to the bourgeoisie are well known: 'It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals. . .' [60] The point of this, however, is not the sheerly technological accomplishment of capitalism: rather, the technological expansion of capitalism is symptomatic of the 'universal tendency' [61] of bourgeois society which distinguishes it from all previous social formations. Bourgeois society replaces the relatively autonomous local communities characteristic of prior types of society by a division of labour which draws the disparate cultural and even national groupings which formerly existed into the same social and economic system. At the same time as it expands the range of human interdependence, the spread of bourgeois society sweeps away the particular cultural myths and traditions under which men have lived from the beginning of time. Ultimately, bourgeois society brings the whole of mankind, for the first time in history, within the purview of a single social order, and is genuinely 'world-historical'.

But this is only achieved through the action of the market and the transformation of all personal ties of dependence (such as existed in feudal bonds of fea' ') into exchange-value. Seen in this light, it is easy to understand why much of the controversy over the value-price problem between volumes 1 and 3 of *Capital* is essentially irrelevant to the objectives of the work as a whole, which are to document this metamorphosis of human relationships into phenomena of the market. The analysis given in the three volumes of *Capital* examines in detail the alienative effects of the progressive development of capitalism, and shows how the universalisation of social relationships achieved by bourgeois society is only accomplished by their transmutation into class relationships: 'The limitation of capital is that this whole development takes place in a contradictory manner, and that the elaboration of the productive forces, of universal wealth, science, etc., appears as the *alienation* of the individual worker from himself. . .' [62]

Since its very core is founded upon an antagonistic relationship, between capital and wage-labour, which by its very operation universalises the worker *only in a condition of alienation*, capitalism contains within it forces which both propel it towards its own demise and prepare the way for its transcendence.

[60] *CM*, p. 135.

[61] *Gru*, pp. 438–41. As Mandel remarks: 'The socialisation of production under the capitalist system is the most important and progressive effect of the generalisation of the capitalist mode of production.' Ernest Mandel: *Marxist Economic Theory* (London, 1968), vol. 1, p. 170.

[62] *Gru*, p. 440.

Part 2: Durkheim

5. Durkheim's early works

To move from Marx to Durkheim is not only to move from an earlier to a later generation of social thinkers; it is also to effect a major change in institutional context and intellectual tradition. Of the three writers discussed in this book, Durkheim was the least directly involved on a personal level in the great political events of his time: virtually all of his works are wholly academic in character, and consequently are far less scattered – and less propagandist – than many of those of Marx or Weber.[1] Moreover, the intellectual influences which were most important in contributing to Durkheim's theoretical outlook are more homogeneous and easy to specify than those moulding the work of the other two authors.

The significant influences over Durkheim's mature intellectual position come from within distinctly French intellectual traditions. The overlapping interpretations which Saint-Simon and Comte offered of the decline of feudalism and the emergence of the modern form of society constitute the principal foundation for the whole of Durkheim's writings. Indeed, it could be said that the main theme in Durkheim's life's work is concerned with the reconciliation of Comte's conception of the 'positive' stage of society with Saint-Simon's partly variant exposition of the characteristics of 'industrialism'.[2] Other influences from an earlier generation are those of Montesquieu and Rousseau; to these, Durkheim conjoined the contemporary teachings of Renouvier, and at the *Ecole Normale* where Durkheim studied from 1879 to 1882, those of his professors Boutroux and Fustel de Coulanges.[3]

Durkheim's earliest writings, however, were concerned with the ideas of a group of contemporary German authors. There are some sorts of social theory which, although as recent in formulation as those which are very familiar in

[1] This judgement cannot be made too sweepingly, however. Durkheim's important article: 'L'Individualisme et les intellectuels', *Revue bleue*, vol. 10, 1898, pp. 7–13, is directly related to the Dreyfus case, although it is hardly a wholly 'political' statement. During the First World War, Durkheim worked on the preparation of various propaganda documents, including *Qui a voulu la guerre?*, with E. Denis (Paris, 1915), and '*L'Allemagne au-dessus de tout*' (Paris, 1915).

[2] cf. Alvin W. Gouldner: 'Introduction' to *Soc*, pp. 13–18.

[3] Further documentation of the sources of Durkheim's thought would be tedious and irrelevant to this work. The influence of German and English authors is obviously not completely absent. Renouvier mediated the interest which Durkheim maintained in Kant; as is indicated below in the text, Durkheim was marginally influenced by a number of contemporary German authors; the English influence is evident in Durkheim's early interest in Herbert Spencer and later in the writings of the English anthropologists (Frazer, Tylor and Robertson-Smith).

modern-day sociology, have rapidly become almost completely forgotten. One such type of theory is organicism, such as represented in the latter part of the nineteenth century by writings of Fouillée and Worms in France, and Schäffle and Lilienfeld in Germany. The notion that society forms an integrated unity which is in some sense comparable to that of a living organism is, of course, one which can be traced back to classical social philosophy. But the publication of Darwin's theory of biological evolution gave an entirely new stimulus to the elaboration of organicist theories.[4] It is difficult from the perspective of the modern age to recapture the extraordinary impact which Darwin's writings had upon social thought in the concluding decades of the nineteenth century. The century as a whole witnessed many considerable advances in biology: the properties of the cell were identified through microscopic analysis, and the thesis that all organisms are composed of combinations of similar cellular structures became a firmly established principle. In Darwin's work these notions are placed within the context of an empirically grounded dynamic theory; and nothing was more guaranteed to fire the imagination of his contemporaries than this powerful combination of positivism and a perspective of evolutionary progress. The writings of Schäffle and the others thus differ considerably from those of their many precursors who employed organic analogies, in that these later authors proceed from the premise that the established laws governing the functioning and evolution of animal organisms provide a model upon which the framework of a natural science of society may be based.

Sociology and the 'science of moral life'

Between 1885 and 1887, Durkheim published a number of critical discussions of the work of Schäffle, Lilienfeld and other German social thinkers. Durkheim's review of Schäffle's *Bau und Leben des Socialen Körpers* was his first publication, but it gives ample indication of the trend of Durkheim's early thought.[5] Durkheim's discussion of Schäffle's book makes it plain that he is sympathetic to some of the chief points of argument presented by that author. One of Schäffle's most important contributions, according to Durkheim, is to have outlined a useful morphological analysis of the principal structural components of different forms of society. In achieving this, Schäffle makes extensive use of organic analogies, comparing various parts of society to the organs and tissues of the body. This is not, in Durkheim's view, an illegitimate procedure, because Schäffle does not attempt in a direct sense to deduce the properties of social organisation from those of organic life. On the contrary, Schäffle insists that the use of biological concepts represents nothing more than a 'metaphor' which can facilitate sociological analysis.

In fact, Durkheim points out approvingly, Schäffle insists that there exists a radical and highly significant discrepancy between the life of the organism and that of society. Whereas the life of the animal organism is governed 'mechanically', society is bound together 'not by a material relation, but by the ties of ideas'.[6] The notion of 'society as the ideal', Durkheim stresses, occupies a focal place in Schäffle's thought, and is entirely consistent with the latter's emphasis that society has its own specific properties which are separable from those of its individual members. For Schäffle, 'Society is not simply an aggregate of individuals, but is a being which has existed prior to those who today compose it, and which will survive them; which influences them more than they influence it, and which has its own life, consciousness (*conscience*), its own interests and destiny'.[7] Schäffle thus rejects the conception of the individual and society given primacy by Rousseau, in which the hypothetical 'isolated individual' in a state of nature is freer and happier than when bonded to society. On the contrary, everything that makes human life higher than the level of animal existence is derived from the accumulated cultural and technological wealth of society. If this be removed from man, 'then you will have removed at the same time all that makes us truly human'.[8]

The ideals and sentiments which constitute the cultural inheritance of the members of a society are 'impersonal', that is, they are socially evolved, and are neither the product nor the property of any specific individuals. This is easily shown by reference to the example of language: 'each of us speaks a language which he did not create'.[9] Schäffle shows, Durkheim continues, that to treat the *conscience collective* as having properties which are not the same as those of the individual consciousness does not imply anything metaphysical.[10] The *conscience collective* is simply 'a composite, the elements of which are individual minds'.[11]

Schäffle's work, together with that of other German authors, according to Durkheim, manifests the important advances being made in social thought in Germany – a state of affairs contrasting heavily with the retarded develop-

[4] The publication of *The Origin of Species* was also regarded by Marx and Engels as an event of major significance, offering a direct parallel to their own interpretation of social development. Marx wrote to Darwin offering to dedicate the first volume of *Capital* to him. (Darwin declined the offer.)

[5] Durkheim: review of Albert Schäffle: *Bau und Leben des Socialen Körpers* (2nd. ed.); (the review covers only vol. 1 of Schäffle's work). *RP*, vol. 19, 1885, pp. 84–101. cf. my article: 'Durkheim as a review critic', *Sociological Review*, vol. 18, 1970, pp. 171–96, which I have drawn upon for part of this chapter.

[6] Review of Schäffle, p. 85. Quotations are from Durkheim. For Durkheim's views on the usefulness of organic analogies in sociology, see my article quoted above, pp. 179–80.

[7] Review of Schäffle, p. 84.

[8] *Ibid.* p. 87.

[9] *Ibid.* p. 87.

[10] *Ibid.* pp. 99ff. I have followed the usual practice of leaving Durkheim's phrase *conscience collective* untranslated. There is a definite ambiguity in the term which overlaps with both the English words, 'consciousness' and 'conscience'.

[11] Review of Schäffle, p. 92. Durkheim nevertheless criticises Schäffle for sometimes relapsing into idealism.

ment of sociology in France. 'Thus sociology, which is French by origin, is becoming more and more a German science.' [12]

In his long survey of 'positive moral science' in Germany, published in 1887, Durkheim reiterates some of these points.[13] But the main concern of this article is to examine the contributions which leading German authors have made towards founding a science of moral life.[14] In France, Durkheim asserts, only two broad forms of ethical theory are known – Kantian idealism on the one hand, and utilitarianism on the other. The recent works of the German social thinkers, however, have begun to establish – or rather, to re-establish, since some of their notions were previously stated by Comte – ethics on a scientific footing. This approach, Durkheim states, has been worked out primarily by economists and jurists, among whom the most important are Wagner and Schmoller.[15] The work of these two authors, as Durkheim describes it, differs considerably from that of orthodox economists. Orthodox economic theory is built upon individualistic utilitarianism, and is ahistorical: 'In other words, the major laws of economics would be exactly the same even if neither nations nor states had existed in the world; they suppose only the presence of individuals who exchange their products.' [16] But Wagner and Schmoller depart substantially from this standpoint. For them (as for Schäffle), society is a unity having its own specific characteristics which cannot be inferred from those of its individual members. It is false to suppose 'that a whole is equal to the sum of its parts': in so far as these parts are *organised* in a definite fashion, then this organisation of relationships has properties of its own.[17] This principle has to be applied also to the moral

[12] Durkheim: review of Ludwig Gumplowicz: *Grundriss der Soziologie*, *RP*, vol. 20, 1885, p. 627.

[13] 'La science positive de la morale en Allemagne', *RP*, vol. 24, 1887, pp. 33–58, 113–42 & 275–84. cf. also 'Les études de science sociale', *RP*, vol. 22, 1886, pp. 61–80.

[14] Durkheim usually employs the term 'la morale' which is ambiguous in English in that it can mean either 'morality' or 'ethics' (i.e. the study of morality). I have rendered the term variably according to context in quoting from Durkheim.

[15] This establishes one of the few points of direct connection between the writings of Durkheim and Max Weber. Adolf Wagner and Gustav Schmoller were among the founders of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*, of which Weber became a prominent member. But Weber never accepted that aspect of the views of Wagner and Schmoller which appealed most to Durkheim – their attempt to found a 'scientific' ethics. Weber also questioned the policy of state intervention in the economy, as advocated by Schmoller in particular.

[16] 'Science positive de la morale', part 1, p. 37.

[17] This principle was already well known to Durkheim, through Renouvier. Durkheim applies it frequently in his writings. As he remarks in a review published much later, 'it is from Renouvier that we took the axiom that a whole is not equal to the sum of its parts' (Review of Simon Deploige: *Le conflit de la morale et de la sociologie*, *AS*, vol. 12, 1909–12, p. 326). Deploige's work is a scathing attack upon Durkheim's school from a Thomist standpoint. It has been translated into English as *The Conflict between Ethics and Sociology* (St Louis, 1938); see esp. pp. 15–185. Some of the more important reviews written by Durkheim in the *AS* have been collected together as *Journal sociologique* (Paris, 1969).

rules which men live by in society: morality is a collective property and must be studied as such. In the theory of orthodox political economy, on the other hand, 'the collective interest is only a form of personal interest', and 'altruism is merely a concealed egoism'.[18]

Schmoller has shown, Durkheim states, that economic phenomena cannot be adequately studied in the manner of classical economic theory, as if these were separate from the moral norms and beliefs which govern the life of individuals in society. There is no society (nor could there conceivably be a society) where economic relationships are not subject to customary and legal regulation. That is to say, as Durkheim was later to express the matter in *The Division of Labour*, 'a contract is not sufficient unto itself'.[19] If it were not for the existence of social norms which provide the framework within which contracts are made, then 'incoherent chaos' would reign in the economic world.[20] The regulations which control economic life cannot be explained purely in economic terms: 'One can understand nothing of the rules of morality which govern property, contract, work, etc., if one does not know the economic causes which underlie them; and, conversely, one would arrive at a completely false notion of economic development if one neglected the moral causes which influenced it.' [21]

It is a major achievement of the German thinkers to have shown that moral rules and actions can and must be studied scientifically, as properties of social organisation. Here Durkheim sets out a precept which was to form a main connecting thread of his subsequent writings. Up to the present, philosophers have assumed that ethics can be based upon a deductive system of abstract principles. But the work of the German authors has shown that it is fundamentally mistaken to proceed in this way, as if human social life could be reduced to a few intellectually formulated maxims. Rather, we must *begin* with reality, which means the study of concrete forms of moral rules comprised within definite societies. Here Durkheim again quotes Schäffle appreciatively: it is precisely Schäffle's major achievement to have shown that moral rules are shaped by society, under the pressure of collective needs. There can be no question, therefore, of assuming that such rules, as they really operate empirically, can be reduced to a few *a priori* principles of which all specific beliefs and actions are merely an expression. Moral facts are actually 'of prodigious complexity': the empirical study of different societies shows that there exists a 'steadily increasing multitude of beliefs, customs and legal provisions'.[22] This diversity is not refractory to analysis; but only the sociologist, through observation and description, can hope to classify and to interpret it.

Durkheim devotes a large part of his article on the German thinkers to

[18] 'Science positive de la morale', part 1, p. 38.

[19] *DL*, p. 215.

[20] 'Science positive de la morale', part 1, p. 40.

[21] *Ibid.* p. 41.

[22] *Ibid.* part 3, p. 276.

analysing Wundt's *Ethik*, regarding this work as one of the most significant fruits of the perspectives outlined above. One of Wundt's primary contributions which Durkheim singles out, is to have shown the basic significance of religious institutions in society. Wundt has shown that primitive religions contain two sorts of interrelated phenomena: a set of 'metaphysical speculations on the nature and order of things' on the one hand, and rules of conduct and moral discipline on the other.[23] Moreover, through providing ideals to be striven for, religion is a force making for social unity. Durkheim accepts this as a general postulate: these ideals may vary between different societies, 'but one can be confident that there have never been men who have completely lacked an ideal, however humble it may be; for this corresponds to a need which is deeply rooted in our nature'.[24] In primitive societies, religion is a strong source of altruism: religious beliefs and practices have the effect 'of restraining egoism, of inclining man towards sacrifice and disinterestedness'. Religious sentiments 'attach man to something other than himself, and make him dependent upon superior powers which symbolise the ideal'.[25] Individualism, Wundt has shown, is a product of social development: 'far from individuality being the primitive fact, and society the derived fact, the first only slowly emerges from the second.'[26]

One of Durkheim's criticisms of Wundt is that the latter does not fully perceive the dual character of the regulative effect of religious and other moral rules. All moral actions, Durkheim says, have two sides: the positive attraction, the attraction to an ideal or set of ideals, is one side. But moral rules also have characteristics of obligation or constraint, since the pursuit of moral ends is not always inevitably founded upon the positive valence of ideals. Both aspects of moral rules are essential to their functioning.

Durkheim's concerns in 'The Division of Labour'

Durkheim's early discussions of the works of the German social thinkers indicate that several of his characteristic views were established at the very outset of his career.[27] It is difficult to assess precisely how far Durkheim was

[23] *Ibid.* part 2, pp. 116–17. Weber's critical discussion of Wundt appears in *GAW*, pp. 52ff.

[24] *Ibid.* p. 117.

[25] *Ibid.* p. 120.

[26] *Ibid.* p. 129. For another source of information upon Durkheim's early views on religion, cf. his review of Guyau's *L'irréligion de l'avenir*, *RP*, vol. 23, 1887, pp. 299–311.

[27] It is important to emphasise this point, because most secondary interpreters have concentrated heavily upon the changes which are presumed to have occurred in Durkheim's thought over the course of his writings. The most influential analysis of this sort is given in Talcott Parsons: *The Structure of Social Action* (Glencoe, 1949), pp. 301–450. For a recent, more simplified statement of the same position, see Jean Duvignaud: *Durkheim, sa vie, son oeuvre* (Paris, 1965), pp. 39–50. A similar theme is reiterated by Nisbet: Robert A. Nisbet: *Emile Durkheim* (Englewood Cliffs, 1965), esp. p. 37. The effect of this is to minimise the importance of *The Division of Labour* in relation to Durkheim's later writings, and thereby to make Durkheim appear as much more of a 'conservative' theorist than is actually the case. cf. my 'Durkheim as a review critic', pp. 188–91.

directly influenced by their writings, and how far alternatively these simply reinforced conclusions which he had already reached from other sources. The latter is the most likely. When criticised, much later on in his life, for having 'imported his ideas wholesale from Germany', Durkheim bluntly denied the assertion, stating that the influence of Comte was much more profound, and formed the position from which he evaluated the contributions of the German authors.[28] The important point is that Durkheim's discussions in the early writings show that he was conscious, at the outset of his career, of notions which sometimes have been supposed to have appeared only much later.[29] Of course, these are only stated in a rudimentary way, or have to be inferred from Durkheim's presentation of the views of others. But they include a consciousness of the following elements: the importance of 'ideals' and moral unity in the continuity of society [30]; the significance of the individual as an active agent as well as a passive recipient of social influences [31]; the dual nature of the attachment of the individual to society, as involving both obligation and positive commitment to ideals; the conception that an organisation of units (i.e., individuals as the units of organised societies) has properties which cannot be directly inferred from the characteristics of the component units considered in isolation from one another; the essential foundations of what was to become the theory of anomie [32]; and the rudiments of the later theory of religion.

It is important to bear these considerations in mind when evaluating the

[28] Review of Deploige, p. 326. It should be remembered, however, that Durkheim's comments were written in the shadow of the imminent World War. For an earlier exchange of critical letters between Durkheim and Deploige, see the *Revue néo-scolastique*, vol. 14, 1907, pp. 606–21.

[29] See esp. Parsons, pp. 303–7; also Alessandro Pizzorno: 'Lecture actuelle de Durkheim', *Archives européennes de sociologie*, vol. 4, 1963, pp. 3–4.

[30] In reviewing Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Durkheim makes the point that, when primitive society is replaced by more modern forms, the moral basis of unity does not wholly disappear. Tönnies assumes, according to Durkheim, that in *Gesellschaft* all 'collective life resulting from internal spontaneity' has been lost. But we must recognise, Durkheim states, that the differentiated type of social order has not ceased to be a society: that is, it preserves a collective unity and identity. *RP*, vol. 27, 1889, p. 421.

[31] This emerges clearly in Durkheim's discussion of Gumplowicz's *Grundriss der Soziologie* (RP, vol. 20, 1885, pp. 627–34), where Durkheim says, in criticism of Gumplowicz's 'objectivism', that 'we are at the same time actors and acted upon, and each of us contributes to forming this irresistible current which sweeps him along' (p. 632).

[32] cf. Durkheim's early article on suicide, where the point is made that, contrary to the thesis of the utilitarians, there is no direct and universal relationship between increasing prosperity and the advance of human happiness. If the effect of satisfying wants is simply to stimulate further wants, then the disparity between desires and their satisfaction may become actually broadened. 'Suicide et natalité, étude de statistique morale', *RP*, vol. 26, 1888, pp. 446–7.

content of *The Division of Labour* (1893), which is a highly polemical work. Durkheim concentrates his critical attack in such a way that certain of the underlying themes of the work tend to become obscured. One main arm of the polemic in the book is directed against the utilitarian individualism of the political economists and English philosophers.[33] But there is also another, rather less evident, critical objective in the book. This concerns the stream of thought deriving from Comte, and adopted by such authors as Schäffle, which stresses the salience of strongly defined moral consensus to the perpetuation of social order.[34] Durkheim accepts this as appropriate to the analysis of traditional types of society. But the main proposition developed in *The Division of Labour* is that modern complex society is not, in spite of the declining significance of traditional moral beliefs, inevitably tending towards disintegration. Instead, the 'normal' state of the differentiated division of labour is one of organic stability. This does not mean, however (as Durkheim considers Tönnies's analysis in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* to imply), that the integrating effect of the specialised division of labour can be satisfactorily interpreted in the mode of utilitarianism, as the result of multifarious individual contracts. On the contrary, the existence of contract presupposes norms which are not themselves the outcome of contractual ties, but which constitute general moral commitments without which the formation of such ties could not proceed in an orderly fashion. The 'cult of the individual', a notion which Durkheim takes over from Renouvier – basic consensual beliefs concerning the dignity and worth of the human individual, such as were formulated by the *philosophes* of the eighteenth century and underlay the French Revolution – is the counterpart to the individualisation produced by the expansion of the division of labour, and is the main moral support upon which it rests.[35]

The standpoint from which Durkheim approaches his subject-matter in *The Division of Labour* is identical to that set out in his discussions of the German social thinkers. 'This book', Durkheim states at the outset, 'is above all an attempt to treat the facts of moral life according to the method of the positive sciences.'[36] Such a method has to be clearly separated from that of ethical philosophy: the moral philosophers begin either from some *a priori* postulate about the essential characteristics of human nature, or from propositions taken from psychology, and thence proceed by a process of logical deduction to work out a scheme of ethics. Durkheim sets out, on the other hand, not to 'extract ethics from science, but to establish a science of morality, which is quite different'.[37] Moral rules develop in society, and are integrally

[33] It is this which is given sole prominence by Parsons; see pp. 308–17.
[34] cf. Gouldner, pp. 28–9.
[35] *DL*, pp. 399–402.
[36] *DL*, p. 32. *DTS*, p. xxxvii. See J. A. Barnes: 'Durkheim's *Division of Labour in Society*', *Man* (New Series), vol. 1, 1966, pp. 158ff.
[37] *DL*, p. 32; *DTS*, p. xxxvii.

bound up with the conditions of social life pertaining in a given time and place. The science of moral phenomena thus sets out to analyse how changing forms of society effect transformations in the character of moral norms, and to 'observe, describe and classify' these.

The main substantive problem which is at the root of Durkheim's concern in *The Division of Labour* stems from an apparent moral ambiguity concerning the relationship between the individual and society in the contemporary world. On the one hand, the development of the modern form of society is associated with the expansion of 'individualism'. This is a phenomenon clearly associated with the growth of the division of labour, which produces specialisation of occupational function, and therefore fosters the development of specific talents, capacities and attitudes which are not shared by everyone in society, but are possessed only by particular groups. It is not difficult, Durkheim states, to show that there are strong currents of moral ideals in the present age which express the viewpoint that the individual personality should be developed according to the specific qualities which the person has, and hence that not everyone should receive a uniform education.[38] On the other hand, there are other contradictory moral trends which are also strong, and which praise the 'universally developed individual'. 'In a general way, the precept (*maxime*) which commands us to specialise appears everywhere to be contradicted by the precept which commands us all to follow the same ideal.'[39]

An understanding of sources of these apparently contradictory moral ideals, according to Durkheim, can be achieved only through a historical and sociological analysis of the causes and effects of the expansion of the division of labour. The division of labour, Durkheim points out, is not wholly a modern phenomenon; but in the more traditional sorts of society, it is rudimentary, and usually confined to a sexual division. A high degree of specialisation in the division of labour is particularly consequent upon modern industrial production. It is fallacious, however, to suppose, as many economists are prone to do, that it is only in the strictly 'economic' sphere that the division of labour is becoming more diversified, or that this diversification is the result of industrialism alone. The same process can be observed in all sectors of contemporary societies – in government, law, science and the arts. In all of these areas of social life, specialisation is becoming increasingly evident. This can be illustrated by the example of science: whereas once there existed a general discipline of 'philosophy' which took as its subject-matter the whole of natural and social reality, it has long since become split into numerous separate disciplines.

The increase in social differentiation which is characteristic of the process

[38] Durkheim quotes Secrétant: 'To perfect oneself is to learn one's role, to become capable of fulfilling one's function . . .' *DL*, pp. 42–3.
[39] *DL*, p. 44; *DTS*, p. 6.

of development from traditional to modern forms of society can be compared to certain biological principles. In the evolutionary scale, the first organisms to appear are simple in structure; but these cede place to organisms which show a higher degree of internal functional specialisation: 'the more specialised the functions of the organism, the higher its level on the evolutionary scale'.[40] This is paralleled in Durkheim's analysis of the development of the division of labour and its relationship to the moral order. In order to analyse the significance of differentiation in the division of labour, we have to compare and contrast the principles according to which the less developed societies are organised with those which govern the organisation of the 'advanced' societies.

This entails attempting to measure changes in the nature of social solidarity.[41] Since social solidarity is, according to Durkheim – as in the case of every moral phenomenon – not directly measurable, it follows that in order to chart the changing form of moral solidarity 'we must substitute for the internal fact which escapes us an external index (*fait extérieur*) which symbolises it'.[42] Such an index can be found in legal codes. Whenever a stable form of social life exists, moral rules eventually come to be codified in the shape of laws. While on occasion there may be conflict between customary modes of behaviour and law, this is, according to Durkheim, exceptional, and occurs only when law 'no longer corresponds to the state of existing society, but maintains itself, without reason for so doing, by the force of habit'.[43]

A legal precept can be defined as a rule of conduct which is sanctioned; and sanctions can be divided into two major types. 'Repressive' sanctions are characteristic of penal law, and consist in the imposition of some kind of suffering upon the individual as a punishment for his transgression. Such sanctions include the deprivation of liberty, the inflicting of pain, loss of honour, etc. 'Restitutive' sanctions, on the other hand, involve restoration, the re-establishment of relationships as they were before the law was violated. Thus if one man claims damages from another, the object of the legal process is to recompense the claimant, if his claim is upheld, for some sort of loss which he has incurred as an individual. There is little or no social disgrace attaching to the individual who loses a case of this sort. This is typical of most areas of civil, commercial and constitutional law.

Repressive law is characteristic of that sort of transgression which is a 'crime'. A crime is an act which violates sentiments which are 'universally approved of' by the members of society. The diffuse moral basis of penal law is evidenced by its generalised character. In the case of restitutive law, both sides of the legal commitment are typically precisely defined – both the obligation, and the penalty for transgression.

Penal law, on the contrary, sets forth only sanctions, but says nothing of the obligations to which they correspond. It does not command respect for the life of another, but kills the assassin. It does not say to begin with, as does civil law: here is the duty; but rather, here is the punishment.[44]

The reason why the nature of the moral obligation does not have to be specified in repressive law, Durkheim says, is evident: because everyone knows of it and accepts it.

The predominance of penal law within the juridical system of a given society thus necessarily presupposes the existence of a strongly defined *conscience collective*, of beliefs and sentiments shared in common by the members of the society. Punishment consists above all in an emotive response to a transgression. This is shown by the fact that it is not always confined to the guilty: often those who are themselves entirely innocent, but closely connected to the guilty party – such as relatives or friends – also suffer, because they are 'tainted' by their association with the culpable agent. Especially in primitive societies, punishment tends to have a blind, reflexive character; but the principle underlying penal law remains the same in the more developed types of society. In contemporary societies, the rationale which is frequently offered for the continuance of repressive sanctions conceives of punishment only as a deterrent. But if this were really so, Durkheim argues, the law would not punish according to the gravity of the crime itself, but in relation to the strength of the *motivation* of the criminal to commit the crime. 'Robbers are as strongly inclined to rob as murderers are to murder . . .; but murder is nevertheless subject to more severe sanctions than robbery.'[45] Punishment thus retains its expiatory character (as regards the perpetrator of the criminal act), and remains an act of vengeance (on the part of society). 'What we avenge, what the criminal expiates, is the outrage to morality.'[46]

The primary function of punishment, therefore, is to protect and reaffirm the *conscience collective* in the face of acts which question its sanctity. In the simpler societies, there is a unitary religious system which is the prime embodiment of the common beliefs and sentiments of the *conscience collective*. Religion 'comprises all, extends to all', and contains an intermingled set of beliefs and practices regulating not only strictly religious phenomena, but also

[40] *DL*, p. 41; *DTS*, p. 3.
[41] See J. E. S. Hayward: 'Solidarist syndicalism: Durkheim and Duguit', *Sociological Review*, vol. 8, 1960, parts 1 & 2, pp. 17–36 and 185–202.
[42] *DL*, p. 64.
[43] *DL*, p. 65.
[44] *DL*, p. 75; *DTS*, p. 41.
[45] *DL*, p. 89. Durkheim makes an important qualification, however, to the main trend of his argument. There are moral sentiments which, in certain societies, are as deeply rooted as those punished under penal law – Durkheim gives the example of filial piety. Thus it is not a wholly sufficient condition for the existence of 'crime' that collective sentiments should be strong; 'they must also be precise . . . relative to a very definite practice . . . penal laws are remarkable for their neatness and precision, while purely moral rules are generally somewhat nebulous' (p. 79).
[46] *DL*, p. 89.

'ethics, law, the principles of political organisation, and even science. . . .'[47] All penal law is originally contained within a religious framework; conversely, in the most primitive forms of society all law is repressive.[48]

Societies in which the principal bonds of cohesion are based upon 'mechanical solidarity' have an aggregate or segmental structure: that is, they consist of juxtaposed politico-familial groups (clan groups) which are very similar to each other in their internal organisation. The tribe as a whole forms a 'society' because it is a cultural unity: because the members of the various clan groups all adhere to the same set of common beliefs and sentiments. Thus any part of such a society can break away without much loss to the others – rather in the same way as simple biological organisms can split up into several bodies which are nonetheless unitary and self-sufficient. In primitive, segmental societies, property is communal, a phenomenon which is only one specific aspect of the low level of individualisation generally. Since, in mechanical solidarity, the society is dominated by the existence of a strongly formed set of sentiments and beliefs shared by all members of the community, it follows that there is little scope for differentiation between individuals; each individual is a microcosm of the whole. 'Property is in fact simply the extension of the person over things. Thus wherever the collective personality is the only one which exists, property itself can be nothing other than collective.'[49]

The growth of organic solidarity

The progressive displacement of repressive by restitutive law is an historical trend which is correlated with the degree of development of a society: the higher the level of social development, the greater the relative proportion of restitutive laws within the juridical structure. Now the fundamental element found in repressive law – the conception of expiation through punishment – is absent in restitutive law. The form of social solidarity indexed by the existence of the latter type of law consequently must be distinct from that expressed by penal law. The very existence of restitutive law, in fact, presupposes the prevalence of a differentiated division of labour, since it covers the rights of individuals either over private property, or over other individuals who are in a different social position from themselves.

[47] *DL*, p. 135; *DTS*, p. 105.

[48] *DL*, p. 138.

[49] *DL*, p. 179; *DTS*, pp. 154–5. Durkheim stresses, in a subsequent publication, that the development of the state is not necessarily parallel to the level of general evolution of a given society. A relatively primitive society may have a fairly highly developed state. Durkheim's analysis here is similar to Marx's discussion of 'oriental despotism'. Durkheim says that in such societies: 'the right of property which the community exercises over things in an undivided way passes intact into the superior personality who finds himself thus constituted' (*DL*, p. 180). This issue is analysed in detail by Durkheim, and linked up with variations in intensity and quality of penal sanctions, in 'Deux lois de l'évolution pénale', *AS*, vol. 4, 1899–1900, pp. 65–95.

Society presents a different aspect in each case. In the first [mechanical solidarity] what we call by that name is a more or less organised totality of beliefs and sentiments common to all the members of the group: it is the collective type. On the other hand, the society which we are bound to [*dont nous sommes solidaires*] in the second case is a system of differentiated and special functions united in definite relationships.[50]

This second type of social cohesion is 'organic solidarity'. Here solidarity stems not simply from acceptance of a common set of beliefs and sentiments, but from functional interdependence in the division of labour. Where mechanical solidarity is the main basis of societal cohesion, the *conscience collective* 'completely envelops' the individual consciousness, and therefore presumes identity between individuals. Organic solidarity, by contrast, presupposes not identity but *difference* between individuals in their beliefs and actions. The growth of organic solidarity and the expansion of the division of labour are hence associated with increasing individualism.

The progression of organic solidarity is necessarily dependent upon the declining significance of the *conscience collective*. But commonly held beliefs and sentiments do not disappear altogether in complex societies; nor is it the case that the formation of contractual relations becomes amoral and simply the result of each individual following 'his best interest'. Here Durkheim reverts to the theme previously developed in his first writings, and applied specifically in criticism of Tönnies' conception of *Gesellschaft*. Herbert Spencer is Durkheim's target for critical attack in *The Division of Labour*, but the substance of his polemic is the same. A society in which each individual solely pursues his own interest would disintegrate within a short space of time. 'There is nothing less constant than interest. Today, it unites me to you; tomorrow, it will make me your enemy.'[51] It is true, Durkheim admits, that contractual relations generally multiply with the growth of the division of labour. But the expansion of contractual relations presupposes the development of norms which govern contract; all contracts are regulated by definite prescriptions. However complex the division of labour, society does not become reduced to a chaos of short-term contractual alliances. Durkheim here reiterates the point first made in reference to Tönnies: 'It is thus mistaken to oppose a society which derives from a community of beliefs to one based on co-operation, according a moral character only to the first and seeing in the second nothing more than an economic grouping. In reality, co-operation has its own intrinsic morality.'[52]

Utilitarian theory is unable to account for the basis of moral solidarity in contemporary societies; and it is also fallacious as a theory of the causes for the increase in the division of labour. In the latter form, it attributes the increase in specialisation to the increase in material wealth which is made

[50] *DL*, p. 129; *DTS*, p. 99. My parenthesis.

[51] *DL*, p. 204.

[52] *DL*, p. 228; *DTS*, p. 208.

possible through diversification and exchange. According to this conception, the more production increases, the more men's needs are met, and the greater the increase in human happiness. Durkheim puts forward various arguments against this position. The most important one, however, is that the thesis is simply fallacious on the empirical level. While it is true that there are a variety of pleasures open to modern man which were previously unknown, these are more than counterbalanced by sources of suffering which do not exist in previous forms of society.[53] The high incidence of suicide in contemporary societies is indicative of this. Melancholy suicide is almost wholly absent in the less developed societies; its importance in contemporary societies makes manifest that societal differentiation does not inevitably produce an increase in the general level of happiness.[54]

The explanation for the growth of the division of labour thus has to be sought elsewhere. We know that the development of the division of labour goes hand in hand with the disintegration of the segmental type of social structure. For this to occur, relationships must have formed where none previously existed, bringing erstwhile separate groups into contact. The differing modes of life and belief of such societies, once they are brought into contact with each other, breaks down the isolated homogeneity of each group, and stimulates economic and cultural exchange. Division of labour thus increases 'as there are more individuals sufficiently in contact to be able to act and react upon one-another'.[55] Durkheim calls the frequency of such contact moral or 'dynamic' density. The growth of diversified contacts between individuals obviously must derive from some sort of continuous physical relationships. In other words, the growth of dynamic density is mainly contingent upon an increase in the physical density of population. We can then formulate the general proposition that: 'The division of labour 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 greater in volume.'[56]

It has often been suggested that the interpretation offered by Durkheim here marks a relapse from the principle stated in *The Rules of Sociological Method*, that social phenomena must not be explained reductively. Durkheim himself seems to have felt uneasy about this point, and later amended some-

[53] Here Durkheim repeats the point made in his earlier article on suicide. See footnote 32, p. 71.

[54] *DL*, p. 249. In primitive societies, 'a man kills himself, not because he judges life bad, but because the ideal to which he is attached demands the sacrifice' (p. 246). This is, of course, the type which Durkheim later calls altruistic suicide.

[55] *DL*, p. 257.

[56] *DL*, p. 262; *DTS*, p. 244. Durkheim admits that there are partial exceptions to this: e.g., traditional China or Russia. Here 'the division of labour is not developed in proportion to the social volume. In fact, increase in volume is not necessarily a sign of superiority if density does not increase at the same time and in the same degree . . .' (*DL*, p. 261; *DTS*, p. 243).

what his original assessment of the relation between physical and dynamic density.[57] But, in fact, it is clear in his statement of it in *The Division of Labour*, that the explanation Durkheim offers is a sociological one: physical density is important only in so far as it becomes transformed into moral or dynamic density, and it is the frequency of social contact which is the explanatory factor. A more convincing case could be made for the supposition that Durkheim employs a 'biological' explanation in the mode in which he seeks to analyse *conflict* as a mechanism, within a quasi-Darwinian framework, which accelerates the progression of the division of labour. Darwin and other biologists have demonstrated, according to Durkheim, that the struggle for existence is most acute between organisms of the same type. The existence of such conflict tends to generate complementary specialisation, such that organisms can exist side by side without the one hampering the survival of the other. Differentiation of function allows diverse types of organism to survive. A similar principle, Durkheim concludes, can be applied to human society:

> Men submit to the same law. In the same city, different occupations can co-exist without being obliged mutually to destroy one another, for they pursue different objects. The soldier seeks military glory, the priest moral authority, the statesman power, the businessman riches, the scholar scientific renown.[58]

Individualism and anomie

Having set out both a functional and causal analysis of the division of labour, Durkheim is now in a position to answer the questions which formed the original stimulus to his work. We can be certain that the differentiation of the division of labour inevitably produces a decline in the pervasiveness of the *conscience collective* in society. The growth of individualism is an inevitable concomitant of the expansion of the division of labour: and individualism can only progress at the expense of the strength of common beliefs and sentiments. Thus the *conscience collective* 'comes increasingly to be made up of highly generalised and indeterminate modes of thought and sentiment, which leave room open for an increasing multitude of individual differences'.[59] Modern societies do not thereby collapse into disorder, as would follow from the standpoint of those who assume that a strongly defined moral consensus is requisite to social cohesion. In fact, in contemporary societies, this form of cohesion (mechanical solidarity) is increasingly supplanted by a new type of social cohesion (organic solidarity). But the functioning of organic solidarity cannot be interpreted in the manner of utilitarian theory; contemporary society is still a moral order. There is, indeed, one area where the *conscience collective* becomes 'strengthened and made more precise':

[57] See *RSM*, p. 115.

[58] *DL*, p. 267.

[59] *DL*, p. 172; *DTS*, pp. 146–7.

in relation to the 'cult of the individual'.[60] The growth of the 'cult of the individual' is only possible because of the secularisation of most sectors of social life. It contrasts with the traditional forms of *conscience collective* in that, while it consists of common beliefs and sentiments, these focus upon the worth and dignity of the individual rather than of the collectivity. The 'cult of the individual' is the moral counterpart to the growth of the division of labour, but is quite distinct in content from the traditional forms of moral community, and cannot in itself provide the *sole* basis of solidarity in contemporary societies.

> It is certainly what might be called a common faith; but, firstly, it is only made possible by the ruin of the others, and consequently cannot produce the same effects as this multitude of extinguished beliefs. Nothing compensates for that. Moreover, if it is common insofar as it is shared by the community, it is individual in its object.[61]

At this point, Durkheim's analysis runs into an obvious difficulty. If the growth of the division of labour is not inevitably associated with disruption in social cohesion, what explains the conflicts which are such an evident feature of the modern economic world? Durkheim recognises that burgeoning class conflict between capital and wage-labour has accompanied the expansion of the division of labour ensuing from industrialisation. It is, however, fallacious to suppose that this conflict results directly from the division of labour. It is, in reality, consequent upon the fact that the division of economic functions has temporarily outstripped the development of appropriate moral regulation. The division of labour does not everywhere produce cohesion because it is in an anomic state.[62] That is, the relationship between capital and wage-labour really *does* approximate to the condition considered ethically ideal in utilitarian theory – where there is little or no regulation upon the formation of contracts. What this leads to, however, is a chronic state of class conflict. In lieu of the requisite moral regulation, the formation of contractual relations tends to be determined by the imposition of coercive power. Durkheim calls this the 'forced division of labour' (*la division du travail contrainte*). While the functioning of organic solidarity entails the existence of normative rules which regularise the relationships between different occupations, this cannot be achieved if these rules are unilaterally imposed by one class upon another. These conflicts can be obviated only if the division of labour is co-ordinated with the distribution of talents and capacities, and if the higher occupational positions are not monopolised by a privileged class. 'If one class of society is obliged, in order to live, to take any price for its services, while another can abstain from such action thanks to resources at its disposal which, however,

[60] *DL*, p. 172.
[61] *DL*, p. 172; *DTS*, p. 147.
[62] Durkheim seems to have adopted the term 'anomie' from Guyau (see note 26, p. 70). Guyau, however, uses the term 'religious anomie' in a sense close to

> are not necessarily due to any social superiority, the second has an unjust advantage over the first at law.'[63]

The present situation, in which this does still pertain, is a transitional one. The progressive decline of inequality of opportunity ('external inequality') is a definite historical tendency which accompanies the growth of the division of labour. According to Durkheim, it is easy to see why this should be so. In primitive society, where solidarity is based primarily upon community of belief and sentiment, there is neither the means nor the need for the equalisation of talent and opportunity. But the individualising effects of the division of labour mean that specific human faculties which previously remained latent increasingly become capable of actualisation, and thus create a pressure towards individual self-fulfilment:

> we may thus say that the division of labour produces solidarity only if it is spontaneous and to the degree that it is spontaneous. But by spontaneity we must understand not simply the absence of express and overt violence, but of anything that might, even indirectly, shackle the free employment of the social force that each person carries in himself. This not only supposes that individuals are not relegated to particular functions by force, but also that no sort of obstacle whatsoever prevents them from occupying in the social framework the position which accords with their capacities.[64]

[63] *DL*, p. 384. For further discussion of Durkheim's views on this question, see below, pp. 229–31.
[64] *DL*, p. 377; *DTS*, p. 370.

6. Durkheim's conception of sociological method

The notions developed in *The Division of Labour* constitute the foundations of Durkheim's sociology, and the bulk of Durkheim's subsequent writings represent elaborations of the themes originally set out in that work. This is most obviously true of Durkheim's two major publications prior to the turn of the century: *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895) and *Suicide* (1897). In *The Rules*, Durkheim explicates the methodological suppositions already applied in *The Division of Labour*. While the subject-matter of *Suicide* appears at first sight to be utterly different from *The Division of Labour*, the themes of the former actually mesh very closely with the latter, both within the context of Durkheim's own thought, and within the framework of nineteenth-century writing upon questions of social ethics more generally. Since the end of the eighteenth century, the study of suicide was used by a variety of writers as a specific problem in terms of which general moral issues could be analysed. Durkheim's analysis in *Suicide* is based upon the work of such authors, but also takes as its point of departure some of the general conclusions concerning the moral order of different forms of society established in *The Division of Labour*.

The problem of suicide

Durkheim's interest in suicide, and acquaintance with the large extant literature on the subject, was established some while prior to 1897. In 1888 he already writes: 'it is quite certain that a consistent increase in suicides always attests to a serious upheaval in the organic conditions of society'.[1] The attempt to document, through the precise analysis of a specific phenomenon, the nature of this moral *lacuna* in contemporary societies is perhaps the most basic of Durkheim's concerns in *Suicide*. But to this must be added a methodological objective: the application of sociological method to the explanation of what might *prima facie* appear to be a wholly 'individual' phenomenon.

A basic standpoint set out by numerous previous writers on suicide, and one which Durkheim adopts, is that a strict analytical separation must be drawn between the explanation of the distribution of suicide *rates*, and the aetiology of individual cases of suicide. Nineteenth-century statisticians previously showed that the rate of suicide for a society typically shows a stable distribution from year to year, interspersed with specifically identifiable periodic fluctuations. The patterns of suicide rates, they concluded, must depend upon stably distributed phenomena of a geographical, biological, or social kind.[2] In *Suicide*, Durkheim discusses these first two in some detail, rejecting both as possible explanations for the distribution of suicide rates.[3] It is, therefore, to the third type of factor, the social, that we must look to explain the patterns of suicide rates.

The distribution of suicide in the countries of western Europe shows a close relationship between suicide rates and religious denomination: predominantly Catholic countries everywhere have lower suicide rates than those which are mainly Protestant. This consistent differential in suicide rates cannot be explained by reference to variation in the degree to which suicide is condemned in the *credo* of the two denominations; both prohibit suicide with equal stringency. Its explanation must be sought in differences rooted more generically in the social organisation of the two churches. The most obvious dissimilarity between the two, according to Durkheim, is that Protestantism is founded upon the promotion of a spirit of free enquiry. The Catholic church is formed around the traditional hierarchy of the priesthood, whose authority is binding in matters of religious dogma; but the Protestant is alone before God: 'like the worshippers, the priest has no other source but himself, and his conscience'.[4] Protestantism is, in Durkheim's phrase, a 'less strongly integrated' church than Catholicism.

The inference can be drawn from this that there is nothing specifically bound up with religion as such which needs to be invoked to explain the 'preservative effect' of Catholicism; in other words, that the degree of integration in other sectors of society is related to suicide rates in a comparable way. Durkheim finds that this is in fact so. Unmarried individuals generally show higher rates of suicide than married persons of comparable age, and there is an inverse relation between suicide and size of the conjugal unit – the greater the number of children in the family, the lower the suicide rate. This parallels the case of the relationship between suicide and religious denomination, supplying in this instance a measure of the relationship between suicide and degree of integration in family structure. A similar relationship between suicide rates and level of social integration can be demonstrated in another quite different institutional context. Suicide rates decline in times of national political crisis, and in times of war: in the latter case, not merely among those in the armed forces, but also among the civilian population of both sexes.[5] The reason is that political crises and wars, by

[1] 'Suicide et natalité, étude de statistique morale', p. 447.

[2] Virtually all of the statistical relationships between suicide and social phenomena used by Durkheim in *Suicide* had been established by previous writers. See my article, 'The suicide problem in French sociology', *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 16, 1965, pp. 3–18.

[3] *Su*, pp. 57–142.

[4] *Su*, pp. 160–1. Anglicanism, Durkheim admits, is a partial exception to this; but England has a lower rate than the other Protestant countries.

[5] In none of these cases, according to Durkheim, can the drop in suicide rates be attributed to less precise official documentation of suicide in war-time (*Su*, pp. 206–8).

stimulating an increased level of involvement within a definite set of events, 'at least for a time, bring about a stronger integration of society'.[6]

There is, consequently, a relationship between social integration and suicide which holds regardless of the particular institutional sector of society which is analysed: the proposition is established that 'suicide varies in inverse ratio to the degree of integration of the social groups of which the individual forms a part'.[7] Thus this type of suicide may be called 'egoistic', and it is the resultant of a state where 'the individual self asserts itself to excess in the face of the social self and at its expense. . .'.[8] Egoistic suicide is particularly characteristic of contemporary societies; but it is not the only type of suicide found there. A second type of suicide springs from the phenomenon which Durkheim discusses at some length in *The Division of Labour*: the anomic state of moral deregulation characterising economic relationships. This is indexed by the correlation which can be demonstrated between suicide rates and the occupational structure. Suicide rates, Durkheim points out, are higher in occupations in industry and commerce than in agricultural occupations. Moreover, within non-agricultural occupations, suicide rates are inversely related to socio-economic level, being lowest among the chronically poor, and highest among the well-to-do and those in the liberal professions. This is because poverty is in itself a source of moral restraint: it is the occupations above the lowest levels which have become most freed from stable moral regulation. The relationship between anomie and suicide can also be demonstrated in reference to another phenomenon which Durkheim discusses in *The Division of Labour* as an outcome of the anomic state of industry: the occurrence of economic crises. In times of economic depression, suicide rates show a marked increase. This is not explicable simply in terms of the economic deprivation involved, since suicide rates increase to equivalent degree in times of marked economic prosperity. What both upward and downward fluctuations in the economic cycle share in common is that each has a disruptive effect upon accustomed modes of life. Those experiencing either a sudden downswing or uplift in their material circumstances are placed in a situation in which their habitual expectations come under strain. An anomic condition of moral deregulation results.

Anomie is thus, like egoism, 'a constant and specific factor in suicide in our modern societies; it is one of the sources upon which the annual contingent is nourished'.[9] Durkheim's discussion of the differences between egoistic and anomic suicide is not always unambiguous, and this has caused

[6] *Su*, p. 208; *LS*, p. 222.
[7] *Su*, p. 209; *LS*, p. 223.
[8] *Su*, p. 209; *LS*, p. 223.
[9] *Su*, p. 258; *LS*, p. 288. For a development of these ideas, considered in relation to psychological theory, see my 'A typology of suicide', *Archives européennes de sociologie*, vol. 7, 1966, pp. 276–95.

some commentators to suppose that the two types in fact cannot, from the substance of Durkheim's analysis, be meaningfully distinguished.[10] Careful reading of Durkheim's account against the broader backdrop of *The Division of Labour*, however, makes this position difficult to maintain. Egoistic suicide is clearly linked by Durkheim to the growth of the 'cult of the individual' in contemporary societies. Protestantism is the religious forerunner and primary source of modern moral individualism, which has in other areas of social life become wholly secularised.[11] Egoistic suicide is thus an offshoot of the growth of the 'cult of the personality'. Where 'man is a God to mankind', a certain growth in egoism is unavoidable: 'Individualism is undoubtedly not necessarily egoism, but it comes close to it; the one cannot be stimulated without further spreading the other. Thus, egoistic suicide arises.'[12] Anomic suicide, on the other hand, derives from the lack of moral regulation particularly characteristic of major sectors of modern industry. In so far as anomie is, according to Durkheim, a 'pathological' phenomenon, then anomic suicide is also pathological, and therefore not an inevitable characteristic of contemporary societies.[13] Egoistic and anomic suicide are nevertheless closely related to one another, especially on the level of the individual suicide. 'It is, indeed, almost inevitable that the egoist should have some tendency to deregulation; for, since he is detached from society, it has not sufficient hold upon him to regulate him.'[14]

Suicide in traditional societies takes a different form to the egoistic and anomic types: this is directly traceable to the characteristics of social organisation, specified in *The Division of Labour*, whereby such societies differ from the modern form. In one category of suicides found in traditional societies, it is a duty for an individual, when placed in certain circumstances, to kill himself. 'A person kills himself because he has an obligation to do so.' This is 'obligatory altruistic suicide'. There are other sorts of altruistic suicide which do not involve a definite obligation, but where suicide is associated with the furtherance of definite codes of honour and prestige ('optional' [*faculatif*] altruistic suicide). Both kinds of altruistic suicide, however, rest upon the existence of a strong *conscience collective*, which so dominates the actions of the individual that he will sacrifice his life in furtherance of a collective value.

[10] Barclay Johnson: 'Durkheim's one cause of suicide', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 30, 1965, pp. 875–86.
[11] Durkheim makes this point explicit in his neglected but important work *L'évolution pédagogique en France* (Paris, 1969).
[12] *Su*, p. 364; *LS*, p. 416.
[13] Durkheim holds that a certain minimal level of anomie is a necessary element in societies which are committed to progressive change. 'Every morality of improvement and progress thus presupposes a certain level of anomie.' *Su*, p. 364; *LS*, p. 417.
[14] *Su*, p. 288; *LS*, p. 325.

' Externality ' and ' constraint '

The ideas presented in *Suicide* constitute a particularly forceful testimony to the fruitfulness of Durkheim's conception of sociological method. Durkheim expresses the fundamental standpoint underlying *Suicide* as follows:

> At any given moment the moral constitution of society establishes the contingent of voluntary deaths. There is, therefore, for each people a collective force of a definite amount of energy, impelling men to self-destruction. The victim's acts which at first seem to express only his personal temperament are really the supplement and prolongation of a social condition which they express externally.[15]

This does not mean, Durkheim goes on to add, that psychology is irrelevant to the explanation of suicide: the proper contribution of the psychologist is to study the particular motives and circumstances which drive specific individuals, when placed in the relevant social circumstances (e.g., in a condition of anomie) to commit suicide. While Durkheim's methodological views are set out most systematically in *The Rules of Sociological Method*, he regards the approach documented in the work as stemming directly from the substantive studies represented by *The Division of Labour* and *Suicide*. 'The method which we have described is simply a summary of our practice.'[16]

A primary theme of *The Rules* is that the nature of the subject-matter of sociology must be clarified, and its field of investigation delimited. Durkheim repeatedly emphasises in his writings that sociology remains largely a 'philosophical' discipline, consisting of a heterogeneous assortment of all-embracing generalisations which rest more upon logical derivation from *a priori* precepts than upon systematic empirical study. Sociology, Durkheim remarks in the beginning of *Suicide*, 'is still in the stage of system-building and philosophical syntheses. Instead of attempting to cast light upon a limited portion of the social field, it prefers brilliant generalities . . .'[17] The discipline is evidently in some way concerned with the study of man in society: but the category of the 'social' is often employed in a very loose fashion. What are the specific characteristics of the class of phenomena which may be delimited as 'social' and thereby separated from other categories such as the 'biological' and 'psychological'?[18]

Durkheim's attempt to define the specificity of the social is based upon the use of the famous criteria of 'exteriority' and 'constraint' (*contrainte*). In spite of the variety of differing interpretations which have been placed upon Durkheim's argument at this point, the substance of Durkheim's position here can be elucidated without difficulty. There are two related senses in which social facts are 'external' to the individual. Firstly, every man is born into an on-going society which already has a definite organisation or structure, and which conditions his own personality: 'the church-member finds the beliefs and practices of his religious life ready-made at birth; their existence prior to his own implies their existence outside of himself'.[19] Secondly, social facts are 'external' to the individual in the sense that any one individual is only a single element within the totality of relationships which constitutes a society. These relationships are not the creation of any single individual, but are constituted of multiple interactions between individuals. 'The system of signs I use to express my thought, the system of currency I employ to pay my debts, the instruments of credit I utilise in my commercial relations, the practices followed in my profession, etc., function independently of my own use of them.'[20] It has often been pointed out that Durkheim uses the term 'individual' here in more than one sense. At times the context makes it apparent that he is speaking of the (hypothetical) 'isolated individual', the asocial being which forms the starting-point of utilitarian theory; at other times, Durkheim uses the word to refer to a given 'particular' individual – a flesh-and-blood member of an empirical society.[21] But, in fact, for Durkheim's purposes, which are in part polemical, the distinctions which may be drawn between the various senses of the term 'individual' are not important. The main burden of Durkheim's thesis is that *no* theory or analysis which begins from the 'individual', either in the two senses mentioned above or in others, can successfully grasp the specific properties of *social* phenomena.

Durkheim's point here, in other words, is a conceptual one. It is true that this is to some extent obscured by Durkheim's insistence upon talking of social 'facts'; but it should be obvious that the criterion of 'exteriority' is not an empirical one. If it were, it would lead directly to the ludicrous conclusion that society exists externally to *all* individuals: this is, Durkheim says, 'an obvious absurdity we might have been spared having attributed to us'.[22] Durkheim stresses many times that 'society is composed only of individuals'.[23] But a parallel statement can be made of the relationship between chemical elements and the substances which are composed of combinations of them:

> What is so readily judged inadmissible in regard to social facts is freely admitted in the other realms of nature. Whenever any elements combine and thereby pro-

[15] *Su*, p. 299.

[16] 'La sociologie en France au XIXe siècle', *Revue bleue*, vol. 13, 1900, p. 649. Durkheim also says in *The Rules* that the method stated therein is 'of course, contained by implication in the book which we published recently on *The Division of Labour*'. *RSM*, p. ix.

[17] *Su*, p. 35.

[18] Parsons has pointed to an epistemological confusion involved in Durkheim's use of the phrase social 'fact' as equivalent to social 'phenomenon' (Parsons, pp. 41–2).

[19] *RSM*, p. 2.

[20] *RSM*, p. 2.

[21] cf. Harry Alpert: *Emile Durkheim and his Sociology* (New York, 1939), pp. 135–7; Parsons, pp. 367–8; Guy Aimard: *Durkheim et la science économique* (Paris, 1962), pp. 26–31.

[22] *Su*, p. 320.

[23] That is, individuals plus the artifacts which they construct; but physical objects only have social relevance when there are men in society who attribute some kind of significance to them. *RSM*, pp. 1ff.

duce, by the fact of their combination, new phenomena, it is plain that these new phenomena reside not in the original elements but in the totality formed by their union. The living cell contains nothing but mineral particles, as society contains nothing but individuals; and yet it is patently impossible for the phenomena characteristic of life to reside in the atoms of hydrogen, oxygen, carbon and nitrogen... Let us apply this principle to sociology. If, as we may say, this synthesis *sui generis* which every society constitutes, yields new phenomena, differing from those which take place in individual minds, we must, indeed, admit that these facts reside in the very society itself which produces them, and not in its parts, i.e., its members.[24]

The second criterion which Durkheim applies in specifying the nature of social facts *is an empirical one*: the presence of moral 'constraint'. Here it is best to proceed from an illustration which Durkheim himself offers, the case of 'fatherhood'. Paternity is in one sense a biological relation: a man 'fathers' a child through the act of procreation. But paternity is also a social phenomenon: a father is obliged, by convention and law, to act in various definite ways *vis-à-vis* his offspring (and, of course, other members of his family also). These modes of action are not created by the individual in question, but form part of a system of moral duties in which he is enmeshed with other men. While an individual might flout such obligations, in doing so he feels their force and thereby confirms their constraining character: 'Even when I free myself from these rules and violate them successfully, I am always compelled to struggle with them. When finally overcome, they make their constraining power sufficiently felt by the resistance they offer.'[25] This is, of course, most obvious in the case of legal obligations, which are sanctioned by a whole apparatus of coercive agencies: the police, the law courts, etc. But a large variety of other sanctions exist which reinforce adherence to obligations not expressed in law.

Durkheim frequently reiterates, however, that conformity to obligations rarely rests upon fear of the sanctions which are applied against contravention. In most circumstances individuals accept the legitimacy of the obligation, and thus do not consciously feel its constraining character: 'when I conform to them whole-heartedly, this constraint (*coercition*) is felt only slightly, if at all, since it is unnecessary. But it is, nonetheless, an intrinsic characteristic of these facts, the proof thereof being that it asserts itself as soon as I attempt to resist it.'[26] Durkheim's emphasis upon the importance of constraint is evidently directed primarily against utilitarianism. But moral obligation always has two aspects, the other being the acceptance of an ideal (however partial that acceptance may be) underlying it. Durkheim later remarked that he had consistently been misunderstood on this point:

[24] *RSM*, pp. xlvii–xlviii; *RMS*, pp. xvi–xvii.

[25] *RSM*, p. 3. In applying this criterion, Durkheim moves what Weber calls 'usage' – behaviour which is habitual, but not normatively condoned or condemned – to the borderline of sociology, thus actually reaching a rather similar conclusion to Weber. cf. below, pp. 153–4.

[26] *RSM*, p. 2; *RMS*, p. 4.

Since we have made constraint the *outward sign* by which social facts can be most easily recognised and distinguished from the facts of individual psychology, it has been assumed that according to our opinion, physical constraint is essential to social life. In reality, we have never seen in it any more than the material and evident expression of an internal and deep-rooted fact which is wholly ideal: this is *moral authority*.[27]

The logic of explanatory generalisation

In the preface to the second edition of *The Rules*, Durkheim takes up objections which were made to what became perhaps the most renowned proposition contained in the book: '*consider social facts as things*'.[28] This is obviously a methodological postulate rather than an ontological one, and has to be understood in terms of the conception of the mode of development of science which Durkheim takes over from Comte. All of the sciences, before they emerge as disciplines which are conceptually precise and empirically rigorous, are collections of crudely formed and highly generalised notions originally grounded in religion: '... thought and reflection are prior to science, which merely uses them methodically.' But these notions are never tested in any systematic fashion; 'facts intervene only secondarily as examples or confirmatory proofs'.[29] This prescientific stage is broken through by the introduction of empirical method, not by conceptual discussion alone. This is perhaps even more important in social than in natural science, since here the subject-matter relates to human activity itself, and consequently there is a strong tendency to treat social phenomena as either lacking in substantive reality (as creations of the individual will) or, on the contrary, as already wholly known: thus words such as 'democracy', 'communism', etc., are freely used as if they denoted precisely known facts, whereas the truth is that 'they awaken in us nothing but confused ideas, a tangle of vague impressions, prejudices and emotions'.[30] The proposition that social facts must be treated as 'things' is advanced as a counter to these tendencies. Durkheim thus assimilates social facts to the world of natural reality only in that, like objects in nature, their properties cannot be immediately known by direct intuition, and they are not plastic to the individual human will. 'Indeed, the most important characteristic of a "thing" is the impossibility of its modification by a simple effort of the will. Not that the thing is refractory to all modification, but a mere act of the will is insufficient to produce a change in it... We have already seen that social facts have this characteristic.'[31]

The maintenance of the principle of treating social facts as things, of object-ivity, demands rigorous detachment on the part of the investigator of social reality. This does not mean that he should approach a given field of study with a completely 'open mind', but rather that he must adopt an

[27] *EF*, p. 239; *FE*, p. 298 (footnote). cf. Raymond Aron: *Main Currents in Sociological Thought* (London, 1967), vol. 2, pp. 63–4.

[28] *RSM*, p. 14.

[29] *RSM*, pp. 14–15.

[30] *RSM*, p. 22.

[31] *RSM*, pp. 28–9.

emotionally neutral attitude towards what he sets out to investigate.[32] This in turn depends upon the establishment of precisely formulated concepts which avoid the confused and shifting terminology of popular thought. It is evident, however, that at the outset of research we are likely to have little systematically derived knowledge of the phenomenon in question: thus we must proceed by conceptualising our subject-matter in terms of those properties which are 'external enough to be immediately perceived'.[33] In *The Division of Labour*, for example, Durkheim seeks to delimit what constitutes crime in terms of the 'external characteristic' of the existence of punitive sanctions; a crime is any action which evokes punishment. But this is a means of elaborating a more satisfactory concept of crime: that it is an act which contravenes collectively-held beliefs and sentiments.[34] This approach might be criticised as giving undue significance to the superficial attributes of a phenomenon at the expense of its more fundamental underlying traits. Durkheim counters this criticism by asserting that the definition based upon 'external' characteristics is only a preliminary usage, set up in order 'to establish contact with things'.[35] Such a concept provides an *entrée* into a field, by allowing research to begin from observable phenomena.

Durkheim's observations upon the logic of explanation and proof in sociology are closely tied-in to his analysis of the principal characteristics of social facts. There are two approaches which may be used in the explanation of social phenomena, the functional and the historical. The functional analysis of a social phenomenon involves establishing the 'correspondence between the fact under consideration and the general needs of the social organism, and in what this correspondence consists . . .'. 'Function' must be separated from psychological 'end' or 'purpose', 'because social phenomena do not generally exist for the useful results they produce'.[36] The motivations or sentiments which lead individuals to participate in social activities are not in most cases coterminous with the functions of those activities. Society is not simply an aggregate of individual motivations, but 'a specific reality which has its own characteristics': it therefore follows that social facts cannot be explained in terms of such motivations.

The identification of social function does not, according to Durkheim, provide an explanation as to 'why' the social phenomenon in question exists. The causes which produce a social fact are separable from the function which it has in society. Any attempt to assume an explanatory closure between function and cause, Durkheim points out, leads to a teleological explanation of social development in terms of final causes. 'Explanation' in terms of

[32] Durkheim warns that 'too great a detachment in relation to tested propositions has the serious drawback of preventing continuity in effort and thought'. 'Sur le totémisme', *AS*, vol. 5, 1900–1, p. 89.

[33] *RSM*, p. 35. See the penetrating analysis given in Roger Lacombe: *La méthode sociologique de Durkheim* (Paris, 1926), pp. 67ff.

[34] *RSM*, pp. 35–6. [35] *RSM*, p. 42. [36] *RSM*, p. 95.

final causes entails the sort of fallacious reasoning which Durkheim criticises in both *The Division of Labour* and *Suicide*:

> Thus Comte traces the entire progressive force of the human species to this fundamental tendency 'which directly impels man constantly to ameliorate his condition, whatever it may be, under all circumstances'; and Spencer relates this force to the need for greater happiness . . . But this method confuses two very different questions . . . The need we have of things cannot give them existence, nor can it confer their specific nature upon them.[37]

The causes which give rise to a given social fact must therefore be identified separately from whatever social functions it may fulfil. It is appropriate methodological procedure, moreover, to establish causes prior to the attempt to specify functions. This is because knowledge of the causes which bring a phenomenon into being can, under certain circumstances, allow us to derive some insight into its possible functions. The separate character of cause and function, according to Durkheim, does not prevent the existence of a reciprocal relation between the two. 'The effect can doubtless not exist without its cause; but the latter, in turn, needs its effect. It is from the cause that the effect draws its energy; but it also restores it to the cause on occasion, and consequently it cannot disappear without the cause showing the effects of its disappearance.'[38] Thus, in the illustration which Durkheim gives from *The Division of Labour*, the existence of 'punishment' is causally contingent upon the prevalence of strongly held collective sentiments. The function of punishment consists in the maintenance of these sentiments at the same degree of intensity: if transgressions were not punished, the strength of sentiment necessary to social unity would not be preserved.

Normality and pathology

A substantial section of *The Rules* is devoted to an attempt to establish scientific criteria of social pathology. Durkheim's discussion here is a direct development of his concerns in his early articles, and is indeed of pivotal importance through the whole of his thought. Most social theorists, Durkheim points out, hold the view that there is an absolute logical gulf between scientific propositions (statements of fact) and statements of value. In this conception, scientific data can serve as a technical 'means' which can be applied in order to facilitate the attainment of objectives, but these objectives themselves cannot be validated through the use of scientific procedures. Durkheim rejects this Kantian dualism on the basis of denying that the division between 'means' and 'ends' which it presupposes can in fact be substantiated. For Durkheim, the abstract dichotomisation of means and ends involves similar errors in the sphere of general philosophy to those embodied in a more concrete way in the utilitarian model of society: namely, that both

[37] *RSM*, pp. 89–90.

[38] *RSM*, pp. 95–6.