**SOC 3150: Classical Sociological Theory**

**Lecture 14: Durkheim: The Division of Labour in Society II**

Now that we have looked at the broad themes in Durkheim’s *Division of* Labour, today we will consider a number of subsidiary issues:

1. Law and social solidarity
2. Causes of the division of labour
3. Individualism, and
4. Abnormal developments

**Law and Social Solidarity:**

Durkheim considered differences in law to illustrate his division of societies – and their moral order - into mechanical solidarity (based on similarity) and organic solidarity (based on difference)

He felt it difficult to study non-material social facts like these and collective conscience directly, so he clamed that sociologists should study material social facts that reflect them

Durkheim asserted that societies approximating *mechanical solidarity* are characterized by *repressive penal law*: as people are very similar and believe very strongly in a common morality, offenders are punished very severely for actions offending it.

In contrast, societies approximating *organic solidarity* are characterized by *restitutive law*, where offences are more likely to be seen as committed against a particular individual or group than against the moral system itself. Because there is a weak common morality, emotional responses are less likely and offenders are required to make restitution for their actions.

More specifically, the latter are characterized by:

* a centralized authority in the form of legal and political organs
* a set of stable and regular social functions which fill social prerequisites
* separate and specialized administrative functions
* a system of judicial organs relying on restitutive sanctions
* social and economic relations regulated by contract law
* separate and autonomous economic functions

**Causes of the division of labour:**

After outlining the main differences between mechanical and organic solidarity, Durkheim turned to the causes of the division of labour itself

Durkheim thought that this began when segmented, relatively isolated social groupings in traditional societies (themselves closely integrated by common religious beliefs and practices) began to interact (i.e. the previous social, economic, and political boundaries between them became more permeable)

This created movement between the parts of the social mass. Instead of social life being dispersed over separate segments, it becomes more consolidated and localized, tending to increase the moral density of society

Beyond this general schema, Durkheim identified three primary causes of the division of labour:

1. Change in the geographic proximity of individuals, especially dispersed populations concentrating themselves in more confined areas
2. The formation of cities, which occurs as social density is increased. This creates an intensification of interaction between individuals/an increase in the overall social mass/mixing segments into consolidated social organs
3. The growing social mass produces more frequent communications and the need for transportation. These new forms of interchange suppress gaps between segments, increase moral density, intra-social relations, and frequency of contact between individuals.

Ultimately, those living in closer proximity find that they must live cooperatively and this takes the form of the interdependent division of labour

**Individualism:**

One result of all this is an increase in individual autonomy in modern societies, reflecting a relative weakening of the links tying individuals to society

Durkheim went beyond earlier French criticism of advancing individualism, showing that it had a social origin and could be explained sociologically (e.g. it was not a conspicuous feature of traditional societies characterized by mechanical solidarity)

Durkheim asserted that in traditional societies, it was essentially the leader that had the authority, and thus the luxury or freedom of being an individual. All others are absorbed into the collective.

In industrial society, as the force of social links between the individual and society weaken, individuals become the recipients of rights and freedoms in which their ties to society are expressed. Thus, as social density, population, and the division of labour grow:

* individuals are freed from traditional social allegiances
* individual ideas begin to predominate over collective ones
* individuals are placed into a framework of causes that connect them to their own wants/needs rather than those of society
* social activity grows more varied, there develops a more varied social life
* interdependence and the division of labour results in new ideas and ideals which gradually replace old ones
* society becomes freer and more extensive

The downside of all this is that personal bonds to each other “become rare and weak, one loses sight of the other and thus loses interest in them.”

As personally indifference grows, there is a loss of collective surveillance and the sphere of individual, autonomous action grows to become a right.

The common conscience begins to lose its hold over the individual, becoming more vague, ambiguous and indeterminate. Collective social rules lose their clarity.

As the collective grasp of society over the individual loosens, there is individual divergence and society is divided into ever smaller compartments enclosing the individual.

**Abnormal developments in the Division of Labour:**

Durkheim, finally, turns his attention to problems occurring in the division of labour that he claimed were “inconsistent with its normal development.” He identified three “pathological” forms:

1. The anomic division of labour
2. The forced division of labour
3. The poor coordination of functions resulting from the division of labour itself

Each of these, in one way or another, emphasizes either what deregulates individuals from society and/or what deregulates social functions among themselves

The *anomic* division of labour refers to the lack of regulation in a society that celebrates isolated individuality and refrains from telling people what they should do. People thus lack sufficient moral constraint, no clear concept of what is not proper/acceptable (i.e. people become so specialized they cease to feel a common bond with others/society)

The *forced* division of labour involves rule by outdated norms and expectations, forcing individuals, groups, and classes into positions

for which they are ill-suited (e.g. traditions, economic power, or status unjustly determining who does what regardless of talent or qualifications)

Societies where the specialized functions performed by different people and groups are *poorly coordinated.* In such cases*,* interdependence between people is undermined in favor of social isolation.