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SOCIAL CHANGE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOME PROMINENT CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGISTS

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Öz

Bu çalışma, sosyal değişimi açıklayan klasik sosyoloji teorileri üzerine odaklanmıştır. Sosyal değişim analiz edilirken, aşağıdaki tanınmış oniki klasik dönem sosyoloğunun fikirlerinden istifade edilmiştir. Bunlar Comte, Marx, Durkheim, Spencer, Weber, Veblen, Tönnies, Simmel, Pareto, Tarde, Le Bon, and Mannheim'dır. Makalede, onların perspektifinden sosyal değişim ele alınmış ve kapsamlı bir şekilde irdelenmiştir. Çalışmada, sadece bu oniki bilim insanına ait birincil kaynaklar kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Klasik Dönem Sosyologları, Sosyal Değişim, Toplum.

Abstract

This study focuses on classical theories explaining social change. The thoughts of the following prominent twelve classical sociologists were used during the analysis of social change. These are Comte, Marx, Durkheim, Spencer, Weber, Veblen, Tönnies, Simmel, Pareto, Tarde, Le Bon, and Mannheim. Social change was comprehensively handled and told from their perspectives in this study. Only primary sources of those twelve scholars were used in this work.

Keywords: Classical Sociologists, Social Change, Society.

Introduction

Various thoughts can be seen about the development and change of society in classical theory. While Comte and Durkheim have an evolutionary approach to social change a revolutionary approach is seen in Marxian view. Similar to Comte, to Durkheim, social change have to happen with the maintaining of social order in order to achieve, reach a higher level stage. These stages have a linear progress approach. The latter is better than the former.

Theological, metaphysical and positive stages are the three stages of Comte's linear social change. To Durkheim, there are two stages in history. One is mechanical solidarity, the other is organic solidarity. In these two forms of society there is a harmony, and social order. There is no conflict as it is seen in Marxian view. There is a transition from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity through division of labor. Social change occurs through this way. That is, to Durkheim, social change is the transition in the social relations from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity.

Durkheim's mechanical solidarity form is seen in primitive communities. Tönnies calls these kinds of communities as Geimanshaft. In these kinds of communities integration level is very high. Organic solidarity form is similar to Gesselshaft in Tönnies's work. When the density of community increases, something starts to change. According to Spencer, the law of social

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change was progress and resistance. Progress is a necessity and it isn't an accident. Civilization is a part of nature. For Veblen, social change theory is basically a technological theory of history.

In classical functionalist approach to social change, there is a linear progress and society has to change with the maintaining of social order. There must be harmony in society. Then, society reaches a better position. However, in conflict approach, there should be two hostile groups in every stages of history. One is oppressor and the other is oppressed group. There should be a revolutionary transition by destroying the old system in order to reach to the better stage.

The main goal of this study is to understand the different approaches about the change of society. This study covers the thoughts twelve prominent classical sociologists about social change. These are Comte, Marx, Durkheim, Spencer, Weber, Veblen, Tönnies, Simmel, Pareto, Tarde, Le Bon, and Mannheim. Only primary sources of those twelve sociologists were used during the examination of the issue.

Classical Social Change Theories

Comte explains progress throughout the history by classifying the theoretical conditions of knowledge that result with social progress. For Comte (1866) all societies pass through three stages which are theological, metaphysical, and positive stages.

In the theological stage or primitive stage, men, manipulated by his imagination, seek out justification of all phenomena in the will of supernatural beings whom they visualize mythically. In the metaphysical or adolescent stage, intellect masters imagination. Metaphysics then displaces religion, and man seeks a justification of phenomenon in the forces of nature, specifically, in the fundamental force, the chemical force. In the last, positive stage is concerned with logical explanation. The only absolute is that everything is subject to change and relative. Moreover, it is science which achieves superiority over philosophy. This is the positive phase. There is not a search for entities which surpass understanding anymore. At this moment, efforts are made to institute the unvarying relationships of phenomena and to submit particular relationships to those that are universal (Comte, 1866).

While Comte believes that positive stage is the final stage of this progress, Marx claims that communism is the perfect stage where there are no class conflicts. Thus, for Marx, there is also an end for evolution with the emergence of communism.

According to Comte (1866) there is a widespread anarchy in the whole intellectual system. Although ideas of order and progress are inseparable, it was set up in radical opposition. While he critic the revolutionary school, he explains his view of order and progress. Society will use the rights of human reasoning to organize itself when the proper time arrives. For him there is not a revolution but a gradual transition. This order and progress will be aided by the scientific class of society.

Comte (1866) extends the static and dynamic conditions of subject to social science. While the former focuses on the harmony of the conditions, latter studies the progress and the change in society. Although social dynamics searches the laws of succession, social statics investigates into those of coexistence.

Comte (1866) sees social dynamics as a process of progressive evolution in which people become cumulatively more intelligent and in which altruism eventually triumphs over egoism, although Durkheim claims that society can very well do without altruism. This process is one that people can modify or accelerate but in the end the laws of progressive development dictate the development of society. Comte's research on social evolution focuses on Western Europe where he viewed as the most developed part of the world during his times. Not only abstract science, but also arts, politics, morality etc. will progress through these stages and benefit from positive stage.

Comte (1866) believes in principle that the division of labor, while it fosters the development of individual, gifts and capacities also contributes to human solidarity by creating in each individual a sense of his dependence on others. Furthermore, positivism could both

advance science and social change. He argues that the upper classes of his time were far too conservative to advocate positive stage.

Comte (1866) views the working class as agents of social change because of their ties of affection to their families, respect for authority, exposure to misery, and propensity for self-sacrifice, while Marx (1848) sees the working class that can overthrow the ruling class through revolutions.

According to Marx (1845), the reality will collapse when he revolts against the imaginary explanations of history, that is, the real world is the product of ideas. For Marx, historical materialism is the proper means to analyze the course of human history. He develops his ideas by contrasting with the idealist approach which he characterizes with *German Ideology*. He states that German intellectuals fail to understand the underlying power of forces of production and men's relation to those forces of production as the determining force of the structure of society. To him, the material forces are the determining factor of the course of the history, while they shape the structure of the society.

For him, the production of the means of to satisfy the needs is the first historical act. This production leads to new needs and forming a family. This production appears both as a natural relation with man and a social relation. He states that there is a materialist connection just behind this act of production (Marx, 1845).

Marx (1845) states that communism is a real movement which abolishes the present states of things. He tries to form a totality which will try revolution in the historical concept. His view of transitions from one form of society to another is to make transition from the bourgeois form of society to a propertyless communist society. In the development of productive forces, there will be a stage that productive forces and means of discourse are no longer productive, but are destructive. The revolutionary class that forms the majority will gain communist consciousness and rise up against the owners of means of production. Finally, they will overthrow the class system. Marx defines communist consciousness as a question of put an end or overthrowing the current state of things.

Marx witnessed that in any particular society the mode of production changes, societies in Europe had evolved from a feudal to a capitalist mode of production. Furthermore, Marx states that human history is the progression through which human beings change themselves. In the course of their history men increasingly transform nature to make it better serve their own purposes. And, in the process of transforming nature, they transform themselves. Men "begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence... By producing their means of subsistence, men indirectly produce their actual material life" (Marx, 1845: 37).

According to Marx (1848), the history of the human beings is the history of class conflict or class struggle. The struggle is to gain people's livelihood through related labor. Human beings create definite forms of social organizations characterizing by societal inequality.

Class antagonisms specific to each particular mode of production leads to the emergence of classes whose interests can no longer be asserted within the framework of the old order; at the same time, the growth of the productive forces reaches the limits imposed by previous productive relations. When this happens, the new classes break down the old order, and the new productive forces create the material conditions for further advance. However, the bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production. When they have been overthrown by a victorious proletariat, the prehistory of human society will have come to an end (Marx, 1848).

For Durkheim (1884), social change is shaped by transformations in the structure of social relationships linking people into a coherent entity. When the density of community increases, something starts to change. Transition from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity occurs through division of labor. With the division of labor, individuals need each other. People's needs increase. Interdependence starts. Division of labor causes industrialization.

Durkheim (1884) used biological metaphors and analogies to resemble social changes; society as a social organism which is evolving or developing from one of being simple, mechanical, to that of a complex, organic, society in its nature.

Durkheim (1895) believes that crime is useful and necessary integrative element for the society. According to his observations, crime is committed in kinds of societies, and even though all efforts spent about the extinction of it throughout human history, it has increased with the growth and progress of civilization; thereby, crime is useful and necessary for societies.

As it is mentioned earlier, Marx also shares a similar perspective in that societies go through certain stages -slavery, feudalism, capitalism and communism- in their development (Marx, 1845). Thus, both Durkheim's and Marx's theories are within evolutionary biology concerning the development of the human species from a primitive being to a modern being (Marx, 1845; Durkheim, 1884).

Durkheim's evolutionary perspective on social change, in contrast to Marx's revolutionary approach, sees society as shifting or changing in a linear form from one stage to another as division of labor increases peoples' roles in performing societal tasks and becoming more specialized. That is a society changes from one of being simple or mechanical to that of a complex or organic one in its nature. As such, the evolution of one society towards modernization and industrialization will lead them from the mechanical to the organic state. This shifting of society can be seen in the context of increased population density, increased interaction between mechanical societies, specialization and division of labor (Durkheim, 1884).

Weber (1920) emphasizes rationalization as a necessary element for the social change. Weber thinks that modernity replaces traditional views with a rational way of thinking. In pre-industrial societies, traditional views blocks change. Things are the way because that is what everyone believes and no one questions it. In modern societies things are questioned and answers are calculated.

Weber's emphasis on the influence of religious ideas in the emergence of modern capitalism forces him into struggle against Marx's materialistic understanding. In his book *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* Weber (1920) presents that in the seventeenth century, an elective affinity developed between the ideas of the Calvinist divines and the concerns of certain bourgeois.

According to Spencer (1851), progress and resistance is the law of social change. The important thing in a society is the law of equal freedom. Progress is a necessity and it isn't an accident. Civilization is a part of nature. For him, the modifications of human beings have undergone and still undergo, consequence from a law which is basic of the entire organic creation, and supplied human race maintains. The formation of things stays the same. Consequently, these modifications have to be completed at the end.

Spencer (1851) also states that the human faculties must be molded into entire suitability for the social state, the things called as evil and immorality must disappear, and man must become perfect. Moreover, greatest happiness is the creative of purpose, and it should be the goal of man. Happiness is also a particular type of life, and the fulfillment of specific functions is essential for life. According to Spencer, in the social state, each individual's sphere of activity is restricted by the others' spheres of activity. Justice is necessary for greatest happiness.

According to Spencer, for understanding humanity in its elementary form, it is essential to examine humanity in its elementary form. If people think, it can be understood that existence of society entails some natural similarity in its members for such a union. It is obvious that without certain suitability in mankind for ruling, government would be impossibility. Complex organizations of commerce grow up under the stimulus of certain desires of people. Spencer also states that "moral forces upon which social equilibrium depends are resident in the social atom-man" (Spencer, 1851: 18).

The existence of society entails some natural similarity in its members for such a union. Spencer says that “non-adaptation of an organism to its conditions is ever being rectified; and modification of one or both, continues until the adaptation is complete” (Spencer, 1851: 55) To Spencer, where faith in the holiness of authority most remains, faith in the holiness of life, of liberty, and of property is least showed. Besides this, where there is inadequate respect for the divine law, there must be extra respect for human law; otherwise, there can be entire lawlessness or barbarism. He explains the transition from barbarism to civilization with obeying rules by all people.

Spencer (1851) claims that peaceful revolutions happen under different conditions. The disturbing force is the inappropriateness between character and institutions, and revolution is the act of restoring equilibrium. Furthermore, although accidental conditions modify the process, they don't perceptibly change the effect. The development of society, the development of men, and the development of life commonly can be explained as a propensity to individuate-to become a thing. For him an individual can become perfectly free when all are free, he/she can become perfectly moral when all are moral, and he/she can become perfectly happy when all are happy.

According to Veblen, social change theory is basically a technological theory of history. For him, the technology determines the character of society's culture. Invention is very important and essential. To Veblen, “the institution of a leisure class has emerged gradually during the transition from primitive savagery to barbarism” (Veblen, 1899: 5). The necessary conditions of these are

“(1) the community must be of a predatory habit of life.

(2) The subsistence must be obtainable on sufficiently easy terms to admit of the exemption of a considerable portion of the community from steady application to a routine of labor” (Veblen, 1899: 5).

Industry is effort to create a new thing. Although a new technology doesn't form new systems of laws, new moral attitudes, or new types of education, it challenges old institutions and reminds their resistance (Veblen, 1899).

To Veblen (1899), spiritual difference isn't a mechanical difference; it is as a considerable distinction between the peaceable and the predatory phase of culture. The change in spiritual attitude is the result of a change in material facts of the group life. In the succession of cultural evolution the appearance of a leisure class happens together with the beginning of ownership. The difference between a leisure class and working class occurs is a separation continued between men's and women's work in the lower stages of barbarism.

For Veblen (1899), if there is the institution of property, the economic process carries the character of a struggle between men for the possession of goods there. Emulation is the motive that is positioned at the root of ownership. Moreover, this motive of emulation maintains active in the further development of the institution.

During the previous periods of the quasi-peaceable development of industry that comes after the predatory stage, a life of leisure is the prepared and most definite proof of pecuniary strength. The institution of leisure class arrives as one of the early results of ownership (Veblen, 1899).

When wealth accumulates, the leisure class develops more in function and structure. To Veblen, the tendency for emulation is almost certainly the strongest, most alert, and insistent of the economic motives proper (Veblen, 1899).

According to Veblen (1899), at quasi-peaceable stage of industry, personal service first ascends to an economic institution, and here it resides the largest place in the community's scheme of life. This stage comes after predatory stage. A formal observance of peace and order is its characteristic feature. It also named as the stage of status. In modern life, the largest manifestation of vicarious leisure is composed of domestic duties. Beside these, in contrast to

Marx, Veblen doesn't think the class struggle as the motor of history. For him it is only shaping force of history between technology and history.

According to Tönnies (1887), development can be understood as a transition from an original, simple, family communism and village-town individualism based thereon, to an independent, universal, urban individualism, and determined thereby, socialism of state and international type.

To Tönnies (1887), folk culture has given rise to the civilization of the state in the course of history. He states that the law can and may completely change the *Gesellschaft* at the level of its own discrimination and purpose. Because religion is mostly connected to the physical-spiritual relation, it is moral in its nature. Science also has a moral meaning, and it obtains its moral meaning from the laws of social life.

Tönnies (1887) also states that the masses realize of the social positions by way of the education and newspapers. They continue from class consciousness to class struggle. This class struggle may destroy society and the state which is its goal to reform. Then the entire culture is transformed into a civilization of state and *Gesellschaft*.

According to Simmel (1955), conflict is a part of dynamic into the groups. The subject matter of sociology is individual unit and the unit of individuals, that is, society, and society must contain both harmony and disharmony. He claims that negative and positive elements play positive role in a broad approach, although he accepts that conflict may cause destruction in some cases.

Simmel (1955) states that competition requires different individual interests, motives and intentions, but it in terms of ultimate purpose it has to be also inclusive for social interest. He suggests that socialism links society's common interests and individuals personal interests. To him, while social groups are composed of individuals, group affiliations affect individuals.

Simmel (1955) thinks that group affiliation as a function of two different processes: The organic membership and the rational membership. Organic memberships are very traditional in nature and, while more basic, are less closely tied to the personal characteristics of the individuals that make them up. They are groupings of very different people who come together without much thought or purpose. Conversely, rational memberships exist because people have to get needs and cannot find people within their primary grouping who have compatible traits.

Pareto (1901) also talks about social change and he believes the leadership of a class. He analyses the human nature and his observations are regarding the reality of events in politics, economics, and the general society. For him, human nature is that people's motivations are irrational and based on sentiment rather than logic, and that any reasons that individuals ostensibly present for their actions are in fact post-rationalizations.

Pareto (1901) states that due to the energy and strength of it, the victory of the new oligarchy is inevitable. For him, humanitarian skepticism weakens the upper classes. Revolution was a reaction of the religious sentiments of the lower classes against the skepticism of the upper classes and it was same at the period of the reformation.

For Pareto (1901), religious sentiment grew among the civilized nations. The religious sentiment of the masses leads to revolt. This sentiment is exploited by the rising elite in its attempt to overthrow the ruling elite. During an ascending period, the activities of the people expand and accelerate the general movement; however, it is vice versa during other times.

According to Tarde, universe searches "the laws that govern the repetition, opposition, and adaptation of phenomena" (Tarde, 1898: 9). He states that people observe the sciences by looking similarities, contrasts, and harmonies, and explore a greater number of resemblances among the phenomena. People discern certain resemblances among them. For him, "people have passed from complex and confused resemblances and repetitions of the whole to resemblances and repetitions of the parts" (Tarde, 1898: 13).

To Tarde, "fundamental phenomenon of life is and indefinite repetition." Heredity is "the form of repetition appropriate to life, just as undulation, or periodic movement, is its

physical, and imitation its social form." Moreover, progress of the science of living things removed the "barriers on the side of their resemblances and repetitions" (Tarde, 1898: 16).

For Tarde, people forever imitate others unless they themselves make an innovation. It is known that innovation is an event which rarely happens. "The unvarying characteristic of every social fact whatsoever is that it is imitative." To him, "each new act of imitation between individuals already associated tends to preserve and strengthen the social bond" He says that "social science develops with the advance of civilization", "the distinction just made is between oppositions of series (evolution and counter evolution) and opposition of degree (increase and diminution)" (Tarde, 1898: 24).

Tarde (1898) states that Spencer thinks social adaptation as a considerable number of different social dramas. Greater mass can be more harmonies and the frequency of this can be more. To him, fundamental social adaptation implies that in the relationship between two individuals, one of them copies the other.

According to Le Bon, organized crowds always affect the people and the social life and "the substitution of the unconscious action of the crowds for the conscious activity of individuals is one of the principal characteristics of the present age" (Le Bon, 1895: 3). For Le Bon, the changes of civilization are after the great upheavals and he gives some examples such as; Roman Empire and Arabian Empire. The important are the apparent effects of the unapparent changes of human thought. The reason of this kind of significant events is almost always instable "in a race as the inherited groundwork of its thoughts" (Le Bon, 1895: 13). During critical moments the thought of mankind undergoes a process of transformation.

There are two essential factors of this transformation. "The first is the destruction of those religious, political, and social beliefs in which all the elements of our civilization are rooted. The second is the creation of entirely new conditions of existence and thought as the result of modern scientific and industrial discoveries" (Le Bon, 1895: 14). He also states that, civilizations are the result of few fundamental ideas which are rarely renewed.

For Mannheim, in a static society social change can destroy everything except for thought. There are two forms of social mobility. These are horizontal and vertical. They run and manage in different ways to show this multiplicity of style of thought. Horizontal mobility is "movement from one position to another position or from one country to another without changing social status." Horizontal mobility indicates that each person differently thinks. Vertical mobility is "the decisive in making persons uncertain and skeptical of their traditional view of world" (Mannheim, 1929: 7).

To Mannheim, the individualistic point of view in most cases can't see the importance of social life for improvement of individual capacities, while the sociological point of view searches from the starting to "interpret individual activity in all spheres with in the context of group experience" (Mannheim, 1929: 30).

Causes of Social Change

According to Comte (1866) ideas are the main causes of social change. Sociology and the other sciences would lead mankind away from the fuzzy and confusing ages of religion into the clear truth, peace and prosperity created by science.

For Comte, human knowledge, which is the deriving force of the progress, passes through theological, metaphysical and positive stages.

Marx (1845) claims that material conditions precede the ideas. In the effort to satisfy primary and secondary needs, men engage in antagonistic cooperation as soon as they leave the primitive, communal stage of development. As soon as a division of labor emerges in human society, that division leads to the formation of antagonistic classes, the primary actors in the social change.

According to Durkheim (1884), social change is intrinsic to society, or in other words, it is in the nature of society. The main reason of social change is the division of labor that stimulates mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity. The evolution of one society towards

modernization and industrialization will lead them from the mechanical to the organic state. Coercive structure of society forces individuals to specialization through division of labor that results with the progress of the society as a whole.

For Spencer (1851), social organism must pass in the course of its development through temporary forms like other organism. Moreover, he tells the transition from barbarism to civilization and legal system. Transition is provided by legal system.

To Veblen (1899), technological development is effective for social development and change. Although a new technology doesn't form new systems of laws, it challenges old institutions and reminds their resistance.

Both Comte and Marx believe that social change will result as the progress of the society; society will be in a better position than before in positive stage or in communism. While Durkheim sees the risk of anomie in the society when social order is neglected, he prefers to emphasize on social order and social cohesion within the society. Thus, Comte and Marx have a linear approach to social change whereas Durkheim can see the downfalls of the societies through anomie.

For Spencer, to become civilized or transition from barbarism to civilization is with the rules and laws. People became civilized by obeying the laws and rules which are the principles of society and unite the people. According to Veblen, development in industry, economy, and technology helps development of society.

Conclusion

These classical theorists covered in this study are considered central in their disciplines. Comte coined the term sociology, and formed a new science under the light of positivism. After Comte, Emile Durkheim is also referred to as the founder of modern sociology, helping to establish the discipline and many of its methods. Marx has perhaps had the most profound influence of any social scientist in history. Not only did he inspire several generations of revolutionaries, he has influenced many social scientists.

While Comte and Durkheim have an evolutionary approach, Marx has a revolutionary approach to social change. Like Comte, to Durkheim, social change have to happen with the maintaining of social order in order to achieve, reach a higher level and better stage. In classical functionalist approach to social change, there is a linear progress and society has to change with the maintaining of social order.

However, in classical conflict approach, –especially in Marxian view- conflict is seen between oppressor and oppressed groups. There should be two hostile classes and there should be a struggle between them in Marx's view. Furthermore, while it is not necessary to destroy old system in functionalist approach, there should be a revolutionary transition by destroying the old system in order to reach to the better stage in conflict approach.

Spencer tells the transition from barbarism to civilization by obeying the principles of society. Societies developed in response to their social and natural environment. Although it was slow, there was adaptation. Life is in community and relationship with the other in societies is important. Individuals are the parts of the society and people collectively do something. Moreover, for the natural growth of organism, liberty is essential.

Rationalization is a required component in Weber's social change thought. Modernity replaces traditional views through a rational way of thinking. Tönnies talks about transition from a simple type community to a complex society.

Veblen mentions the technological development for social development and change. Veblen coins the terms such as, "conspicuous consumption" and "pecuniary emulation". He showed the development of ownership and property. He also influenced the nature of economic thought.

In Simmels view, conflict is a part of change. Society must have both disharmony and harmony because both positive and negative elements play positive role. Pareto's view is

similar to conflict perspective. He also sees revaluation as a reaction of religious sentiments of lower classes against upper classes.

Progress of civilization in the development of social science is important in Tarde's view. People evaluate the science by observing harmonies, contrasts, and similarities. The progress of the science removes the barriers to change. Le Bon's social change is related to upheavals. The changes of civilizations occur after great upheavals. Destruction of old and creation of new is seen his view similar to Marxian view. To Mannheim, social change destroys everything without thoughts through two forms of social mobility.

Some of the classical sociologists react to the initial stages of the societies. To them, revolutions, destroy old systems are necessary to reach a better stage. However, for the other, there is a linear change by maintaining of social order. Besides, they criticize the societies of them and make predictions about the future of those societies. Living in rapidly industrializing societies during their time, led those scholars to theorize the changes in societies.

Social change is the only issue that has been covered in this study. Even though there sometimes seems to be disagreement on the issue, all reflect different aspects of the bigger picture. None of them denies the importance of the material conditions, and also no one rejects the solidarity within the societies. All theories seem to be complementary. They illuminate our understandings and give us new insights.

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