity of life in order to create false scarcity and enrich the ownership class.

Tiny houses, especially cheap off-grid self-build tiny houses, have real potential to exist as a living argument with the established misery and exploitation of our working and housing norms. Thus, the market is working to neutralize them as quickly as possible. A concept that started as a breakaway from the mainstream now has its own glossy magazine spreads and dedicated TV shows. Suddenly, the rebellion looks a lot like the same old rat race, just in a prettier, compact package.

In tiny houses we see an intersection of personal dreams and market-driven realities. The desire to simplify and reclaim autonomy from a system designed for relentless growth has found its symbol in these compact havens. Yet, the very system we seek refuge from adeptly repackages our rebellion, selling it back with a bow-tie of sustainability and freedom.

I am not convinced that freedom can be purchased. While I admire the ingenuity of tiny homes, try to remember to scrutinize the vast, complex social and economic landscape they sit within.

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