

## Social Theory Notes

February 14

Recorded by Sheena Wickett with some materials from LDB

→ Dr. Brush named people who were at or past their limit of 3 misses

From Last time (2/9) on *The Division of Labor*:

### I. Marx and Durkheim characterize “the social”....

#### Marx

- present= modern industrial world; **capitalist**
- conflict theorist
- **method**: dialectical materialism
- modern society industrial and capitalist
- contradiction and class struggle characteristic of modern society
- revolution (sudden, forceful, fast, compressed period)
- class relations are antagonistic/conflictual, unequal, exploitative, alienating, bourgeoisie vs. proletariat
- exploitation, class struggle and labor conflicts are inevitable effects of capitalism, normal
- **solidarity**: common site and plight of proletariat
- **division of labor**: part of class conflict, formation, individual experience, alienation

#### Durkheim

- present= modern industrial world
- functional theorist
- **method**: social realism (objectivist, positivist)
- modern society industrial and organized (different aspects of society organized)
- development of industrial system
- evolution (continuous, slow, natural)
- class relations are interdependent, cooperative
- traditional vs. modern
- shared values and norms of social cohesion eroded by industrialization
- exploitation→ abnormal result of disorganization
- **solidarity**: social cohesion→ 1. mechanical  
2. organic
- **division of labor**: specialization undermines mechanical but is basis of organic (**anomie**)

method: 1.) epistemology  
2.) way of gathering info

## The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life:

Big Ideas: knowledge, ideology

→ essay compared to Marx's commodity fetishism and religion as opium debate  
Commodity fetishism and "religion as opium" are part of Marx's broader theory of ideology, that is, his way of theorizing where ideas come from and how to think about the interests they may represent and the way idea systems (such as religion or bourgeois political economy) construct how people think about the social world.

### **I. Marx and Durkheim characterize religion....**

#### Marx

- **religion:** wants people to demystify the function of religion and criticism to capitalism; instead of religion being a "sacred cow", analyze the function of it
- **motive:** ideas can mystify social relations which makes it hard to see what is really going on
- **method:** dialectical, historical, materialist
- **social constructions:** class analysis of ideology
- **origins of (religious) ideas:** human experience of inhumane conditions

#### Durkheim

- **religion:** serves as social cohesion
- **motive:** religion real and affects all aspects of society; looks at origin and evolution of religion  
pg. 151 → goes beyond superficial to the essence of a social fact
- **method:** empiricist, objectification, significance and function of religion
- **social constructions:** holistic analysis of origins of social thought where ideas come from (pg. 153)
- **origins of religious thought:** collective life (pg. 157-8); natural but not utilitarian → "ideal"

- **religion and science:** pg. 154 → religion is the ONLY place what Durkheim (following a long philosophical tradition) terms categories of thought = ideas come from--

Dr. Brush reads passage from the Bible "God's Days of Creation" and compares to Durkheim's conception of time, space, class, and number originating from science:

1. Time: day vs. night  
morning vs. evening
2. Space: earth divided by firmament and then land masses found in both
3. Class: animals vs. beings
4. Number: 3 days

**Notes:**

-these examples serve as proof that religion is the only place that ideas come from This is a bit of an overstatement of the point; Dr. Brush was just trying to give a concrete, culturally-familiar example of the extent to which Durkheim might be "right" about the notion that the basic categories of thought - which Durkheim claims are essential to social life - are central categories of religious thought.

- some divisions are good (day vs. night, animals vs. beings) and some are bad (2<sup>nd</sup> day of God's creations not good because firmament divides the earth)