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# UNIT 20 DIVISION OF LABOUR —

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## DURKHEIM AND MARX

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Division of Labour –  
Durkheim and Marx

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## 20.0 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- describe Emile Durkheim’s views on division of labour as expressed in his work *The Division of Labour in Society*
- outline Karl Marx’s views on division of labour
- compare the distinct views of Durkheim and Marx on division of labour.

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## 20.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit, you are going to study the similarities and differences in the manner in which Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx treated the process of “division of labour”.

To begin with, we will briefly describe the socio-economic setting in which Durkheim and Marx expressed their views. We will then explain the concept of division of labour. This will be the first section (20.2).

In the second section (20.3) we will study the views of Emile Durkheim on division of labour which he put across in his Ph.D. thesis entitled *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893).

We will go on to study Karl Marx's analysis of the topic in the third section (20.4).

Finally in the fourth section (20.5), we will compare and contrast the positions of these founding fathers.

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## **20.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC SETTING AND MEANING OF DIVISION OF LABOUR**

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In the following sub-sections we shall first describe the socio-economic setting in which Durkheim and Marx worked. This will help us understand their views better. We shall then see exactly what is meant by the term 'division of labour'. What does it involve? Why is it practised? These are some of the points we will tackle in this section.

### **20.2.0 Socio-Economic Setting**

Durkheim and Marx lived in an age in which Europe was experiencing the 'Industrial Revolution'. As we have studied earlier in this course, the Industrial Revolution was characterised by a shift in the technique of production. Small-scale, domestic production of commodities gave way to large-scale mass production in factories.

Change took place not just in the economic sphere. Cities and their populations grew and so did the incidence of poverty, crime and other social problems. Social stability and order were under threat. The traditional, feudal society was crumbling and the modern, industrial world was coming into being.

The social context in which Durkheim and Marx lived was such that they had to evolve or work out explanations for what they saw in the society around them. We shall see the very distinct manner in which they approached the process of division of labour. This was a process, which was becoming conspicuous with the advance of industrialisation.

Let us now understand what division of labour means.

### **20.2.1 Meaning of Division of Labour**

By the phrase of 'division of labour' we mean the splitting up of an activity into a number of parts or smaller processes. These smaller processes are undertaken by different persons or groups of persons, thereby speeding up the performance of the activity. Let us take an example. You want to make a shirt. It will take you quite some time to do the entire job yourself. If, however, some friends decide to join you, the job can be simplified. One person may do the cutting, another may do the machine-stitching, a third

may do the finishing stitches by hand. This will save you a great deal of time and energy. You and your friends can probably make many more shirts in the same time it would take you alone to make a single shirt. You have divided labour and hence saved time and increased productivity. Division of labour implies specialisation, (i.e., each person becoming an expert in his or her task) saving time and saving costs and at the same time increasing productivity.

The concept of division of labour was systematically discussed by the Scottish economist Adam Smith in his work *Wealth of Nations* (1776). Smith felt that the division of labour was the primary source of economic progress. It was the vehicle through which economic development would advance. You may read more about Adam Smith in Box 20.1.

### Box 20.1 Adam Smith

Adam Smith is regarded as one of the pioneers of modern economics. He was born in 1723 in Kirkcaldy, a small town near Edinburgh, Scotland. After his early schooling in Kirkcaldy, Adam Smith went on to the University of Edinburgh where he was awarded an M.A. in 1740. He then went to Oxford. In 1751, Smith was appointed a professor of moral philosophy in the University of Glasgow. During his tenure, which lasted until 1763, Smith produced his first book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759).

Smith began work on his, magnum opus, *The Wealth of Nations* after a two-year stay in Europe. There, he met a number of philosophers, notably the great Frenchman Voltaire, all of whom exerted a profound impact on him. *The Wealth of Nations* was published in March 1776. In this book, he tried to study the history, causes and limitations of economic “progress” or development. Adam Smith saw the basic source of development in the individual’s desire to improve economic status. Smith identified division of labour as the process which helped accelerate economic development. Smith used an impressive collection of economic data, which he gathered from his wide readings and sharp observations. Some of this data is referred to by economists even today. *The Wealth of Nations* remains one of the most important works in social science because it was one of the first attempts to study comprehensively the competitive, individualistic world of industrial capitalism. This book also contained an evaluation and sharp criticism of existing society and government. Smith strongly opposed government intervention in economic matters. In his opinion, human beings should be free to pursue their economic goals. This would lead not just to personal gains, but the benefit of society as a whole.

After the publication of this book, Smith settled in Edinburgh. He died on July 17th, 1790. He is remembered as one of the important figures in the history of economic thought.

We have so far discussed the meaning of the term in an economic sense. Division of labour has a social side as well. It is the social aspect of this phenomenon that Emile Durkheim examines in *The Division of Labour in Society*. Let us now describe the main points made in this work.

## Check Your Progress 1

- i) Fill up the blanks in the following sentences.
  - a) The Industrial Revolution marked a change from..... production of commodities to .....production in factories.
  - b) ..... was becoming more conspicuous with the advance of industrialisation.
  - c) ..... said that division of labour was the primary source of economic development
- ii) State whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F)
  - a) Division of labour leads to wastage to time. (T/F)
  - b) Durkheim wanted to study the economic aspect of division of labour T/F
  - c) Division of labour leads to specialisation T/F

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### 20.3 DURKHEEVTS VIEWS ON DIVISION OF LABOUR

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Durkheim's major concern as a sociologist as we have already seen in Unit 18 of this Block is the theme of social order and integration. What holds society together? What keeps it in an integrated whole? Let us first see what Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, Durkheim's predecessors had to say about it.

Auguste Comte suggests that it is social and moral **consensus** that holds society together. Common ideas, values, norms and mores bind individuals and society together.

Herbert Spencer puts across a different view. According to Spencer, it is an interplay of individual interests that holds society together. It serves the selfish interests of individuals to strive for integration. Thus social life is possible.

Durkheim was at variance with these views. If, as Comte suggests, it is moral consensus that holds society together, then would not modern industrial society crumble? After all, modern society is characterised by heterogeneity, mobility, and diversity in activities and values. It is a society where individualism is valued. Spencer's suggestion that selfish interests hold society together was also found to be faulty by Durkheim. If indeed, individual interests hold sway, the resulting competition and antagonism would break the backbone of society. Each would struggle for his own profit even at the expense of the other. Conflict and tension would bring about social disintegration.

The question that arises is, is individualism the natural enemy of social integration and solidarity? Would the Industrial Revolution lead to nothing but the destruction of social bonds? Durkheim thinks otherwise.

According to him, the basis or focus of social integration differs in pre-industrial and post-industrial societies. He demonstrates how the process of occupational specialisation or division of labour helps to integrate societies where heterogeneity, differentiation and complexity are to be found. These societies, as you have already studied in Block 3 are those based on organic solidarity. In the following sub-sections we will see how Durkheim studies division of labour in terms of

- 1) the function of division of labour
- 2) the causes underlying division of labour
- 3) deviations from the normal type of division of labour, i.e. abnormal forms.

### **20.3.0 Functions of Division of Labour**

As you have already studied, Durkheim classifies human societies into

- i) those based on ‘mechanical solidarity’ and
- ii) those based on ‘organic solidarity’.

#### **i) Mechanical Solidarity**

As you know, mechanical solidarity refers to a solidarity of resemblance or likeness. There exists a great deal of homogeneity and tightly-knit social bonds which serve to make the individual members one with their society. The collective conscience is extremely strong. By collective conscience we mean the system of beliefs and sentiments held in common by members of a society which defines what their mutual relations ought to be. The strength of the collective conscience integrates such societies, binding together individual members through strong beliefs and values. Violation of or deviation from these values is viewed very seriously. Harsh or repressive punishment is given to offenders. Once again, it must be pointed out that this is a solidarity or unity of likeness and homogeneity. Individual differences are extremely limited and division of labour is at a relatively simple level. Briefly, in such societies, individual conscience is merged with the collective conscience.

#### **ii) Organic Solidarity**

By organic solidarity, Durkheim means a solidarity based on difference and complementarity of differences. Take factory, for example. There is a great deal of difference in the work, social status, income, etc. of a worker and a manager. Yet, the two complement each other. Being a manager is meaningless without the cooperation of workers and workers need to be organised by managers. Thus they are vital for each other’s survival.

Societies based on organic solidarity are touched and transformed by the growth of industrialisation. Thus, division of labour is a very important aspect of such societies. A society based on organic solidarity is thus one where heterogeneity, differentiation and variety exist. The growing complexity of societies reflects in personality types, relationships and

problems. In such societies, the strength of the collective conscience lessens, as individual conscience becomes more and more distinct, more easily distinguished from the collective conscience. Individualism becomes increasingly valued. The kind of grip that social norms have on individuals in mechanical solidarity loosens. Individual autonomy and personal freedom become as important in organic solidarity as social solidarity and integration in societies characterised by mechanical solidarity.

Does this mean that modern society has nothing to integrate it? Division of labour, says Durkheim, is the process that will help keep society integrated. How? Well, as we have already seen, division of labour implies working together at certain tasks, in other words, it implies cooperation. As work becomes more and more divided, two consequences can be seen. On the one hand, each individual becomes specialised in his field. He can exercise his initiative and creativity in his special field. On the other hand, each individual grows to depend more intimately on society. Cooperation and complementarity are the watchwords of such a society. The kind of solidarity produced, namely organic solidarity, is of a higher order than mechanical solidarity. It allows individuals to exercise their freedom and initiative even while binding them to each other and to society. Thus, the process, which helps the growth of both, individualism and social integration, is division of labour. At this point it is a good idea to complete Activity 1 in order to appreciate the concept of division of labour. We would then look at Durkheim's answer to the question posed above.

### **Activity 1**

How is labour divided in the household? Write a note of about two pages covering the following points (i) nature and allocation of tasks, (ii) the extent to which division of labour helps or hinders smooth functioning of the household.

Let us now examine in this case the causes of division of labour as described by Durkheim.

### **20.3.1 Causes of Division of Labour**

What leads to the process, of division of labour or, what are the causal factors? Durkheim provides a sociological answer to this question. According to him, division of labour arises as a result of increased material and moral density in society. By material density Durkheim means the sheer increase in the number of individuals in a society, in other words, population growth. By moral density he means the increased interaction that results between individuals as a consequence of growth in numbers.

The growth in material and moral density results in a struggle for existence. If, as in societies characterised by mechanical solidarity, individuals tend to be very similar, doing the same things, they would also struggle or compete for the same resources and rewards. Growth of population and shrinking of natural resources would make competition more bitter. But division of labour ensures that individuals specialise in different fields and areas. Thus they can coexist and, in fact complement each other. But does this ideal state of affairs always prevail? Let us see what Durkheim says.

### 20.3.2 Abnormal Forms of Division of Labour

If division of labour helped societies achieve integration and a newer, higher form of solidarity, why was European society of that time in such a chaotic state? Was division of labour creating problems? What had gone wrong?

According to Durkheim, the kind of division of labour that was taking place was not the 'normal'-type that he wrote about. Abnormal types or deviations from the normal were being observed in society. Briefly, these included

#### 1) **Anomie**

This term means a state of normlessness. Material life changes rapidly, but rules norms and values do not keep pace with it. There seems to be a total breakdown of rules and norms. In the work sphere, this reflects in conflicts between labour and management, degrading and meaningless work and growing class conflict.

To put it simply, individuals are working and producing but fail to see any meaning in what they are doing. For instance, in a factory assembly-line workers have to spend the whole day doing boring, routine activities like fixing screws or nails to a piece of machinery. They fail to see any meaning in what they do. They are not made to feel that they are doing anything useful, they are not made to feel an important part of society. Norms and rules governing work in a factory have not changed to the extent that they can make the worker's activities more meaningful or show the workers that society needs and values them.

#### 2) **Inequality**

Division of labour based on inequality of opportunity, according to Durkheim, fails to produce long-lasting solidarity. Such an abnormal form results in individuals becoming frustrated and unhappy with their society. Thus tensions, rivalries and antagonism result. One may cite the Indian caste system as an example of division of labour based on inequality. People have to do certain kinds of work not because of their capacity but because of their birth. This can be very frustrating to those who want to do more satisfying or rewarding jobs, but cannot have access to proper opportunities.

#### 3) **Inadequate organisation**

In this abnormal form the very purpose of division of labour is destroyed. Work is not well organised and coordinated. Workers are often engaged in doing meaningless tasks. There is no unity of action. Thus solidarity breaks down and disorder results. You may have observed that in many offices, a lot of people are sitting around idly doing little or nothing. Many are unaware of their responsibilities. Collective action becomes difficult when most people are not very sure of what they have to do. Division of labour is supposed to increase productivity and integration. In the example discussed above, the opposite takes place (see Giddens 1978: 21-33).

So far in this unit, we have seen how Durkheim views division of labour not just as an economic process but a social one. Its primary role, according to him, is to help modern industrial societies become integrated. It would perform the same function for organic solidarity that the collective conscience performed in mechanical solidarity. Division of labour arises as a result of the competition for survival brought about by growing material and moral density. Specialisation offers a way whereby various individuals may coexist and cooperate. But in the European society of the time, division of labour seemed to be producing entirely different and negative results. Social order seemed to be under serious threat.

Durkheim however describes this as deviations from the normal type. He terms these as (1) **anomie**, wherein new rules and norms governing division of labour do not arise, (2) inequality, which results in discontent, tension and conflict and (3) inadequate organisation, which makes division of labour meaningless, producing disunity and disintegration.

Let us now move on to the next section and study the views of Karl Marx on division of labour. But before that, do check your progress.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- i) State whether the following statements are true or false
  - a) Auguste Comte explained social integration in terms of individual interests. T/F
  - b) Durkheim agreed that moral consensus was what held modern industrial society together. T/F
  - c) According to Durkheim, individualism and social integration were natural enemies. T/F
  - d) The collective conscience becomes stronger in organic solidarity according to Durkheim. T/F

- ii) Answer the following in about five sentences each.
  - a) Why is organic solidarity of a higher order than mechanical solidarity, according to Durkheim?  
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.....  
.....
  - b) How do material and moral density lead to division of labour?  
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- .....  
.....  
c) What did Durkheim mean by “anomie”?

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## 20.4 MARX’S VIEWS ON DIVISION OF LABOUR

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In the following sub-sections we shall try to understand

- i) the distinction made by Marx between social division of labour and division of labour in industry or manufacture.
- ii) the implications of division of labour in manufacture.
- iii) Marx’s remedy to the problems created by division of labour, namely, revolution and change.

### 20.4.0 Social Division of Labour and Division of Labour in Manufacture

Let us first try to understand what Marx means by division of labour. In this analysis of the topic in the first chapter of ‘Capital’, Volume 1, Marx pin-points two types of division of labour, namely, social division of labour and division of labour in manufacture.

- 1) **Social division of labour:** This exists in all societies. It is a process that is bound to exist in order that members of a society may successfully undertake the tasks that are necessary to maintain social and economic life. It is a complex system of dividing all the useful forms of labour in a society. For instance, some individuals produce food, some produce handicrafts, weapons and so on. Social division of labour promotes the process of exchange of goods between groups, e.g., the earthenware pots produced by a potter may be exchanged for a farmer’s rice or a weaver’s cloth (see Figure 20.1: Social Division of Labour). Such exchanges spur on or provide an impetus to specialisation.

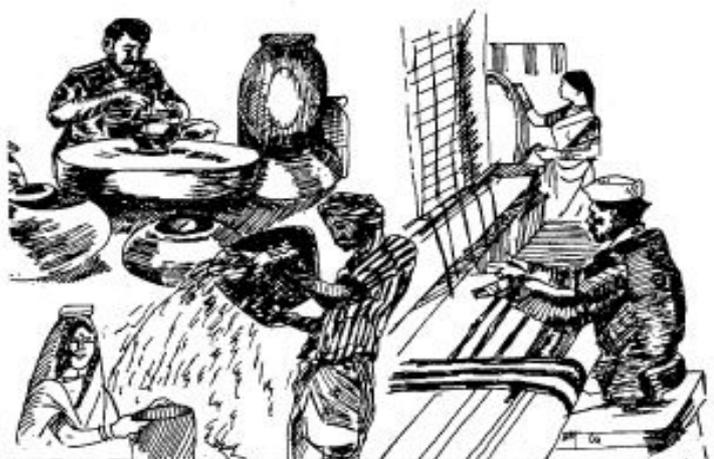


Figure 20.1 Social Division of Labour

- 2) **Division of labour in industry or manufacture:** This is a process, which is prevalent in industrial societies where capitalism and the factory system exist. In this process, manufacture of a commodity is broken into a number of processes. Each worker is limited to performing or engaging in a small process like work in an **assembly line** (see Figure 20.2: Division of Labour in Manufacture). This is usually boring, monotonous and repetitive work. The purpose of this division of labour is simple; it is to increase productivity. The greater the productivity the greater the **surplus value** generated. It is generation of surplus value that motivates capitalists to organise manufacture in a manner that maximises output and minimises costs. It is division of labour, which makes mass production of goods possible in modern, industrial societies. Unlike social division of labour where independent producers create products and exchange them with other independent producers, division of labour in manufacture completely divorces the worker from his product. Let us examine this point in more detail by trying to understand the implications of division of labour in manufacture.



Figure 20.2 Division of Labour in Manufacture

### 20.4.1 Implications of Division of Labour in Manufacture

#### 1) Profits accrue to the capitalist

As earlier described, division of labour in manufacture help to generate more and more surplus value leading to capital accumulation. Marx tackles a crucial question, namely, who takes away the profits? Not the workers, says Marx, but the capitalists. Not those who actually produce, but those who own the means of production. According to him, division of labour and the existence of private property together consolidate the power of the capitalist. Since the capitalist owns the means of production, the production process is designed and operated in such a way that the capitalist benefits the most from it.

## 2) **Workers lose control over what they produce**

According to Marx with division of labour in manufacture workers tend to lose their status as the real creators of goods. Rather, they become mere links in a production chain designed and operated by the capitalists. Workers are separated from the products of their labour; in fact, they hardly ever see the end result of their work. They have no control over its sale and purchase. For example, does a worker in an assembly line in a factory producing washing-machines really get to see the finished product? He/she might see it in an advertisement or at a shop window. The worker will not be able to sell it or afford to buy it, having been merely a small part of the production of that machine. The actual control over it is exercised by the capitalist. The worker as an independent producer no longer exists. The worker has become enslaved by the production process.

## 3) **Dehumanisation of the Working Class**

The capitalist system characterised by division of labour is one where workers stop being independent producers of goods. They become suppliers of labour-power, which is needed for production. The worker's individual personality needs and desires mean nothing to the capitalist. It is only the worker's labour-power which is sold to the capitalist in exchange for wages that concerns the capitalist. The working class is thus stripped of its humanness and labour-power becomes a mere commodity purchased by the capitalist, in Marx's view.

## 4) **Alienation**

One of the important concepts developed by Marx in understanding the realities of the industrial world is that of alienation. You have already studied this in Block 2.

The process of production and division of labour is one which forces the worker to do boring, tedious, repetitive work. The worker is robbed of all control over his/her work. The worker becomes alienated from the products he/she is creating, from the production process he/she is a part of, from fellow workers and from society at large (see Kolakowski, 1978: 281-287).

### **Activity 2**

Observe the process of division of labour in a factory or a cottage industry. Jot down your findings in about two pages and compare them, if possible with the other students at your Study Centre.

## **20.4.2 Marx's Remedy - Revolution and Change**

Can the problems of loss of control, dehumanisation and alienation be countered? For Marx it is the abolition of private property, and the establishment of a classless society is the way out. Are labourers forced to be enslaved by the production process? Is division of labour forever to be imposed on them, restricting their creativity and control over their work?

Marx holds that social division of labour has to exist in order that the material conditions of human life may be met. But it is division of labour

in production that has to be reorganised. It is only when private property is abolished through the revolution of the proletariat that the workers can gain freedom from the alienative division of labour that has been thrust upon them.

The establishment of a communist society according to Marx will enable workers to own and control the means of production. The reorganised production process will enable each individual to realise his/her potential and exercise creativity. Marx and Engels describe their vision in the following words:

“In communist society where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic” (*German Ideology*, Vol. I, Sect. IAI).

In the above discussion, we saw how Marx distinguished between social division of labour and division of labour in manufacture. Social division of labour is essential for the basis of material life in all societies. Division of labour in manufacture, however, comes into existence with the development of industrialisation and capitalism.

The existence of division of labour in manufacture has the following implications, namely,

- 1) Profits accrue to the capitalist.
- 2) Workers lose control over what they produce.
- 3) Dehumanisation of the working class takes place.
- 4) Alienation takes place at all levels.

In order to handle these problems, Marx preaches the ‘revolution of the proletariat’, which will do away with private property and transfer the ownership of the means of production in the hands of the workers. This will result in the production process being designed and operated by the workers themselves, enabling workers to give scope to their creativity, and excel at a variety of tasks. They will not be forced into a boring exploitative routine.

### **Check Your Progress 3**

- i) Answer the following questions in three lines each.
  - a) What did Marx mean by “social division of labour?”

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.....

- b) “Workers lose control over their products as a result of division of labour in manufacture.” Explain this statement.

.....  
.....  
.....

ii) Tick the correct alternative.

- a) According to Marx, the working class becomes dehumanised because

- i) machines are introduced in factories.
- ii) the working class is regarded only as a supplier of “labour power”.
- iii) workers cannot buy the goods they produce.

- b) Workers become alienated from production because

- i) they are engaged in monotonous work.
- ii) they do not share the profits and have no control over their production.
- iii) they sell their labour-power for wages.

- c) The communist revolution would result in

- i) complete abolition of division of labour.
- ii) no change in division of labour in manufacture.
- iii) a production process designed and operated by the workers themselves.

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## **20.5 A COMPARISON**

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We have separately studied the views of Durkheim and Marx on division of labour. Let us now compare their views. To make this comparison easier, we shall compare their views on division of labour under the following headings viz.

- i) Causes of division of labour
- ii) Consequences of division of labour
- iii) Solutions to the problems related to division of labour
- iv) Durkheim’s ‘Functional’ model of society and Marx’s ‘Conflict’ model.

### **20.5.0 Causes of Division of Labour**

Both, Durkheim and Marx make a very clear distinction between division of labour in simple societies and complex industrial societies. Division of labour is an inevitable and necessary aspect of the socio-economic life of

any society. But they are more concerned and interested in the division of labour that takes place in industrial societies.

Durkheim explains division of labour in industrial societies as a consequence of increased material and moral density. As we have studied earlier, he looks at specialisation or division of labour as a means through which competition or the struggle for existence can be eased. Specialisation is what makes it possible for large numbers of people to live and work together without fighting, because each has a distinct part to play in society. It makes team-work and coexistence possible.

Marx too considers division of labour in manufacture a feature of industrial society. But unlike Durkheim, he does not see it as a means of cooperation and coexistence. Rather, he views it as a process forced upon workers in order that the capitalist might extract profit. He sees it as a process closely linked with the existence of private property. The means of production are concentrated in the hands of the capitalist. Therefore, the capitalist has to design a production process that will result in maximum profit. Hence, division of labour is imposed on workers. They sell their labour-power to the capitalist for wages. They are reduced to doing monotonous, boring and unimaginative activities so that productivity increases and the capitalist's profits increase.

Briefly, Durkheim says the causes of division of labour lie in the fact that individuals need to cooperate and do a variety of tasks in order that industrial society may survive. According to Marx, division of labour is imposed on workers so that the capitalists may benefit. Durkheim stresses cooperation, whilst Marx stresses exploitation and conflict.

### **20.5.1 Consequences of Division of Labour**

Following from their differing views on the causes of division of labour in modern industrial societies, Durkheim's and Marx's perceptions on the consequences of division of labour too are bound to be different. Durkheim, as earlier mentioned, sees division of labour as a process that would help individuals coexist and cooperate. We have already studied how he views division of labour as being a force of social integration promoting organic solidarity. In a "normal" situation, division of labour contributes to social integration by giving each individual a specialised activity to perform. Each can develop his/her powers of creativity and innovation in his or her specialised task. At the same time, each would depend more and more on others doing **complementary** activities. Thus social bonds would become more firm, more enduring.

Anomic division of labour based on inequality and inadequate organisation are pathological or abnormal forms, according to Durkheim. They are not caused by division of labour as such. They are the result of society being in a state of flux. Norms, rules and regulations governing new economic relations have not yet come into being. The economic sphere is changing rapidly, but new norms regulating it have not yet emerged properly.

Marx on the other hand sees division of labour as a process imposed on workers by capitalists. Its consequences, as we have already studied, are that it leads to dehumanisation of the work force. Alienation results. Workers

are reduced to things. Their creativity, their control over their creation is taken away. Their labour becomes a commodity that can be bought and sold at the market place. Thus they become mere parts of the production process rather than the producers themselves. Their personalities, their problems mean nothing to their employers. They are regarded as nothing more than work-machines. Thus they are literally dehumanised. Being part of a system they cannot control, they suffer from alienation at all levels; from their work, their fellow-workers and the social system itself.

Briefly, Durkheim sees division of labour as a process that can be the basis of integration. Marx sees it as a process bringing about dehumanisation and alienation, separating the creators from their creation. The workers become slaves of the system of which they should have been the masters.

### **20.5.2 Solutions to the Problems Related to Division of Labour**

As we have seen earlier, Durkheim sees division of labour as a process, which under normal circumstances will bring about social integration. The pathological or abnormal forms of division of labour that prevail in society have to be solved in order that division of labour might perform its integrative functions.

Anomie according to Durkheim can be handled by making workers conscious of their role in society. By making them feel organically linked and involved with the life of society, the frustration of doing “meaningless” work can be eased. Meaninglessness will then be changed into an awareness of the significance of their productive roles.

According to Marx, capitalism itself is the problem. Division of labour brings about dehumanisation, alienation and loss of control. The way out is through revolution, through which workers gain control over the means of production. They will then organise and operate the production process in such a manner that dehumanisation and alienation will become things of the past.

### **20.5.3 Durkheim’s ‘Functional Model’ of Society and Marx’s ‘Conflict Model’**

Durkheim’s study of division of labour brings out his **functional model of society**. Social institutions and processes are viewed by him in terms of the contributions they make to keeping a society alive. You have studied this in Unit 18 of this Block. Durkheim tries to give an explanation to the question of order. Remember, he lived at a time when social order seemed to be under threat. His task therefore was to demonstrate that the changes that were taking place would not destroy society but contribute to integrating the new society that was emerging. Durkheim does not merely look at the economic aspect of division of labour but rather its social aspect, its contribution to social integration.

Marx responds quite differently to the challenges thrown up by industrialisation. He does not share Durkheim’s view that society is basically in a state of equilibrium and that social institutions and processes exist

only because they help to integrate society. Marx views human history as a history of class struggle, or a series of struggles between the oppressors and the oppressed. Capitalism is a phase in human history marked by the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The system of production that exists under capitalism is designed to exploit the workers. The interests of the workers conflict with those of the capitalists. The revolution of the proletariat, Marx believes, will overthrow the old system and bring in the new. Contradictions, conflict and change are the key-words in Marx's understanding of society.

Briefly, Durkheim sees society as a system held together by the integrative contributions of its various institutions. Marx sees history as a series of struggles between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. This leads to conflict and change. This is the main difference in their approaches.

**Check Your Progress 4**

- i) Arrange the serial numbers of the following statements under the appropriate headings:

**DURKHEIM'S VIEWS**

**MARX'S VIEWS**

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- a) Division of labour is exploitative.
- b) Division of labour leads to cooperation.
- c) Division of labour is conducive to social integration.
- d) Division of labour strips the worker of all control.
- e) Division of labour is a feature of the modern capitalist world.
- f) The problems of the industrial world are abnormal forms.
- g) The problem of the industrial world is capitalism itself.
- h) Division of labour based on inequality will create problems in society.

- ii) Distinguish between Durkheim’s functionalism and Marx conflict model in their treatment of the topic ‘division of labour’. Answer in eight lines.

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## 20.6 LET US SUM UP

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We first studied the meaning of the term “division of labour”. We then studied the views of Emile Durkheim on division of labour. These views were put across in his work *Division of Labour in Society*. The main points expressed in this book were organised under the following headings

- 1) Functions of division of labour
- 2) Causes of division of labour
- 3) Abnormal forms.

We then dealt with the views of Karl Marx on division of labour. We saw the difference he made between social division of labour and division of labour in manufacture. We studied the implications of division of labour in manufacture, namely, how

- 1) profits accrue to the capitalist.
- 2) workers lose control over what they produce.
- 3) dehumanisation of the working class takes place.
- 4) alienation takes place at all levels.

We then described Marx’s remedy for this situation, namely, revolution which would establish a communist society where each individual could develop his/her creative powers.

Finally, we compared the views of Durkheim and Marx under the following headings

- 1) Causes of division of labour
- 2) Consequences of division of labour
- 3) Solutions to the problems related to division of labour
- 4) Durkheim’s functional model of society and Marx’s conflict model.

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## 20.7 KEYWORDS

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<b>Assembly line</b>	A feature of the modern factory system wherein workers assemble or put together the various parts of a commodity or perform certain operations on it. Each has a specific task to do. This speeds up production.
<b>Anomie</b>	This term is used by Durkheim to convey a situation in which the individual does not feel integrated in society. Social norms and values seem unclear and unintegrated and the individual does not feel morally involved with the affairs of society.
<b>Complementary</b>	Something that helps, supports e.g. the role of a nurse is complementary to that of a doctor.
<b>Consensus</b>	Agreement amongst the members of society regarding social norms, values, allocation of roles and rewards. Consensus helps to maintain social order.
<b>Conflict model of society</b>	This is a way of looking at society which stresses on the tensions which mark society, rather than social order. According to Marx, the social relations of production are the basis of tensions and conflict.
<b>Functional model of society</b>	This way of looking a society stresses on social order and studies how different social institutions and sub-systems function or contribute to maintaining social order.
<b>Heterogeneous</b>	Opposite of 'homogeneous': This means variety, different types, e.g. India has a heterogeneous population, i.e. a variety of races, languages, religions, customs, etc.
<b>Surplus value</b>	When a worker applies his labour power to raw materials, they are converted into commodities. A certain value is added by the worker to the materials. The value created is greater than what is paid to the worker as wages. This difference between the value created and the wage received is called 'surplus value'. Marx says this surplus value is appropriated by the capitalist.

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## 20.8 FURTHER READING

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Aron, Raymond 1970. *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*. Vols. 1 and 2. Penguin Books: London, (see the sections on Marx and Durkheim)

Bottomore, Tom (Ed.) 1983. *Dictionary of Marxist Thought*. Blackwell: Oxford.

Giddens, Anthony 1978. *Durkheim*. Harvester Press: Hassocks

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## 20.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- i) a) Small-scale, domestic large-scale, mass
- b) Division of labour
- c) Adam Smith
- ii) a) F
- b) F
- c) T

### Check Your Progress 2

- i) a) F
- b) F
- c) F
- d) F
- ii) a) mechanical solidarity is a solidarity of resemblance. Organic solidarity is based on differences and complementarity of differences. Thus individuals can be innovative and at the same time need to depend on each other and on society. So individualism and social integration can exist together. Durkheim therefore feels that organic solidarity is a higher form of solidarity.
- b) Material and moral density help the members of a society come into close contact with each other. A struggle for existence and for scarce resources may come about. In order that they may coexist, individuals specialise in separate fields and division of labour takes place. Thus material and moral density lead to division of labour according to Durkheim.
- c) Anomie, according to Durkheim, is 'pathological' or abnormal. It refers to a situation where norms and rules seem to have broken down. In the sphere of work, for example, individuals have to work and produce but there are no new norms governing them. They fail to see any meaning or purpose in their activity.

### Check Your Progress 3

- i) a) Social division of labour is a complex system of dividing all the useful forms of labour in society. Some people may produce food, others handicraft etc. It promotes exchange of goods and is necessary to maintain social and economic life.
- b) Division of labour in manufacture makes the worker a small part of the production process. The worker does not have anything to do with the product. He/she cannot sell it and often cannot buy it, and thus becomes a slave, not a master of the process of production of goods.
- ii) a) ii b) i c) iii

### Check Your Progress 4

i)

Durkheim's Views	Marx's Views
b)	A0
c)	d)
e)	e)
f)	g)
h)	

- ii) By Emile Durkheim's "functional" model of society we mean the way in which he studied the contributions of social institutions and processes in maintaining social integration. In keeping with this model, he studied division of labour not just as an economic process but as a social one. He tried to show how it contributed to social integration.

Karl Marx, on the other hand saw society in terms of contradictions, conflict and change. Human history is marked by the oppression of one group by another. Division of labour is one of the processes through which capitalists oppress workers. This reflects his 'conflict' model of society.