

Does individualism lead to social disintegration?

I. Introduction

Key definitions

Define what Durkheim theory is?

Two main concepts to be defined – individualisation and disintegration.

Locate a debate

Why this topic can be interesting?

According to Durkheim, **traditional** cultures experienced a high level of **social and moral integration**, there was **little individuation**, and most behaviors were governed by social norms, which were usually embodied in religion. However, when **division of labour** increases it disrupts homogeneity of society and leads to the **disintegration** of society - social ties weakens and social isolation increases.

Formulate essay question

What is the main problem in your debate?

Therefore, how can modern societies hold together in an age of increasing individualism?

Plan (optional for 12 marks essays)

About what are you going to tell in the main body?

To answer this question, it is possible to follow several possible ways.

- To compare and contrast answers given by
 - Adam Smith - 'invisible hand' - the process by which market competition channels individual self-interest,
 - Hobbes - social contract - to submit ourselves to political authority,
 - Durkheim - moral individualism.
- To explain Durkheim's answer using his *Homo duplex* model, or organic versus mechanic solidarity, or anomie, or non-contractual elements of contractual relations.

II. Main body

Key idea

*Since market arose **mechanical solidarity** was replaced by **organic solidarity***

The central issue in Durkheim's work concerns the source of social order. According to Durkheim, the desires and self-interests of human beings can only be held in check by forces that originate outside of the individual.

If **mechanical solidarity** exists in traditional societies where people shared strongly held beliefs (**collective consciousness**). The norms, values and beliefs of the society (or the collective conscience) are so homogenous and confront the individual with such overwhelming and consistent force, that there is little opportunity in such societies for individuality or deviance from this collective conscience. The collective conscience and individual consciences are virtually identical.

However, as society becomes more complex,

**Key concepts/
terms**

*Provide good
argumentative
explanation for the
selected concepts*

**Arguments or
Counter-
arguments**

Examples

*Look for examples
which can illustrate
the main points of
your essay*

individuals play more specialized roles and become ever more dissimilar in their social experiences, material interests, values, and beliefs. Individuals have less in common. The growth of individualism is an inevitable result of the increasing division of labor. If there was to be social integration and solidarity, there needed to be ways in which the **moral capacities of individuals could be ensured**, and through which individuals could feel **attachment to society**.

Mechanical solidarity has to be replaced by **organic solidarity**, since Durkheim was critical of Smith's argument that social integration can be attained purely on the basis of self-interested exchanges in the marketplace. Social integration in Durkheim's opinion arises out of the need of individuals for one another's services, with individuals functioning much like the **interdependent** but differentiated organs of a living body. If there is no attachment to society, morality breaks down and result in *anomie*, a state of deregulation, because the traditional rules have lost their authority.

Sources:

1. Your own experience
2. Lecture notes
3. Sociological research

III. Conclusion

**Short answer to
the essay question**

*Check your short
answer with the
essay question*

**Summary of the
main body**

*Provide a logical
conclusion*

To sum up, Durkheim rejects the classical liberal argument that the market is sufficient to guarantee that the free reign of individual egoism will lead to the greater good for society as a whole. He also rejects the conservative claim that the repression of individual choice is needed to prevent social disintegration. What is needed, Durkheim argues, is a new and higher form of social solidarity that will reconcile individualism with a sense of respect for and obligation toward others. Durkheim refers to this as "organic solidarity," which he distinguishes from the more traditional form of "mechanical solidarity." As a result, moral individualism will make the individual while becoming more autonomous be nevertheless depended upon society.

Common mistakes

1. Poor structure
2. No definition for solidarity
3. Durkheim in his work "Suicide" showed the idea of ***social control***, not that society "pushes" person