

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227378738>

# Division of Labour in some Classical Concepts--An Attempt of Contemporary Theoretical Synthesis

Article · January 2011

DOI: 10.2202/1145-6396.1222 · Source: RePEc

---

CITATIONS

0

READS

1,016

1 author:



**Krešimir Peračković**

Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar

39 PUBLICATIONS 74 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



SHSSLCC - Second Homes and Social Sustainability of Local Communities in Croatia [View project](#)



Second Homes and Social Sustainability of Local Communities in Croatia [View project](#)

*Journal des Economistes et des  
Etudes Humaines*

---

Volume 17, Number 1

2011

Article 1

---

Division of Labour in some Classical  
Concepts—An Attempt of Contemporary  
Theoretical Synthesis

**Kresimir Perackovic**, *The Institute of Social Sciences Ivo  
Pilar*

**Recommended Citation:**

Perackovic, Kresimir (2011) "Division of Labour in some Classical Concepts—An Attempt of Contemporary Theoretical Synthesis," *Journal des Economistes et des Etudes Humaines*: Vol. 17: No. 1, Article 1.

**Available at:** <http://www.bepress.com/jeeh/vol17/iss1/art1>

**DOI:** 10.2202/1145-6396.1222

©2011 Berkeley Electronic Press and IES-Europe. All rights reserved.

# Division of Labour in some Classical Concepts—An Attempt of Contemporary Theoretical Synthesis

Kresimir Perackovic

## Abstract

This paper analyzes classical concepts of division of labour and offers some contemporary theoretical model which includes causes and effects of it. For Smith, the main cause is a tendency of human nature to exchange and the main effect is a progress of the country. For Marx, the fundamental cause is historical development of productive forces and effects are accumulation of capital on the one side but also an alienation of working class on the other. Spencer considers as the main cause specialization of functions in generally, which consequence is integration of society. For Durkheim, causes are social density and volume, and its effect or function is new interconnection in society known as term organic solidarity. Weber derives division of labour from his theory of rational economic actions, and its most important effect is development of occupational structure.

**KEYWORDS:** division of labour, political economy, classical sociology, Smith, Marx, Spencer, Durkheim, Weber

## 1. Introduction

The first question that arises for an author who wants to discuss the division of labour is what is the purpose of writing an article with such a topic in the informational age, when Rifkin has already written about *the end of work* (Rifkin, 1999)? Why should anyone bother with writing about theories of the division of labour and, particularly, why start from classical sociological concepts? Is there any useful insight for contemporary social sciences that we can find in these first theories? What would be the contribution of such a theoretical article?

Exactly because it appears at first glance that this work seems useless and unnecessary, one must first explain why, even today, it is important to use concepts from our sociological heritage when talking about the division of labour. The inspiration for this article has come from research on the post-industrial transformation of the structure of occupations in Croatian society during the period of transition from communism to neo-liberal capitalism, as Croatia prepares to enter into the European Union. Even though every worldwide-known textbook of sociology, (for example the ones from Smelser (1988), Haralambos (1997), or Giddens (2008)) contains a special chapter on work and labour, none of them presents, analyzes and compares terms relating to this subject from the original sources of classical sociological theories. Therefore the main goal of this article is to promote classical theoretical terms and concepts and to point to their relevance in modern conceptualizations of the division of labour. This article will present basic approaches and theories about the division of labour from Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer and Max Weber and will highlight their main conclusions. The article will conclude with a comparative scheme of the causes and effects of division of labour based on these classical theories and approaches. This scheme could be a model for the theoretical synthesis of classical sociological approaches to the division of labour. The purpose of such a theoretical synthesis is to promote classical theoretical terms and concepts and to point to their relevance in modern theoretical conceptualizations of the division of labour. This could also be used as a fundamental starting point for the operationalization of the research on changes in the social division of labour, evident in transformations in the structure of economic activities, the structure of education and structure of occupations.

## 2. Adam Smith: consequences and fundamental features of the division of labour

Adam Smith is the first author who used a concept of the *division of labour*. He pointed out that this phrase was not used earlier, except in Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* (1729.) Moreover, the first book of his masterpiece *An Inquiry*

*into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* begins with the following three chapters: “Of the Division of Labour,” “Of the Principle Which Gives Occasion to the Division of Labour,” “That the Division of Labour is limited by the Extent of the Market.” His analysis of the division of labour begins with a description of the process of manufacturing pins. This is divided into a number of specific crafts. Smith gives the following illustration:

One man draws out the wire, another straightens it, a third cuts it, a fourth points it, a fifth grinds it at the top for receiving the head; to make the head requires two or three distinct operations; to put it on is a peculiar business, to whiten the pins is another; it is even a trade by itself to put them into the paper; and the important business of making a pin is, in this manner, divided into about eighteen distinct operations, which, in some manufactories, are all performed by distinct hands, though in others the same man will sometimes perform two or three of them. In consequence of a proper division and combination of their different operations, ten persons, therefore, could make among them upwards of forty-eight thousand pins in a day. But if they had all wrought separately and independently, and without any of them having been educated to this peculiar business, they certainly could not each of them have made twenty. (Smith, 1852, p 3)

Smith uses this description not only to show to that the division of labour in manufacturing causes, in each specific craft, a significant increase of productivity, and to emphasize that differentiation of various occupations and jobs on the national level results in the development and the wealth of some countries. This principle became one of the most important features of the wealth of nations that enjoy the highest degree of industry and improvement (Smith, 1852, p 3). Smith concludes that the large increase in the amount of work that can be done by distributing the same number of people, using the division of labour, can be attributed to three different circumstances. The first is the increase in the skills of each worker. The second is saving time - before the division of labour lots of time was lost transiting from one type of work to another. The third is the invention of a large number of machines which facilitate and reduce the work and enable one man to do the work of many people. Every individual, says Smith, becomes a better expert in his particular job and, therefore, more work could be done, and the amount of knowledge is highly increased:

It is the great multiplication of the productions of all the different arts, in consequence of the division of labour, which occasions, in a well-

governed society, that universal opulence which extends itself to the lowest ranks of the people. (Smith, 1852: 5)

In the second chapter of the first book of his masterpiece “Of the Principle which Gives Occasion to the Division of Labour”, Smith argued that the division of labour was not originally the effect of some kind of human wisdom that foresees and intends to achieve the general welfare. He claims:

It is the necessary, though very slow and gradual consequence of a certain propensity in human nature which has in view no such extensive utility; the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another. Nobody ever saw a dog make a fair and deliberate exchange of one bone for another with another dog, (Smith, 1852, p 6)

He further argues that a man without this natural human tendency would have to supply all of life’s necessities and comforts for himself. Moreover, everybody would have to do same job and there could not be many different jobs, There would be no possibility for developing talent within a particular job. Therefore, he concludes, all this division of labour is caused by a power of exchange as a feature of human nature.

The third chapter argues that the division of labour is limited by the scope of the market. In the lone houses and small villages in the Scottish mountains each man must be a butcher, baker and brewer for his own family. “A country carpenter deals in every sort of work that is made of wood: a country smith in every sort of work that is made of iron,” (Smith, 1852, p 8). Therefore certain types of industries can be performed only in the big city. But after the division of labour was applied, there remains a small portion of needs that a man has to achieve with his own production. Smith concludes:

He supplies the far greater part of them by exchanging that surplus part of the produce of his own labour, which is over and above his own consumption, for such parts of the produce of other men's labour as he has occasion for. Every man thus lives by exchanging, or becomes in some measure a merchant, and the society itself grows to be what is properly a commercial society. (Smith, 1852, p 10)

These are the basic and most important of Smith’s thesis on the division of labour on which he builds his entire economic theory. It is important to emphasize that for him the division of labour is actually an indicator of prosperity of certain countries and is the main cause of the economic system that leads to general welfare. We may say that Smith is the first to point out the developmental dimension of the division of labour.

### **3. Karl Marx: The principles and forms of the division of labour**

Unlike optimistic Smith, Marx first sees the negative aspects of the division of labour, but also notes its ubiquity:

Is the whole internal organisation of nations, are their international relations, anything but the expression of a given division of labour? And must they not change as the division of labour changes?

This is one of Marx's main theses on the division of labour and can be found even in his early paper "A letter to Annenkov," (1975, p 95) which shows us how important this subject was for Marx. Besides the division of labour in manufacturing or in individual work in a workshop, Marx analyses the social division of labour, (general and specific,) which has a fundamental importance for society. It makes a general basis for production of each commodity and mainly depends on the development of *forces of production*<sup>1</sup>. He considers that any new force of production leads to the further development of the division of labour. In the first historical division of labour within society there was a separation of industrial and trade work from agricultural work and, therefore, a separation between towns and villages with their different and opposite interests. Further development leads to the separation of industrial from trade or commercial work. This division of labour also developed within these branches of economy different social groups whose social position is determined by the ownership of materials, tools and works products. By the type of position and ownership Marx distinguishes tribal, ancient, communal, state and feudal or class ownership. These theses are also the basis of his sociological thought, although he never considered himself a sociologist.

Marx wanted to explore the basic principles which lead to the division of labour even in the original and first communities. In the first primitive societies, clans and tribes, the first native division of labour derived from the difference of gender and age, that is, from *physiological principles*. Later, along with the differentiation of the instruments or tools for specific works, also developed the differentiation of craft which produces these tools, as well as specially trained people who know how to use them. That was the first technical division of labour that leads to the separation and differentiation of branches of production, so Marx points out:

---

<sup>1</sup> The concept of *forces of production* is one of Marx's main terms where he implies that material resources of production together with *social relations of production* make the base of social structure (Marshall, 1998).

(d)ivision of labour in society is brought about by the purchase and sale of the products of different branches of industry, while the connexion between the detail operations in a workshop, is due to the sale of the labour-power of several workmen to one capitalist, who applies it as combined labour-power. The division of labour in the workshop implies concentration of the means of production in the hands of one capitalist; the division of labour in society implies their dispersion among many independent producers of commodities. (Marx, 1990, p 475)

Considering this thesis, Marx claims that division of labour is the main factor that causes the development of production sectors on national and international levels. Modification and technical functions of tools are developed based on changes in materials and raw materials, so modern industry of his time, as well as today, continually uses and includes these technical innovations in the process of production. Marx concludes that this technical basis of division of labour is revolutionary, whereas in all earlier processes it was conservative.

By means of machinery, chemical processes and other methods, it is continually causing changes not only in the technical basis of production, but also in the functions of the labourer, and in the social combinations of the labour-process. At the same time, it thereby also revolutionises the division of labour within the society, and incessantly launches masses of capital and of workpeople from one branch of production to another. (Marx, 1948, p 617)

Therefore, we can conclude that for Marx the development of technology and technical innovation (as an element of production forces) in industrial societies, substituted for physiology as the main principle of the division of labour from earlier ages. Marx, of course, does not finish his study on the division of labour by just giving an exploration of its principles and typology. He also wants to analyze the influence of division of labour as a national-economic expression of the sociability of labour within the concept of *alienation*<sup>2</sup>. That specific approach was displayed even in his early writings known as *Economic and*

---

<sup>2</sup> In sociological literature that mentions Marx's theory, the term of "alienation" is considered a central term that unites his anthropological definition of the human as a creature of work and a critic of capitalism that degrades the potential of this human being. The term itself understands that humans do not succeed in finding pleasure and fulfilment in doing their work nor in products of the same, so the worker is estranged from himself, that is, from his nature, and, therefore, from others ( Haralambos, Holborn, 2008).



*Philosophical Manuscripts*, where he claims that the “division of labour is nothing more than the estranged alienated positing of human activity as a real species activity or as activity of man as species being,” (Marx, Engels, 1975 b).

Marx criticizes and rejects Smith’s thesis that the principle which causes the division of labour is a specific human tendency to exchange and trade, and the motive of the exchange is not humanity but egoism. On the contrary, he finds that the division of labour in capitalism was initiated with the general intention of the accumulation of capital. It has led to the degeneration of human beings, and certainly does not originate from human propensity to exchange.

The central limitation of this part of Marx’s theory is that it was fixed mainly on the division of labour within the production of material products in manufactories and factories of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (which became commodities in a market). With this reductive approach, Marx omits in his analysis the rest of social structures, which, in that period included the dominant peasantry, the remnants of feudal classes, the growing trade and commercial sector and already existing service sector and service occupations. Without going into further presentation of Marx’s discussion of the division of labour, for this paper it is important to highlight these theses: on the one side of the division of labour is the importance of the role of technical development, which leads to further differentiation and specialisation, and on the other side it is the disappearance of the old and the emergence of new occupations and professions.

#### **4. Emile Durkheim: causes and functions of the division of labour**

Both, Smith and Marx in their analyses on the division of labour were focused on the production sector: manufacturing and industrial production. On the other hand, Durkheim noticed that the division of labour is not specific only to the economic world.

We can observe its increasing influence in the most diverse sectors of society. Functions, whether political, administrative or judicial, are becoming more and more specialised. The same is true in the arts and sciences. (Durkheim, 1984, p 2)

He points out that Smith first used the term and developed the theory of the division of labour, but in that time there were also some biological researches, which Durkheim defined as “philosophical speculations” in biology, conducted by Wolff, von Baer and Milne-Edwards. They pointed out that the law of the division of labour corresponds with organisms as well as with societies, and so Durkheim concluded:

It may even be stated that an organism occupies the more exalted place in the animal hierarchy, the more specialised its functions are. It is no longer a mere social institution whose roots lie in the intelligence and the will of men, but a general biological phenomenon, the conditions for which must seemingly be sought in the essential properties of organised matter. The division of labour in society appears no more than a special form of this general development. In conforming to this law societies apparently yield to a movement that arose long before they existed and which sweeps along in the same direction the whole of the living world. (Durkheim, 1984, p 3)

According to this perspective, the fundamental questions that Durkheim wants to consider and research in his famous masterpiece *The Division of Labour in Society*, are the nature of the division of labour with the law of nature and the moral rule of human behaviour, and, if both are true, why are they true, and how could they be measured. He noticed that public opinion tended to treat the division of labour as the obligatory rule and impose it as some kind of important social mission. This is especially evident in imperatives for education, which became increasingly specialized, and was reflected in a popular phrase of the time: “train up to fill specific useful function.” He especially criticized writers who made only a subjective perception of the division of labour. He wanted to find out what features of the division of labour are objective and could be treated as objective facts to be observed and compared. Therefore Durkheim points out that results of these observations are often different from subjective perceptions and experiences. He argued that the division of labour first must be considered in an entirely speculative way by researching its utility and its main content, causes and functions. After these first steps he emphasizes:

When this has been accomplished, we are in position to compare it with other moral phenomena and perceive what relationship it entertains with them. (Durkheim, 1984, p 6.)

From this point, Durkheim sets out three main goals of his research: 1. to explore the social function of the division of labour, 2. to determine the causes and conditions upon which it depends; 3. to classify the major abnormal forms in which it appears<sup>3</sup>. Before answering the question about its function, Durkheim

---

<sup>3</sup> This article will not take into account those abnormal or pathological, i.e. anomic forms which he described in the third chapter, but it is necessary to mention the three most general types specified: 1. industrial and commercial crises through bankruptcy, 2. hostility between labour and capital, 3. atomisation of science on great number of branches. (Durkheim, 1984: 291).

observes the historical development of the division of labour and remarks that the increase in the division of labour is therefore due to the fact that social segments lose their individuality and that the partitions dividing them become more permeable. In short, there occurs between them a coalescence that renders the social substance free to enter into new combinations. Before the development of the division of labour, social segments were connected by sets of beliefs and feelings that were common to the average members of the same society. This makes one determined system with its own life that Durkheim calls *collective or common conscience*. Therefore, the collective consciousness is the element that makes members of a particular society unified and interconnected. That type of interdependence, based on similarity, Durkheim calls *mechanical solidarity*. With the disappearance of society based on mechanical solidarity, specialisation came on the scene. This, according to Durkheim, partially relieves the individual consciousness and the individual becomes a major factor in his behaviour, no more just a reflection of collectivity. Division of labour itself contributed a lot to this liberation of individual consciousness, and, through professional specialisation individual nature becomes more complex, with less influence from the collectivity and heredity as well. That is why for him to be an individual means to be *independent source of action*.<sup>4</sup> For the type of society in which the collective consciousness is no longer a major factor of solidarity (as interdependence and interconnection) and where the fundamental principle is not similarity but diversity, there is a need for a new and different factor of solidarity. This factor for Durkheim is actually the division of labour, and solidarity that is based on it he calls *organic*. Durkheim claims the following:

Through it the individual is once more made more aware of his dependent state vis-à-vis society. It is from society that proceed those forces that hold him in check and keep him within bounds. In short, since the division of labour becomes the predominant source of social solidarity, at the same time it becomes the foundation of the moral order. (Durkheim, 1984, p 333)

Thus, Durkheim explains, in the nations at the lower level of development, the task of man is to resemble his compatriots, to create within himself all the qualities of a collective type that will be even more closely identified with the universal human type. While the division of labour brings liberation of individual conscience, an individual remains an independent factor of his own actions.

---

<sup>4</sup> Unlike Marx, who in division of labour sees the source of dehumanisation and alienation, Durkheim gives credits to division of labour for liberating individual from collective pressures.

Durkheim particularly emphasizes, that there is a completely different structure of these societies where this new organic solidarity exists. It consists of a system of different organs each of which has a special role and is made up of heterogeneous types that are coordinated and subordinated to one another, around the same central organ that directs action. Durkheim concludes that social life stems from two sources: similarity of consciousness and the division of labour. Similarity of consciousness creates legal rules under the threat of sanctions, imposed on all by beliefs and customs, while the division of labour creates legal rules that determine the nature and relations of divided functions. The first function of the division of labour for Durkheim is the one that was earlier filled by collective consciousness--to make civilisation possible--and that holds together social groups of higher types.

Durkheim points out another important function of the division of labour, and that is the education of social groups who would not even exist without it. Therefore Durkheim is the author of the first theoretical conceptualisation of the term *profession* as a social group that requires particular education and exact occupation, but he also considers them as important fact of the future moral order. In societies with organic solidarity, then, individuals are no longer stratified according to their heritage, because their position, role and status are now based on professional achievements. These insights of Durkheim's are very important elements for understanding the process of modernization in western societies, which is still on the scene in the countries in transition, as well as in other, non-western parts of the world.

Analysing the factors that lead to the division of labour, Durkheim emphasizes two main causes: density (*densité*) and social volume (*volumen*). Defining the concept of (social) density as moral condensation of mankind he claims:

Thus the division of labour progresses the more individuals there are who are sufficiently in contact with one another to be able mutually to act and react upon one another. If we agree to call dynamic or moral density this drawing together and the active exchanges that result from it, we can say that the progress of the division of labour is in direct proportion to the moral or dynamic density of society.. (Durkheim, 1984, p 201)

During the period of historical development he observes how condensation of society occurs gradually through three main stages: 1) the development of agriculture, which requires a sedentary lifestyle, 2) the emergence and development of cities and 3) the amount and speed of traffic and communication. If condensation of society has such an effect, it is because it

multiplies social interactions. But there will be even more of those interactions if the total number of the members of society increases, and, therefore, the consequences will be even stronger connections. Although social density and volume have the same impact on the division of labour, for Durkheim it is important to emphasize that increasing social volume does not always speed up the development of the division of labour. This occurs only when both of these factors exists in the same social frame. He concludes:

The division of labour varies in direct proportion to the volume and density of societies and if it progresses in a continuous manner over the course of social development it is because societies become regularly more dense and generally more voluminous. (Durkheim, 1984, p 205)

In his concluding remarks Durkheim summarizes the presented concepts and opposes them to the ideas of society held by Smith and Spencer. He built one of the foundations of the subject of sociology as a science, as opposed to the then prevailing historicism, biological determinism, psychological and economic determinism. When considering some of the final definition of society he claims:

It is not mere juxtaposition of individuals who, upon entering into it, bring with them an intrinsic morality. Man is only a moral being because he lives in society, since morality consists in solidarity with the group, and varies according to that solidarity. Doubtless society cannot exist if its parts are not solidly bound to one another, but solidarity is only one of the conditions for its existence. There are many others no less necessary, which are not moral. Moreover, it can be that, within this network of the ties that go to make up morality, there are some that are not useful in themselves, or whose strength bears no relationship to their degree of usefulness. The idea of the useful does not therefore come into our definition as an essential element of it. (Durkheim, 1984, p 332)

Durkheim understands as the main source of solidarity morality, which makes a person to be relied on by another person and to act guided by something else besides egoism. That's why he openly disagrees with Smith's thesis, in particular, that the division of labour does not produce solidarity just because it makes each individual an exchanger, but because it creates among people the whole system of rights and obligations that bound them to one another permanently. He concludes that societies can be formed only with the development of a division of labour, which means with greater specialisation of function. The division of labour, therefore, does not oppose individuals or

persons, but just social functions. Social aspects of individuals in that kind of society couldn't be reduced to psychological aspects: personality, behaviour, subjective perception, and so on. On the historical stage has come modern society with completely new terms and concepts such as social role, social status, social fact and many others, which are today known as major principles of sociology. From Durkheim's theses presented above, it can be concluded that the division of labour is the key factor of moral integration of modern industrial societies that makes their members interdependent.

### **5. Herbert Spencer: division of labour as a factor for the integration of society**

Unlike Durkheim and his sociological, ethical and legal concerns, Herbert Spencer approaches the division of labour through the theory of social evolution and the differentiation of functions, but he also considers it as the main factor of social integration in the society defined as a *supra organic aggregate*. He divided this concept of the division of labour into four different categories: *social differentiation, specialisation, integration and function*<sup>5</sup>. In an early book, *The Study of Sociology*, (1873,) Spencer emphasises how the division of labour is a “cardinal truth in sociology neither been specially created, nor enacted by a king, but had grown up without forethought of any one” ( Spencer, 2002b, p 65).

In the first chapter of his other book, *The Principles of Sociology*, (1876,) he observes the division of labour in ants and bees. Spencer notes that the development of the division of labour is evidence of organic evolution in biology, because the simplest living creature is all stomach, all respiratory system, all limbs. Spencer applies this argument to society, but here he uses the term *super – organic evolution*, pointing out, “While rudimentary, it is all warriors, all hunters, all hut builders, all tool makers: every part fulfils for itself all needs (Spencer, 2003, p 452).

He noticed that the progress from primitive to military society can be reached only if there are arrangements by which the rest of population will supply that military caste with food, clothing and ammunition. From this he concludes that such division of labour is what makes society, in the same way an animal

---

<sup>5</sup> Spencer notices how social differentiation, that comes from division of labour, is actually very important for connecting individuals into society and is a foundation for social evolution, that is defined as enlargement of diversity (differentiation), specificity and function connection. Specialisation is defined as improvement of particular functions of social organs and integration as growth of heterogeneity, meaning there is a certain order between parts along with coordination between functions. Spencer did not give us explicit definition of the term “function,” but by this he implies different activities of different parts of an organic or social aggregate.

makes a living entity. Because of this fundamental characteristic social and individual organisms are completely the same, and interdependence of parts in both cases is of crucial importance.

Analysing Spencer's concept of social evolution we can notice that he found the law of evolution, not only in physical and organic reality, but in the works of human creation. Thus, the development of technology shows the same law of evolution. Certain progress from the rough, small and simple tool to perfect complex and large machines is also a development in integration that Spencer describes as:

Among what are classed as the mechanical powers, the advance from the lever to the wheel-and-axle is an advance from a simple agent to an agent made up of several simple ones. On comparing the wheel-and-axle, or any of the mechanical appliances used in early times with those used now, we see that in each of our machines several of the primitive machines are united. A modern apparatus for spinning or weaving, for making stockings or lace, contains not simply a lever, an inclined plane, a screw, a wheel-and-axle, joined together, but several of each - all made into a whole. (Spencer, 2002a, p 289-290)

Spencer claims that the initial homogeneous state of society is reflected in the equitable distribution of social power. The first differentiation came through the creation of a government, creating a superior rank of power. The first subject used for strengthening that power for the ruler was religion, then the social customs and rituals were developed. Still, Spencer says, social connectivity or integration is an even more significant differentiation on the basis on division of labour, because it creates the social classes and estates. It is inherent in industrial society and in a civilised community. Besides the division of labour in manufacturing, which was also analysed by economists, both Spencer and Durkheim emphasize the importance of the division of labour in a whole society that leads to the connection of different parts of a country in one common economic community. This connection expands to the whole human race. Spencer pointed out:

So that beginning with a primitive tribe, almost if not quite homogeneous in the functions of its members, the progress has been, and still is, towards an economic aggregation of the whole human race; growing ever more heterogeneous in respect of the separate functions assumed by separate nations, the separate functions assumed by the local sections of each nation, the separate functions assumed by the many kinds of producers in each place, and the separate functions

assumed by the workers united in growing or making each commodity. (Spencer, 2002 a, p 311)

From this we can conclude that Spencer, one hundred years before the formation of European Economic Community and today's European Union, anticipated some of the integration process caused by the division of labour that goes towards global integration and global interdependence. Spencer's theses are very important for contemporary researches on the division of labour, because the globalisation of the economy, politics and culture is certainly one of the fundamental factors that influence these changes. From Spencer's approach it is obvious that the division of labour is a key factor for the integration of industrial types of society, which is actually similar to Durkheim's conclusion on the division of labour as the key factor of a new, organic solidarity.

## **6. Max Weber: Types of economic, technical and social division of labour and the concept *occupation***

In the second chapter of his masterpiece *Economy and Society*, entitled "Sociological Categories of Economic Action," along with other fundamental concepts, Weber explores the division of labour. First off, he opts for the term *division of works and services* rather than *division of labour*, because he claims that the term *labour* means, above all, performance of those jobs that are *neither managerial nor executive* (Weber, 1978, p 114.).

Starting from such a clear distinction between the term *works and service* and the term *labour*, he developed the term of *occupation* and *occupational structure*. By doing so Weber established the concept of socio-professional structure as one of the fundamental concepts in sociology. He retains the term division of labour, but just in cases where it involves the division of works and services. Weber analyzes the division of labour starting from his theory about types of social action, where it belongs to the type of economic action as a type of rational action. He starts with the assumption that each type of social action that is oriented towards an economic goal involves a special manner of the distribution and organisation of human actions. This effectively means that different people perform different types of jobs that are combined for the purpose of achievement of final objectives, either through interaction or through interaction with some non – human form of production (machine). Weber distinguishes three types of divisions of labour: *economic, technical* and *social* (Weber, 1978, p 118-121.). By the economic division of labour Weber primarily means the division of labour between *managerial* and *working labour*. Managerial labour determines conditions and gives directions and guidelines, while working labour for Weber usually means just physical work. The technical aspect means differentiation and



combination of activities, and also specialised type of functions, that an individual performs in a series of combinations. Social aspects of the division of labour he considers through the difference between “budget units” and “units that create profit.” The fundamental budget unit is the household that has its own budget and can have its own production. A “profit” unit is a company that produces or provides services on the market. There is also a second aspect to the social division of labour, namely, an aspect of ownership, which implies the possession of land, production or service firm, goods or management functions.

The combination of these types and aspects of the division of labour results in specific units of economic action. For Weber, those are encapsulated in a new concept: occupation (*beruf*). Weber gives the following definition of occupation:

The term “occupation” (*Beruf*) will be applied to the mode of specialization, specification and combination of the functions an individual so far as it constitutes for him the basis of a continuous opportunity for income or earnings. (Weber, 1978, p 140)

Difference within the structure of occupations is closely associated with different opportunities for earnings. From this relationship, Weber develops his famous discussion of the problems of class and status stratification. Even in this small segment of his opus, it is obvious that he used the theory of social actions for considering problems of the division of labour as well.

Although neither he nor other classic theorists of social thoughts quoted each other, or applied theoretical concepts from each other to develop some new theoretical concepts, after this systematic presentation of the different approaches that the authors used on the division of labour, it can be argued that Weber somehow brought together the main elements of the previous authors and developed a concept usable for the operationalization of the whole theory, through the concept of *occupation*.

## **7. Instead of conclusion: A Tentative Theoretical Synthesis**

Revolutionary social changes in Europe in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, among other things, led up to a number of formed elements in the social structure, including a new division of labour. Labour as social interaction and social activity became the fundamental function of social life. The division of labour is a fundamental theme of social analysts beginning with Smith and developed especially in sociological classics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Marx, Durkheim, Spencer and (later) Weber. Smith considers the division of labour to be the foundation of the wealth of nations. This is also one of the most important topics

of Marx’s work as well. Marx especially notes a problem of a conflict between two fundamental society classes that emerged from the division of labour. Durkheim dedicated his masterpiece to *The Division of Labour in Society*, as the essential element of society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His focus was a quest for elements of a new social consensus. One of the key processes of social integration in Spencer’s biological theory of society is the division of labour defined as distribution and specialisation of functions. This is also an essential part of Weber’s *Economy and Society*, where, in a chapter on economic action, he provides a typology of different economical, technical and social divisions of labour and develops a concept of occupation and occupational structure. To summarize this reconsideration of classical approaches to the division of labour, there is a comparative scheme (table1) on the causes and impacts of the division of labour, according to theses of Smith, Marx, Durkheim, Spencer and Weber.

**Table 1.** *Causes and impacts of the division of labour in classical sociological concepts*

<b>AUTHORS</b>	<b>Smith</b>	<b>Marx</b>	<b>Durkheim</b>	<b>Spencer</b>	<b>Weber</b>
<b>CAUSES</b>	Human nature’s tendency to exchange	The development of technology	Social density and volume	Specialization of functions	Economic action
<b>IMPACTS</b>	Country’s development	Capital accumulation and alienation	Organic solidarity	The integration of society	Emergence of occupational structure

These classic social theorists and sociologists consider the existence of two different dimensions of the division of labour, although they did not define them as such. There is a horizontal dimension that, with its diversity, creates a new solidarity and leads to even greater integration and social development (Smith, Durkheim and Spencer). There is also a vertical or class/stratification dimension which divides society into different classes (Marx, Spencer and Weber). From everything mentioned here it could be concluded that, according to classical theories, the causes of the division of labour can be divided among following factors: anthropological, technological, demographic and economic. According to the authors considered, impacts can be divided among developing factors (development, integration and solidarity), regressive factors (alienation, enrichment of just one social class) and structural factors (change of social structure i.e. occupational structure, economic branches, and so on.) Therefore, this model that unites all the main theses and conclusions of these authors, where each of the authors, from his own perspective, contributes to the theory of the division of labour with its causes and impacts, can become a theoretical and conceptual framework. And this framework can be taken as a starting point for

modern researches on this subject, whether on a local or global level. This comprehensive theoretical approach surely overtakes the opposition between functionalist and Marxist paradigms of labour that dominated 20<sup>th</sup> century sociology. This approach includes a wider spectrum of factors of the division of labour and excludes *a priori* considerations of social values or ideological dimensions of labour to integrate developing and regressive elements through a common theoretical synthesis.

## **References**

- Durkheim, Emile 1984. *The Division of Labour in Society*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Giddens, Anthony 2008. *Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Haralambos, Michael, and Michael Holborn. 1997. *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*. London: Harper Collins Publishers Limited.
- Marshall, Gordon, ed. 1998. *A Dictionary of Sociology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1975a. *Collected Works*, Vol. 38. London: International Publishers.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1975b. *Early Writings*. New York: Penguin Classics.
- Marx, Karl 1990. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. New York: Penguin Classics.
- Rifkin, Jeremy 2004. *The End of Work* . New York: Penguin Group.
- Smelser, J. Neil 1988. *The Handbook of Sociology*. London: Sage.
- Smith, Adam 1852. *An Inquiry into the Nature And Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. London: T. Nelson and Sons, Paternoster Row.
- Spencer, Herbert 2002a [1946]. *First Principles*. Honolulu: University of the Pacific.
- Spencer, Herbert 2002b [1929] *The Study of Sociology*. Honolulu: University of the Pacific.,

Spencer, Herbert 2003 [1898]. *The Principles of Sociology: In Three Volumes*.  
New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.

Weber, Max 1978 [1968]. *Economy and Society I*. Berkeley: University of  
California Press.