recognizes that a given social practice need not be functional for more than one system level at a time. A social component or process that may come into existence because it is functional to the needs of the system at one level may at the same time undermine the system at another level. Also, a component or process generated by the operation of a social system may be both functional and dysfunctional, if it both contributes to and undermines the working of the social system. In fact, it is the development of such conflicts or contradictions that is the fundamental source of change within societies.

It is the normal functioning of a societal system that generates the forces that lead to its transformation. Societies, as we have seen, have contradictions; their normal operation generates forces that undermine their operation. Change comes about because of the existence and growth of these contradictions. For example, the normal operation of competitive capitalist society results in growing economic crises, large-scale property, and economic stagnation. These contradictions of the system result in the transformation of competitive capitalism into monopoly capitalism in order to attempt to resolve the contradictions. But monopoly capitalism too has contradictions, which become the motive force behind change in this type of social organization. Inequality, racism, sexism, war, and the continuation of the subordination of men and women to the social laws of capitalism (alienation) persist, resulting in movements of opposition to the continuation of this social form.

The growth of bureaucracies is another contradictory feature of capitalist societies. Bureaucratic forms are needed to enable the capitalists to maintain control of the large corporations that grow up as part of the monopolization process inherent in capitalist economies. But these forms lead to alienation and work dissatisfaction, which cause discontent with the system, forcing workers to unite in collective struggle to change their working conditions.

The notion of social contradiction as the motive force of social change is alien to almost all of liberal and conservative sociology. These sociologists look for change in either factors external to the system or simply consider it to be an accident. At best a few of these sociologists analyze the stresses and strains inherent in social systems that cause them to change *quantitatively*, that is, without fundamental transformations of their basic social relationships. Socialist sociology understands that all class societies are constantly in the process of *qualitative* change. Because of the internal contradictions of the normal and routine operation of their social structures they are turning into new forms totally different from what they temporarily are.

Explanation in terms of social structure or the nature of social relations is what is meant by "sociological materialism." The materialism of radical sociology assumes that the real relationships among people are responsible for the fundamental character of social organization and social process. Materialist explanation of real social relations is counterposed to the idealist mode of analyzing the world. Idealism looks to the ideas, spirit, will, values, or norms held by individuals or groups as the ultimate explanatory category. Idealism frequently rejects the scientific method of determining

the nature of the world in favor either of a subjectivistic approach, which argues that one person's ideas about the world are as good as another's, or to a voluntarism, which maintains that people can change the world if they simply want to do so (that is, change their ideas about it).

Contrary to the claims of sociological idealism, it is the social relationships in which people participate that determine all the major aspects of society, individual behavior, and social change. The system of social relations is in turn determined by the distinctive mode of production of a society, that is, by the mutually conditioning system of the techniques of production on the one hand and the social relationships between the producers and those that control production on the other.

Although the techniques of production and the social relations of production mutually condition one another, it is the logic of the social relations of production that govern the actual technologies employed and the rate at which technology advances. The structure of relationships among people is determined by the mode in which people relate to nature to satisfy their material needs. People are driven by their biological needs to interact with nature and with other people in order to win from nature that which they need. Thus social relations are at base economic relations. Regardless of people's will or consciousness, it is ultimately the way people get a living that determines all aspects of their social life. Political, legal, moral, religious, philosophical, and all other kinds of ideas, as well as all basic types of familial, military, social, and political behavior, are fundamentally determined by social activities that are structured by societies' distinctive mode of production.

THE NATURE OF SOCIETY

Societies are created by people because only in association with other people can people meet their basic needs. A society consists of a system of social relationships between people that can basically satisfy or contain the biological drives of its members. But once a society exists, it takes on a life of its own. In addition to providing for the needs of its members, a society must provide for its survival as a social organization.

This much can be said for all societies. As simple societies grow and become wealthier and more complex, however, they develop a third characteristic. They develop systems of inequality or of social stratification. Some people become wealthier and more powerful than others. This seems to be necessary for societies to progress, to become larger and stronger, yet it is a source of conflict and contradiction as well. Social processes that are necessary to maintain the privileges of elites often conflict with the more elementary requirements of meeting basic biological and emotional drives and surviving as social organizations.

A society can be defined as a group that is more or less self-sufficient. Some primitive societies consist of as few as 50 or 100 people, yet they qualify as societies

because they are essentially self-sufficient and provide for all their members' needs. Most of what goes on in these simple societies can be explained in terms of two variables: the biological needs of its members and the physical environment in which they live. Meeting the basic needs of hunger, warmth, and dryness takes up most of people's energy in simple societies because their technologies are primitive. They cannot harness the energy of animals or fuels to do this work but must do it themselves. Their remaining energies are spent on bearing and raising children, and on informal sociability among themselves.

Contemporary societies tend to have hundreds of thousands or millions of members. With the increasing importance of the government in modern societies, the boundaries of societies generally coincide with the boundaries of the nation-state. Yet even societies as large as the United States must meet the same basic human needs as are met by a primitive society of less than 100 people. In fact, it may not meet them so well since in addition to meeting basic human needs, and needs of social coordination, it must also sustain a system of social inequality that is often contradictory to those needs.

A good part of the institutions of all societies are devoted to meeting biological needs such as hunger, warmth, and dryness. The social institutions that meet these needs are referred to as the *economy*. Because these needs are so basic, the way they are met tends to shape the rest of the society. The need for sex is met primarily through the institution of the *family*. The family also meets other basic human needs, such as the drives for affection, approval, dignity, self-esteem, belongingness, and community. These two institutions meet most of our basic human needs, although these needs may also be met through other institutions. The drives for dignity, self-esteem, community, and belonging also contribute to the widespread prevalence of clubs, associations, ceremonies, patriotism, and racism, for example, while the drive for meaningful creative activity results in the universal presence of hobbies, participant sports, crafts, and games, which provide satisfaction that may not be present in economic life.

Other institutions meet other basic human needs. The drive for meaningful activity together with the propensity to attach meaning to things is one factor that results in the universal presence of world views such as those of religion, mythology, philosophy, or science. The need of human children for extensive care and socialization makes necessary some sort of family or educational institutions.

Functional Requisites of Societies

Much of what goes on in societies, however, must be attributed to the functional requirements of the social system itself. In order for society to continuously function to satisfy biological drives, it must continue to exist as a coherent system. To do this, it must fulfill a set of societal requisites. These can be called "integrative impera-

tives," since they are necessary for social integration or coherency. Four of these can be listed:

1. The societal need to replace society's members who age and die.
2. The societal need to preserve the health of its members against human diseases and the integrity of the society against threats from both animals and other societies.
3. The societal need to coordinate the society so that it can function properly.
4. The societal need to manage frustrated biological energies so that they do not disrupt society.

In summary, these four societal requirements can be referred to as the member replacement, safety, coordination, and safety-valve functions.

Every society, if it is to survive, must replace its members that die with new people. Therefore, it must provide for childbirth, and/or other means of recruiting new members, as well as for the socialization and education of new members so that they will be able to perform their roles. Much of the family pattern, children's games, and educational institutions are determined by this societal need. Every society must in practice have institutions for preserving the integrity of the group. It must defend itself from dangerous animals, epidemic diseases, other societies, and internal disruption or else it cannot continue to exist. This requirement accounts for many of the institutions of the military, public health, magic, and the police or their equivalents. Safety-valve institutions will be discussed in Chapter 6.

The members of a society must coordinate their efforts if they are going to realize the advantages of working together to satisfy their individual drives. The effectiveness of a group in achieving its ends is a function of its internal coordination. There is a wide range of mechanisms of social coordination: rational agreement, convergence of interest, habit, enjoyment in working together, and the power of leaders are some of the most important. The universal presence of language can be accounted for in terms of its contribution to this function. Leaving language aside, the most important mechanism of coordination, especially in complex societies, is power. By power is meant simply the ability to realize one's will. Giving power to an individual or small group is one mechanism of coordination. Society can coordinate itself through such means as the police, blood vengeance, the courts, economic incentives, the inculcation of common values by education, religion, and mass media, as well as by informal mechanisms of social approval and disapproval. Correspondingly, much of the structure and operation of these institutions is determined by the requisites of social coordination.

Primitive societies can be more or less completely explained in terms of how they meet biological drives and maintain social integration within the limitations of a specific physical environment. Class societies, where great differences in power,

wealth, and privilege exist, cannot. In these societies, technological resources exist that make it easy to meet basic biological needs. As a consequence, the population grows rapidly, and the need for coordination becomes more difficult to meet. Technology also makes it possible to live in a wide variety of physical environments, modifying the environment to fit the needs of people (who naturally would require a warm environment). Thus, the more developed a society becomes, the greater the extent to which its organization is shaped by social requisites.

In analyzing class societies, we must always consider the extent to which social institutions contribute to the maintenance of the class structure. Most specifically, we must consider how they meet the requisites of the specific type of class system present in the society. This makes social analysis quite complicated, since a given institution generally fulfills functions on three different levels. For example, in class societies the family fulfills basic biological needs for sex and emotional support. It also fulfills basic societal needs for socialization by teaching the young skills needed by everyone in a society. Even more specifically, however, it socializes people to fit into a capitalist class society by teaching them to accept the particular position they have been born into in the class system. It also provides a safety valve for the frustrations its members suffer as members of class society. Likewise, most other institutions in class societies have this contradictory character. They exist to fulfill functions necessary for the survival of the society and of the people in it. And they also exist to meet the needs of the people on top of the society to maintain their privileges at the expense of those on the bottom. It is this contradictory nature of social institutions in capitalist society that creates conflict and leads eventually to the transformation of these societies into new and more advanced forms of social organization.

THE NATURE OF CLASS SOCIETY

Class societies are characterized by the division of the population into large groups of families that share a common economic and social position defined by the relationship of its adult members to the means of production. Social classes are ranked hierarchically or *stratified* into various levels essentially corresponding to their position in the production process. Members of classes share many things in common: their wealth, their income level, their occupational status, their educational level, and the general prestige or status they have in the community. People tend to live in neighborhoods, and to marry people from the same class. Of course, there are exceptions. Some people are mobile from one class to another. If this is merely a matter of an individual changing positions, it is of little importance. However, when changes in society force many people to be mobile, this may be of great significance.

There are many different theories of class in sociology. Conservative sociologists tend to see classes as hereditary groups that pass on traditions necessary for the maintenance of social order. They see the upper class as a valuable repository of aristo-

cratic virtues. Liberal sociologists, on the other hand, tend to stress social mobility. They argue that social stratification is useful when it motivates people to work hard in order to win a higher position in society. (This is known as the "functional" theory of stratification.) The difficulty with this argument, however, is that there is little evidence that people's position in a class society is determined by how hard they work or how much they contribute to society. In fact, the probable relationship may be just the opposite: people on a lower level of society often work harder and contribute more than those on top.

While liberals see stratification as being functional in the sense that it is useful for society as a whole, radical sociologists believe that it is functional only for those on top. Radicals believe that class relationships arise out of exploitation, and that the only interest they serve is to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Radicals favor a society without class divisions; ultimately they work towards a society without inequality. They believe that in a classless society people will work because they want to, and for the good of society, not so that they can make more money than someone else.

Radical sociology has a different theory of stratification than liberal or conservative sociology. The liberals and conservatives tend to place the greatest emphasis on the values held by people in different classes, and on the way in which they live. They thus emphasize the consumption patterns of members of social classes. Radicals, on the other hand, stress the *productive* side of class relationships. Following the social theories of Karl Marx, they argue that it is the social relationships growing out of economic production that create different classes. Someone must produce wealth before it can be consumed. A person's relationship to the production of wealth determines how much wealth he or she will have to consume, and hence the life style he or she will be able to afford.

Class and Economic Value

In most class societies there are two major classes. The dominant class is the one that owns or controls the means of production. In an agricultural society, this class owns the land. In an industrial capitalist society, it owns the factories. The other class, the class that is dominated or oppressed, is the class that does not own the means of production. This class is forced to work for the class that owns the means of production, in exchange for wages or for some other payment (such as a percentage of the crop in a sharecropping situation) that represents less than the *value* of what they produce.

A central tenet of Marxist theory is that it is *labor* that produces value. Of course, some things such as the air we breathe have great value in the sense that we must *use* them to survive. This *use value* is often inherent in the bounty of nature, as with plants that grow wild. However, *exchange value*, the commercial value of some-

thing in a market society, depends on how much work people must do to produce it. Thus, it is the people who do the work who produce value. Simply owning the land or a factory does not add any value for people. A capitalist who simply sits home and collects dividends, or a landlord who simply collects rents from the farmers who do the work, does not contribute anything to production. (Of course, an owner who actively manages his or her enterprise is performing a useful function. The proportion of his or her income that is attributable to actually working in the production process is not unearned income. With marginal classes, it is often difficult to distinguish between earned and unearned income.)

Class and Power

Class relationships are essentially relationships of *power*. As we have seen, by power sociologists refer to the ability to realize one's will even in the face of resistance from others. In class societies, the dominant class exercises power over the subordinate class by compelling members of that class to work for their benefit. There are four major types of power that can be identified in class societies; economic power, physical power, ideological power, and social power. By "economic power" is meant the ability to determine the behavior of others by manipulating the satisfaction or frustration of their material drives and wants through controlling the goods and services available to them, thus essentially bribing them to follow a certain course of action. By "physical power" is meant direct physical compulsion—the threat or actual use of physical force to compel someone to do a certain thing. By "ideological power" is meant the manipulation of people's beliefs and values to get them to follow a certain course. Ideological power can be exercised by creating wants or values in people through such means as advertising, early socialization, or education. It can also be exercised by controlling the channels of information either to make people believe that a certain thing or course of action will in fact satisfy their wants or values or to obtain access to better information than others in order to make better decisions than those lacking good information. By "social power" is meant the ability to have one's will prevail by using such means as control over prestige, group interaction, or social acceptance to get another to do one's bidding. Social power can be very compelling and is normally only resistable when an individual belongs to another group that places conflicting demands on him or her.

Power does not have to be actually exercised to be effective. The mere threat of the exercise of power is often sufficient to secure compliance. The mere threat of being fired, of being shot, or of being cut off from valued friends is usually enough to get an individual to realize the will of others. However, in order to maintain credibility, power must occasionally be actually exercised. Of course, the too frequent exercise of power may be counterproductive. It might alienate people to the extent that they may rebel against the demands of those with power.

The dominant class in society has an objective interest in maintaining a social structure that reinforces and increases its power, prestige, and income, while the subordinate class has an objective interest in decreasing or eliminating the differentials in these categories. The dominant class members can utilize the existing organizational structure of society to maintain and increase their privilege. Generally speaking, they are quite conscious of their objective interests. They have a high degree of "class consciousness" in the sense of being consciously aware of their interest and how to maintain it. The army, churches, state, and the corporations are all available for their service. The masses of the working people, on the other hand, must set up alternative structures in order to implement their interests in changing the structure of society. Labor unions and working-class-oriented political parties are probably the two most important forms of such organizations. Since working people must exist in a society dominated by institutions that reinforce the ideology of the upper class, it is more difficult for them to develop class consciousness. Often they are torn by conflicting loyalties, with their objective experiences leading them to feel solidarity with other workers, but the propaganda they hear from the schools, churches, and media reinforcing allegiance to the existing system. For class consciousness to develop among the working class, generally there must be a concerted effort made by organizers from leftist parties or labor movements.

Because of the propensity of human beings to seek world views or attribute meaning to things, and because of their tendency to believe that that which corresponds to one's behavior and satisfies one's drives and is in one's interests is right and good, all classes *tend* to develop a consciousness that justifies the pursuit of their interests. In order for the subordinate class to develop fully as a social class it must control its own institutions and propagate a counterculture of resistance. It must gain control of its own media and educational institutions, or develop enough political power to be able to gain control of a part of the established institutions in the society. The radical sociology movement is an outgrowth of an attempt made by progressive social movements in the 1960s to use the existing educational institutions as well as alternative media of communication to help build working-class consciousness.

Changes in Class Systems

The productive system in a society is constantly changing, partly as a result of technological developments and partly as a result of changes in social relationships manifested in social conflict. Radical sociologists see changes in the productive system as the basic source of social evolution, both in the past and in the future. They focus on the relations of production when studying the way in which society evolved from primitive hunting and gathering techniques to modern industrial societies. They also believe that continuing changes in the productive system will cause a continued evolution of society towards socialism. Political and social struggle is also necessary,

however, to assure that society evolves in a humane direction. Modern technology makes socialism possible, but it may also facilitate fascism. Before we can intelligently participate in political struggles, we must have an understanding of the role of changes in the productive system in causing and channeling social changes.

The earliest forms of the division of labor were determined by people's biological nature. The main division was between women and men, with each sex playing a different role in the productive process. Women were pregnant or nursing during most of their fertile years and consequently had to stay close to the camp and focus their energies on gathering plants to eat and on household chores. Men were free to hunt. There was also some division of labor between younger and older people, with men who were too old to hunt staying in camp and working on crafts, medical arts, or other things that were within their biological limitations.

The first changes in the relations of production resulted from ecological or environmental factors. As the population grew in fertile river valleys, it became more efficient to settle in one place and plant crops rather than roam around gathering natural products. It became necessary to import some commodities from distant places, since not everything can be obtained in one place. Thus, a need for merchants and traders developed. When water was scarce or erratic, a need for flood control and irrigation developed. The earliest development of governmental institutions can probably be traced to this need to control the water supply, as well as the desire to protect valuable land and to secure internal harmony between various specialists. Gradually, greater specialization developed between food production and crafts, or between manual and intellectual labor.

Those societies that adopted these changed relations of production became larger and more powerful. They were able to spread to outlying areas, compelling more primitive peoples to adapt to their system. In so doing, they developed an elite, an upper class, which controlled the armed forces and which existed by extracting taxes or tribute from the productive classes in society. This elite class, of course, had an interest in the division of labor even if it was not functional for society as a whole. Thus, they tended to encourage further specialization in order to make the system better able to support them and their ambitions. With the development of a major division of labor social classes developed, with families passing on their position in the system to their children. Technology tended to be developed according to the interests of the dominant classes, and this class system assumed a logic of its own that became the principle determinant of social organization. Thus, as societies become more developed, their evolution tends to result from *social* rather than *ecological* factors. This process of social evolution will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

For now, let us look in some detail at capitalist society as a form of class society. Capitalist society is, of course, the most familiar to the readers of this book, who, we can assume, live in capitalist societies. However, the class relations of capitalist societies are often less obvious and visible than those in feudal or slave societies. Relationships between lords and serfs, or between masters and slaves, are personified in specific individuals who know each other and interact on an interpersonal level. The