

Essay on Durkheim's theory of division of labour

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Abstract

Emile Durkheim is pre-eminently known for instituting a social theory which views sociology as a natural science subject to empirical study. His seminal research on labour, *The Division of Labour in Society*, uses a comparative method to explain the morphological changes in labour in preindustrial and post-industrial societies. Durkheim categorised labour in primitive societies as mechanical solidarity for its homogenous nature, and its industrial counterpart as organic solidarity, suggesting its heterogeneous nature. Division of labour has a significant role to perform in the society since it does not depend on the establishment of economic services only but also generates harmony between people. Anomie has contributed to chaos in the social life and society is conscious of it and when society revitalises it results in social reconstruction. A foremost theme in all Durkheim's writings is the importance of collective social norms and values in preserving social cohesion and solidarity. He argued that the nature of this social solidarity depends on the extent of the division of labour.

Keywords: division of labour, mechanical solidarity, organic solidarity, anomie, social fact

1. Introduction

Durkheim was deeply concerned with the impact of the large-scale structure of society, and society itself, on the thoughts and action of individuals. His works, as interpreted by Talcott Parsons and others, was most influential in shaping structural-functional theory, with its emphasis on social structure and culture. On the intellectual front, a large body of scholars have given insight into the study of society, most significantly, Fustel de Coulanges – teacher of Emile Durkheim, had a large intellectual influence on Emile Durkheim sociological thinking. He advocated that animal societies are mechanically integrated, and human societies are integrated by ideas. This explanation offered directive to Durkheim to conclude how conscience collective (collective ideas) do influence individual motives, giving rise to regularity and continuity in social life. In Durkheim sociology, one notices the enormous influence of Simon, Rousseau and August Comte ^[1]. All of them profoundly agree that when general will prevail the gulf between individual desire and the collective institution is entirely integrated. Therefore, integration, harmony, and trust are the essential precondition for the continuity of social life.

One can find out the presence of influence of J.S. Mill and his theory of 'Concomitant Variation' is offering a methodological tool to Durkheim to explain 'dynamic density' to understand the 'social solidarity'. The Montesquieu ideas of 'spirit of the law' canter around with his explanation of 'social solidarity' ^[2]. Being influenced by Montesquieu's theory of spirit of the laws ^[3] Durkheim asserts that the structure of law may be different, but its function stands universally similar. The principal role of law includes:

1. It controls and neutralise the negative solidarity
2. It repairs injuries inflicted on conscience collective through the action of violators

3. It reinforces the faith of the collectivism on the power of society doing right thing in the right place at right time
4. Finally, the presence of law never does mean an end to crime. Instead, enforcement of the law is a voluntary reaction of society to the action of the offender.

Thus, in conclusion, the spirit of law inherently motivates people to internalise, accept to the command of society, considering them as moral. Therefore, the law is a stimulation to promote integration between individual and collective consciousness. Thus, a collective correlation is present between the function of law and the goal of a division of labour in society.

2. Theory of division of labour

Division of labour is a sociological question addressed by Emile Durkheim for various reasons. Firstly, he has witnessed a drastic transformation in the social life of France, where the monarchy has crumbled, a new middle class has made its appearance controlling the state apparatus, and the bourgeoisie has created presence inducing control over education. In France, a large section of society has given conformity to the traditional pattern of governance, and a part of intellectuals was also offering support to the call of the revivalist. Thus, the entire society was polarised into two groups, one standing in favour of change and others in search of revivalism.

Behind everything visible, there is something invisible. The concern of sociology is to establish negation between the two; it is the foundation of Durkheim's thinking. He asserts, terminologically speaking, a division of labour means the hierarchical gradation of occupation, which is concrete and visible. But occupational gradation present in given society is guided by, the size of a population, nature of the needs of the individual, role of community, functions of institution present

in society, role of law and so on. Therefore, the division of labour cannot be studied in isolation to a mode of production, the rule of law, and every possible form of division of labour is guided by a given pattern of social interrelationship which cannot be wishfully ignored. Thus, a single variable such as demographic, technological, institutional cannot be considered as adequate cause to explain the division of labour in society. Therefore, he advocates that division of work is a social fact which should be understood by casual analysis method, reduction analysis method, comparative method.

3. Durkheim's optimistic view of division of labour

Durkheim's division of labour is influenced by positivistic methodology explaining functional integration in society. Thus, sociologically speaking, the division of labour establishes a balance between positivism and functionalism in society. While discussing the division of labour, Durkheim considers the notion of individual action. He believed that the action of man is expressive and when his action is governed by collective well-being, it gives rise to normalcy, and when individual action is driven by pathological stimulation, i.e. self-centric & utilitarian, it gives rise to the growth of abnormal, unwanted morbid element in social life. Thus, in every social institution, there are healthy and pathological elements, pathology induce strain, it is undesirable but unavoidable. Every society tolerates to certain aspects of pathological strain in routine and regularised manner. But in most of the situation, normalcy prevails, where the firm desire of man fits into the conscious and the collective will of the society promoting social solidarity. Thus, a division of labour is a story of the structure of social life where there is a presence of harmony, integration, accomplishment and continuity.

4. Individualism vs Durkheim's Sociology

While discussing the division of labour, Emile Durkheim intended to offer a critic from the standpoint of the utilitarian tradition developing in the field of economics with the contribution of Adam Smith, David Richardo and J.M. Keynes. All of them advocate that nor it is a state, neither is it the government which would contribute to the growth and the promotion of human happiness, accelerating production and having a vast accumulation of resources. They believe that 'man is the master of his destiny'. Therefore, it is individual talent, expertise derives and dreams which transform a simple society into a vibrant and prosperous country. This agreement is not acceptable to Durkheim because individualism and Durkheim's sociology stand mutually opposite to each other. Thus, Durkheim instead of addressing to what made modern capitalism possible prepares to study the conditions present in the new capitalist societies of Europe.

Durkheim is not too comfortable with the writing of Hobbes and Locke. In their theory of individualism Machiavelli, Hobbes and Locke strongly assert that state; the government are the conscious creation of individual for the promotion of individual happiness. In their 'social contract theory', Hobbes and Locke ^[4] advocate that how rational man evaluating his benefits developed negotiation with the fellow being, from out of which grew; clan, tribe, confederation and consequently state. Therefore, a social organisation in particular and societies, in general, are the conscious creation of individual desire and motives.

Durkheim prefers the ideas of L. Hobhouse and Rousseau ^[1] who advocate that man in search of freedom accept enslavement or when a man is driven by self-love, he thinks about himself, but when he is motivated by sympathy, he established interconnectivity between individual desire and collective happiness. Collective happiness can contribute to personal satisfaction. Thus, the man instead of being utilitarian reposes his faith in the wisdom of collectively. Therefore, individual desire and collective will positively correspond to each other, and that is the essence of the division of labour in society. It drives the point back home that division of labour is not an explanation of a shift from a state of nature to state. It is rather how this shift moralise the relationship between individual and society being the essence of the division of labour, a division of labour is social fact that being a matter of political inquiry.

5. Division of labour- A social reality

Durkheim was primarily influenced by the writing of Tonnies, in his book 'Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft' Tonnies advocate that when there is a shift from community type of condition to society type of condition, people undergo through the spirit of strain, restlessness and maladjustment. However, these experiences are temporal. Thus, over a period, a new institution, new laws will moralise new form of relationships, offer direction to the people to go for harmony and integration. Consequently, change brings happiness and pleasure, integrating the distinction between individual desire and collective will. Thus, a division of labour is not a story of how utilitarian man makes society possible; rather it is an explanation of the social change, the emergence of new social structure and individual negotiation with the will of collectively. Hence, the division of labour is not an economic fact; rather it is a social reality ^[5].

Eric Swift consider that the 'psychic state' of man's mind is so greatly driven by the spirit of self-love, personal happiness, a personal pleasure that man first think about himself, his survival, his pleasure before he thinks about others. Durkheim considers this kind of thinking as immoral and wicked. Eric Swift, who believes that man, will not hesitate to kill his

¹ The book Hobbes, Locke and Confusion's Empire: An Examination of Seventeenth-Century Political Philosophy presents a major study of the foundations of modern political theory, the eminent political philosopher Ross Harrison explains, analyses, and criticizes the work of Hobbes, Locke and their contemporaries. He provides a complete account of the turbulent historical background that shaped the political, intellectual and religious content of this philosophy. The book explores the limits of political authority and the relationship of the legitimacy of government to the will of its people in non-technical, accessible prose.

children and eat their flash at the time of extreme difficulties when his survival is at stake. Contradicting to Swift, Durkheim asserts that history indicates situation when people killed themselves because they could not see the miseries of their children. Durkheim concludes that man controls his self-centric origin, internalising the values and normative condition of society. Therefore, in individual thinking feeling and perception, one can find the wisdom of collectivity about 'what is moral or immoral'. Thus, the individual feeling and sensation, drives and derivatives the positive reflection of collective desire and motives. Therefore, a particular action is an extension of collective judgment, cumulative evaluation, which is the essence of debate on the division of labour. Hence, a division of labour is not a manifestation of individual psychology; instead of being a social fact, it explains how own consciousness necessarily negotiates with a collective consciousness.

6. Durkheim's methodology to explain division of labour

Darwin and Malthus^[6] explain that size and volume of the population necessarily define the nature and the form of division of labour in society. Their explanation sufficiently influences by the writings of Spencer who advocated how societies pass through the stage of homogeneity to heterogeneity, which can be understood in the light of change from the simple form of division of labour to a complex type of division of labour. Durkheim is not entirely convinced with the argument that:

1. There is a qualitative distinction between the simple and complex form of division of labour; he believes that the spirit or the essence present in the division of labour in both the societies stand to be universally same.
2. Division of labour is not explaining the emerging difference among the people because of the increase in a volume of the population. He believes there is a possibility of people coming together to each other when the population is high, yet people are much unknown to each other. Hence, it cannot be concluded that higher is the population volume least possible is an interpersonal relationship. Therefore, heterogeneity promotes lack of integration and consequently social crisis.

He asserts that going beyond the study of material density (volume of the population), one should consider dynamic frequency (a synergistic relationship between the community) which consequently define the excellent density (proper integration between people). To examine the magnetic density, he speaks about intensity and rigidity and therefore explains the outcomes of it (content), what can be best understood in the light of moral density. This explanation is driven by 'casual analysis method and deductive analysis' explaining the use of the positivistic method by Durkheim to explain the division of labour in society^[7].

Durkheim while explaining the division of labour keeps in mind the common methodology this must have to be used

while conducting research. His search for a methodology comes out of the explanation given by J.S. Mill. In his theory of concomitant variation, Mill asserts that 'how a given social reality must be understood in the light of the corresponding dependent variable'. This logic is a foundation to causal analysis method, supported by a positivistic tradition of August Comte and meticulously followed by Durkheim in a sociological search. Thus, he concludes contradictory to Spencer that when society is changed from the state of simplicity to the state of complexity, the new diversity does not give way to confusion, chaos and disorder. The position can be best explained concerning Durkheim's understanding of the interconnectivity between 'demographic and structure of division of labour'^[2].

7. Division of labour as a social fact

The development and use of a concept of the social fact lie at the heart of Durkheim's sociology. Durkheim believes firmly that the potential function of the division of labour as a social fact is to explain the moral integration between man and man, man and the social institution, man and society. Division of labour ultimately produces a harmonious union between individual and society, contributing to the moral integration between both. Thus, a division of labour being moral and binding, sociology must have to understand that how by confirming to given occupation voluntarily, man becomes an invisible part of the social life. To Durkheim, a division of labour being moral, sociology must have to understand it in the light of demand and supply in the view of the theory of economics. In voluntary manner, every society offers to its member's different kinds of vocations essential for its continuity. By adhering to its vocation unquestionably, man necessarily supplies to the demands of the society. Hence, integration and continuity are found in society^[8].

Durkheim's understanding of division of labour never commits itself to the fact that where there is a division of labour, there is bound to be present no violation, no deviance and no discontinuity to the moral preaching of society. Instead, in every society integration and challenge to integration would exist that means both conformity and deviance are mutually coexistent. Though division of labour stimulates the sense of inclusion between man and society, there are present in every society a handful of people those who love to differ, disagree, and manifest deviance. Durkheim explains their course of action as abnormal or pathological, mutually coexistent with normal, hence, considered as usual. Therefore, he believes that no society is threatened by the presence of deviation of violation because every society has an efficient mechanism within its control to repair the injuries manifested by the violators on the course of the action of conferment. Thus, the mechanism is known as the rule of law which must be understood to examine the structure and function of the division of labour in society.

² In the book Sociological theory, the text gives readers an overview of the major theorists and schools of sociological thought. It integrates key theories with biographical sketches of theorists, and theories are placed in their historical and intellectual context to help researchers to understand the original works of the theorists.

8. Simple society vs complex society

Durkheim's sociology conceptualises that if the division of labour is universal, equally universal is a violation and the presence of law to neutralise the bearing of a breach on the action of the collectivity, which conform to the will of society. Durkheim believes that division of labour is universal, the law is also equally universal, but the structure of law is substantially dependent on the structural character of society. Hence, in the simple society where every individual is a functional duplicative of another individual repressive law make an appearance.

While speaking about the division of labour, Durkheim considers two different social conditions where the division of labour is present which include: division of labour at the time of social continuity and division of labour at the time of social change. While explaining the division of labour about social continuity, he considers two different social conditions, i.e. simple society and complex society.

In a simple society, the size of the population being restrictive, if a violator is shown mercy, and then there is a probability that the conformist may follow the footsteps of the deviant, considering that as moral. Hence the structural charter of the society defines the nature and the form of law useful to the society to reinforce social solidarity. [ibid] To its contrast, in case of modern society, specialisation has given way to diversity, compartmentalisation (economic life separated from political life) of a different section of human activities. Thus, in a complex society, crime is evaluated, and corresponding to that punishment is accorded. Therefore, to modern society, the restitutive law can be considered as exclusively functional.

9. Durkheim's optimistic view of division of labour

Durkheim meets Marx ^[9] in his explanation of the division of labour and comes close to Marx to explain the economic conditions present in simple societies about the mechanical society and both considers the economic factors and their consequence on social life. While Marx was pessimistic about the division of labour in society, Durkheim was thoughtfully optimistic. They stand different to each other based on their understanding of the consequences of industrialisation, a growth of capitalism and their bearing on individual experience. Durkheim advocates that in simple society family and kinship determine the nature and form of production, supply labour to the process of production, transmit skills from one generation to another and production skills are known to every member of the family. Hence, in the absence of one, other can take work with the same drive, bringing home the same output.

In case of these societies, every family and individual being economically self-sufficient, they are not dependent on others for their survival. However, a common mode of livelihood, popular participation in rituals periodically brings people closer to each other. Thus, Durkheim concludes that even the size of a population is low physical co-presence is high, also though the functional dependency is being lowed; the synergistic relationship among the population is moderate in

case of this society. Every person is functional duplicative to every other person, and any violation gives way to the severe sanction. Thus, in such society, mechanical solidarity means solidarity of resemblance is present which can best be understood in term of conventional thinking, mediocre acting, collective participation in the mode of production and shared understanding about enforcement of justice, in this situation man directly relates himself with society. Therefore, mechanical solidarity is suitable to the structural character of simple society.

10. Mechanical and Organic solidarity

For Durkheim, a volume of the population is the necessary cause which defines the inter-relationship among the population. To explain this inter-relationship, he uses the term 'intensity' meaning how frequently purposely, people in each society relate themselves to each other. This relationship may be direct, immediate, personal and face to face in simple society, but it may be indirect, variable, impersonal, contractual, psychological yet moral, binding, and integrative in case of modern society. The interrelationship between the populations does sufficiently explain rigidity, meaning how strongly people feel about each other, considering themselves close to each other. Thus, a volume of population offers a direction to intensity and rigidity present in each population in the light of which one must understand dynamic density. Dynamic density ordinarily means the psychological, moral integration among the population which is purposely developed. Thus, Durkheim concludes that dynamic density is moderate or low in a society where the volume of the population is less, and it is highly frequent in societies where material density is high. Thus, variation in magnetic density produce a form of moral density in a simple society which can be defined as mechanical solidarity, and in a complex society, it provides organic solidarity.

In the explanation of organic solidarity, he advocates how an increase in the population gives way to the growth of multiple needs. Consequently, a sophistication of technology, variability of products, particular specialisation results in masking the identity of man as one who is producing to gratify the consumption needs of the people unknown to him. As an outcome, specialisation gives way to the reduction of man into a part producer, dependent on the functional skills of others for his survival. Thus, Durkheim advocates that higher is the population more intensive are specialisation and a more high dependency on each other accelerating the mutual interchange among people. The people being mostly unknown to each other, yet dependent on each other, they search for an efficient mechanism which could ensure others contributing to his needs and vice-versa. As a result, voluntarily man confirms to the rule of society. Thus, mercantile laws, industrial laws, civil laws of different kind enforced by the state promote moral integration between man and man and consequently between man and society. Therefore, a structure of modern society necessarily demands the presence of organic union among

individual on one hand and occupational group on the other ^[3]. Consequently, to Durkheim, both organic and mechanical solidarity explains a regular form of division of labour, present in two different kinds of societies. Where the standard form of division of labour exists, there is spontaneous adherence to a given kind of occupation, a given form of law which consequently produce a given form of solidarity. Thus, natural selection of occupation promotes a normal form of division of labour.

11. Social change and division of labour

In his explanation of social change and division of labour, Durkheim asserts that when the old order goes out, and the new order is yet to make its appearance, one doesn't find a well-defined conscience collective which can be moralised by the individual. A person becomes directionless, helpless and hopeless in this kind of situation and society suffers from lawlessness or anomie. Thus, loses its vitality and strength to regulate or control the deviance behaviour, in such a situation, one becomes the master of his destiny. One gets sufficient space and scope to gratify his utilitarian interest thus, 'I stand taller than our' giving rise to disillusionment and suffocation. In such a situation, work is reduced to a wage-earning activity as one never enjoys his work nor committed to his work, work never offers man eternal happiness and societal appreciation. Thus, man reduces into a machine, and the industrialist exploit workers as their working hours keep increasing, the value of wages decline, and price of essential commodities rise sky high making a man entirely disillusioned. The provincial mechanisms are dead. No family, no kinship, no religion come to rescue of man to at least a lip service to neutralise his frustration. Industries are not morally committed to the state. Therefore, tax evasion, a concentration of capital becomes the essential goal of the industrial house.

12. Division of Labour and Anomie

Emile Durkheim is a moralist; he lives in hope thus, believes that 'anomie is temporal' ^[4]. Anomie ^[5] has contributed to chaos in the social life and society is conscious of it. Hence, when society revitalises itself new form of law, new social group, and a new form of education will be making an appearance which will be contributing to social reconstruction. As a result, trade union, school, a family will offer individual the values of professionalism, moralism, a spirit of cooperation, a merit of conformity to law. As a result, these new benefits, new ethos will bring man back to the state of happiness where the gulf between individual will and collective expectation will be meeting its natural ends. Thus, in modern society, man will learn to respect his work,

moralise his industry, occupation, family, peer group, school. He will be concerned about his functional role towards a different section of society. Hence, an exclusive form of moral integration between individual and society. In conclusion, one can advocate that when Durkheim was emerging as sociologist while speaking about the structure of division of labour he gives an impression that he is more a social priest than sociologist when he offers a solution to the problem of anomie.

13. Concluding Remark

Emile Durkheim's sociology is intellectually obliged to distinctive tradition to explain the social change and social continuity. In his well-known work 'The Division of Labour in Society' Durkheim strained to determine the social consequences of the division of labour in modern societies. A major theme in all Durkheim's writings is the significance of collective social norms and values in upholding social cohesion and solidarity. He contended that the nature of this social solidarity depends on the extent of the division of labour. Durkheim embraced that only if all the members of a society were knotted to a common set of symbolic representations or to common set of beliefs about the world around them, the moral unity of the society would be innocuous. Without them, Durkheim contended, any society, whether primitive or modern, was certain to degenerate and decay.

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³ Durkheim, Morals and Modernity-this book is intended for social and political theory, philosophy of science and Durkheimian studies within sociology, philosophy and politics. Thorough and wide-ranging examination of the science of morals, reviving and defending the tradition of a scientific approach to ethics, it engages with recent debates on modernism and morality, demonstrating the contemporary relevance of Durkheim's ideas.

⁴ Ross Harrison, Hobbes, Locke and Confusion's Empire: An Examination of Seventeenth-Century Political Philosophy.

⁵ In the 1960s, Robert Merton (American sociologist) used the term to describe the differences between socially accepted goals and the availability of means to achieve those goals.

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