

# SOC 347

## CHARON, CHAPTER 7

- **Why is there Misery in the World?**

# Learning Objectives

- Human misery
- Social inequality
- Social forces & social problems
- Destructive social conflict
- Socialization and alienation
- Society as a cause of misery

# Misery

**Misery**—life of chronic suffering and unhappiness

# Questions

- Does the misery we see around us lie within our power to help remedy?
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- Shouldn't a person herself be entirely responsible for what happens to her?
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- Why should others take responsibility for influencing his/her life?

# Sociology of Misery

- Social inequality
- Destructive social conflict
- Socialization
- Alienation

# Social inequality

- Winners and losers
- Winners exploit losers
- Loss of hope
- Leads to poverty
- Lack of self-worth (poor self-images)
- Institutions that produce and maintain misery

# Destructive Social Conflict

- powerful fail to recognize the powerless
- social inequality
- dehumanizing victims
- victims of violence
- leads to disorder and unpredictability
- the strong survive
- undermines society

# Socialization

- destructive family settings
- too little love and affection
- failure to teach self-control
- development of poor self-image
- internalizing “fake” ways of society
- socialization by people in misery
- socialization into impossible or confusing expectations

# Alienation

- modern life produces alienation
- separation from other people
- separation from meaningful work
- separation from self—feeling of powerlessness
- many traps in modern society
- leads to insecurity, loss of identity, loss of intimacy

# Self-Help

- dependence on others is ethically problematic,
- dependence is practically defeatist
- saps individual initiative and effort
- reduces self-respect
- loss of motivation
- loss of self-knowledge
- replacing individual responsibility is counterproductive.

# Conclusion

That God has reasons to want us to deal with these matters ourselves.

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That people themselves must have responsibility for the development and change of the world in which they live.

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There is no substitute for individual responsibility—but responsibility requires **FREEDOM.**

# More Questions

- 1. How can God create an evil world?
- 2. Why should we do good? What reward is there for living right?
- 3. Why do some righteous people suffer and why does sin sometimes go unpunished?

# More Questions

- 4. How does evil square with the concept of a fair, holy, and loving God?
- 5. Does God really care for and protect His people who revere Him?
- 6. Are adversity and affliction a sign that a sufferer is wicked?
- 7. If God is good, why does He allow the suffering of the innocent?

# Theodicy

- **Theodicy**—the justice of God in light of human suffering.
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- How can the justice of an almighty God be defended in the face of evil, especially human suffering—and even more particularly, the suffering of the innocent?
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# Assumptions

- That God is indisputably Almighty
- God is perfectly just
- No human is wholly innocent

# The Story of Job

The story of Job begins with a very prosperous, respected, and good man who was devastated in just one day. He lost everything he had, including all his ten children. However, he refused to blame God for his troubles.

# Job

- Stricken with a terrible disease
- suffered excruciating pain for a long time.  
friends comfort/criticize him,
- That the horrible things that befell Job were due to his own sin.
- that all suffering is always the result of sin.

# Enigmas of life

We did not ask to be born, and we are just bewildered about the prosperity of evil men and the calamities of good men. But now that Jesus has come, we can understand the mystery much better. He suffered much and was unjustly condemned and executed, yet He too was victorious. Surely, we can see that all things do work together for good to those who love God (Rom. 8: 28).

# Conclusion

- suffering the result of personal sin
- there is a disciplining aspect of suffering
- God's redemptive purpose at work
- our piety has little worth before God
- God's ways are inscrutable
- mighty power of God is revealed
- Our abilities are limited
- purposes of God are beyond our comprehension

# Response

*“Do not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”* Philippians 4:6-7