

external nature of social facts Durkheim also recognized that such facts are not confined to the realm of ideas or feelings, but often possess a concrete reality as well. For instance, educational institutions and penal systems are also decisive for shaping the social order and individuals' actions within it. Thus, social facts are capable of exerting both a moral and an institutional force. In the end, however, Durkheim stressed the nonrational aspect of social facts as suggested in his supposition that the penal system (courts, legal codes and their enforcement, etc.) ultimately rests on collective notions of morality, a complex symbolic system as to what is "right" and what is "wrong." This issue will be discussed further in the next section in relationship to the specific selections you will read.

Readings

In this section, you will read selections from the four major books that Durkheim published during his lifetime: *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (1897), and *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912). We begin with *The Division of Labor in Society*, in which Durkheim set out the key concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity, and collective conscience. We then shift to excerpts from *The Rules of Sociological Method*. It is here, as you will see, that Durkheim first laid out his basic conceptualization of sociology as a discipline and delineated his concept of social facts. This is followed by excerpts from *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, which is notable, first, in that it exemplifies Durkheim's distinctive approach to the study of the social world, and second, because it further delineates Durkheim's core concept of anomie. We conclude this chapter with excerpts from *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, which many theorists consider Durkheim's most theoretically significant work. In it, Durkheim takes an explicitly cultural turn, emphasizing the concepts of ritual and symbol, and the sacred and profane, and collective representations.

Introduction to *The Division of Labor in Society*

In his first major work, *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), which was based on his doctoral dissertation, Durkheim explains how the division of labor (or economic specialization) characteristic of modern societies affects individuals as well as society as a whole. As you may recall, this issue had been of utmost concern to Marx as well. Marx contended that modern, competitive capitalism, and the specialized division of labor that sustained it, resulted in alienation. In contrast, Durkheim argued that economic

specialization was not necessarily “bad” for either the individual or the society as a whole. Instead, he argued that an extensive division of labor could exist without necessarily jeopardizing the moral cohesion of a society or the opportunity for individuals to realize their interests.

How is this possible? Durkheim argued that there were two basic types of solidarity: mechanical and organic.¹ **Mechanical solidarity** is typified by feelings of *likeness*. Mechanical solidarity is rooted in everyone literally doing or feeling similar things. Durkheim maintained that this type of solidarity is characteristic of small, traditional societies. In these “simple” societies, circumstances compel individuals to be generalists. Neither the actual processes involved in the production and distribution of goods and services, nor the knowledge behind such production and distribution, is relegated to particular sectors of society. Specialization in one task to the exclusion of others is not possible because each individual is needed for a wide variety of tasks. For instance, despite their varying individual levels of competence and ability, men, women, and children alike are all needed to pick crops at harvest time; and at the end of the harvest, all partake in the harvest time celebrations as well. So too, governmental decisions, personal conflicts, holidays, and so on are all shared by everyone in the community (even if some individuals have more power than others or are more directly involved).



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Photo 3.1a Mechanical Solidarity: Women Work Harvest

Durkheim maintained that different types of society exhibit different types of solidarity. Mechanical solidarity, based on likeness, is characteristic of small, traditional societies. In this type of society, participating in the same exact tasks accords individuals a feeling of oneness based on similarity, and shared systems of meaning, or collective consciousness.



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Photo 3.1b Organic Solidarity: Doctors Perform Surgery

Organic solidarity, based on specialization, is characteristic of large, modern industrial societies. In these types of societies, individuals garner a feeling of oneness not from participating in the same exact tasks, but rather from interdependence based on specialization. Here plastic, orthopedic, and hand surgeons, rehabilitation specialists, and nurses work together to perform a successful double-arm transplant.

Durkheim argued that a significant social consequence of the shared work experience characteristic of traditional societies is a shared collective conscience. Social cohesion and solidarity—and social order—in such societies rests on everyone feeling “one and the same.”

Yet, Durkheim saw that in large, complex societies, mechanical solidarity, based on likeness, was waning. In large, modern societies, labor is specialized; people do not necessarily all engage in the same work or share the same ideas and beliefs. For Durkheim, **organic solidarity** refers to a type of solidarity in which each person is interdependent with others, forming a complex web of cooperative associations. In such situations, solidarity (or a feeling of “oneness”) comes not from each person believing or doing the same things, but from each person cultivating individual differences and knowing that each is doing her part for the good of the whole. Thus, Durkheim argued that the increasing specialization and individuation so readily apparent in modern industrial societies does not necessarily result in a decline in social stability or cohesion. Rather, the growth in a society’s density (the number of people living in a community) and consequent increasingly specialized division of labor can result in simply a different *type* of social cohesion, which he calls *organic solidarity*.

Consider, for instance, your relationship with your mechanic or your

computer technician. You may not know your mechanic or tech consultant personally, but you know that they know how to fix cars or computers. You feel *dependent* on them because they know things that you do not, just as they feel dependent on you for your business. For Durkheim, the cohesion of modern society depends, then, not on feelings of “oneness” based on similarity or likeness, but rather on feelings of interdependence based on specialization. So too, in your workplace, you may not personally know the other people in your same company who work in other departments. But you trust that they will do their jobs so that you can do yours. In this case, what holds you together is interdependence based on specialization, or organic solidarity.

Significantly, however, Durkheim maintained that organic solidarity does not automatically emerge in modern societies. Rather, it arises only when the division of labor is “spontaneous” or voluntary. States Durkheim, “For the division of labor to produce solidarity, it is not sufficient, then, that each have his task; it is still necessary that this task be fitting to him” (Durkheim 1893/1984:375). Moreover, a “normal” division of labor exists only when the specialization of tasks is not exaggerated. If the division of labor is pushed too far, there is a danger for the individual to become “isolated in his special activity.” In such cases, the division of labor becomes “a source of disintegration” for both the individual and society (ibid.). The individual “no longer feels the idea of common work being done by those who work side by side with him” (ibid.). Meanwhile, a rigid division of labor can lead to “the institution of classes and castes . . . [which] is often a source of dissension” (ibid.:374). Durkheim used the term *anomie* to refer to the pathological lack of moral regulation in modern societies. In *The Division of Labor*, Durkheim emphasized that overspecialization thwarts organic solidarity (or the “feeling of oneness” based on interdependence) because instead of instigating interdependence it instigates isolation. As we will see, Durkheim expanded on the concept of anomie in later works. Thus this is a pivotal concept to which we shortly return.

Most interesting, then, the important point is not that Durkheim ignored the potentially harmful aspects of the division of labor in modern societies; on the contrary, Durkheim acknowledged that the division of labor is problematic when it is “forced” or pushed to an extreme. This position offers an important similarity as well as difference to that offered by Marx. As we noted previously, Marx saw both alienation and class conflict as inevitable (or “normal”) in capitalist societies. By contrast, rather than seeing social conflict as a “normal” condition of capitalism, Durkheim maintained that anomie results only in “abnormal” conditions of overspecialization, when the rules of capitalism become too rigid and individuals are “forced” into a particular

position in the division of labor.

From The Division of Labor in Society (1893)

Émile Durkheim

INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM

The division of labor is not of recent origin, but it was only at the end of the eighteenth century that social cognizance was taken of the principle, though, until then, unwitting submission had been rendered to it. To be sure, several thinkers from earliest times saw its importance;ⁱ but Adam Smith was the first to attempt a theory of it. Moreover, he adopted this phrase that social science later lent to biology.

Nowadays, the phenomenon has developed so generally it is obvious to all. We need have no further illusions about the tendencies of modern industry; it advances steadily towards powerful machines, towards great concentrations of forces and capital, and consequently to the extreme division of labor. Occupations are infinitely separated and specialized, not only inside the factories, but each product is itself a specialty dependent upon others. Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill still hoped that agriculture, at least, would be an exception to the rule, and they saw it as the last resort of small-scale industry. Although one must be careful not to generalize unduly in such matters, nevertheless it is hard to deny today that the principal branches of the agricultural industry are steadily being drawn into the general movement. Finally, business itself is ingeniously following and reflecting in all its shadings the infinite diversity of industrial enterprises; and, while this evolution is realizing itself with unpremeditated spontaneity, the economists, examining its causes and appreciating its results, far from condemning or opposing it, uphold it as necessary. They see in it the supreme law of human societies and the condition of their progress. But the division of labor is not peculiar to the economic world; we can observe its growing influence in the most varied fields of society. The political, administrative, and judicial functions are growing more and more specialized. It is the same with the aesthetic and scientific functions. It is long since philosophy reigned as the science unique; it has been broken into a multitude of special disciplines each of which has its object, method, and though. “Men working in the sciences have become increasingly more specialized.”ⁱⁱ

MECHANICAL SOLIDARITY

We are now in a position to come to a conclusion.

The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society forms a determinate system which has its own life; one may call it the *collective* or *common conscience*. No doubt, it has not a specific organ as a substratum; it is, by definition, diffuse in every reach of society. Nevertheless, it has specific characteristics which make it a distinct reality. It is, in effect, independent of the particular conditions in which individuals are placed; they pass on and it remains. It is the same in the North and in the South, in great cities and in small, in different professions. Moreover, it does not change with each generation, but, on the contrary, it connects successive generations with one another. It is, thus, an entirely different thing from particular consciences, although it can be realized only through them. It is the psychical type of society, a type which has its properties, its conditions of existence, its mode of development, just as individual types, although in a different way. Thus understood, it has the right to be denoted by a special word. The one which we have just employed is not, it is true, without ambiguity. As the terms, *collective* and *social*, are often considered synonymous, one is inclined to believe that the collective conscience is the total social conscience, that is, extend it to include more than the psychic life of society, although, particularly in advanced societies, it is only a very restricted part. Judicial, governmental, scientific, industrial, in short, all special functions are of a psychic nature, since they consist in systems of representations and actions. They, however, are surely outside the common conscience. To avoid the confusionⁱⁱⁱ into which some have fallen, the best way would be to create a technical expression especially to designate the totality of social similitudes. However, since the use of a new word, when not absolutely necessary, is not without inconvenience, we shall employ the well-worn expression, *collective* or *common conscience*, but we shall always mean the strict sense in which we have taken it.

We can, then, to resume the preceding analysis, say that an act is criminal when it offends strong and defined states of the collective conscience.^{iv}

The statement of this proposition is not generally called into question, but it is ordinarily given a sense very different from that which it ought to convey. We take it as if it expressed, not the essential property of crime, but one of its repercussions. We well know that crime violates very pervasive and intense sentiments, but we believe that this pervasiveness and this intensity derive from the criminal character of the act, which consequently remains to be defined. We do not deny that every delict is universally reprobated, but we take as agreed that the reprobation to which it is subjected results from its delictness. But we are hard put to say what this delictness consists of. In immorality which is particularly serious? I wish such were the case, but that is to reply to the question by putting one word in place of another, for it is

precisely the problem to understand what this immorality is, and especially this particular immorality which society reproves by means of organized punishment and which constitutes criminality. It can evidently come only from one or several characteristics common to all criminological types. The only one which would satisfy this condition is that opposition between a crime, whatever it is, and certain collective sentiments. It is, accordingly, this opposition which makes crime rather than being a derivative of crime. In other words, we must not say that an action shocks the common conscience because it is criminal, but rather that it is criminal because it shocks the common conscience. We do not reprove it because it is a crime, but it is a crime because we reprove it. As for the intrinsic nature of these sentiments, it is impossible to specify them. They have the most diverse objects and cannot be encompassed in a single formula. We can say that they relate neither to vital interests of society nor to a minimum of justice. All these definitions are inadequate. By this alone can we recognize it: a sentiment, whatever its origin and end, is found in all consciences with a certain degree of force and precision, and every action which violates it is a crime. Contemporary psychology is more and more reverting to the idea of Spinoza, according to which things are good because we like them, as against our liking them because they are good. What is primary is the tendency, the inclination; the pleasure and pain are only derivative facts. It is just so in social life. An act is socially bad because society disproves of it. But, it will be asked, are there not some collective sentiments which result from pleasure and pain which society feels from contact with their ends? No doubt, but they do not all have this origin. A great many, if not the larger part, come from other causes. Everything that leads activity to assume a definite form can give rise to habits, whence result tendencies which must be satisfied. Moreover, it is these latter tendencies which alone are truly fundamental. The others are only special forms and more determinate. Thus, to find charm in such and such an object, collective sensibility must already be constituted so as to be able to enjoy it. If the corresponding sentiments are abolished, the most harmful act to society will not only be tolerated, but even honored and proposed as an example. Pleasure is incapable of creating an impulse out of whole cloth; it can only link those sentiments which exist to such and such a particular end, provided that the end be in accord with their original nature. . . .

ORGANIC SOLIDARITY

Since negative solidarity does not produce any integration by itself, and since, moreover, there is nothing specific about it, we shall recognize only two kinds of positive solidarity which are distinguishable by the following qualities:

1. The first binds the individual directly to society without any

intermediary. In the second, he depends upon society, because he depends upon the parts of which it is composed.

2. Society is not seen in the same aspect in the two cases. In the first, what we call society is a more or less organized totality of beliefs and sentiments common to all the members of the group: this is the collective type. On the other hand, the society in which we are solitary in the second instance is a system of different, special functions which definite relations unite. These two societies really make up only one. They are two aspects of one and the same reality, but none the less they must be distinguished.

3. From this second difference there arises another which helps us to characterize and name the two kinds of solidarity.

The first can be strong only if the ideas and tendencies common to all the members of the society are greater in number and intensity than those which pertain personally to each member. It is as much stronger as the excess is more considerable. But what makes our personality is how much of our own individual qualities we have, what distinguishes us from others. This solidarity can grow only in inverse ratio to personality. There are in each of us, as we have said, two consciences: one which is common to our group in its entirety, which, consequently, is not *ourselves*, but society living and acting within us; the other, on the contrary, represents that in us which is personal and distinct, that which makes us an individual.^v Solidarity which comes from likenesses is at its maximum when the collective conscience completely envelops our whole conscience and coincides in all points with it. But, at that moment, our individuality is nil. It can be born only if the community takes smaller toll of us. There are, here, two contrary forces, one centripetal, the other centrifugal, which cannot flourish at the same time. We cannot, at one and the same time, develop ourselves in two opposite senses. If we have a lively desire to think and act for ourselves, we cannot be strongly inclined to think and act as others do. If our ideal is to present a singular and personal appearance, we do not want to resemble everybody else. Moreover, at the moment when this solidarity exercises its force, our personality vanishes, as our definition permits us to say, for we are no longer ourselves, but the collective life.

The social molecules which can be coherent in this way can act together only in the measure that they have no actions of their own, as the molecules of inorganic bodies. That is why we propose to call this type of solidarity mechanical. The term does not signify that it is produced by mechanical and artificial means. We call it that only by analogy to the cohesion which unites the elements of an inanimate body, as opposed to that which makes a unity out of the elements of a living body. What justifies this term is that the link

which thus unites the individual to society is wholly analogous to that which attaches a thing to a person. The individual conscience, considered in this light, is a simple dependent upon the collective type and follows all of its movements, as the possessed object follows those of its owner. In societies where this type of solidarity is highly developed, the individual does not appear, as we shall see later. Individuality is something which the society possesses. Thus, in these social types, personal rights are not yet distinguished from real rights.

It is quite otherwise with the solidarity which the division of labor produces. Whereas the previous type implies that individuals resemble each other, this type presumes their difference. The first is possible only in so far as the individual personality is absorbed into the collective personality; the second is possible only if each one has a sphere of action which is peculiar to him; that is, a personality. It is necessary, then, that the collective conscience leave open a part of the individual conscience in order that special functions may be established there, functions which it cannot regulate. The more this region is extended, the stronger is the cohesion which results from this solidarity. In effect, on the one hand, each one depends as much more strictly on society as labor is more divided; and, on the other, the activity of each is as much more personal as it is more specialized. Doubtless, as circumscribed as it is, it is never completely original. Even in the exercise of our occupation, we conform to usages, to practices which are common to our whole professional brotherhood. But, even in this instance, the yoke that we submit to is much less heavy than when society completely controls us, and it leaves much more place open for the free play of our initiative. Here, then, the individuality of all grows at the same time as that of its parts. Society becomes more capable of collective movement, at the same time that each of its elements has more freedom of movement. This solidarity resembles that which we observe among the higher animals. Each organ, in effect, has its special physiognomy, its autonomy. And, moreover, the unity of the organism is as great as the individuation of the parts is more marked. Because of this analogy, we propose to call the solidarity which is due to the division of labor, organic. . . .

THE CAUSES

We can then formulate the following proposition: The division of labor varies in direct ratio with the volume and density of societies, and, if it progresses in a continuous manner in the course of social development, it is because societies become regularly denser and generally more voluminous.

At all times, it is true, it has been well understood that there was a relation between these two orders of fact, for, in order that functions be more

specialized, there must be more co-operators, and they must be related to co-operate. But, ordinarily, this state of societies is seen only as the means by which the division of labor develops, and not as the cause of its development. The latter is made to depend upon individual aspirations toward well-being and happiness, which can be satisfied so much better as societies are more extensive and more condensed. The law we have just established is quite otherwise. We say, not that the growth and condensation of societies *permit*, but that they *necessitate* a greater division of labor. It is not an instrument by which the latter is realized; it is its determining cause.^{vi}

THE FORCED DIVISION OF LABOR

It is not sufficient that there be rules, however, for sometimes the rules themselves are the cause of evil. This is what occurs in class-wars. The institution of classes and of castes constitutes an organization of the division of labor, and it is a strictly regulated organization, although it often is a source of dissension. The lower classes not being, or no longer being, satisfied with the role which has devolved upon them from custom or by law aspire to functions which are closed to them and seek to dispossess those who are exercising these functions. Thus civil wars arise which are due to the manner in which labor is distributed.

There is nothing similar to this in the organism. No doubt, during periods of crises, the different tissues war against one another and nourish themselves at the expense of others. But never does one cell or organ seek to usurp a role different from the one which it is filling. The reason for this is that each anatomic element automatically executes its purpose. Its constitution, its place in the organism, determines its vocation; its task is a consequence of its nature. It can badly acquit itself, but it cannot assume another's task unless the latter abandons it, as happens in the rare cases of substitution that we have spoken of. It is not so in societies. Here the possibility is greater. There is a greater distance between the hereditary dispositions of the individual and the social function he will fill. The first do not imply the second with such immediate necessity. This space, open to striving and deliberation, is also at the mercy of a multitude of causes which can make individual nature deviate from its normal direction and create a pathological state. Because this organization is more supple, it is also more delicate and more accessible to change. Doubtless, we are not, from birth, predestined to some special position; but we do have tastes and aptitudes which limit our choice. If no care is taken of them, if they are ceaselessly disturbed by our daily occupations, we shall suffer and seek a way of putting an end to our suffering. But there is no other way out than to change the established order and to set up a new one. For the division of labor to produce solidarity, it is not

sufficient, then, that each have his task; it is still necessary that this task be fitting to him. Now, it is this condition which is not realized in the case we are examining. In effect, if the institution of classes or castes sometimes gives rise to anxiety and pain instead of producing solidarity, this is because the distribution of social functions on which it rests does not respond, or rather no longer responds, to the distribution of natural talents. . . .

CONCLUSION

But not only does the division of labor present the character by which we have defined morality; it more and more tends to become the essential condition of social solidarity. As we advance in the evolutionary scale, the ties which bind the individual to his family, to his native soil, to traditions which the past has given to him, to collective group usages, become loose. More mobile, he changes his environment more easily, leaves his people to go elsewhere to live a more autonomous existence, to a greater extent forms his own ideas and sentiments. Of course, the whole common conscience does not, on this account, pass out of existence. At least there will always remain this cult of personality, of individual dignity of which we have just been speaking, and which, today, is the rallying-point of so many people. But how little a thing it is when one contemplates the ever increasing extent of social life, and, consequently, of individual consciences! For, as they become more voluminous, as intelligence becomes richer, activity more varied, in order for morality to remain constant, that is to say, in order for the individual to remain attached to the group with a force equal to that of yesterday, the ties which bind him to it must become stronger and more numerous. If, then, he formed no others than those which come from resemblances, the effacement of the segmental type would be accompanied by a systematic debasement of morality. Man would no longer be sufficiently obligated; he would no longer feel about and above him this salutary pressure of society which moderates his egoism and makes him a moral being. This is what gives moral value to the division of labor. Through it, the individual becomes cognizant of his dependence upon society; from it come the forces which keep him in check and restrain him. In short, since the division of labor becomes the chief source of social solidarity, it becomes, at the same time, the foundation of the moral order.

We can then say that, in higher societies, our duty is not to spread our activity over a large surface, but to concentrate and specialize it. We must contract our horizon, choose a definite task and immerse ourselves in it completely, instead of trying to make ourselves a sort of creative masterpiece, quite complete, which contains its worth in itself and not in the services that it renders. Finally, this specialization ought to be pushed as far as the elevation

of the social type, without assigning any other limit to it.^{vii} No doubt, we ought so to work as to realize in ourselves the collective type as it exists. There are common sentiments, common ideas, without which, as has been said, one is not a man. The rule which orders us to specialize remains limited by the contrary rule. Our conclusion is not that it is good to press specialization as far as possible, but as far as necessary. As for the part that is to be played by these two opposing necessities, that is determined by experience and cannot be calculated *a priori*. It is enough for us to have shown that the second is not of a different nature from the first, but that it also is moral, and that, moreover, this duty becomes ever more important and pressing, because the general qualities which are in question suffice less and less to socialize the individual. . . .

Let us first of all remark that it is difficult to see why it would be more in keeping with the logic of human nature to develop superficially rather than profoundly. Why would a more extensive activity, but more dispersed, be superior to a more concentrated, but circumscribed, activity? Why would there be more dignity in being complete and mediocre, rather than in living a more specialized, but more intense life, particularly if it is thus possible for us to find what we have lost in this specialization, through our association with other beings who have what we lack and who complete us? We take off from the principle that man ought to realize his nature as man, to accomplish his *ἁλκυονίδος ἔργον*, as Aristotle said. But this nature does not remain constant throughout history; it is modified with societies. Among lower peoples, the proper duty of man is to resemble his companions, to realize in himself all the traits of the collective type which are then confounded, much more than today, with the human type. But, in more advanced societies, his nature is, in large part, to be an organ of society, and his proper duty, consequently, is to play his role as an organ.

Moreover, far from being trammelled by the progress of specialization, individual personality develops with the division of labor.

To be a person is to be an autonomous source of action. Man acquires this quality only in so far as there is something in him which is his alone and which individualizes him, as he is something more than a simple incarnation of the generic type of his race and his group. It will be said that he is endowed with free will and that is enough to establish his personality. But although there may be some of this liberty in him, an object of so many discussions, it is not this metaphysical, impersonal, invariable attribute which can serve as the unique basis for concrete personality, which is empirical and variable with individuals. That could not be constituted by the wholly abstract power of choice between two opposites, but it is still necessary for this faculty to be

exercised towards ends and aims which are proper to the agent. In other words, the very materials of conscience must have a personal character. But we have seen in the second book of this work that this result is progressively produced as the division of labor progresses. The effacement of the segmental type, at the same time that it necessitates a very great specialization, partially lifts the individual conscience from the organic environment which supports it, as from the social environment which envelops it, and, accordingly, because of this double emancipation, the individual becomes more of an independent factor in his own conduct. The division of labor itself contributes to this enfranchisement, for individual natures, while specializing, become more complex, and by that are in part freed from collective action and hereditary influences which can only enforce themselves upon simple, general things. . . .

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ⁱAristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, E, 1133a, 16.

ⁱⁱDe Candolle, *Histoire des Sciences et des Savants*, 2nd ed., p. 263.

ⁱⁱⁱThe confusion is not without its dangers. Thus, we sometimes ask if the individual conscience varies as the collective conscience. It all depends upon the sense in which the word is taken. If it represents social likenesses, the variation is inverse, as we shall see. If it signifies the total psychic life of society, the relation is direct. It is thus necessary to distinguish them.

^{iv}We shall not consider the question whether the collective conscience is a conscience as is that of the individual. By this term, we simply signify the totality of social likenesses, without prejudging the category by which this system of phenomena ought to be defined.

^vHowever, these two consciences are not in regions geographically distinct from us, but penetrate from all sides.

^{vi}On this point, we can still rely on Comte as authority. "I must," he said "now indicate the progressive condensation of our species as a last general concurrent element in regulating the effective speed of the social movement. We can first easily recognize that this influence contributes a great deal, especially in origin, in determining a more special division of human labor, necessarily incompatible with a small number of co-operators. *Besides, by a most intimate and little known property, although still most important, such a condensation stimulates directly, in a very powerful manner, the most rapid development of social evolution*, either in driving individuals to new efforts to assure themselves by more refined means of an existence which otherwise would become more difficult, or by obliging society with more stubborn and better concentrated energy to fight more stiffly against the more powerful effort of particular divergences. With one and the other, we see that it is not a question here of the absolute increase of the number of individuals, but especially of their more intense concourse in a given space." *Cours*, IV, p. 455.

^{vii}There is, however, probably another limit which we do not have to speak of since it concerns individual hygiene. It may be held that, in the light of our organico-psychic constitution, the division of labor cannot go beyond a certain limit without disorders resulting. Without entering upon the question, let us straightaway say that the extreme specialization at which biological functions have arrived does not seem favorable to this hypothesis. Moreover, in the very order of psychic and social functions, has

not the division of labor, in its historical development, been carried to the last stage in the relations of men and women? Have not there been faculties completely lost by both? Why cannot the same phenomenon occur between individuals of the same sex? Of course, it takes time for the organism to adapt itself to these changes, but we do not see why a day should come when this adaptation would become impossible.



Introduction to *The Rules of Sociological Method*

In *The Rules of Sociological Method* (Durkheim 1895/1966:xiii), Durkheim makes at least three essential points. Durkheim insists (1) sociology is a distinct field of study, and (2) although the social sciences are distinct from the natural sciences, the methods of the latter can be applied to the former. In addition, Durkheim maintains (3) the social field is also distinct from the psychological realm. Thus, sociology is the study of social phenomena or “social facts,” a very different enterprise from the study of an individual’s own ideas or will.

Specifically, Durkheim maintains there are two different ways that social facts can be identified. First, social facts are “general throughout the extent of a given society” at a given stage in the evolution of that society (Durkheim 1895/1966:xv,13). Second, albeit related, a social fact is marked by “any manner of action . . . capable of exercising over the individual exterior constraint” (ibid.). In other words, a “social fact” is recognized by the “coercive power which it exercises or is capable of exercising over individuals” (ibid.:10). This does not mean that there are no “exceptions” to a social fact, but that it is potentially universal in the sense that, given specific conditions, it will be likely to emerge (ibid.:xv).

The “coercive power” of social facts brings us to a critical issue raised in *The Rules of Sociological Method*: crime. Durkheim argues that crime is inevitable or “normal” in all societies for two reasons. First, crime is inevitable and normal because crime defines the moral boundaries of a society and, in doing so, communicates to its inhabitants the range of acceptable behaviors. As Durkheim maintains, “A society exempt from [crime] is utterly impossible” because crime affirms and reaffirms the collective sentiments on which it is founded and which are necessary for its existence (ibid.:67). The formation and reformation of the collective conscience is never complete. Indeed, Durkheim maintains that even in a hypothetical “society of saints,” a “perfect cloister of exemplary individuals,” “faults” will appear, which will cause the same “scandal that the ordinary offense does in ordinary consciousnesses” (ibid.:68,69). It is impossible for all to be alike. . . . There cannot be a society in which the individuals do not differ more or less from