RUNNING HEAD: DURKHEIM

Modern societies and Durkhem

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***Introduction***

Emile Durkheim was a French sociologist who contributed much towards society and social interaction. In conjunction with Karl Marx and Max Weber, he was the prime originator of modernity. His most of the work was related to maintenance of integrity and consistency in the era of modernity. As a functionalist, he viewed society as a whole and laid stress over the interconnectivity of all elements of society. According to him, society is a living organism that for its proper functioning requires the effective role of each part. Therefore, there must be strong ties among people in society for social integration. There must be social solidarity as a result of social bonds and interchanges. In the absence of these factors there comes the social disintegration in the society. Moreover, he used his concept of division of labour to show the change of society from traditional to modern. This essay will discuss the views of Emile Durkheim regarding the pre-modern and modern societies and the elements that disintegrate these societies. There will be also discussion about the new problems that modern societies are facing in the context of his theories.

As a functionalist, he emphasized the need for societal equilibrium for the proper functioning of societies. If the social order and flow system are disturbed due to any factor, society should adjust itself to get a stable state again. Durkheim was an eye witness of the late 19th century. He showed his apprehension in his book “The Division of Labour in Society” about social disintegration in modern society. These apprehensions were responding to Auguste Comte views. Thus, the turbulence during the late 19th century was the result of the division of people in the society as they were growing in number. Their growth made things complex and this decreased the social solidarity in society. He used his concept of social solidarity to understand the difference between pre-modern and modern societies.

According to him, there are two types of social solidarity; mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. Mechanical solidarity functions as glue and fastens individual of the society. This is the characteristic of traditional societies that have a limited division of labour. The limited division of labour is the result of shared emotions that people had due to the same nature of tasks. Accordingly, pre-modern societies were harmonized and consistent that had people having same race, traditions as well as education. This presence of consistency required only a few specialised industries and jobs. Moreover, due to the fewer population societies were small having few machines and were mostly depending upon local resources. Likewise, there was less economic production due to a few specialised occupations (Bulgaru, 2019). As people were less and knew each other, they established mechanical solidarity. However, this solidarity was threatened in the late eighteenth century as a result of the rise of industry and its expansion. This expansion affected the nature of social networks. These networks were required for the cohesion of society. When these started weakened, then people were disintegrated and societies were shifted from one form to another.

On the other hand, organic solidarity is the characteristic of modern societies having extremely developed division of labour. This division of labour is due to the mutual dependency of people as the result of the mutual needs of people in society. Durkheim also criticized considering the technical conditions for the division of labour and did not accept it as a natural condition. When there are changes in natural conditions in societies, then there emerged the need for division of labour. For example, when there are more and more people, a need for specialization arises leading to the division of labour. This division of labour is also responsible for determining the type of solidarity (Johnson et al., 2017). For example, modern societies are heterogeneous have people with different races, traditions as well as education levels. When needs increase, there emerge more and more industries to fill those needs and needs of the society as a whole. Therefore, social patterns in the society are the source of industrialization. Same happened during the mid-1700s in Europe and societies transformed from traditional to modern. The eighteenth century can be witnessed for technological inventions that brought industrial revolution. These technological inventions changed people’s living style and moved the industrial societies towards information societies.

***Conclusion***

There is a need for some deviance in societies that can bring changes in societies. Even, if there are only saints in societies then this deviance can come from any means leading to bring social change (Tiryakian, 2016). Emile. Durkheim was born in the period of modern change and predicted the presence of autonomy and productivity in modern societies along with distortion of social ties. When he was young France faced a Franco-Prussian was during 1870-1871. He spent his all efforts in finding the reasons of social solidarity that he considered the cause of modernity. His main point regarding the social changes was the increase in human population density. When there are more and more people, the competition among them increases. They then need specializsed activities to fulfil their needs. This act as a change factor and societies are moved from traditional to modern due to less solidarity. With his work, he also rejected the idea of the emergence of technology and the establishment of modern societies.

Today societies are information societies due to the presence of the latest technology and its use. These modern societies of today are known as information societies. Thus, information societies are depending upon the high level of development of information and telecommunication technologies. All the occupations of people and their needs are also related to information technologies. With this, these societies also have less solidarity as people are less depends upon them. Individualism is the characteristic of today’s societies. This is more evident in European countries that have less social ties among society members. These are also the result of the transition of their society from modern to the information society. Now, the nature of business is different for people and there is no need for mutual cooperation in society. This is causing different issues to emerge in society. For example, due to more trends towards individualism now people are suffering from different mental health issues. There is now more depression in the society and suicide rates have also increased to the alarming level (Clegg, Cunha and Rego, 2016). Furthermore, with the weakness in the social ties, there are now fewer concepts of family and family relations. The concept of the extended family has almost ended in European countries. All the problems of the modern world can be addressed with the functionalist perceptive of Emile Durkheim who laid stress over the presence of integration in the society.

References

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