

The division of labour between karl marx and emile durkheim

Sociology



Division of labour is the specialization of cooperative labour in specific, circumscribed tasks and like roles. Changing from a feudal society (in which agriculture is the main form of production) to a society in which work tasks become more and more specialised, people are compelled to sell their labour to the owners of big factories in order to survive. People are forced to move into (the rural parts) of town, as that's where the big factories and new invented machines are. These factories are owned by individuals and no longer state-owned and controlled.

In the law of nature everything was primitive but as the society grew into a more complex capitalist society there was also increased division of labour. To Durkheim division of labour was a way of social order that was going to bring solidarity amongst the people as they will all be interdependent on each other and will be specializing in what they are good at, unlike Karl Marx who saw division of labour as a car driving us to different social classes, anomie and individualism.

Durkheim is a functionalist who sees a society as an interdependent organ, it cannot function on its own and division of labour brings about permanent feelings of mutual dependence amongst the people in the society and his perspective's main aim was to support that division of labour is a pillar for social order (Giddens, 1998: 184), however Marx does not embrace it as much, to him division of labour is like cancer that gets into a human body and destroys it entirely, with no committed function of the life-host, and whose decoupled appropriation of its nutrients deprives the life-host of what it requires to sustain its vital functions(Kahn, 1981: 132). Marx acknowledges that division of labour came to exploit, enslave workers and that's a social

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reality we can find in factory floors and manufacturing industries where workers are dehumanized (Johnson, 1971: 117), but Durkheim insists with a metaphor that society is like a human body that needs the eye to see, ears to hear and legs to walk, without another part the body will not be functioning properly.

Durkheim argues that cooperation necessarily supposes the pre-existence of society for the division of labour to function, groups which apparently perform distinct tasks must actually intermingle and be absorbed into one another, in very simple societies, and members can easily replace each other in tasks. Comte and Spencer would argue that in higher societies, as social organization is perfected, it becomes more and more impossible for members to switch out of roles. However, Durkheim disagrees. He claims that the phenomena of substitution are also observable in even the highest levels of society. A member of society must always be ready to change functions to accommodate a break in social equilibrium. as labor is divided up more in human societies, this elasticity increases. Consequently the function becomes more and more independent of the organ (member of society) which performs it.

For instance in higher societies, men performing different social functions are distinguished less and less by physical features The division of labour is a necessary consequence of the growth of volume and density of society as the number of individuals between whom social relations are established increases, men can only maintain their position by specializing more. Men go forward because they must. Civilization is but an after-effect (not a cause) of the division of labour. Furthermore, individuals are more a product of <https://assignbuster.com/the-division-of-labour-between-karl-marx-and-emile-durkheim/>

common social life than a determining factor in it. Individuals depend on the diversity of social conditions to differentiate themselves. The more numerous and diverse individuals are, the more strongly and rapidly they react together. As a result, social life becomes more intense. This intensification constitutes civilization. The product of these social relationships becomes an entity in itself (society sui generis).

Karl Marx is concerned with the exact development of industrial capitalist society. For him, most social classes or structures in the past have either ended in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. Therefore, part of his ideology is to minimize the division of labour to an extent which would make it possible to reduce certain negative impacts that industrial capitalism has on the individual. He appreciated the work of many other philosophers but also argues that the purpose of his own work is in changing the whole way of how society is structured.

Durkheim suggests that the popular assumptions of the time concerning the imminent collapse of social life in response to the ever increasing division of labour and general urbanization of life were not just exaggerated but actually wrong. Durkheim retorted that rather than being dismantled, solidarity was simply being reconstructed in a different form. Durkheim argued that modern industrial society actively freed people from isolation by mutual dependence through the increasing division of labour. For Durkheim only collective solidarity and morality could furnish the necessary foundations for individual freedom, ethical individualism not psychological egoism, was the key to progress for Durkheim and this key lays buried within <https://assignbuster.com/the-division-of-labour-between-karl-marx-and-emile-durkheim/>

the increasing division of labour. He suggests that without some form of institutionalized dispute resolution at work, anomie is likely to prevail.

The forced division of labour occurred when existing patterns of inequality failed to mirror what Durkheim took to be the normal of inevitable distribution of personal inequalities. Thus the advantages of the normal division of labour would be found only if society is constituted in such a way that social inequalities exactly express natural inequalities. For division of labour to create social solidarity, it is not enough that everyone have a task, the task must be agreeable to him. If the division of labour produces unrest, it is because the distribution of social functions does not correspond to the distribution of natural abilities. Constraint binds people to their functions, and only a troubled form of solidarity can exist. Normally, labor is divided according to the distribution of aptitude in society.

The division of labour produces social solidarity when it arises spontaneously . perfect Spontaneity corresponds to absolute equality in the external conditions of struggle for a position in the division of labour. Constraint occurs when this struggle becomes impossible. Perfect spontaneity cannot exist in any society inequalities build up through time. For instance, the hereditary transmission of wealth makes the external conditions of the 'struggle' very unequal. The 'higher' the society, the less these inequalities exist. In an organic society, the sentiments held in common do not possess a great deal of strength to keep the individual bound to the group.

Subversive tendencies emerge more readily than in mechanical societies.

Hence, in organized societies it is indispensable that the division of labour

work to attain the goal of spontaneity. these societies should attempt to <https://assignbuster.com/the-division-of-labour-between-karl-marx-and-emile-durkheim/>

eliminate all external inequalities. They cannot sustain solidarity unless their constituent parts are solidly linked. Equality in the external conditions of the struggle is needed to secure each individual to his function and to link these functions with each other. This proposition introduces a long discussion from Durkheim on the importance of equality in contracts. He states that contracts necessarily develop with the division of labour.

Durkheim also contends that 'there can be no rich or poor by birth without there being unjust contracts'. these injustices are found more often in less advanced societies, where contractual relations are less developed. Yet as labor becomes more divided up and the social doctrine weakens, these injustices become more unbearable and people start creating contracts to make relationships fairer. Lastly, Durkheim makes a pitch for the importance of society over nature. Contracts regulate social life because if not, people will take advantage of each other. In the broad scheme, liberty and equality are products of regulation. Man as a social being regulates things in nature, 'stripping them of their moral character.

Man cannot escape from nature save by creating another world in which he dominates it. that world is society. Marx's analysis of the division of labor is remarkably similar to Rousseau's. Both argued that the desire for private property led to the division of labour, and this in turn gave rise to the existence of separate social classes based on economic differences. The Marxist analysis of politics relies completely upon the validity of this assumption. Without economic classes, there would be no need for a State, since a State is, by definition, nothing more than an instrument of

social control used by the members of one class to suppress the members of another.

Thus, when the proletarian revolution comes, the proletarian class must use the State to destroy the remnants of bourgeois capitalism and the ideology of capitalism. Marx actually believed that in the communist society beyond the Revolution, the division of labor would be utterly destroyed. All specialization would disappear. This implies that for the purposes of economic production and rational economic planning, all men (and all geographical areas) are created equal. It is precisely this that Christians, conservatives, and libertarians have always denied. Marx argued that division of labour may also lead to workers with poorer overall skills and a lack of enthusiasm for their work.

This viewpoint was extended and refined by Karl Marx. He described the process as alienation workers become more and more specialized and work becomes repetitive, eventually leading to complete alienation from the process of production. He wrote that with this division of labour, the worker is depressed spiritually and physically to the condition of a machine. He believed that the fullness of production is essential to human liberation and accepted the idea of a strict division of labour only as a temporary necessary evil. Marx's most important theoretical contribution is his sharp distinction between the social division and the technical or economic division of labour.

That is, some forms of labour co-operation are due purely to technical necessity, but others are purely a result of a social control function related to a class and status hierarchy. If these two divisions are conflated, it might appear as though the existing division of labour is technically inevitable and <https://assignbuster.com/the-division-of-labour-between-karl-marx-and-emile-durkheim/>

immutable, rather than (in good part) socially constructed and influenced by power relationships. It may be, for example, that it is technically necessary that both pleasant and unpleasant jobs must be done by a group of people. But from that fact alone, it does not follow that any particular person must do any particular (pleasant or unpleasant) job.

If particular people get to do the unpleasant jobs and others the pleasant jobs, this cannot be explained by technical necessity; it is a socially made decision, which could be made using a variety of different criteria. The tasks could be rotated, or a person could be assigned to a task permanently, and so on. Marx also suggests that the capitalist division of labour will evolve over time such that the maximum amount of labour is productive labour. where productive labour is defined as labour which creates surplus value. Marx argues that in a communist society, the division of labour is transcended, meaning that balanced human development occurs where people fully express their nature in the variety of creative work that they do. In summation Durkheim is often criticized for being a functionalist and a positivist.

However, his historical comparative methodology puts him at odds with functionalists and positivists who believe that invariant social laws exist that can explain social phenomenon across all societies. Durkheim does tend to emphasize the objective nature of social facts; thus, he neglects the subjective interpretations that social actors may have of a particular social phenomenon and the agency of individuals in general to control social forces. Furthermore, Durkheim's basic assumption about human nature-that people are driven by their passion for gratification that can never be

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satisfied-is not empirically substantiated in any of his work. Finally, Durkheim's understanding of the relationship between morality and sociology has been critiqued as being conservative.