



Classical Sociological Theory and Foundations of American Sociology

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DURKHEIM

I. Division of Labor, Introduction

“Every society is a moral society.”

NOTE ON SOURCE: This and the following two passages come from Durkheim's dissertation, completed in 1893, and first published in 1902 as *De la Division du Travail Sociale*. The first English translation was done by George Simpson in 1933, but this version was found to have several shortcomings. A more approved translation was made in 1984 by W. D. Halls, edited by Lewis A. Coser. This translation was republished with some improvement by Steven Lukes in 1997. This is the recommended version if you would like to read more of the text than what is included here.

Introduction – Why this is important and what to look for

The Division of Labor in Society was Durkheim's first major work, completed in fulfillment of the requirements for earning his doctorate. It is therefore young Durkheim. There are some antiquated ideas here, and some out of date or inaccurate empirical observations. Yet it remains a masterpiece and is probably the best example of Durkheim's methodical and clear style of writing and presentation. The work itself is divided into three “books,” of equal length. In the original, a lengthy preface is included along with a detailed table of contents (as in *Suicide*). As the preface is not included in the more recent editions, it is included here, along with the extended table of contents and a summary of Book 1. If you get lost in the three books, return here, to this introduction, to help orient you to the point and design of the work.

Preface

This book is above all an effort to treat the facts of moral life according to the methods of positive science. To clarify, however, we do not agree with those moralists who deduce their doctrines from propositions of the natural sciences (e.g., Social Darwinism from biology). They may call their ethics scientific but that is not what we mean by the term. We are not trying to derive ethics from science, but rather to establish a science of ethics – something quite different. Moral facts are phenomena like any other. They consist of rules of action which we recognize by certain distinct characteristics. So, it must then be possible to observe them, describe them, classify them, and look for laws that explain them.

But as we set out to study reality, it does not follow that we must renounce attempts to make it better. We would estimate our research hardly worthy of its time if it were only of speculative interest. If we separate out the philosophical issues from the practical issues it is not to ignore the former but to be better able to resolve them, after our investigation is complete. We will see that science can help us adjust ourselves to attain the ideals to which we aspire.

Some might object that a method of observation lacks rules with which to judge or evaluate what is observed. But such rules emerge from the facts themselves. Thus, we argue that there is a state of moral health which science alone can determine with competence. As we never quite attain this state of moral health, it is an ideal we seek. Furthermore, the conditions of that state of moral health are themselves always changing, as societies are always changing. Science allows us to determine the moral health in relation to these changes. We can foresee changes; we can compare normal types with those that are abnormal; and we can seek to correct contradictions.

If science foresees, it does not command, so much is true. However, as science tells us alone what is necessary for living, then assuming we want to live, the laws science establishes are in reality imperative rules of conduct. Even on such a question as to whether we ought to wish to live, we think science is not mute.

This work originated in questions about the relationship between individuals and social solidarity. Why is it that the individual, while become more freely autonomous, depends more and more on society? How can we be at one time more individualized and more socialized? Indeed, these two movements, while they appear in contradiction, develop in parallel. This is the problem that we are posing here. It seemed to us that what resolves this apparent contradiction is a transformation of social solidarity as a result of the constant development of an increasing division of labor. This is how we have come to study the division of labor in society.

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Book One. The Function of the Division of Labor

Chapter One. The Method for Determining this Function.

1. the meaning of the word *function*
2. the function of the division of labor is not to produce civilization; cases where the function is to bring forth groups which would not exist without it; from which we derive the hypothesis that the division of labor is the principal source of the cohesion of later civilizations
3. to verify this initial hypothesis, we must compare the social solidarity based on the division of labor with other types of solidarity and classify these types; we can do this by comparing legal systems and rules; there are as many types of legal systems and rules as there are forms of solidarity; distinguish between repressive sanction systems and restitutive sanction systems

Chapter Two. Mechanical Solidarity through Likeness.

1. The link of social solidarity to which repressive law corresponds is the one whose break constitutes a crime. The essential characteristics of crime, those found wherever crime occurs, are the following: (1) a crime offends sentiments found among all normal individuals in any given society; (2) those sentiments are strong; (3) those sentiments are defined. A crime is thus an act which offends strong and defined states of the collective conscience.
2. Verification of this definition (if it is correct, it should account for all the characteristics of punishment).

What are those characteristics of punishment? (1) punishment is a passionate reaction, of graduated intensity; (2) this passion reaction comes from society; (3) this reaction is enforced through the intermediary of a constituted body

3. These characteristics can now be deduced from our definition of crime: (1) every strongly offended sentiment mechanically determines a passionate reaction (which reaction helps to maintain the sentiment); (2) the collective character of these sentiments explains the social character of the reaction (why it is useful for it to be social); (3) the intensity and defined nature of these sentiments explain the formation of the organization which enforces this reaction
4. The rules sanctioned by penal law express the most essential social similarities; in consequence, they correspond to the social solidarity which comes from resemblance and varies with it. We can measure the part this (mechanical) solidarity plays in general social integration according to the fraction of the complete legal system and rules which penal law represents

Chapter 3. Organic Solidarity due to the Division of Labor

1. The nature of the restitutive sanction implies (1) that the corresponding rules are foreign to the collective conscience; (2) that the relations they determine only link the individual to society indirectly
2. Negative relations, linking things to persons and not persons to persons, are typical here. Since the solidarity that the legal system and rules express is negative, it has no independent existence but is merely a prolongation or residue of positive forms of social solidarity
3. Positive or cooperative relations come from the division of labor, which are governed by a defined legal system and set of rules which we can call cooperative law (analogous here to the nervous system)
4. Thus, we find in conclusion two kinds of positive solidarity: one which comes from similarity (mechanical solidarity) and the other which comes from the division of labor (organic solidarity). The first varies in inverse ratio and the second in direct ratio with individualized personalities

Chapter 4. Further Proof of the Preceding

If we are right, we ought to see more repressive law than cooperative law when there is more social similarity and less division of labor and we ought to see more cooperative law than repressive law when there is a greater division of labor and less social similarity. This is actually what we do see!

1. The more primitive societies are, the more resemblance there is among individuals, both physically and mentally. The division of labor, originally non-existent, begins to develop
2. Originally, all law has a repressive character (examples of Hebrew law, Hindu Law, the development of cooperative law in Rome). Today, the primitive relationship is reversed. Note that this has nothing to do with a low state of morals in primitive societies (all societies are equally moral)

Chapter 5. Progressive Preponderance of Organic Solidarity: Its Consequences

1. The actual preponderance of cooperative law over repressive law demonstrates that the social links which come from the division of labor are more numerous than those which come from social similarities. As this preponderance grows as we approach more complex societies, it is not accidental but dependent upon the nature of these societies. These links are both more numerous and stronger

2. The links that come from similarities loosen as social evolution advances. Mechanical solidarity relies on three conditions: (1) the relative extent of the collective conscience and of the individual conscience: (2) intensity; and (3) the degree of determination of the states composing the collective conscience
3. [Extension]
4. [Example from Criminology]
5. Further Proof: the particularly strong states of the collective conscience have a religious character, but religion disappears along with social evolution, as do proverbs and other such common sayings. Organic solidarity becomes preponderant

Chapter 6. Progressive Preponderance continued

1. Social structures correspond to these two types of solidarity. Segmental types correspond to mechanical solidarity
2. Organized types correspond to organic solidarity. There is antagonism between these two types as the second develops proportionally at the cost of the first (which, though it shrinks, never quite vanishes)
3. [Analogy with animal kingdom]
4. [Do not confuse this with Spencer's Social Darwinism¹]

Chapter 7. Organic Solidarity and Contractual Solidarity

1. Social harmony depends upon cooperation and the division of labor in industrial societies; Contractual relations may grow but this does not mean, as Spencer suggests, that contractual exchange can be the only existing link between people
2. Contractual relations, almost absent in simple societies, multiply greatly in advanced societies but still, Spencer fails to see that non-contractual relations also greatly multiply; numerous examples
3. Administrative law takes on greater importance in advanced societies
4. Summary of Book 1:

The following propositions summarize the first part of our work:

Social life comes from a double source, the similarity of consciences and the division of social labor. The individual is socialized in the first case because, without having her own individuality, she becomes part of the same collective group as that she resembles. The individual is socialized in the second case because, while having a separate personality and specific personal activity which distinguishes her from others, she depends on them to the same extent she differs from them.

1. Herbert Spencer was a well-known and influential philosopher and social theorist of the nineteenth century. He essentially took Darwin's idea of biological evolution and natural selection and sought to apply them to social groups. According to Spencer, history proceeded along lines of "survival of the fittest." For these reasons, any attempts at social reform or amelioration were misguided, as they prevented the natural and optimal path of development. Durkheim often spoke against this idea, as he thought it muddled two very distinct strands (the biological and the social) in a problematic way.

The similarities of consciences produces a legal system and set of rules which imposes uniform beliefs and practices through the threat of repressive measures.

The division of labor produces a legal system and set of rules which determine the nature and the social relations of divided functions, violation of which brings in only restitutive measures.

Each legal system (repressive and restitutive) is accompanied by a body of purely moral rules. Where penal law predominates, common morality is quite extensive (that is to say, public opinion is quite strong in many areas). Where restitutive law predominates, there is instead an occupational morality for each job or profession. There are usages and customs that are localized to particular jobs and job sites but these are rarely repressive or harshly enforced.

Nonetheless, the rules of occupational morality are just as imperative as any other. They force individuals to act in view of ends not strictly their own, to make concessions, to consent to compromises, to take into account interests higher than their own. In contrast to what Spencer suggested, even where society relies most completely on the division of labor the members are united by ties which extend deeper and far beyond the short moments they come into contact with each other through exchange. Each of the jobs they do is fixed and dependent upon others, thus forming a solidaristic system. Because we fill some particular function we are involved in a web of obligations from which we have no right to free ourselves. And above all is the State. Our contacts with the State multiply as do the occasions when it is entrusted with the duty of reminding us of the sentiment of common solidarity.

Thus, we see that altruism is not destined to become a mere ornament to social life, as Spencer wishes, but will instead always be its fundamental basis. How could we do without it? We cannot live together without making mutual sacrifices, without tying ourselves to one another with strong and lasting bonds. *Every society is a moral society.* In a way, this is even more rather than less true in organized societies. Because the individual is not sufficient unto herself, it is from society that she receives what she needs, and it is for society that she works. Thus, is formed a strong attachment to the society to which she belongs. She comes accustomed to regarding herself as party of a whole. On the other side of the equation, society begins to regards its members not as things to control but as cooperators whom it cannot neglect and whom it owes duties. It is thus not only societies that share a collective conscience that are moral. In reality, cooperation also has its intrinsic morality.

But this intrinsic morality is not the same in nature as the collective conscience. That is strong only if the individual is not. Made up of rules which are practiced by all, it receives from this uniform practice and obedience an authority almost super-human, which puts it beyond discussion. In contrast, the cooperative society is stronger as the individual is stronger. There is always room for personal initiative. It is we ourselves who choose our professions. We may have to follow rules once we do so, but it is an initial act of the will that sets us down our individual paths.

There are, then, two great currents of social life to which two types of structure correspond. The one has its origin in social similarities. Little by little, the second type grows up within this type and eventually overtakes it, covers it over, without every completely eliminating it.

We shall find the causes of this relation of inverse variation in the following book.

Book 2. Causes and Conditions

Chapter 1. The Progress of the Division of Labor and of Happiness

1. According to many, the individual's desire for happiness pushes him to specialize. But if this were the case, we would long ago have stopped specializing, as the moderate existence is much more favorable to happiness than one of constant striving. Other problems with this supposition
2. Our striving has actually produced more suffering and unhappiness than commonly known to exist in more simple societies held together by the collective conscience. Note, for example, the increase in suicide in modern societies
3. Nor can it be that the desire to escape boredom pushes us forward. It is impossible for humanity to have imposed upon itself so much trouble only to be able to vary its pleasures a little

Chapter 2. The Causes

1. We must look for the causes elsewhere, by studying the variations between the two types. We find that the progress of the division of labor is in direct ratio to the moral or dynamic density of society. This so because intra-social relations are multiplied
2. Our view contrasts with Spencer, who argues that the increase of social volume merely accelerates the division of labor but does not cause it
3. The growth of volume and density mechanically determines the progress of the division of labor by intensifying the struggle for existence
4. The division of labor is produced only in organized societies. It is an error to find the division of labor and social cooperation fundamental facts of human life

Chapter 3. Secondary Factors – Progressive Indeterminacy of the Common Conscience and Its Causes

The division of labor can progress only if individual variation increases and this can happen only if the collective conscience recedes. What are the causes of this recession?

1. As the social environment extends, the collective conscience must also extend and thus becomes increasingly abstract (e.g., transcendence of the idea of God; more rational law). This abstract indeterminacy leaves a larger space for individual variation
2. The authority of the tradition is weakened when individuals are detached from the environment of their birth and the influence of their elders
3. As the segmented type of society loses hold over the individual, it also loses control of divergent tendencies
4. From this perspective, social organs can no longer play the role of a unindividuated segment

Chapter 4. Secondary Factors – Heredity

Heredity poses an obstacle to the progress of the division of labor but it has become a lesser factor over time

1. Heredity loses its power because modes of activity that do not rely on hereditary transmission become much more important than any that do

2. Heredity also grows more indeterminate, as instinct grows weaker and individual differences develop

Chapter 5. Consequences of the Preceding

1. As function becomes more independent from the person doing the function, the division of labor has a supple and flexible character. This suppleness is a great strength
2. A more mechanistic theory of the division of labor (e.g., Spencer's), implies that civilization is the product of necessary causes, and not an end which itself influences activity
3. The growth of volume and of density in changing societies changes individuals; we become freer from our bodies and thus our mental lives develop. Individual personalities emerge from the collective personality. Society explains the individual

Book 3. Abnormal Forms

Chapter 1. The Anomic Division of Labor

Abnormal forms exist when the division of labor does not produce solidarity. Why we need to study these forms:

1. Abnormal cases in economic life; industrial crises and the antagonism between labor and capital
2. Should the state step in to regulate the details of economic life to prevent such antagonisms?
3. Necessity of regulation and why the division of labor sometimes fails to produce solidarity in its absence

Anomie arises when the organs are not in sufficient contact or sufficiently prolonged contact of the normal state. When the division of labor is normal, it does not confine any person to a task without giving her a glimpse of anything outside the task.

Chapter 2. The Forced Division of Labor

1. Class War comes from individuals not being in harmony with their functions, as the functions have been imposed on them by force. Meaning of force here includes any type of inequality in the external conditions of life
2. Reasons why progress towards equality is necessary

True individual liberty does not consist in suppressing regulation but rather is a result of good regulation, as equality is not ours by nature. Achieving justice is a task for organized societies, as it is only in this condition that they can be maintained.

Chapter 3. Another Abnormal Form

There is another case in which the division of labor fails to produce solidarity because the functional activity of the worker is insufficient.

Conclusion

1. The rule that orders us to be like each other (to follow the collective conscience) aims to assure social

solidarity (integration and cohesion), but so to does the rule that orders us to specialize. Both are moral rules. Morality is but the totality of conditions of social solidarity.

2. The division of labor does not weaken the individual personality; in fact, individualization progresses under the influence of the same causes which produce the division of labor. The only way for us to realize human brotherhood and sisterhood is through the progression of the division of labor.
3. However, the division of labor gives rise to solidarity only if it is just. Economists are mistaken. We need more justice, not less.

Questions

1. What does it mean to say that science can predict but science does not command? Does Durkheim agree with this statement? What is the role of sociology?
2. What is the question underlying this book? Why did Durkheim write a book about the division of labor?
3. What does the tripartite division of the book tell you about Durkheim's approach? Compare this to the division of *Suicide*. What useful direction for conducting sociological research is provided by these divisions?

Concepts

Anomic Division of Labor

Collective Conscience

Division of Labor

Forced Division of Labor

Mechanical Solidarity (and MS Societies)

Morality

Organic Solidarity (and OS Societies)

Solidarity