

DURKHEIM & WEBER THEORIES: COMPARISON AND RELEVANCE TODAY

Introduction

Classical, seminal sociological theorists of the late 19th and early 20th century such as Durkheim and Weber were greatly interested in religion and its effects on society. Like those of Plato and Aristotle from ancient Greece, and Enlightenment philosophers from the 17th through 19th centuries, the ideas posited by these sociologists continue to be examined today.

Durkheim and Weber had very complex and developed theories about the nature and effects of religion. Of these, Durkheim and Weber are often more difficult to understand, especially in light of the lack of context and examples in their primary texts. Religion was considered to be an extremely important social variable in the work of these two.

Emile Durkheim

Emile Durkheim was a French sociologist with a background in anthropology, and became known as 'the father of sociology'. He lived from 1858-1917 and was educated in both France and Germany. Durkheim viewed religion as an essential part of one's social life and went as far as to say that without religion society could not possibly exist cohesively. Religion, as 'the cement of society', is entirely a social concept.

Durkheim's method in studying religion was based on the scientific method. It does not take into account specific beliefs or the origins of religions. Matters regarding the truth of religion are not accounted for, nor is there any such thing as a false religion. The fact that a religion has survived for so long gives the religion meaning, and that is central to the social dimension of religion.

Unlike most other sociologists of religion, Durkheim did feel that religion was real, and will survive. There was nothing illusion or deceptive of religion, and a strong religion will simply ensure social solidarity.

Max Weber

Max Weber was a German sociologist, economist, and political scientist. He lived during the same time frame as Durkheim, from the late 19th to the early 20th century. Weber saw religion as fulfilling self-interest. Although not to the same extent as Marx, Weber did feel that religion was something that arose out of an individual need for life to have meaning. Unlike Durkheim, society was not central, but rather what was important to study is how different individuals of a religion relate to one another.

Weber's method was groundbreaking at the time because he refuted all previous understandings of history dealing with religion, particularly those of Marx, and of course, Durkheim. Nonetheless, he did share some similarities with his French colleague. Like Durkheim, he used a strict scientific outlook when studying the field, which helped to establish the field of sociology as an academic discipline.

Comparison of Durkheim & Weber

In comparison studies, unlike Durkheim, who compared social entities, Weber used the notion of the individual and ideal-types. From his studies, Weber hypothetically created an ideal form, from whose characteristics can be taken from various individuals or events. Weber argued that no scientific process can account for every issue regarding his studies of sociology of religion.

Along with the use of ideal-types, Weber's goal of sociology of religion was to understand the individual impact of religion. While Durkheim stressed how religion caused society to remain interconnected and moral, Weber did not feel it was necessary to delve into the social function of religion. The personal role of religion and its individual

meaning was much more crucial. He refuses to allow the importance of religion to be reduced to something merely social. Max Weber believed that religions provided meaning for individuals who aspired it. Religious beliefs are an example of these self-interests. As far as Durkheim's society theory relates, Weber believed that the study of society and religion for that matter should be the study of the interrelation between individuals.

Weber did not disagree with Durkheim regarding the reality of religions or its future. Weber and Durkheim were in the minority of sociologists who believed that religion was real and sacred.

They also agreed that religion did have a future, albeit for different reasons. While Durkheim thought religion was necessary for the society to exist, Weber believed that individuals who were religious would be influenced to take part in so called worldly affairs, and succeed, such as capitalist Protestants.

Emile Durkheim and Max Weber were not only the two founders of sociology, but also the founders of sociology of religion. These two men, from roughly the same time period and geography, approached their field with due scientific processes. However, while Durkheim viewed religion to simply the basis and entity of social function, while Weber refused reduce religion to a single theory, but saw the importance of religious ideas in the personal realm and the influences it could have not only to oneself but to other surrounding individuals. Both Durkheim and Weber attempted to interpret religion and its social composition, and understood the nature of its utmost real importance and role it would have in the future of humanity.

Relevance Today

Emile Durkheim & Weber were two sociologist those mainly tried to make us understand society taking the religion as a base element. They both focused on religion as an important constituent of society. According to Durkheim there would be no society without the factor of religion and same as Weber described his opinion about the significance of religion in terms of individual social life.

What they both had defined in terms of religion is very relevant in modern time; as the science has grown its roots to the very peculiar direction everyone entitle to know the truth especially in religion. Understating the religion is one of the solutions of basic problem of human. In whole world people are trying to understand the importance and relevance of religion in their social life. It is a burning issue in today's time. The point which has been raised by Durkheim and Weber is still getting the full concentration of people. If we talk about Islam; is the most fastest growing religion in UK and USA, one of the primary reasons is people interest to know about the religion and how it effects our collective or individual social life.

We can elaborate this from the primitive societies which exist on the basis of religion, we have example of countries like Pakistan and Israel those got the entity only on the basis of religion. From this whole discussion we came to know that both Durkheim and Weber has explained a key point as the factor of religion to understand the society which is still very much relevant today.