

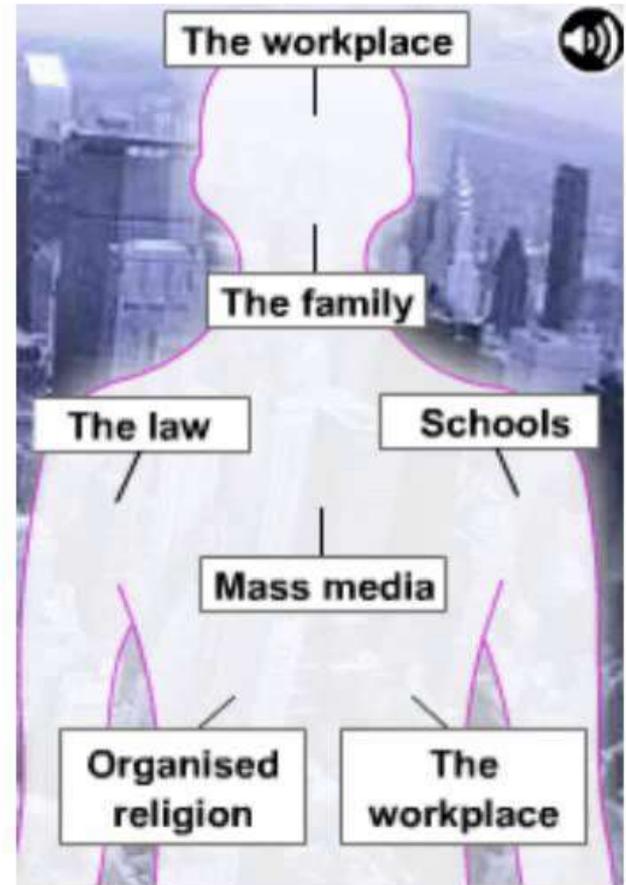
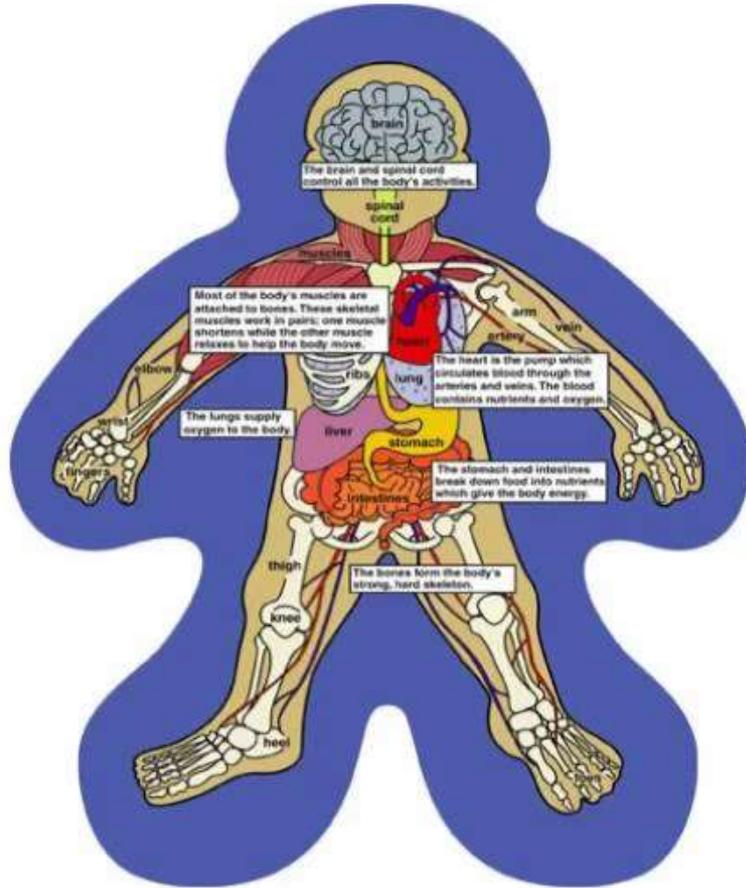
ORGANIC ANALOGY

introduction

- Spencer is popularly known for his treatment of the **organic analogy**. The evolutionary doctrine was no doubt the foundation of Spencer's sociological theory.
- He, however, presented the organic analogy, as a secondary doctrine which also played a vital role in his thought system.
- “He established the hypothesis that society, is like a biological organism and then proceeded to defend it against all objections with great logical force.”

introduction

- Herbert Spencer came to sociology via biology. Therefore he drew analogy between the society and the biological organism.
- society is organised on the same system as an individual .
- we may perceive something more than an analogy between them, the same definition of life applied to both [biological and social organism]
- He concentrated on bringing forth wonderful parallels between organic and social evolution, between similarities in the structure and evolution of organic and social units.



THE ORGANIC ANALOGY

LIVING ORGANISM...

Has organs, arranged in systems which each play a role to keep the whole healthy.

SOCIETY...

Has institutions, which are linked together, and which have functions in keeping society

Similarities between Biological and Social Organism

- **1. Similarity in Visible Growth:**
- Both society and organism are distinguished from inorganic matter by means of their visible growth.
- Thus both society and the organism are subject to growth.
- Example: A child grows up to be a man; a tiny community becomes a metropolitan area; a small state becomes an empire, and so on.

2. An Increase in the Complexity of Structure:

- As both society and organisms grow in size they also increase in complexity of structure.
- Primitive organisms [like amoeba] are simple whereas the highest organisms [like the mammals] are very complex.
- Primitive community was very simple whereas the modern industrial society is highly complex

3. Differentiation of Structure Leading to Differentiation of Functions

- In societies and in organisms progressive differentiation of structure is accompanied by progressive differentiation of functions.
- The primitive living organism was a unicellular creature; but with the increase in the cells, differentiation of organs resulted, at the highest levels of evolution the structure of the body is quite complex.
- Similar is the case with society. In the case of an organism that has very complex organs, each organ performs a specified function. Similarly, in the case of complex society subdivided into many different organisations, each organisation carries on a specified function.

4. Change in Structure Leads to Change in Functions

- When change takes place in the structure of organs and communities, there results a change in their functions.
- The function becomes more and more specialised.
- This applies to the body of a living creature as well as to the society.

5. Differentiation as well as Harmony of Organs

- Evolution establishes for both societies and organisms, differences in structure and function that make each other possible.
- Evolution leads to development of greater differentiation of the organs of society as also that of an individual.
- Along with this differentiation there is also the harmony between various organs.
- Each organ is complementary to the other and not opposed. This holds true both in the body of a living organism and society.

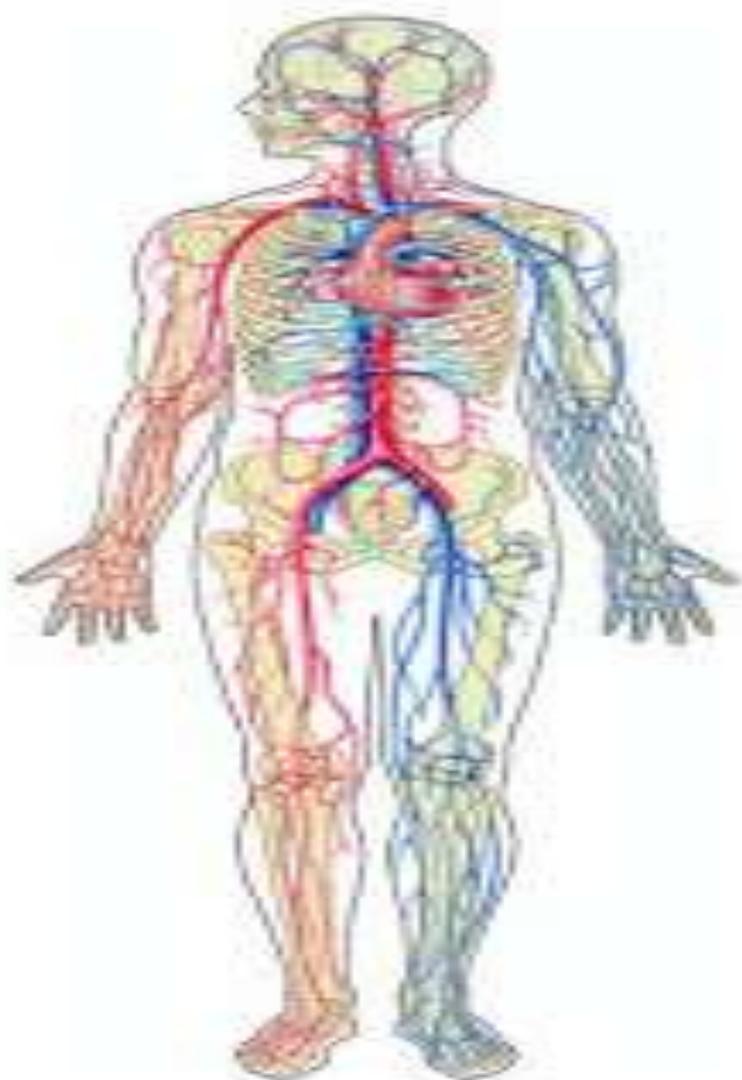
6. Loss of an Organ does not necessarily Result in the Loss of Organism:

- Both society and the individual are organisms. It is common to both that a loss of one organ or the other does not necessarily result in the death of an organism.
- For example, if an individual loses his leg he does not necessarily meet with his death. Similarly, in society if some association or a political party disintegrates it does not invariably lead to the decay of the society.

7. Similar Process and Methods of Organisation:

- (i) The alimentary system of an organism to the productive industries, or the sustaining system in the society.
- (ii) There is a strong parallelism between the circulation system of an organism and the distributing system in society with its transportation lines and with its commercial classes and media of exchange.

In the same way that the skin holds the human body,so too do norms and values bind society together



SYSTEM	ANIMALS	SOCIETIES
<i>Regulative System</i>	<i>Central nervous system</i>	<i>Government</i>
<i>Sustaining System</i>	<i>Giving/receiving nourishment</i>	<i>Industry (jobs, money, economy)</i>
<i>Distribution System</i>	<i>Veins and arteries</i>	<i>Roads, transportation, internet, etc.</i>

similarities

- (iii) In both the cases there are developed regulating systems.
- In society, there is the social control mechanism to fulfill the regulative function.
- In an organism there are dominant centres and subordinate centres, the senses, and a neural apparatus to perform the tasks of the regulating system.

Differences between Organism and Society

- **1. Organs are organised, but Parts of Society are Independent:**
- As Spencer has observed various organs of the body are incapable of independent existence, whereas various parts of society can exist independently.
- **Example:**
- Limbs of the organism such as legs, hands, face, etc., cannot have existence outside the physical body of the organism. But the parts of society such as family, school, army, police, political parties, etc., are relatively independent and are not organically fixed to the society. The movement of the parts is relatively free here.

2. Society does not have a Definite Form as does the Organism

- Unlike organisms, societies have no specific external form, such as a physical body with limbs or a face.
- Organisms have an outward form or shape [for example, dog, donkey, monkey, deer and so on] whereas societies such as Indian society or American society do not have any definite and externally identifiable form.
- Society is only a mental construct. It is abstract and exists in our mind only in the form of an idea.

3. Manner of Difference in the Dependence of Organs or Parts on the Organism or Society:

- Parts or organs of the body [such as legs, hands, nose, eyes, head, etc.] of the organism are dependent upon the body itself.
- They exist for the sake of the body. On the other hand, in the case of society the parts [such as individuals, families, groups, etc.] are more important than the society.
- In fact, society exists for the benefit of its parts, that is, individuals.
- **Spencer as a champion of the philosophy of individualism** very strongly felt that the state and society exist for the good of the individual and not vice versa.

4. Difference Regarding the Centrality of “Consciousness”:

- In an organism, there exists what is known as “consciousness” and it is concentrated in a small part of the aggregate.
- The parts of the body do not have this. But in the case of the society consciousness is diffused throughout the individual members

5. Differences Regarding the Structure and Functions:

- In the case of organism each of its parts performs a definite and fixed function. The parts perform their functions incessantly. This certainty relating to the functions of the parts, we do not find in society.
- Functions of the parts of society such as institutions often get changed. Some of the functions of family, for example, have changed.
- On the contrary, the eyes, heart, nerves, ears, tongue and other organs of the organism cannot change their functions.

Critical Comments:

- 1. Spencer used his organic analogy in a ridiculous manner when he compared the King's Council to the medulla oblongata, the House of Lords to the cerebellum, and the House of Commons to the cerebrum .He failed to understand the limitations of his analogy.
- 2. Spencer used his analogy in a very dogmatic manner, but later referred to it as merely scaffolding for building a structure of deductions. He actually proceeded as if the scaffolding were the real building. "Unfortunately, he consistently and conspicuously used the tertninology of organicism.

Critical Comments:

- 3. The organic analogy was used by thinkers in their discussions even prior to Spencer. But Spencer was the first to give to that analogy the value of scientific theory. But he was very definitely taken a prisoner by the ghost he had evoked.
- 4. If a society is like an organism, it experiences a natural cycle of birth, maturity, old age, and death. But the death of a society does not come with organic inevitableness. A society need not die.

Critical Comments:

- 5. Whether we accept or reject Spencer's comparisons between the human society and the organism, we are bound to acknowledge the fact that he popularised the concept of "system" in our sociological discussion.
- Present-day sociology profusely uses Spencer's concept of "system", of course, in a modified form.

Critical Comments:

- Replying to critics he made statements such as the following: “I have used analogies, but only as a scaffolding to help in building up a coherent body of sociological induction.
- Let us take away the scaffolding: the induction will stand by themselves.”

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