

Sociological Theory

Classical Statements

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Moral facts exist as phenomena like other phenomena. They consist of rules of action that have certain distinctive characteristics. It must then be possible to observe them, describe them, classify them; and to seek out laws which explain them. This is what we intend to do for some moral facts. One might object to this in terms of free choice, but such an objection would militate against all determinant laws and be an insurmountable obstacle, not only for psychological and social sciences; but for all the sciences. Because human choices are always tied to external movement, an emphasis on freedom would make determinism unintelligible outside as well as inside of us. However, no one will contend the reality of the physical and natural sciences. We claim the same right for social science.

Thus understood, our science is not in opposition with any sort of philosophy, because it is premised on entirely different grounds. It is possible that morals may have some transcendental end beyond the reach of experience—this is a question for metaphysicians to occupy themselves with. But it is also true that morals develop historically, in terms of historical causes, and that they serve some functions in our temporal life. Whatever morals are (or are at any given point in time) the conditions in which people live do not permit them to be otherwise and the proof of this is that they change when conditions change. Today it is no longer possible to maintain that moral evolution consists of the development of a single idea, which, confused and uncertain in primitive man, makes itself clear and precise little by little with the spontaneous progress of knowledge. If the ancient Romans did not have the wide conception of humanity that we have today, it was not the result of an error due to the narrowness of their intellect, but because ideas identical to our own would have been incompatible with the nature of Roman civilization. Our cosmopolitanism would not have been able to appear there, any more than a plant can germinate in soil incapable of nourishing it. Moved to Rome from somewhere else, modern cosmopolitan ideas would have been unable to survive. Since our modern attitudes have not made their appearance due to philosophical discoveries, they did not arise because our minds have opened to truths that the ancients ignored. It is changes in the structure of society which have produced changes in our mores. Morals are then formed, transformed and maintained due to experiential reasons; these are the only reasons which a science of morality attempts to determine.

—Emile Durkheim, Preface to
The Division of Labor in Society

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(David)
Emile
Durkheim

(1858–1917)

BACKGROUND

Life

On April 15, 1848, David Emile Durkheim (the "David" would be dropped later) was born in the town of Epinal in France's eastern border province of Lorraine. He came from an Ashkenazic (that is, northern European tradition) Jewish family. His ancestral roots in Lorraine and the neighboring province, Alsace, reached back into the medieval period. Although David Emile was the fourth child and second son of Moise and Melanie Durkheim, he was expected to follow in the calling of his father. Moise was Chief Rabbi of the Vosges and Haute-Marne regions and was the latest in a line of eight successive generations of rabbis.

David Emile's parents were not unthinking traditionalists. They did not seek isolation from the larger Christian and increasingly secular society. Like most Jews of the region, they felt a debt to France for introducing the Napoleonic reforms that had

granted Jews full civil rights. Some Jews (like Captain Albert Dreyfus, who will be discussed below) even pursued careers in France's military officer corps. David Emile Durkheim thus was raised as both religiously Jewish and patriotically French. He attended both religious and secular schools, excelling in both.

Durkheim's image of the Jewish community of Epinal always stayed with him as a model of social cohesion and moral virtue. But Durkheim ceased traditional religious observance while still in high school. Under a teacher's influence, he had a brief flirtation with a mystical form of Catholicism. It had the effect of turning him permanently away from a career in the rabbinate. Throughout his adult life, Durkheim considered himself an agnostic. But as we shall see, it was a peculiar kind of agnosticism. Durkheim replaced a focus on, and devotion to, the God of Abraham with a dedication to society as the object of study and source of all moral law.

Durkheim's pleasant upbringing was shattered by war. In 1870, an ill-prepared France almost gleefully entered into a conflict with Prussia and its allied German states. The war was a disaster for France (but, bad though it was, it turned out to be a mere prelude to the catastrophic Great War of 1914–1918, which took the lives of 1,350,000 Frenchman and wounded a further 4,266,000). On a personal level, the Franco-Prussian War radically changed Durkheim's life. The defeat of France was unexpected by nearly all of its citizens. Like all others in Lorraine, Durkheim had to deal with a humiliating occupation by German troops. But additionally, he and the other Jews of the region had to cope with anti-Semitic outbreaks that accused them of being a "foreign element" that, somehow, was responsible for France's defeat. Durkheim would come to see this scapegoating as indicative of the moral failing of French society. His lifetime goal subsequently became a search for the means to bring about a societal moral unity. In pursuit of this objective he sought the best education available: that offered by *l'École Normale Supérieure* in Paris.

Like *l'École Polytechnique*, which Comte had attended, *l'École Normale* was a free government-supported institution in Paris with a student body selected by a national competitive exam. But whereas the former institution focused on mathematics and the physical sciences, the latter emphasized historical and philosophical studies. Both schools had among their faculty the best scholars in France. Like most of his fellow students, Durkheim did not gain admission on his first try. To improve his chances, he spent a year in Paris with tutors. During this period he lived in an inexpensive rooming house frequented by transients. It was an unhappy time. Cut off from his home community, he perceived the Parisian population around him as driven by egoistic desires and devoid of a sense of obligation to something greater than their own petty interests.

L'École Normale is still a flourishing academic institution. On its website is a picture of the school's large, well-tended courtyard. The courtyard is totally encased by buildings, with no access to the school's adjacent streets. Today, as in Durkheim's day, to attend *l'École Normale* is to be in Paris but also to be physically separate from it. In the 1880s, students were rarely allowed to leave its confines. They lived immersed in their studies in the company of teachers and peers. Under the constant supervision of government-appointed administrators, they were groomed to be part of the nation's intellectual elite.

Durkheim's class was an exceptionally talented one. It included Henri Bergson (whose philosophical work would influence George Herbert Mead) and Jean Jaurès (the future leader of the Socialist party in France). Even in this group, Durkheim was the most intellectually oriented. In addition to doing a considerable amount of required reading in history and philosophy, Durkheim studied the sociological writings of Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer on his own. After graduating, he went on to seek a doctorate at the University of Paris. He wrote his (then required) Latin thesis on the social theories of Montesquieu. His doctoral dissertation, which was published and translated into numerous languages, soon followed. Under its English title, *The Division of Labor in Society*, it is still in print.

As a student, Durkheim traveled to Germany. The trip was paid for by a government program developed to advance French science. He took this opportunity very seriously, as evidenced by the report he wrote on his return.¹ What Durkheim found of most value came from his observations at Wilhelm Wundt's psychology lab. He was impressed by Wundt's willingness and ability to treat moral phenomena in a way that made them subject to positivistic scientific measurement.

Durkheim also returned with great admiration for German scientists' work ethic. He admired the German commitment to specialized, persistent, precise, dedicated study of a delineated set of problems. He contrasted it to the attitude of French academicians, which, he concluded, was but a continuation of an archaic aristocratic emphasis on developing an elegant prose style, coupled with a disdain for cooperative work and an overall dilettantish approach to knowledge. Durkheim later saw the embodiment of all that was wrong with French social scholarship in the psychological reductionist writings of Gabriel Tarde. Tarde later became Durkheim's main rival in French sociology. As Durkheim established his own reputation, their disdain for each other's ideas became vitriolic and public.

Durkheim learned to emulate the focused scholars and scientists he had perceived in Germany. He is reported to have allowed himself time for personal conversation with his family and guests only at the dinner table. And a student (who was also a nephew of Durkheim's) once remarked that on a sunny day he was sitting at an outdoor café when he saw Durkheim hurrying down the street to a meeting. Although sipping coffee and engaging in conversation was a beloved midday French pastime, doing so was unacceptable to his uncle Emile. His nephew realized the offense but, luckily, before he was detected. Reacting quickly, he placed the menu in front of his face, holding it there until his uncle had passed out of sight. Thus a predictable lecture on the role and moral obligations of a social scientist was avoided.

On completion of his studies, Durkheim was selected by the French education ministry for an academic future. He was first assigned a position as a high school teacher. He taught an introductory philosophy class—a general high school requirement peculiar to France's highly centralized educational system. In 1887, Durkheim received a faculty appointment at the University of Bordeaux. There he had the responsibility of developing education courses for future secondary school teachers. Durkheim introduced the first sociology course at the university. From 1896 until the time he left Bordeaux, he held the Chair of Social Sciences. In 1902 he was invited to join the prestigious faculty of the Sorbonne in Paris and held the Chair of Education.

It was only in 1913 that his appointment was changed to the Chair of Education and Sociology, officially recognizing the field with which he most identified.

Durkheim's relationship with the liberal French political establishment was a symbiotic one. In the struggle to control the future of France, ideological control of school curricula by the national government was always seen as essential. Political change in France tended to be immediately followed by shifts in high school and university curricula. The powerful ministry in charge of education approved of Durkheim's focus on developing a secular morality. The ministry supported Durkheim's career and put him in a position of unparalleled influence over the moral and political attitudes of a generation of French students. Robert Alun Jones has written that Durkheim's courses were unique in being

obligatory for all students seeking degrees in philosophy; history, literature and language; in addition he was responsible for the education of French school teachers, in whom he instilled all the fervor of his secular, rational philosophy.²

Durkheim was a tireless worker—a "workaholic" before the term was invented. In the course of his career he taught a variety of courses, founded a research institute, founded and edited what probably was the first journal of sociology, trained a generation of graduate students, and produced a large body of literature. Durkheim's books, articles, and reviews add up to over five hundred pieces of published writings (not counting materials published posthumously).

Durkheim married Louise Dreyfus early in his career. The couple had two children, Marie and André. To a considerable extent, it was because of Louise Durkheim that Emile Durkheim could pursue his sociological concerns. Louise "came to the marriage with a substantial dowry, equivalent to what her husband would earn in twenty years of a university position."³ These funds helped ensure the family's comfortable lifestyle and financial security. Louise also assisted in editing and other work, although she received no public recognition for these labors.

World War I began in August 1914. André and most of Durkheim's graduate students immediately enlisted. A patriotic Durkheim devoted himself to the war effort and wrote pro-French propaganda. These writings were aimed specifically at convincing the United States to enter the war as a needed French ally. France had entered the war no better prepared for conflict than it had been in 1870. Following the meticulous detail of the Schlieffen Plan, a better-armed and trained German military rapidly moved through Belgium into France, overwhelming all early resistance. Among the missing and presumed dead was André Durkheim. Eventually the family found out that he had died of combat wounds. His grief-stricken father found it increasingly difficult to concentrate on his work. Depressed, aware both of his personal loss as well as the loss of a generation of young men, Emile Durkheim died on November 15, 1917.

In his fifty-nine years, Durkheim did more than anyone else to institutionalize sociology. In pursuing his larger goal of reforming modern society along lines that he thought were both morally progressive and necessary, he had had no success. Many of the social problems and conditions that he viewed as "pathological" are still with us today; the solution of "corporatism" he offered to them seems at best quaint and has no adherents.

Social Environment

In English "*Île du Diable*" literally means "island of the devil." In Durkheim's day, this notorious island, which is off the coast of French Guinea, was reserved for use as a penal colony. Its captives found the island aptly named. Many prisoners died within a few years of arriving. Napoleon III had ordered the creation of the prison in 1852. He had a plethora of political enemies he wished removed from France, which made the expense of maintaining the distant prison worthwhile. As Louis Napoleon, he had come to power as the first President of the Second Republic after the restored Bourbon monarch had been overthrown in the revolution of 1848. Failing to get a constitutional amendment to expand his authority, Louis Napoleon staged a coup in 1852. Using violence, intimidation, and the prestige of his famous name, he won two plebiscites. On the basis of these he took on both dictatorial powers and the title of Napoleon III. The regime's end came after he was captured in humiliating circumstances by enemy troops at the end of the Franco-Prussian War.

The hardships of war and defeat exacerbated the difficulties already felt by members of France's growing urban industrial working class. Their discontent led to increasing support for socialist movements that called for the overthrow of the capitalist system. The power vacuum at the end of the Franco-Prussian War created an opportunity to put the theory of a workers' egalitarian state into practice. Armed male and female workers united with soldiers disgusted by the war to set up barricades around Paris and called their new socialist republic the Paris Commune. They declared the Commune to be independent of the postwar provisional government headquartered at the ancient palace of Versailles. Lacking the troops necessary to suppress the revolutionaries, the bourgeois-controlled Versailles government asked the occupying German forces for assistance. The rifles of the Communards were of little use against Prussian cannon. Photographs from the era show block after block of working-class apartments reduced to rubble. Bodies are lined up in row after row of open coffins. At a conservative estimate, twenty thousand men, women, and children died.

With Napoleon III gone and the Paris Commune crushed, a new constitution was written creating the French Third Republic. Considering the divisions, violence, and instability that seemed never to abate in France, it is not surprising that even the relatively more liberal governments that emerged did not close down the prison on Devil's Island. The prison was still in use in 1894 (and a half-century thereafter), when a previously unknown artillery officer, Captain Albert Dreyfus, was condemned to go there. Dreyfus had been convicted of treason. The trial and the conflicts that arose from it came to be called the "Dreyfus Affair." In the course of the Dreyfus Affair, Durkheim would become, for a brief period of time, a publicly well-known political activist.

The Third Republic was divided over issues of politics, education, religion, ethnicity, and the role of the military in the larger society. Traditionalists in the church, the military hierarchy, anti-Semitic elements in the society, and monarchists tended to have interests in common. Secularists, republicans, and social and educational reformers tended to form an opposed camp on most social issues. When Albert Dreyfus, a Jewish artillery officer, was accused of treason, evidence began to circulate that he was framed to cover up the betrayal of military secrets to a foreign power by a

member of the upper echelon of the military hierarchy. All the social and political factions in France lined up either on the side of the military establishment or on the side of Dreyfus. The latter were called the "Dreyfusards." Durkheim was prominent among them.

Durkheim took a leadership role in the Dreyfusards' League for the Defense of Human Rights. He wrote articles and gave passionate speeches in support of its positions. For this, he was harassed and even shouted down by reactionary students in his own classroom. The historian of the Dreyfus family, Michael Burns, calls Durkheim's unwavering public stance "heroic."⁴

Behind the scenes Durkheim continued his efforts. He convinced his old friend and former schoolmate, Jean Jaurès, to place the Socialist party (of which Jaurès was now the leader) publicly on the Dreyfusard side. After heated debate on the streets, in the press, and in a variety of legal actions, the Supreme Court cleared Dreyfus of all charges in 1906. Evidence, now public, revealed a conspiracy that compromised leaders of many conservative institutions in the nation.

Durkheim interpreted the divisions in France that had led up to the Dreyfus conflict as something other than politics as usual. For him, the deep social divides, along with currents of anti-Semitism and violent labor conflicts, were indicative of a society in a moral crisis. The inability of France to achieve political stability more than a century after the great revolution was another indication of this crisis. Moreover, it was a crisis in which reactionary forces wanted to turn back the clock to prerevolutionary days, while those at the other political extreme were preaching further violent revolutionary class struggle. Durkheim developed his sociology as the means of resolving moral crisis without violent conflict. Through scientific research, sociology would provide a unity that called for neither retrogression nor revolution.

Intellectual Roots

There is no way to write about the intellectual sources that most influenced Durkheim without appearing to take sides on a number of ongoing scholarly disagreements. Some of these are so old that Durkheim himself commented on them. Others are more recent. Five such areas of contention have generated the most ink. They are as follows: (1) Do Durkheim's works present a continuation of the sociology of Auguste Comte or a conscious sharp break from all Comtean ideas? (2) Were the sources and orientations that Durkheim directly built on French or German? (3) Are there, or are there not, fundamental elements in Durkheim's theory that were strongly influenced by Judaism? (4) Does Durkheim's work predominantly extend and support the views of earlier, politically more liberal, conservative, or radical writers? (5) Do the major influences on Durkheim's work change so markedly that it makes sense to distinguish between the opposed views of a younger, "positivistic" Durkheim and an older, "idealist" Durkheim?

It might seem obvious to begin a discussion of Durkheim's ideas with the theorist who preceded Durkheim in France and named the discipline with which Durkheim identified. For differing reasons, some positivistic sociologists and moral philosophers have tended to downplay the influence of Comte on Durkheim. For positivistic

sociologists, the denial reflects embarrassment with Comte's "religion of humanity." For moral philosophers who see Durkheim as having written within a Kantian tradition of individual moral autonomy, it is Comte's emphasis on determinism that is most problematic in closely linking the two scholars.

Certainly Durkheim wanted nothing to do with Comte's religion of humanity. But it would be a distortion to see Durkheim, writing at the end of the nineteenth century, as somehow cut off from Comte, writing a half century earlier. There is no great divide between, on the one hand, certain Comtean themes and, on the other, many ideas that permeate Durkheim's works. Indeed, for Durkheim, Comte always remained the founder of sociology. The need for sociomoral constraint of the individual, so central to Comte's notions of morality and social harmony, underlies the whole of Durkheim's sociological theorizing.

Like Comte, Durkheim takes a social evolutionary approach in which he interprets the social problems of his era as a manifestation of a transitional period. Such problems are destined to disappear. But this disappearance is not automatic. For both scholars, a science of society is viewed as necessary to analyze the emergent properties of the social and to discover the rules by which a new social solidarity can be created. Both sociologists also distrust revolutionary politics and direct democracy. They view them as incompatible with social reform. And their views of society are essentially mentalistic (as opposed to materialistic). New collective symbols appropriate to modern society are seen as needed to re-create a harmonious social order. Finally, underlying both of their works is a merger of Enlightenment faith in science and rationality and anti-Enlightenment views. For both, science and rationality alone, without a sense of moral obligation and duty to the social whole, was incapable of producing social stability.

The question over the influence of Comtean ideas on Durkheim can be seen as part of a larger concern: Did Durkheim rely mostly on earlier French or German intellectual sources? Discussion on this concern occupies much of the most recent Durkheim literature. Moreover, it revives a debate that occurred in Durkheim's lifetime. In that debate, Durkheim made his own understanding of his intellectual ancestry crystal clear. Durkheim asserted that the greatest influences on his formative thought were French thinkers. We agree with Durkheim's assessment. Along with the intellectual foundation laid down by his teachers at *l'École Normale* (such as the historians Gabriel Fustel de Coulanges and the philosopher Emile Boutroux), Durkheim built on Comte's conception of the field, Montesquieu's notion of social laws, Saint-Simon's image of an emergent industrial society, and Charles Renouvier's "rationalist" approach to the social world.

Fustel de Coulanges' *The Ancient City*⁵ is essential for understanding Durkheim's emphasis that collective ritual, and not a rationally conceived "social contract," forms the basis for law, government, and social order. Boutroux's rejection of Cartesian rationalism in favor of scientific observation underlies Durkheim's methodological and epistemological arguments. Boutroux's insistence that the laws of each science are irreducible to one another "provided an infrastructure for a realist interpretation of society"⁶ central to Durkheim's work. Durkheim looked back to Montesquieu as the "first to establish the fundamental principles of social science."⁷ And above all

others, it was Renouvier to whom Durkheim referred as "my master." As Donald Nielson points out, many major ideas that Durkheim borrowed from others (e.g., Kant's concept of "representations") appear in his work only as reinterpreted and reformed by Renouvier.⁸

This is not to say that specific German and other foreign scholars were not of great import to Durkheim. Although elements of his understanding of Kant were mediated by the interpretations of Renouvier, Durkheim's ideas of the categories of knowledge were developed in more direct dialogue with Kant's formulations. Similarly, although conceptually Durkheim was little influenced by Wundt's psychological ideas, his overall view of social science research as a collaborative specialized activity owed much to his early observations of Wundt's lab.

We find attempts to present the main elements of Durkheim's sociology as mostly reflecting the ideas of scholars like the historian Albert Schaffle or the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer unconvincing.⁹ Nor does Durkheim appear to have been influenced by the two scholars most responsible for defining sociology in Germany. Durkheim explicitly rejected Georg Simmel's definition of sociology. Inexplicably, Durkheim seemed uninterested in exploring Max Weber's attempts to define the field.

Durkheim descended from the Ashkenazic Jewish community of Alsace-Lorraine and had been raised in a rabbi's home. It thus might seem obvious to look for sources of Durkheim's analyses in the religion of his youth. Of particular interest here is the fact that Durkheim's paternal religion was one that stressed moral rules embodied in legal codes. Durkheim's sociology began with an analysis of such rules and the analysis of the development of legal codes in *The Division of Labor in Society*. Certainly some scholars—especially those focusing on Durkheim's "sociology of religion"—have found Durkheim's sociology to owe a great deal to traditional Jewish thought. Others insist that it makes more sense to see Durkheim as a product of the educational system in France. In this latter view, if there are religious underpinnings to Durkheim's thought, they are not Judaic but French Roman Catholic. After all, the university system in France grew out of institutions established by that church. It is also possible to trace a "realist" image of society back through Renouvier, Boutroux, and Comte to Joseph de Maistre and ultimately to medieval French theologians.

While the influence of French Catholic sources on Durkheim's view of the social as an "organic" entity cannot be denied (see the section "society" below), certain significant elements of his thought do show a Judaic influence. In Durkheim's own day, the anti-Semite Tarde attempted to disparage Durkheim's work by connecting it to Durkheim's ethnic roots and referring to Durkheim's theory as "Talmudic sociology." But Durkheim himself also recognized the Judaic influence on his sociological formulations. Durkheim's nephew, Henri Durkheim, quotes his uncle as responding to a question about an aspect of his work with the assertion: "One must not forget that I am the son of a rabbi."¹⁰

The most obvious Judaic influence is on Durkheim's centrally important sociological definition of religion. He presents religion as that which involves a separation of "sacred" actions, rituals, and beliefs from everyday "profane" objects and events. Each Saturday evening while growing up, Durkheim would have heard at the *Havdalah* (Sabbath ending) service an ancient Hebrew prayer which translates to

"Blessed are you, Lord, our God, who separates the sacred from the profane." The prayer marked the transition from the sacred day of the week (in which utilitarian this-worldly action was forbidden) to the other days (in which ordinary profane actions of the work week may be undertaken). The written form of the prayer itself includes the sacred name of God, which was never profaned by being spoken. Instead the word *Adonoi* (Lord) was spoken in its place.

It should also be noted that the most important attributes that Durkheim ascribes to society are those a traditional Jew would ascribe to the deity. Society is presented as "real," but without corporeal form. It is a higher level of existence, antedates and gives rise to our individual existences, and completes us such that to be cut off from society leads to self-destruction. Moreover, society is presented as beneficent, the self-revealing source of all knowledge, and the ultimate origin and focus of all moral activity.

Considering the questions at which Durkheim looked, one would expect that his writings would reflect the political debates of the day. Some later commentators have linked Durkheim to conservative sources and commitments. Others see him as a liberal. And still others tie him to intellectually radical roots and ideals. (A note of caution here: Words like "liberal" and "conservative" can be misleading if one fails to take into account historical changes in meaning between Durkheim's time and our own.) One of the reasons this can easily happen is that the ideational elements from which Durkheim constructed his sociology reflected both of the main opposing strains of sociopolitical thought then current in France.

Comte's assumptions, ideas, and intellectual goals drew respectively from Condorcet's pro-Enlightenment and prorevolutionary writings and de Maistre's anti-Enlightenment works. Durkheim, likewise, is heir to seemingly incompatible schools of thought. Writing about a half century after Comte, Durkheim again tries to synthesize elements from Enlightenment and prorevolutionary intellectuals with those derived from the anti-Enlightenment school and the enemies of the revolution of 1789.

Durkheim's remarks on individualism, his defense of secular morality and education, his assertions that social evolutionary progress means that monarchical political institutions must give way to republican government, his faith in progress and social reform, and his belief in the possibility of an instrumental and deterministic science of society reflect the thoughts of writers ideologically committed to Enlightenment goals. Durkheim's insistence that individuals need external collective direction and constraint, his analysis of the necessary role of collective rituals and images, his realist view of society, his descriptions of the related dangers of "anomie" and destructive egoism, his underlying "dualistic" model of human nature, and his distrust of direct democracy and revolutionary politics clearly derive from an anti-Enlightenment discomfort with many aspects of modernity. Durkheim weaves the threads of these ideological traditions much closer together in the fabric of his sociology than Comte did. Thus, the logical contradictions pronounced in Comte's theory are not as apparent in Durkheim's.

The final complication in focusing on Durkheim's intellectual roots is the supposed sharp break in Durkheim's thought between his earlier works and his last writings. The former are said to reflect French positivistic roots. The latter are seen as tied

more closely to those of German idealist thinkers. Our position is that Durkheim's work forms an amazingly unified project and that no such sharp break actually exists. Certainly someone with a long academic career would show inconsistencies, modifications, terminological developments, and shifts in the specific topics studied. Clearly, all of these are found in Durkheim. But such expected elements do not support the "two-Durkheim hypothesis" that separates the older and younger Durkheim into two different scholars guided by two different sets of goals, orientations, and intellectual influences.

The distinction that does exist arises primarily out of the work of Talcott Parsons and his followers. Parsons attempted to integrate Durkheim's ideas into his own work, which reflected assumptions found in German idealism (see the section "Contemporary Relevance"). Society, though, for Durkheim, always remained an "external" reality whose organization, development, and impact on its members could be studied via the methods of positive science. He never rejected his early view that lawful relations of order and change existed and could be used in an instrumental manner. That late in his career he focused more on how meanings and mental categories were collectively constructed does not indicate that he ever abandoned his positivistic outlook. Indeed, a close reading of the opening chapters of his last major work, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, reveals an assertion that fundamental and discoverable aspects of society exist and can be apprehended via the scientific comparison of simpler to more complex societal types.

If recent publications are any indication, the debate over Durkheim's source materials shows no sign of abating. Perhaps, at this point, the best we can do is to sum up as follows: In his long career, Durkheim took ideas selectively from many scholars. He created out of them a unique theory that forms a whole that is considerably greater than the sum of its borrowed parts. It is to that theory that we now turn.

IDEAS

Society

Durkheim's sociology rests on the notion of a reality beyond the psychological. For him, the reality of society is something other than, and morally superior to, a mere collection of people and their individual psychological makeups. Durkheim gives two accounts of the relationship between this superior reality and an inferior psychological reality. We can refer to these as the "logical account" and the "historical-developmental account."

According to the logical account, reality is structured in terms of a number of levels. Each of these levels is governed by its own laws. The laws of one level are useless in explaining the facts of any other level. The levels range from the most simple to the most complex. Each more complex level emerges from, but is distinct from, the level beneath it. These levels of reality are the physical, chemical, biological, psychological, and social.

From the combination of physical elements emerges a new chemical reality with new and distinct properties from those of the physical. For example, the chemical sodium chloride (common table salt) has properties distinct from those of the elements it has emerged from—the volatile metal sodium and the corrosive gas chlorine. From the interrelationship of chemicals emerges the reality of life. A biological organism is composed of salt and other chemicals, but has emergent properties of a living thing such as birth, death, and procreation. From the combination of biological components emerges the psychological reality of individual consciousness. And from the interaction of beings with psychological consciousness emerges a superior reality of a "collective consciousness"—the reality of society. This reality generates its own facts. These are just as distinct from psychological facts as psychological facts are from biological ones.

Logically, Durkheim views the social as emerging from the interrelationship of beings with individual consciousness; in his developmental-historical account he reverses the order. Durkheim presents the social as preceding the psychological. In this account, humans are descendants of social primates. They lived a social existence prior to the development of individual human consciousness. Individual psychological identity only develops as society evolves into more advanced forms and nurtures its development. The very ability to think of oneself as an individual depends on mental categories developed in society.

Whichever account we look at, there is one unmistakable point we find at the core of Durkheim's theory: society is a real phenomenon with unique properties. To express this point, Durkheim often used a Latin term. He referred to society as a phenomenon *sui generis*. To apprehend that reality requires that sociology be independent of psychology (and any other field, for that matter). Sociology must also be an integrative discipline that reflects the integrated nature of the reality that it is focused on. For Durkheim, the familial, political, economic, religious, educational, and all other institutional aspects of society are analytically separable. That is, it is possible to engage in specialized studies that look only at features of one of these areas at a time. But to stop there, with an array of separate findings about family life, occupational specialization, and so on would give an incomplete and distorted image of social reality.

Durkheim presents the social as an integrated whole within which its features are connected, mutually determined, and mutually influenced. This whole is not static. Rather, it is in a constant process of change. Sometimes this change is slow, and the parts of the whole remain relatively harmoniously integrated. At other times, change is a disruptive transition from one form of society to another. Durkheim uses a number of metaphors when discussing social change and transition. We can refer to the metaphor of evolutionary growth, the organic-mechanical metaphor, and the medical diagnostic metaphor.

Durkheim uses the old social evolutionary metaphor of society undergoing natural and necessary growth as society evolves from a less complex to a more complexly integrated structure. This metaphor underlies the presentation of a series of sequential stages. These include "simple polysegmental society," "polysegmental simple compound society," and "polysegmental doubly compound society." The growth metaphor implies naturalness of change and a developmental specialization that allows adaptive

advance. We see this metaphorical approach used by Durkheim in arguments against reactionaries opposed to modern science and individualism. Growth is one-way development that cannot be reversed. Once a level of structural complexity has arisen and given rise to new activities, perceptions, and shared consciousness, it cannot be undone.

The mechanical-organic metaphor refers to the ways in which individuals are attached to one another within a society. "Mechanical solidarity" implies an attachment that permits severability. "Organic solidarity" implies one that is not severable. In a mechanism, each unit is detachable and able to exist apart from the others. In a living organic being, each organ has a high degree of specialized activity, as well as mutual dependence on every other organ and on the whole for its continued existence. Thus a heart and a stomach rely on each other (and on the other organs) such that neither could exist by itself or replicate itself.

In the simplest hunting and gathering societies, mechanical unity came from likeness. People had little or no sense of individuality and shared the same set of moral rules and perceptions. Each person perceived and reflected on reality in pretty much the same way. Durkheim tells us that eventual settlement and an agricultural lifestyle generated artisans and leadership roles. Thus it became a society of individuals engaged in specialized activities. Such specialization, in turn, gave rise to differing perspectives, knowledge, and (to a lesser extent) moral views. People were no longer virtually alike in their consciousness; they had become different. Although there was still a need for certain core values and perceptions to be shared by all members of the society, unity passed from being totally a product of likeness to one of mutual dependence.

Another way of expressing this is to say that with the rise of "organic solidarity," all the same cognitive-perceptual-moral component units of a society no longer resided in every individual. They varied to an extent from one person to another. Durkheim refers to these units as "collective representations." The total collective representations in a society can be said to form a "collective consciousness." In a mechanical society, each individual mind replicates the collective consciousness of society. In a more complex organic society, this is not the case. Each person internalizes only a portion of the whole based on the person's specialized position in society.

Along with the growth and mechanical-organic metaphors, Durkheim's discussion of societal change and transition is animated by a medical diagnostic metaphor. Like a biological organism, a society can be viewed as a set of mutually dependent parts. Similarly, like a biological organism, a society can be in a "healthy" or "pathological" state. Following the logic of this metaphor, the sociologist takes on a role analogous to that of a physiologist in studying the related organs of a society and a physician in diagnosing and recommending cures for its ailments. Durkheim equated the "usual" with the "normal" and the "normal" with the "healthy" for a society at any particular stage of social development. In parallel fashion, he equated the "unusual" with the "unhealthy" and the "unhealthy" with the "pathological." The "pathologies" that he found most prevalent in modern societies arose from a condition that he termed "anomie." Durkheim's use of "anomie" in social diagnosis thus refers to a condition of society itself and not to a psychological condition of its members.

Durkheim tells us that society has a number of attributes. Among these are "externality," "generality," and "constraint." All individuals experience society as a gen-

eral force that is both external to each of them and that inhibits, constrains, and directs behavior. Even when an individual violates moral rules that derive from the *sui generis* reality of society, this is done only with an effort against societal constraint. Anomie is a pathological condition in which the moral rules are in a weakened or confused state. Such a state occurs in periods of social transitional change when old rules have declined and new ones have yet to fully emerge. Durkheim viewed the time in Europe after the fall of Rome as one such pathological period. He viewed his own era as another.

Individuals' reactions to living in anomic society may vary, but an anomic society will have an "abnormal" increase in murder, other crimes, suicide, and unhappiness. (See the section "Individual in Society.") Sociologists, as diagnosticians, must detect this pathology, discover the root causes, and develop a plan on how to bring society back to health. A biological organism may have a pathological problem such as an inflamed appendix. It is important that a physician be able to distinguish between a dispensable organ such as an appendix and a necessary organ such as a liver. One can be removed to restore health; the other cannot. Late in his career Durkheim asked what features are basic, essential, elementary, or foundational for all social life.

Shared perceptions, cognitions, and moral rules are essential features of social reality. Moral rules, in other words, form an objective and scientifically discoverable feature of society. Durkheim's position here can be made clear if we distinguish it from both that of ancient philosophy and that of twentieth-century anthropological cultural relativity. Unlike Socrates and his followers, Durkheim rejected the idea that there was a single conception of "the good" (morality) that could be discovered. He argued that moral rules, as an integrated feature of the social, had to change with social evolutionary development. The proper morality for a society at the stage of development of fifth century BCE Athens had to differ from that of industrialized late-nineteenth-century France. But such difference did not mean total equality of moralities, as a cultural relativist like Ruth Benedict would assert.¹¹

Until the rise of modern social science, Durkheim believed that all knowledge of the social appeared in a "mythologized" and therefore distorted manner. Science allows advancement beyond mythologized earlier understandings. We thus get a clearer and more accurate view of the appropriate rules of moral conduct. Modern scientific knowledge of the social and its moral rules is thus superior to that which has come before. In Durkheim's theory, science is not just a human enterprise that emerges at a certain level of social development. It is additionally the clearest and most advanced revelation of the *sui generis* reality of society about itself and the conduct appropriate for its members. Thus, Durkheim believed that a society was developing that would be socially (and morally) superior to anything that had preceded it.

The Individual in Society

Durkheim distinguishes between shared "collective representations" and "individual representations." Individual representations reflect only isolated, unique individual experiences. Of the two, collective representations are presented as of far greater import. They originate from outside of each particular person and causally impact on each

person's actions. Society thus makes us who we are. This image of society leads to a reversal in Durkheim's writings of the causal logic found in traditional history and philosophy. Individuals, through rational calculation, do not create new types of social institutions. Instead, changes in social reality create new types of individuals.

Durkheim thus rejects the "great man" theory of history, which ascribes social innovations to the "genius" of a particular individual such as Solon or Napoleon. Similarly, he rejects English "contract" theories of society (like those of John Locke or Thomas Hobbes) that assume that sociopolitical order was a product of rational agreement among individuals. For Durkheim, the very notion of a contract is a collective representation that requires a high level of social evolutionary development. A contractual agreement also requires a social evolutionary development of individualism. We can contract with other persons only to the extent to which we come to see both ourselves and the other as individuals within a socially rule-governed exchange relationship.

In Durkheim's theory, the development of a sense of individual self-identity is a social evolutionary emergent. In mechanical societies there is little socially to distinguish one person from another. Accordingly, in such societies, an individual tends to have a quite limited sense of uniqueness as a person. As societies advance and become more complex, specialization increases. With specialized division of labor, people increasingly distinguish themselves from one another and develop a growing sense of individual identity. Durkheim claims that he can detect this increasing individualism empirically by studying the changing nature of suicide.

In simpler societies, with little individualism, altruistic suicide is most common. This form of suicide arises from identification with the group and a willingness to sacrifice oneself for it. In advanced societies, in which people have a more developed sense of individualism, anomic and egoistic suicides are more common. Anomic suicide tends to result from a state in which the individual's social bonds are weakened in a period of social transition. Egoistic suicide tends to result from an overintellectualized image of one's self-importance.

Durkheim presents the modern individual as having a fully developed "dualistic" or divided nature. The modern individual has a consciousness of being a member of society that includes a feeling of obligation toward the greater social whole. This exists alongside a distinct individual consciousness of one's own existence and oriented toward fulfilling one's own desires. This dual and antagonistic set of consciousnesses began to emerge in humans early in prehistory. The socially oriented consciousness emerged out of a sense of dependence on society and an internalization of moral rules. The nonsocialized aspect reflects one's awareness of oneself as an organism with individual desires that may clash with the demands and obligations of the social. Early on, humans collectively realized that they had this dual consciousness. This awareness accounts for religious beliefs separating "spirit" and "flesh" in religions that developed in separate societies throughout the world. In premodern societies the socially oriented consciousness predominated. But with modern society this duality becomes increasingly manifest.

Durkheim presents a model of the individual that allows persons to engage in both moral and nonmoral acts. He defines a moral act in terms of being in conformity with social rules and aimed at the well-being of the collective. By "collective"

Durkheim meant the *sui generis* social whole, and not any mere aggregation of others. He reasoned that if a moral act is not merely of benefit to the actor in question, then it cannot simply be oriented to the well-being of another single actor (such as a friend). Further, if an act oriented toward a single other actor is not moral in itself, an act oriented toward the well-being of an aggregation of others (such as a number of friends) cannot be said to be a moral act. Only when an act has collective ends (i.e., supports rules that are widely shared as part of the collective reality of society) can it be said to be moral in nature.

Durkheim argues that social order depends on the moral activity of the members of society, but that moral individual activity itself depends on integration and socialization into a well-ordered society. On the surface, Durkheim seems to have created an insoluble paradox for the social reformer: For greater social order to arise, people have to act in a more moral manner, but they will not act in a more moral manner until there is greater social order. Durkheim uses his evolutionary theory of society to overcome this paradox. He sees his present society as in an anomic state of transition. The rules of the old order have broken down, and new moral rules have yet to emerge. In such a state, the social and moral sides of our dualistic makeup cannot be fully nurtured. Therefore self-centered, egoistic consciousness can flourish. But as new social rules emerge and are learned, the social consciousness of our dualistic makeup can be strengthened. This will allow a more harmonious society to emerge.

The role Durkheim sets for sociology, accordingly, is the discovery of new moral rules appropriate to modern society. Durkheim, as we have seen, insisted that no single universal model of moral behavior could ever be developed. The content of that which constitutes moral behavior will change as social evolution progresses. Durkheim accordingly rejected the idea that past moral models that we have socially evolved beyond could ever be resurrected. He explicitly rejected those who would try to repress modern scientific rationalism and individualism in order to create a morality based on tradition and unreflective faith in religious doctrine. Durkheim saw those who wished to turn back the clock as confusing an amoral egoism with "moral individualism."

Egoism is a feature of a period of social transition in which the self-centered aspect of our dualistic nature dominates the intellect. It is destructive to both social order and personal well-being. It undermines social order by placing individual desire above the achievement of collectively necessary goals. It undermines personal well-being by placing the individual in a situation in which there is no sense of moral obligation or joy in acting appropriately that limits or constrains individual desires. The egoist thus becomes locked into an endless quest for more and more individual pleasure. Whatever the egoist achieves always pales given the infinite amount of material wealth and pleasures beyond the egoist's grasp. Durkheim calls this unhappy state the "malady of infiniteness."

"Moral individualism," in contrast to egoism, is a product of the side of our dualistic consciousness that emphasizes social obligation and taking joy in acting to achieve collective goals. The moral individual does this not by a suspension of reason, a denial of individual identity, or an escape into unthinking tradition. Rather, moral individualism recognizes one's unique role in society and uses education and reasoning to achieve the collective good. Moral individualism can thus involve scientifically based

questioning of that which may be traditional but is no longer of collective value and therefore no longer worthy of collective support.

Durkheim believed that with the rise of modern industrial society and its specialized division of labor, the development of a moral orientation in the child becomes increasingly the responsibility of the school. The school takes over what in earlier social forms had been primarily a familial task. In Durkheim's educational writings, he emphasizes the role of the school teacher as an exemplar of morality. The teacher's role in this regard is more important than the teacher's role as a conveyor of knowledge. The teacher's authority represents to the child the general authority of society. It is an authority beyond the limited authority of the family. Durkheim stresses that to be a successful agent of moral socialization, the teacher needs not just the firmness necessary for representing the authority of society. The teacher also needs to treat children in a consistently fair and just manner.

Early in his career, Durkheim attempted to work out the relationship of the social to the emotional and moral makeup of the individual. While these topics continued to be important to him, in his later writings he became increasingly concerned with the relationship of the social to the individual's intellectual makeup. Knowledge, Durkheim informs us, is mediated by socially generated categories. Unlike Kant, who viewed mental categories as *a priori* givens, Durkheim holds that the very categories in which we think first emerge in primitive social relationships. Thinking in terms of temporal periods, seeing events as causally linked, and placing things in terms of types, for example, do not come from our bioorganic nature. They arise from early collective religious rituals and group activities. Once in existence, these categories shape our perception and understanding of the world. Once again, though, it would be a mistake to view Durkheim as a relativist who sees one socially constructed image of reality as equal to another. For him, as society advances, knowledge advances as well.

Durkheim focuses on the development in the individual of knowledge about society itself. Our knowledge of society is, in a sense, revealed to us by society and will vary with the societal type. Thus, how the social is understood in primitive societies will differ from how it is understood in more evolutionarily advanced ones. This argument is made in *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Durkheim begins the book with the seemingly illogical assertion that all religions are true. How can this be the case if religions contradict each other on fundamental theological points? The answer lies in Durkheim's conception of myth and "mythologization." Myths for Durkheim are features of the *sui generis* social whole. They are not simply imaginative stories, entertaining fantasies, or mistaken understandings. Rather, myths are representations of underlying truths in a form understandable by people in a society at a specific level of development.

The most important myths focus on society and the individual's relationship to it. All religions represent the underlying truths about society in a mythologized form that its members can apprehend. Thus, for example, Durkheim views the traditional conception of God as a socially generated mythologization of society itself! The beneficence, nurturing, superior, rewarding, punishing, ultimate intellect, ultimate power, source of all knowledge, source and focus of all moral action, and self-revealing aspects of God are presented by Durkheim as a mythologization of the fundamental features

of and orientations necessary toward society. That God cannot be explained in any terms outside of God is a mythologized conception of the *sui generis* nature of society.

For Durkheim, as previously discussed, the common and defining feature of all religion is a distinction between the sacred and the profane. The profane refers to those objects, activities, and symbols that people relate to in a utilitarian manner—that is, in terms of their usefulness in achieving everyday goals. The sacred refers to those objects, symbols, and activities set apart from everyday use. Thus a hammer is an object to drive nails in as needed, but to the Christian, a metal cross about the size of a hammer is a sacred object and should not be used for such a mundane purpose. Ultimately, for Durkheim, all sacred objects, symbols, and activities (such as rituals) are emanations of society. Respect for them is a mythologized respect for the morally superior social reality on which we are dependent. Durkheim contrasts this religious consciousness arising out of the mythologization of society with that underlying a belief in and use of magic. Just as religion is a manifestation of and an orientation toward the social, magic reflects an egoistic desire to circumvent the social for amoral individual ends.

In sum, then, Durkheim's image of the individual is one in which the individual is shaped, directed, limited, and determined in thought and morally oriented action by a *sui generis* social reality. Recently, though, some philosophers have argued that sociologists have misunderstood Durkheim by presenting him in this manner. They state that Durkheim is really closer to a Kantian position that allows for a good degree of autonomous individual moral choice. We find this revisionist interpretation of Durkheim totally unconvincing. This is especially so when we consider all of the constraining elements of society presented in Durkheim's theory.

For Durkheim, we humans are social beings whose thoughts and actions are limited in a multitude of ways. (Some of these have been previously discussed; others will be elaborated upon further on.) We are creatures of our societal type, and thus the "collective representations" with which we think cannot be otherwise. Our actions are the outcome of external social constraint (or the lack thereof) limiting a basic egoistic part of our dualist makeup. Our individual consciousnesses reflect the degree of specialization in our society and our place in its division of labor. Our moral values themselves are not a product of choice, but reflect the society that we live in. We are constrained by thinglike "social facts" that do not bend to our wills or desires. Reforms can be developed that predictably will work and shape our future social activity. We are headed in a social evolutionary direction to which we must individually and collectively adjust. Something as personal as suicide reflects socially generated "currents" of which we are not aware and over which we have no control. Our very sense of individualism and individual choice are themselves social products and emerge only to the extent permitted by the type of society of which we are a part. And, finally, choice depends on knowledge, and the fundamental categories of knowledge are themselves socially determined.

Durkheim's analysis of the individual in society, as we have seen, covers a large number of topics. In recent years, questions have been raised about Durkheim's failure to fully address issues regarding women and gender differences. In her *Durkheim and Women*, Jennifer M. Lehmann asserts, "Durkheim's *oeuvre* is clearly characterized

by its silence on the subject of women—by the conspicuous absence of women in its many pages.”¹² Moreover, she adds that when women are included in his work, Durkheim tends to violate his own approach and offers a biological justification of their socially available roles.

We find merit in Lehmann’s criticisms of Durkheim on these points. Durkheim fails to analyze how industrial society impacts on the consciousness of women. Specifically, he fails to examine the impact on women of unequal access to employment based on gender. This does not seem to us a question of historical hindsight, but rather an obvious question to be raised from the perspective of Durkheim’s theory. A contemporary of Durkheim’s, Charlotte Perkins Gillman, did in fact discuss these very issues in her 1898 book, *Women and Economics*.¹³ Gillman concluded that to keep women in premodern unspecialized housework while men move into specialized industrial activities has profound negative effects on marital and familial relationships. Since Durkheim did not explore the issue, we do not know if he would have concurred with Gillman or not.

Methodology

Durkheim was one of the most important pioneers of empirical research in sociology. He is generally recognized and even lauded in sociology textbooks as such. For reasons we will discuss at the conclusion of this chapter, Durkheim’s approach to data—especially his statistical analysis of suicide—is often presented as closer to current sociological practice than it actually is. Durkheim’s epistemological assumptions (that is, his assumptions about the nature of knowledge) differ profoundly from those of current positivistic researchers in sociology. To avoid misconstruing Durkheim’s methodology, we offer these five warnings:

1. Do not forget that Durkheim viewed the social as a unique level of reality and that this totality was the focus of all his research. Thus, for example, his statistical analyses of suicide data were not intended merely to produce aggregated information about the social behaviors of members of a society or describe the factors most likely to lead to suicide. Such analyses were instead used to indicate characteristics of the *sui generis* reality itself.
2. Durkheim believed that moral rules existed as objective and discoverable features of that reality. Social analysis thus did not aim merely to state what exists, but rather to tell us what ought to exist. Moreover, as a social evolutionist, Durkheim understood that which exists is in the process of change and becoming something else. Durkheim never saw his method as telling us how society is structured and functions at some frozen point in time. He was instead interested in objectively discovering both what society was becoming and what it should become.
3. Durkheim’s overall goal was social reform. All his research was aimed at a broad instrumentalist reorganization of social life. Some sociologists have praised his work *Suicide* while totally ignoring the conclusions of that book on how society ought to be restructured. Even when he was looking at primitive religions, Durkheim was never interested in a topic for its own sake. He studied primitive

religions to understand the foundations of sociality so that he could promote his reformist aims.

4. As we noted above, Durkheim held that prescientific knowledge of the social was distorted mythologization but that social science research gives us objectively unmythologized truth. In other words, achieved correctly, scientific knowledge is not relative to anything else but is instead an accurate emanation of the social itself. This position underlies Durkheim's hostility to American pragmatic philosophy. By making knowledge relative to a purpose at hand, pragmatism allowed a degree of uncertainty that Durkheim would not and could not permit. Durkheim, in sum, believed that scientific research would be able to produce objective truth with a level of certainty that goes considerably beyond twenty-first-century researchers' conceptions of reliability and validity.
5. The medical diagnostic metaphor (discussed above) pervades much of Durkheim's discussions of methodology. This is especially true in his sole work dedicated to methodology—*Rules of Sociological Method*. Durkheim presented the role of the sociologist as analogous to that of a physician. He asserted that the usual is the normal and the normal is the healthy for a society at a specified level of social development. Similarly, the unusual is the abnormal and the abnormal is the pathological.

Durkheim believes society is a *sui generis* reality. The difficulty for sociological research is that, though real, the social is intangible and lacks physical form. Thus the constraining forces that emanate from the social are not easy to measure. Yet, even though the social cannot be seen, for sociology to be a diagnostic science the impact of the social must be measurable. Durkheim's solution is to measure indirectly via what he calls "indicators." He discusses three types of indicators: "statistical," "historical," and "ethnographic." Though Durkheim uses these types in combination, we can point to specific works as illustrative of the use of each. *Suicide* emphasizes the use of statistical indicators, *The Division of Labor in Society* relies to a great extent on historical indicators, and *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* draws conclusions from the application of ethnographic indicators.

In *Suicide*, Durkheim presents us with several types of suicidal behavior. Among these is anomic suicide. Anomie, as previously discussed, exists when the sociomoral rules are in a weakened state (such as in a transitional evolutionary period when old rules have declined and new ones have yet to fully emerge). Under such conditions, the *sui generis* reality of society creates suicide-generating currents that impact on the individual. Individuals, as we have seen, have a dualistic makeup. In an anomic period, the social component of that makeup will be weak and undeveloped. The result is that under the causal effect of these currents, suicide rates will increase. To demonstrate that his theory is correct, Durkheim turned to the use of statistical indicators.

Durkheim reasoned that (all other things being equal) some social statuses are more anomic than others. That is, they are less integrated into a system of sociomoral obligations. Thus single men, with fewer familial obligations than married men, are in a more anomic state than those who are married. Accordingly, if his theory of the society and the individual in it is correct, single men should have a higher suicide rate than married men. Durkheim compared statistical data gathered over time in various

European nations and concluded that this was indeed the case. He also made similar predictions in terms of religious affiliation, economic conditions, and conditions of war and peace. In each case the data indicated that individuals with the social statuses he believed to be more anomic had the higher suicide rate. Thus, though anomie and suicide-generating currents arising from the *sui generis* social are intangible, he insisted that they are real and that the statistical indicators he used demonstrated both their reality and their causal impact.

In *The Division of Labor in Society*, Durkheim makes the evolutionary argument that individualism increases as society evolves into higher forms. The logic of the argument is that the greater the differentiation of society into specialized groups, the greater the recognition of differences among persons and the greater the degree of social recognition of the moral value of each person. Individualism thus is another emanation of the *sui generis* social that is both real and intangible. Durkheim reasons, though, that if individualism actually does increase, it should have an impact on the legal codes that regulate the relationships between persons. Accordingly, an analysis of legal codes drawn from societies at lower levels of development should reveal less individualism than those at increasingly higher levels of social development.

The precise historical indicators used by Durkheim to measure the social evolutionary growth of individualism was the extent to which legal codes contained "repressive" versus "restitutive" laws. These two types of laws are distinguished from each other by the type of sanction attached to their violation. Violations of repressive laws result in punishments aimed at damaging the violator. Prison sentences, mutilations, torture of all kinds, and any means of execution (e.g., burning at the stake, hanging, electrocution), when carried out in reference to a legal code enforced by a state apparatus, all reflect repressive law. Restitutive law does not demand that the violators be damaged, but instead that they be compelled by the state to undo the harm they caused to the victim of the crime. They thus must restore things to the way they were. If such actual restoration is not possible, they must compensate the victim for the loss incurred in some other way. An example of the workings of a restitutive law would be a plumber who does incompetent repairs being compelled by a court to reimburse a home owner for the cost of the repairs in question and to pay an additional sum to compensate the home owner for damage caused by the leaking pipes.

Durkheim argued that the data derived from the historical indicators he looked at affirmed his theory. He found that the simpler the society, the greater the degree of repressive law, and the more advanced the society, the greater the degree of restitutive law showing increased individualism with social advance. Moreover, whereas in simpler societies harsh repressive laws are mandated for almost any type of crime, as society advances they are reserved for crimes that harm or kill another person. As individualism increases, individuality takes on increased moral value, and harming another person thus becomes an increasingly serious social offense demanding punishment appropriate to its seriousness.

"Ethnographic indicators" refer to data obtained through the direct observational methods used by social and cultural anthropologists. Durkheim himself did not undertake such field study. From the confines of his office in Paris, he analyzed the data collected by others. The logic justifying the use of such data can be summarized as fol-

lows: All societies evolve. As they evolve, certain features change and complexity increases. But there are certain features that are of an elementary, primary, and fundamental nature such that they appear first. These basic features are foundational for all societies, no matter how advanced and complex. Accordingly, they can be observed and understood most readily in data from the simplest societies, where they exist in their most basic and unelaborated forms. Durkheim's use of ethnographic indicators is thus premised on three assumptions: First, his view of social evolution is correct. Second, existing non-European societies are similar to earlier levels of evolutionary stages of advanced European societies. And, third, analysis of such simple societies reveals fundamental truths about all societies.

The logic justifying the use of ethnographic indicators can be found in Durkheim's early work, but he relied predominantly on ethnography only in his last works. The most important of these is *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. In that work, he uses ethnographic data derived from observations of the Arunta people of Australia to explore a number of questions. Among such questions are: How does the social shape human cognition and perception? What constitutes the sacred? How does society reveal itself in terms of prescientific mythologizations? Durkheim also discusses the earliest process by which sociomoral change begins to take place—a complex process he calls "collective effervescence." In this process, the primitive group gathers in sacred ritual and members totally merge into the collective *sui generis* reality. The result is immediate and lasting change in "collective representations" that permeates the whole society.

John A. Smith and Chris Jenks¹⁴ have recently argued that Durkheim's greatest methodological impact on later sociological analysis comes in his ordering of cause and effect. They argue that he was the central figure in the reorientation of thought that paved the way for the logic of later explanations in academic sociology. Rather than accounting for the structures of society as the outcome of rational planning, he saw the nature of individual rationality as a product of discoverable social facts that existed autonomously from the thoughts and desires of particular individuals. The individual thus is always to be explained by the social. The social is never explained by the individual or by anything outside of the social itself. We can add that for Durkheim the *sui generis* social, like God for his father the rabbi, was the primary preexisting generative reality and could not be known or accounted for in terms of anything else.

We see this approach underlying Durkheim's proposition that the facts generated by the social should be treated in research "as things."¹⁵ Durkheim's use of indicators relies on the belief that the intangible features of society are not arbitrary constructs but real aspects of the social. Because they are real, they are discoverable and have causal significance. In Durkheim's research the social is assumed to be a fundamental reality. This assumption underlies his antireductionistic methodology. If society, or any aspect of it, were to be reduced to psychological or biological causes, the social could no longer be seen as a distinct, self-contained sociomoral reality. If this were the case, the discovery of moral rules appropriate for advanced society would not be possible, for such rules would no longer reflect an overarching reality. They would merely be causal by-products of biological or psychological processes. Durkheim could never accept this possibility; it would have undermined the moral and reformist goals that

justified sociological research in the first place. Durkheim insistently held to the methodological position that "every time a social phenomenon is directly explained by a psychological phenomenon, we may rest assured that the explanation is false."¹⁶

SIGNIFICANCE

Vision of the Future

According to the philosopher Mark Cladis:

Social theory . . . in Durkheim's view, is a normative discipline. Its task is to help us understand who we are by analyzing past and present institutions so that we can better understand where we are to go in the future.¹⁷

Durkheim's work is dedicated to detailing those features of modern society that he viewed as in need of reform while simultaneously pointing to the institutional areas whose socially necessary activities needed to be preserved. As we have seen, Durkheim considered his society to be an anomic one, characterized both by a lack of adequate moral regulation of individuals and by insufficient coordination and harmony among groups. For Durkheim, modern society is marked by conflicts in the industrial world that spread disharmony and misery throughout society. Such disharmony and misery can be seen in the high anomic and egoistic suicide rates of modern societies and in the meaninglessness and purposelessness that characterize the lives of many individuals. Durkheim claimed that these problems persisted because the family, traditional religion, and the state all lack the strength to confront them adequately. Durkheim wrote:

We are living precisely in one of those critical, revolutionary periods when authority is usually weakened through the loss of traditional discipline—a time that may easily give rise to a spirit of anarchy. This is the source of the anarchic aspirations that, whether consciously or not, are emerging today, not only in the particular sects bearing the name, but in the very different doctrines that, although opposed on other points, join in a common aversion to anything smacking of regulation.¹⁸

Despite this negative evaluation of modern society, Durkheim's view of the future was optimistic. The problems that seemed so massive, he believed, would in the future be open to solution. Durkheim's optimism was based on the belief that modern society was in a transitional period, facing many problems that were due to rapid social changes that had occurred recently. Durkheim believed that rapid change in the way people organize their lives and in the organization of society had swept away old moral rules and regulations. He argued that the social rules tied to a preindustrial feudal society ceased to be effective as society rapidly became industrial and democratic. These changes made the social moral rules that had developed in the older feudal society meaningless for modern day-to-day life. Social problems thus existed because the old rules had declined without any new ones taking their place. Given time, Durkheim argued, new moral rules should naturally develop from the interaction of people and

groups in industrial society. He maintained that as new rules for individual life and social organization emerged, society would move from a disharmonious transitional form to a harmonious mature form.

In envisioning the form that a mature modern industrial society would exhibit, Durkheim rejected both liberal *laissez-faire* capitalism (such as espoused by Spencer) and socialism (as presented by Marx) because he viewed both as presenting fundamentally flawed images of society as basically an economic system. For Durkheim, society was essentially a *sui generis* moral entity, and any successful reformation of it had to recognize it as such and involve the creation of a moral unity suited to industrial society. Such a unity would necessarily respect and reflect the individualism of modern society, but would keep that individualism from degenerating into a divisive and self-destructive egoism. In a number of works, Durkheim attempted to envision what such a mature industrial society would entail. Essentially he presented a society organized in terms of industry-specific communal entities that would perform many basic social functions. He termed these entities "corporations." Thus his conception of a sociologically reformed society of the future can be termed "corporatism."

In order to overcome industrial conflict and promote understanding and solidarity, all members of a particular occupation in a region would belong to the same association or corporation. The corporation would be made up of both employees and employers. It would be administered by a council, some of whose members would represent the employers and others the workers in particular occupational fields. This council, in turn, would send representatives to a group governing the occupation on a national level (or a national corporate body). Each national corporation, which together would represent all the members of a particular occupational area in society, would send representatives to a parliament governing the nation. Thus the national governing body would represent the interests of everyone, as well as having all the varied expertise and knowledge of its diverse membership to call on in the formulation of national policy.

The function of the national parliament, once it was established, would be to set general national policy and to settle any disputes that might arise between various national corporations. Each national corporation would be in charge of interpreting general national policy and applying it to the particular occupation it represented. The national corporation would also judge any disputes that might arise between various local corporations representing members of the same occupation. The local corporation would have a duty to interpret national corporate policy in terms of local circumstances and environment. It would also set wages and fair working conditions and would regulate competition; thus it would prevent conflicts between employees and employers and between one owner and another. Additionally, the local corporation would be in charge of education, social welfare, and recreational facilities. Durkheim believed it would create harmonious feelings among individuals in industrial society and would bring an end to the unregulated anomie of Durkheim's day:

The occupational group has the three-fold advantage over all others that it is omnipresent, ubiquitous and that its control extends to the greatest part of life. Its influence on individuals is not intermittent, like that of political society, but it is always in contact with them by the constant exercise of the function of which it is the organ and in which they

collaborate. It follows the workers wherever they go; which the family cannot do. Wherever they are, they find it enveloping them, recalling them to their duties, supporting them at need. Finally, since occupational life is almost the whole of life, corporative action makes itself felt in every detail of our occupations, which are thus given a collective orientation. Thus the corporation has everything needed to give the individual a setting, to draw him out of his state of moral isolation; and faced by the actual inadequacy of the other groups, it alone can fulfill this indispensable office.¹⁹

In sum, Durkheim envisioned a future in which equality of opportunity and democracy would be perpetuated in a society organized in terms of industrial occupational categories. Such a society, he believed, was not only possible: It would develop out of the current transitional societal state and from the application of sociological knowledge.

Contemporary Relevance

The fate of social theories is not without irony. In the late nineteenth century, Emile Durkheim began to construct a theory in which he sought to displace moral philosophy with sociology. In the early twenty-first century, Durkheim has been discovered by practitioners of the field he rejected. Meanwhile, sociology, the field he identified with, has simultaneously raised him to the status of an icon but has abandoned both the goal of his theory and his epistemological approach. The key to understanding both philosophy's latter-day discovery of him and sociology's ignoring what is most central to a Durkheimian approach has to do with the concept of morality.

Durkheim wanted sociology to be a science of morals—a field that would objectively discover the appropriate rules for social conduct in a modern society. He found traditional philosophy wanting because of its attachment to two Socratic principles: There is a single model of "the good" applicable to all times and places, and this model could be ascertained by logical reasoning alone without the use of empirical research. After two thousand four hundred years of failure by philosophy, Durkheim insisted it was time to turn to sociological research to find the moral rules appropriate to each evolutionary form of society. The recent appeal of Durkheim for some philosophers is that Durkheim takes morality seriously and rejects extreme forms of relativism that undermine any moral imperative. He uses familiar terminology grounded in Renouvier's reinterpretation of Kant. And he avoids both a reactionary antimodern attitude and a libertarian rejection of freedom from all obligatory moral constraints.

Sociologists, on the other hand, tend not to accept Durkheim's overall goals at all. Methodology textbooks contain no sections on deriving objective moral rules from the empirical analysis of data. If methodology books use the term "objective" at all, it is to imply a version of value neutrality to which Durkheim never ascribed. Yet, although sociology clearly is not a Durkheimian field in its focus and goals, Durkheim is one of its most celebrated figures. In introductory textbooks, Comte is usually cast out of the field as a philosopher who suggested the idea of sociology. But Durkheim often merits a glossy photograph in Chapter 1 next to text that declares him to be one of the field's true founders.

Durkheim was not always so popular in American sociology. The initial reaction of the first generation of American sociologists, writing before the 1930s, was not to embrace Durkheimian sociology. This can be partly accounted for by the tendency of this first generation to get their advanced degrees in Germany, not France. Thereafter, the nascent graduate programs in the United States (among which that of the University of Chicago was preeminent) tended to be headed by German-trained sociologists. When the early editors of the *American Journal of Sociology* sought out a European sociologist to serialize a work defining the nature and parameters of sociology, they selected Georg Simmel, not Durkheim. Yet Durkheim's ideas were known at a time when American sociologists were literate enough to read a number of European languages. Citations to his work frequently appear. But the reaction to his theory was not one of acceptance.

While a Durkheimian approach began to spread throughout European (especially French) sociology, as well as anthropology, social history, and legal studies, across the Atlantic this was not the case. American sociology was committed to an individualistic view that was seen as incompatible with Durkheim's realistic and deterministic image of the social. Especially disliked was his idea that morality was to be found in the collective and not in the aggregated choices of the members of society. Thus we see Tarde's reductionist sociology receiving some positive assessment, but no founder of American sociology accepted any part of Durkheim's theory as a foundation for developing the field.²⁰

Social evolutionary theories inspired by Herbert Spencer's work dominated American sociology up to World War I. In the 1920s an interest in broad general theories of the social waned. In the 1930s a new wave of general theory emerged. This time the reception for Durkheim was different. He was seen as a significant theorist. From then on, his reputation grew toward the iconic status it has today.

There are numerous changes in both American society and American sociology that help account for this change in the perception of Durkheim. In the aftermath of World War I, explicit connections to German culture were less popular and those to French culture were more popular. The American anti-immigrant hysteria of the 1920s led to a concern with theories that focused on social integration and common moral values. The Great Depression suggested that general problems existed in society and that a broad explanatory theory was necessary. Durkheim also provided a counterapproach for those uncomfortable with the racist eugenics of biological determinism in American sociology. His ideas were in some ways compatible with the use of the realist concept of culture then being assimilated into sociology from anthropology. Durkheim's methodology—especially his use of statistics in *Suicide*—paralleled an American interest in positivistic methodology. Durkheim's theory was politically more palatable than that of Marx for those wanting an academic career in the aftermath of the "red scare" of the 1920s. The New Deal approach of the Roosevelt administration signaled an ideological shift more accepting of planned central government-directed reform. American sociology was shifting its center from the Midwest to Harvard, where European theorists (e.g., Weber, Pareto, and Freud) were better received. Durkheim provided a foundation for emerging subfield specializations in the sociology of religion, education, and criminology in a now university-institutionalized discipline. A

new generation of American sociologists arose that included a large percentage of Jews and Catholics not committed to the secularized Protestant individualism of the first generations of American sociologists. Finally, two books were published at the right moment in the field's history that redefined Durkheimian thought in an appealing way for American sociology.

Harry Alpert's 1939 *Emile Durkheim and his Sociology*²¹ is an apologetic work. (A more appropriate title for it would have been *The Americanization of Emile Durkheim*.) It presents Durkheim as fully compatible with the goals and assumptions of mainstream American sociological thought and research. The more philosophical and epistemological arguments in Durkheim are toned down or left out altogether. Durkheim's realism is presented as a misreading of what he meant by terms like "collective conscience." Durkheim's arguments about determinism and the objective discoverability of mandatory moral rules emanating from a *sui generis* social order are ignored. In sum, Durkheim's work is presented in clear American prose as a good foundation for further advancing American sociological thought and research.

Alpert's book came out two years after Talcott Parsons' *The Structure of Social Action*.²² This two-volume work is premised on Durkheim's turning from an earlier positivistic realism to an idealist approach in his later writings. Parsons placed the ideas of this "later" Durkheim in his own Weberian-influenced paradigm. Durkheim's reputation as one of the most important figures in the development of the field grew as Parsons' own standing rose over the next several decades. At the same time, the theories of the earlier American sociologists who had dismissed Durkheim were largely forgotten. Parsons had a long career, publishing into the 1970s. In his writings and classroom presentations he influenced generations of students with his own reading of Durkheim.

A prolific writer, Parsons continually refined and expanded his ideas. In midcareer he incorporated functionalism into his approach. Functionalism had a number of originators. The most important one was A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. Radcliffe-Brown was an English social anthropologist. The main intellectual influence on him was Emile Durkheim.

Radcliffe-Brown entered anthropology as an ethnographer. Early in the twentieth century, he wanted to develop a theory that would organize and explain the relationships among his ethnographic data. The theory had to meet two criteria: It had to avoid conjectural causal accounts unsupported by empirical data. It also had to explain both the whole community and the observed everyday details of the lives of community members.

In his relatively early *Rules of Sociological Method*, Durkheim had argued that the social explanation of an activity involves two steps. First, one examines how it had come about. Second, one looks at its organic relationships of mutual dependence on the social whole and with other activities in the society. Radcliffe-Brown, lacking historical information about the nonliterate peoples he studied, could do the second but not the first. He thus looked only at the "functional" relations of mutual influence and dependence and ignored issues of change. Radcliffe-Brown wrote what is in essence a fan letter to an aged Durkheim, informing him how much he had inspired and provided a foundation for his own work. Radcliffe-Brown's approach to the question of how the

parts of a social whole function in relation to each other is summarized in his *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*.²³

Parsons incorporated major elements of Radcliffe-Brown's functionalism into his own work. When he did so, he combined ideas derived from Durkheim's early work (via Radcliffe-Brown) with ideas he had previously taken from Durkheim's later work. Parsons' own "structural-functionalism" would be expanded and modified by his students and become the most dominant orientation in American sociology in the middle of the twentieth century. Harvard-trained functionalists such as Robert Merton, Kingsley Davis, and Wilbert E. Moore would become the stars of American sociology. Their language would often sound Durkheimian. Indeed, they would draw explicit links to his work, presenting themselves as the true heirs of the great French sociologist.

An examination of their works shows them not to be true heirs, but pretenders to the Durkheimian throne. For example, Merton early in his career established himself in an article in which he used the concept of anomie in a decidedly non-Durkheimian manner.²⁴ In Durkheim's use, anomie is a feature of the *sui generis* social; in Merton's, it becomes a social-psychological attribute of individuals. More importantly, Durkheim uses the term to diagnose a "pathological" and transitional period. Merton, on the other hand, presents anomie as an inevitable and unrelenting feature of modern social structure. Further, Merton exalts those focused on the acquisition of individual wealth through legal means. And he denigrates as anomic the "conformists" who fully internalize moral rules and makes following them an end in itself. This is practically an inversion of the Durkheimian images of egoism and "moral individualism"!

Davis and Moore presented a widely read outline for a functionalist theory of inequality.²⁵ Its use of the "function" of unequal rewards based on the need for and scarcity of skills has little to do with Durkheim's analysis of inequality in industrial society. Durkheim's own endorsement of capitalist inequality was qualified in a number of ways. Davis and Moore make no mention of the Durkheimian necessity to develop a system of moral rules to regulate relationships between owners and workers. Nor do they discuss the "corporate" reforms Durkheim saw as necessary and inevitable developments for a harmonious industrial society to emerge. As Melvin Tumin, Herbert Gans, and others later pointed out, Davis and Moore's work is mostly a justification of American inequality.²⁶ Its total lack of concern with questions concerning justice makes their views distant from even the thoughts of Adam Smith, let alone those of Durkheim.

Even at its midcentury zenith, functionalism did have some critics. The most famous of these was C. Wright Mills. In 1959 Mills' *The Sociological Imagination* was published.²⁷ For our purposes, what is important to note is that Mills' widely read book praises Durkheim and attacks Parsons. Durkheim's theory is presented as exemplifying an approach that Mills endorses. Mills names that approach the "sociological imagination." It involves a study of the social that illuminates the nature and causes of "troubles" faced by individuals in their day-to-day lives. It then links these troubles to larger socially generated "problems." Parsons is lambasted and ridiculed as the pretentious "grand theorist" whose work ignores and obscures the sociological imagination and who has lost sight of what earlier sociologists, like Durkheim, were trying to accomplish.

Mills' separation of Durkheim from Parsons' functionalist use of his ideas is important for the continuing prestige Durkheim has in the field. Mills was a hero to many of the graduate students in the 1960s and 1970s. Many of these students were radicalized in opposition to the war in Vietnam. Respect for Durkheim continued as functionalism was rejected by later sociologists as either an ideological defense of the status quo or an approach simply no longer in fashion.

At the start of the twenty-first century, many books written by Durkheim are in print both in French and in English translation. His shorter writings have been collected, organized, edited, translated, and published as well. And numerous books about him by persons from a variety of fields (e.g., sociology, philosophy, history, and religious studies) are regularly published. He is held by most sociologists to be one of the most important founders of the field. He is also seen as the founder or one of the founders of various subfields in the discipline. And, as Frank Parkin notes, Durkheim provided fundamental questions about the nature of the social that sociologists "continue to wrestle with," as well as an "Aladdin's cave of concepts" still used in societal analyses.²⁸ But sociologists tend to look at Durkheim's work in highly selective and at times distorted manners. His overall approach, methodology, and goals are far removed from those widespread in the discipline today. Yet arguments made to justify the existence of the field as distinct from psychology still hearken back to his ideas. These were the ideas of a Third Republic professor who sought to establish a discipline that was at once thoroughly scientific, morally oriented, and instrumentally instructive.

NOTES

1. *Ethics and the sociology of morals*. (This is an excellent translation of Durkheim's *La science positive de la morale en Allemagne*.)
2. Robert Alun Jones, *Durkheim*, p. 6.
3. Mary Ann Lammana, *Emile Durkheim on the family*, p. 11.
4. Michael Burns, *Dreyfus: A family affair, 1789-1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), p. 329.
5. Gabriel Fustel de Coulanges, *The ancient city* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956).
6. Robert Alun Jones, *The development of Durkheim's social realism*, p. 107.
7. Donald A. Nielson, *Three faces of God: Society, religion, and the categories of the totality in the philosophy of Emile Durkheim*, p. 58.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.
9. See counterarguments in G. Meštrović Stjepan, *Emile Durkheim and the reformation of sociology*.
10. See W. F. S. Pickering, *Durkheim's sociology of religion: Themes and Theories*.
11. Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934).
12. Lehmann, *Durkheim and Women*.
13. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and economics: a study of the economic relation between men and women as a factor in social evolution*. (Boston: Small, Maynard, & Company, 1898).
14. John A. Smith and Chris Jenks, *Images of community: Durkheim, social systems and the sociology of art*.
15. *Rules of sociological method*, p. 35.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
17. Mark S. Cladis, *A communitarian defense of liberalism: Emile Durkheim and contemporary sociological theory*, p. 28.
18. *Moral education*, 1973, p. 54.
19. *Suicide*, 1964, p. 379.

20. See Roscoe C. Hinkle, *Founding theory of American sociology 1881-1915* (Boston: Routledge, 1980).
21. Harry Alpert, *Emile Durkheim and his sociology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939).
22. Talcott Parsons, *The structure of social action* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1937).
23. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and function in primitive society* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1952).
24. Robert Merton, "Social structure and anomie," *American Sociological Review*, 3 (1938), 672-682.
25. Kingsley Davis & Wilbert E. Moore, "Some principles of stratification," *American Sociological Review*, 10 (1945), 242-249.
26. See Melvin M. Tumin, *Social inequality: The forms and functions of inequality* (Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967), and Herbert J. Gans, *More equality* (New York: Pantheon, 1973).
27. C. Wright Mills, *The sociological imagination* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959). Every student of sociology should read this book.
28. Frank Parkin, *Durkheim*, p. 1.

GLOSSARY

Altruistic suicide: Form of self-sacrificing behavior that occurs as a result of overconformity with group rules and overidentification with the collective whole. Most prevalent in simpler societies.

Anomic suicide: Self-destructive behavior arising in a social setting that lacks sufficient sociomoral rules to constrain actors by integrating them into the collective whole. Most prevalent in period of transition to modern society.

Anomie: State of social disorganization brought on by the lack of, or insufficiency of, social and moral rules regulating activity between persons and groups.

A priori: Latin term meaning that which is innate or preexisting.

Collective consciousness or conscience (translation of *conscience collective*): An emergent characteristic of a group or society arising from and supporting a unified mental and emotional response to the events of the world.

Collective representations (translation of *representation collective*): Shared beliefs, values, norms, ways of thinking, and ways of feeling

that characterize a particular social group or society.

Corporatism: Durkheim's plan for the reorganization of modern society, involving the centrality of occupational specializations in reshaping the political and other institutions.

Dualism (of human nature): The position that human nature is composed of two basic irreducible parts, elements, or components.

Egoistic suicide: Self-destructive behavior occurring when the social part of an individual's nature is insufficiently developed. Most prevalent in the transitional period to modern society.

Emergence: Process of interaction of parts by which more complex levels of reality arise from simpler ones.

Ethnographic indicators of data: Elements of knowledge derived from cultural anthropological sources, such as the study of preliterate peoples.

Externality: That which is characterized by having an existence independent of the will of a particular person or an aggregate of persons.

Function: Contribution made by the individual or group to maintenance of another group or the social whole.

Generality: That which is characterized by a property that resides in or is derived from a collective whole as opposed to any particular person or aggregate of persons.

Individual representations: Ways of thinking, feeling, and reacting that are not shared in the society but are the property of particular individuals. (Compare with *Collective representations*.)

Levels of reality: Conception that the universe can be divided into a series of separate, though related, basic forms of existence (that is, forms manifesting different fundamental characteristics) in terms of their degree of complexity. For Durkheim, these realities were, in order from simplest to most complex: physical, chemical, biological, psychological, and social.

Malady of infiniteness: Durkheim's conception of an individual characterized by pathological insatiable desires brought on by an underdeveloped social aspect of his or her nature.

Mechanical solidarity: Form of social organization in simple societies based on similarity or likeness of persons in terms of their conceptualization of reality and orientation toward the collective whole. (Compare with *Organic solidarity*.)

Methodological indicators: Indirect means of empirical analysis used in scientific investigation. Durkheim's work manifests three kinds of methodological indicators: statistical, historical, and ethnographic.

Moral action: According to Durkheim, activity that is oriented toward the benefit of the social whole and that is characterized by feelings of obligation and desirability:

Moral individualism: Sense of self-identity combined with devotion to collective rules.

Organic solidarity: Form of social organization in more complex societies based on occupational specialization and functional differentiation of social parts. (Compare with *Mechanical solidarity*.)

Profane: The realm of the nonsacred. That which is used or acted on in an everyday, utilitarian manner.

Repressive law: Laws involving punishment or destruction of violator of social rules. (Compare with *Restitutive law*.)

Restitutive law: Laws involving an obligation of the violator of social rules to reestablish the situation as it was before the violation occurred, in order to compensate the victim of the violation. (Compare with *Repressive law*.)

Sacred: The defining characteristic of religion, according to Durkheim. The sacred emanates in society, is collectively held in awe, and is forbidden in everyday use.

Social facts: Attributes, characteristics, or properties of social reality that cannot be reduced to psychological, biological, chemical, or physical attributes or properties.

Social indicators: See *Methodological indicators*.

Social pathologies: Deviations from what is typical, normal, or usual for a particular societal type.

Sui generis reality: Latin term expressing a conception that something is a reality in and of itself and cannot be reduced to its subparts or components without loss or destruction of its most central and fundamental characteristics.

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Durkheim's earliest major work. Discussions include many of his central ideas, with detailed

treatments of anomie and the movement from mechanical to organic forms of society.

Durkheim: Essays on morals and education (W. S. F. Pickering, Ed.; H. L. Sutcliffe, Trans.). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979.

- Durkheim held a joint appointment in education (pedagogy) and sociology and wrote extensively on the subject of education—especially on the inculcation of moral values in the student. This volume introduces a number of Durkheim's writings not previously translated into English and is worthwhile reading together with *Education and Sociology* and *Moral Education*.
- Durkheim and the law* (Steven Lukes & Andrew Scull, Eds.). Oxford, England: Martin Robertson, 1983.
- Following a good twenty-seven-page introductory essay by the editors summarizing the central themes of Durkheim's sociology of law, a number of excerpts are presented from both Durkheim's major and minor writings. Topics focused on include law as an index of social solidarity, the movement from repressive to restitutive law, the relationship of crime and punishment, the evolution of punishment, legal prohibitions of suicide, and the origins of law, property rights, and contracts.
- Durkheim on politics and the state* (Anthony Giddens, Ed.; W. D. Halls, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986.
- A collection of Durkheim's otherwise scattered writings on political themes divided into sections on the state, democracy, socialism, Marxism, political obligation and punishment, the state and education, and patriotism and militarism.
- Education and sociology* (S. D. Fox, Trans.). Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1956 [1922].
- A collection of four essays expanding on themes presented in *Moral Education*.
- The elementary forms of the religious life* (Karen E. Fields, Trans.). New York: Free Press, 1999 [1912].
- Durkheim's last major work. Involves an analysis of primitive religious belief and ritual in order to understand the basic foundations of all moral and religious rules. Also focuses on the development of society and knowledge in general.
- Emile Durkheim on morality and society* (R. N. Bellah, Ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973 (paper).
- A collection of long excerpts from a number of Durkheim's major and minor works, focusing on morality and society but covering a large number of topics.
- Ethics and the sociology of morals* (Robert T. Hall, Ed. & Trans.). Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993.
- A clear introduction by Hall is followed by a translation of Durkheim's *La science positive de la morale en Allemagne*. This early work shows how much the young Durkheim was impressed with contemporary advances in German social science. Durkheim found arguments supporting the social realist ideas that he had already acquired from Renouvier. He also found in the psychological research of Wundt and his associates an example of a positivistic approach to the study of morals.
- Essays on sociology and philosophy* (Kurt Wolff, Ed.). New York: Harper & Row, 1964 (paper).
- This work contains a number of essays by Durkheim, as well as essays on Durkheim's thought by others. Includes Durkheim's important essay "The Dualism of Human Nature and Its Social Conditions."
- The evolution of educational thought: Lectures on the formation of secondary education in France* (P. Collings, Trans.). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977 [1938].
- Durkheim's most ambitious historical study. Concerns the rise of advanced education from the Middle Ages up to his own day.
- Montesquieu and Rousseau* (R. Manheim, Trans.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965 [1953].
- Durkheim's two essays examining the sociological value of the two philosophers in question.
- Moral education: A study in the theory and application of the sociology of education* (E. K. Wilson & H. Schnurer, Trans.). New York: Free Press, 1973 [1925].

Durkheim's major analysis of the nature of socialization and education. Concerns the proper rôle of the teacher in the classroom and the social dynamics of learning.

Pragmatism and sociology (John B. Allcock, Ed.; J. C. Whitehouse, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

This translation of Durkheim's famous lectures reveals Durkheim's hostility toward the philosophical school of pragmatism. His arguments are especially interesting owing to the great influence that pragmatic philosophy had on the development of American sociology (via the works of William James, John Dewey, and especially George Herbert Mead). These lectures also give us a deeper understanding of Durkheim's epistemological views concerning the nature of truth, science, and knowledge.

Professional ethics and civic morals (C. Brookfield, Trans.). Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1958 [1950]. Taken from a series of university lectures, this volume includes Durkheim's longest discussions of politics, the state, and corporatism.

The rules of sociological method and selected texts on sociology and its method (Steven Lukes, Ed.; W. D. Halls, Trans.). New York: Free Press, 1982 [1895] (paper).

Durkheim's attempt to detail the approach used by a sociologist in the course of a study. Includes arguments for sociology as a unique science with methods of its own. Lukes' introduction is excellent. Among the other short writings included are Durkheim's discussions of methodological approaches, Marxian analysis, ethnology, history, political economy, psychology, and philosophy compared to those of sociology.

Socialism (C. Statler, Trans.). New York: Collier, 1962 [1928].

Durkheim's analysis and critique of several major forms of socialist thought and ideology. The main emphasis is on the ideas of Saint-Simon.

Sociology and philosophy (D. F. Pocock, Trans.). New York: Free Press, 1974 [1924].

A series of essays and answers to questions in which Durkheim attempts to treat traditional philosophical concerns in a sociological manner. Topics include the nature of morality and moral action, questions of duty and authority, the nature of mind, and the creation of knowledge.

Suicide: A study in sociology (J. A. Spaulding & G. Simpson, Trans.). New York: Free Press, 1964 [1897].

A pioneering study combining theoretical and statistical analysis. Durkheim defines and develops the major "types" of suicide while using suicide statistics to demonstrate the problems facing modern society and the utility of sociological investigation.

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Alexander, Jeffrey (Ed.). *Durkheimian sociology: Cultural studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

This book is premised on a supposed distinction between an earlier Durkheim, who wrote through the mid-1890s, and a later Durkheim, who had a more "cultural" approach with an emphasis on "symbolic process." Articles in this book attempt to explicate, expand, and apply the thoughts of the later Durkheim.

Allen, N. J., W. S. F. Pickering, & W. Watts Miller (Eds.). *On Durkheim's "Elementary forms of religious life."* London: Routledge, 1998.

Of all of Durkheim's work, *Elementary Forms* has generated the most interest in recent years. The articles in this volume focus on a broad variety of topics related to that work and range from explaining Durkheim's conceptual framework to exploring difficulties with his accounts of the origins, development, and significance of religious phenomena.

Cladis, Mark S. *A communitarian defense of liberalism: Emile Durkheim and contemporary sociological theory*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992.

Written by a philosopher, this work emphasizes the lasting influence of the Dreyfus Af-

- fair on Durkheim's thought. Durkheim is presented as having developed the conception of "moral individualism" in order to transcend a debate between a radical *laissez-faire*, egoistic individualism and a despotic, reactionary anti-individualism.
- Gane, Mike. *On Durkheim's rules of sociological method*. London: Routledge, 1988.
- Gane summarizes the arguments in Durkheim's *The Rules of Sociological Method*, explores the critical reaction to that book from Durkheim's time to the present, and investigates the logic and consistency of Durkheim's own application of his "rules" in the course of his research on a variety of topics.
- Giddens, Anthony. *Emile Durkheim*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1978.
- Perhaps the best short (132-page) introduction to Durkheim. A good first book for the student interested in a summary of the scope of Durkheim's thought.
- Jones, Robert Alun. *The development of Durkheim's social realism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Jones grounds the origins and nature of Durkheim's "realist" image of the social in the socio-political-religious events of the Third Republic and in a reaction by Durkheim against the then widespread Cartesian reductionistic thinking.
- Jones, Robert Alun. *Emile Durkheim: An introduction to four major works*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1986.
- The four major works in question are *The Division of Labor in Society*, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, *Suicide*, and *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Jones addresses each of these works in terms of the questions Durkheim asked, the answers he developed, and brief but interesting critiques of Durkheim's views and procedures. Jones' clear but nonsimplistic approach makes this a good place to begin one's reading on Durkheim.
- Jones, Susan Stedman. *Durkheim reconsidered*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001.
- According to Jones, sociologists in general, and the authors of this book in particular, don't understand Durkheim at all. He was not a determinist but a Kant-inspired philosopher focused on autonomous moral choice. If she is right, you've just wasted your time reading this chapter.
- Lammana, Mary Ann. *Emile Durkheim on the family*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002.
- A clearly written analysis of Durkheim's scattered and often untranslated writings on the family that is overall sympathetic but willing to point out problematic and contradictory formulations.
- Lehmann, Jennifer M. *Durkheim and women*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994.
- Durkheim is severely criticized in this work as an antifeminist thinker who was a liberal in his view of men but a conservative in his understanding of the role of women in society. Lehmann asserts that Durkheim mostly ignores women in his analyses of society. When he does discuss them, he contradicts his overall approach by resorting to biological reductionist arguments.
- Lukes, Steven. *Emile Durkheim: His life and works*. London: Penguin, 1975.
- A comprehensive analysis of the chronological development of Durkheim's ideas in the context of biographical, social, and intellectual environments. Perhaps the best work on Durkheim in any language. Contains an extensive list of writings by and about Durkheim.
- Meštrovic, Stjepan G. *Emile Durkheim and the reformation of sociology*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1988.
- Meštrovic questions the extent to which Durkheim's Judaic background had any lasting or significant influence on his sociological theorizing while maintaining that a strong filiation exists between the work of Durkheim and the thoughts of the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer.

Miller, W. Watts. *Durkheim, morals and modernity*. London: UCL Press, 1996.

Miller views Durkheim as a moralist and reformer who wished to use sociology as a bridge between a knowledge of what is and an understanding of what ought to be. Durkheim's main concern was to create a modern society that would avoid the polar dangers of an atomized individualism and a totalitarian crushing of the individual. Miller views Durkheim as avoiding the mistakes of a simplistic empiricist view of social reality.

Nielson, Donald A. *Three faces of God: Society, religion, and the categories of the totality in the philosophy of Emile Durkheim*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999.

This is an important work for understanding Durkheim's central focus on the social whole. Additionally, Nielson includes sophisticated discussions of the roots of key philosophical assumptions on which Durkheim structured his sociological ideas and Durkheim's intellectual relationship with his Jewish heritage. The serious Durkheim student should read this book.

Parkin, Frank. *Durkheim*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

This short, very readable overview of Durkheim's theorizing maintains that the value of Durkheim's thought lies more in the questions he raised than in the answers he found. Parkin consistently contrasts Durkheim's positions to those of Marx and Weber.

Pickering, W. S. F. *Durkheim's sociology of religion: Themes and theories*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.

This work forms the most comprehensive analysis of Durkheim's overall views of religion in print. It includes excellent chapters on the sacred and the profane and on the nature of ritual and effervescence.

Poggi, Gianfranco. *Durkheim*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of Durkheim's work or of the critical litera-

ture it engendered, this work examines a number of themes and ideas that appear in Durkheim's theory and the interpretations and misinterpretations of them by others. Poggi is often original in his critique, demonstrating that while Durkheim was more sophisticated on some issues than he has generally been given credit for, his work was not without its logical flaws.

Richman, Michele H. *Sacred revolutions: Durkheim and the College de Sociologie*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

This work looks at the impact of Durkheim's ideas about religion, "collective effervescence," and the use of ethnographic research on later French thought.

Schmaus, Warren. *Durkheim's philosophy of science and the sociology of knowledge: Creating an intellectual niche*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

An interesting book by a philosopher knowledgeable about the historical and intellectual context in which Durkheim wrote. Schmaus argues that Durkheim was remarkably consistent in his methodological approach, that he was highly tolerant of different views of his research colleagues, and that a review of Durkheim's approach to data would help contemporary sociologists overcome the increasing split between theorists and empirical researchers.

Smith, John A. & Chris Jenks. *Images of community: Durkheim, social systems and the sociology of art*. Ashgate, England: Ashgate Press, 2000.

Smith and Jenks present an interesting and unique reading of Durkheim: Prior to Durkheim, social settings were seen as causal products of the actions of rational individuals, but Durkheim reverses the causal order: Social settings become the cause and individual actions become the outcome. Not an easy read, but worth the effort.

Strenski, Ivan. *Emile Durkheim and the Jews of France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Strenski argues that there is no "essential" Jewish core in Durkheim's thought and that, for all intents and purposes, knowledge of Durkheim's Jewish roots does not enlighten one about the origins or meaning of Durkheim's sociological ideas.

Thompson, Kenneth. *Emile Durkheim*. London: Tavistock, 1982.

A highly readable introduction to Durkheim's thought. Organized in terms of a presentation of a number of Durkheim's major works in chronological order.

Walford, Geoffery & W. S. F. Pickering (Eds.). *Durkheim and modern education*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Durkheim, who taught in high school and who was a Professor of Education, is generally considered the founder of the "sociology of education." The well-written articles in this volume focus on an analysis and contextualization of Durkheim's educational writings, the application of a "Durkheimian framework" to "current educational issues," and the relationship of Durkheim's thought to that of other educational theorists.