Emile Durkheim

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Emile Durkheim
‘David Emile Durkheim’

- Emile Durkheim was born on April 15, 1858 in Épinal, France.
- Emile is known as one of the first founders of modern sociology.
- His father Moise, was chief rabbi of Épinal for over 20 years, as has generations before him.
- Emile took a different path though. He was interested in teaching. He went to the College d’Épinal and École Normale Superieur.
- Emile married Louise Dreyfus and they had two children Andre and Marie.
- Emile died November 15th 1917, at the age of 59.
• He disagreed with many others in his field at that time, as they believed that individual psychology was the basis of sociology.

• However, he believed that sociology was the study of the society that surrounds and influence the individual.

• With that belief he set out to:
  1. establish scientific legitimacy of sociology and to then use it to maintain social order.
  2. find an alternative to the Marxian, materialist approach (which viewed conflict and crisis as normal in a capitalist society).
Durkheim’s Main Legacy: Structural Functionalism

- Structural Functionalism was developed by Emile Durkheim but also Bronislaw Malinowski.

- Durkheim sought to explain the apparent stability of societies.

- Structural Functionalism is when societies tend to be divided, but are held together by shared values, common symbols or systems of exchanges, which creates stability.

- Therefore, the society is a network of statuses connected by associated roles.

- Structural functionalism states that parts of society work together towards the maintenance of the overall living environment. (Durkheim compares this to an organic system.)
The Division of Labour (1893)

• Society is held together by:
  1. Mechanical solidarity – the shared similarities (values, norms, beliefs) of individuals.
  2. Organic solidarity – division of labour into specialized jobs creates a dependence on one another.

• Mechanical solidarity is more often referred to as collective consciousness.

• Durkheim believed that this collective consciousness was the basis of social order and shapes social life and overall society.

• As it evolved, conflict would emerge but order would eventually return as the new changes were integrated and accepted into society.
The Division of Labour (1893) Cont'd

• Social order would occur when the majority holds the same collective consciousness.

• When individual consciousness collided with the collective consciousness, crime (an act that offends the strong collective consciousness) would occur.

• However, Durkheim believed that crime was essential to a society as it allows for an evolution of morals and prevents stagnation.

• Also, the punishments given for the crime affirm the collective consciousness.
The Rules of Sociological Method (1895)

- To Durkheim, sociology was a scientific study of *sui generis*.

- *Sui generis* is a clearly defined group of phenomena different from those studied by other sciences.

- He called these phenomena, social facts, which consisted of actions, thoughts, and feelings that have an existence in and of themselves but are not bound to the acts of individuals.

- Having such characteristics, these could not be biological phenomena, or be considered in psychology as they existed outside an individuals conscience.

- These social facts impacts all actions and behaviours of an individual in the given society.
Suicide (1897)

- Suicide should not be viewed as an individual act on psychological terms.

- Durkheim explains through an individual’s connection to society.

- This connection through certain bonds regulates conduct and aspirations as well as provides purpose and ideals, one of three suicides occurs when such a bond is weakened.

  1. When there are no firm bonds, there is suicide by egoism.

  2. When bonds are too strong, there is altruistic suicide.

  3. Finally, a society with a weakened moral code allows for an anomic suicide.

- Anomie: a condition where moral norms are unclear.
Durkheim's Importance

• His major works became the classical approach which dominated in the 1930's – 1960's.
• He is credited with making sociology a science with his empirical methodology in Suicide.
• His idea of Functionalism is the basis for most sociological studies today.
Interesting Facts on Emile Durkheim

- Spent his early years in a rabbinical school.

- Passed the entrance exams of Ecole Normale Superieur after his third attempt.

- Founder of "Annee Sociologique," the first Social Science Journal in France.

- Founder of the first European University department of Sociology.

- Enjoyed teaching very much.
Works Cited

<http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89mile_Durkheim>

