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In the course of the nineteenth century, France had undergone considerable change. Through the first half of the century, France was largely an agrarian society of peasants, divided by language, social custom, and regional disputes. France was ruled by the Catholic Church, the landed nobility, and the monarchy. By the turn of the century, France was well on the way to becoming a modern, secular, industrial nation. Nevertheless, in one important respect, very little had changed: France remained socially and politically unstable. Just as Comte faced a nation polarized between the forces of revolution and reaction, Durkheim came of age in a period of

similar social division. Durkheim aimed to legitimate a social liberal alternative to the ideological agendas of the Right and Left. Durkheim shared Comte's hope that sociology could serve as the vehicle for the ideological defense and reconstruction of a liberal France.

Durkheim came of age at a critical juncture in French history. The Third French Republic had established itself as the longest surviving liberal political regime in French history. Whatever optimism existed among supporters of the Republic, however, was tempered by the organized opposition of the conservative Right and the radical Left. Social modernization in France did not lead inexorably to a society unified by a liberal moral center. On the one hand, France remained a society tied to an agrarian, patriarchal, and Catholic culture; the church, landed aristocracy, and military elites resisted secularism, individualism, and the free market ideology of middle class liberals. On the other hand, modernization brought forth a new social force equally opposed to liberalism: a socialist Left rooted in the discontent of laborers and, to a lesser extent, a revolutionary feminism anchored in the disempowerment of women. Whereas the Right attacked liberalism for supposedly unleashing moral and social anarchy, the Left assailed liberalism for preserving social inequality and injustice. Turn-of-the-century France may have succeeded in fashioning a liberal social order, but its fate was very much in doubt.

Durkheim's sympathy lay with the Third Republic. He was, by all accounts, personally uncomfortable with radical change, whether forward looking or backward looking. He was not, though, a simple-minded apologist for the republic or for the business and professional strata for whom social liberalization often meant a social policy of unrestrained capitalism. Durkheim wished to preserve a republican France but only if it was inspired by the high ideals of the French Revolution – *liberté, égalité, and fraternité*.

Durkheim's liberalism shared little with the English and American defense of an unbridled economic individualism. His liberalism fused the English and American respect for individualism with the European concern with moral order and civic virtue; it affirmed economic freedom but only if socially regulated; he defended individualism but only if the individual was firmly rooted in social institutions; he valued cultural pluralism but only in a society that had a clear moral center. In short, to end the bitter conflicts in France, Durkheim reached for a social vision that would integrate the spirit of liberalism (individualism), radicalism (social justice), and conservatism (moral order). Durkheim's liberal social values were not articulated in an explicitly philosophical and moral way but through his empirical sociology. His moral vision is at the heart of two of his most important sociological studies: *The Division of Labor in Society* and *Suicide* [4].

Durkheim's liberal vision of history and modernity

In the course of the nineteenth century, science had become an important language of moral argumentation. Appeals to scientific facts, explanations, or principles justified moral preferences and social values. Thus, Comte invoked the Law of the Three Stages as proof of the inevitability and desirability of the positive society. Marx sought to justify his own social values by identifying them with the laws of history. If the laws of society require particular social norms or institutions, they are said to be objective rather than merely subjective or ideological preferences. Durkheim likewise wished to give his moral preferences an objective authority by framing them in the language of science. He intended to show that his social liberal ideal was rooted in the very evolution of society.

In *The Division of Labor in Society*, Durkheim presented a social liberal ideal that took the form of an evolutionary theory of society. He set out to write a story of the development of humanity from humankind's "primitive" stage to the "advanced" modern era. It was a story, not only of how humankind evolved, but of the necessity of this development and of its direction and endpoint.

Durkheim's evolutionary theory is anchored in a social typology. He distinguishes two types of society: segmental or traditional societies that are unified by "mechanical solidarity" and organized or modern societies that feature "organic solidarity." The history of humanity is charted by positioning social development somewhere along this continuum of "primitive" segmental and "modern, organized" types of societies.

"Primitive" societies exhibit a fundamental simplicity and uniformity in their social structure. Typically, they are composed of a series of kinship groupings whose structure and functioning are more or less identical. Each individual is born into a kin group that assigns specific statuses and social roles in the course of the individual's life cycle. The kin group defines and regulates the behavior of its members. There are minimal social exchanges between these groups as each is more or less socially self-sufficient. This lack of substantial social differentiation between kin units is what Durkheim means by a segmental social structure. The social units (kin groupings) replicate one another in terms of their organization.

If primitive societies feature a segmental social structure, what gives to these societies their sense of coherence or, to use Durkheim's phrase, "social solidarity"? If each kin group is self-sufficient, what social force knits them together into an identifiable, coherent social whole? Durkheim's answer is that primitive societies are unified by a religiously based common culture. Durkheim maintains that, in a society where individual experiences

are wedged into a narrow range exhibiting a strong uniformity, kin units develop similar beliefs and values. Primitive culture is characterized by a large number of beliefs, values, and norms held in common. Moreover, because primitives are unable to understand the social and natural forces that shape their lives, they imagine a universe governed by supernatural forces; the core of primitive culture is religious. Primitives view the human order as a sacred order filled with supernatural beings. It is precisely this religious culture that brings the disparate social segments together into a coherent social whole.

To the extent that primitive societies are unified by a common culture, we can expect them to be conservative. A primitive society cannot, according to Durkheim's social logic, tolerate individuals who deviate from shared beliefs or social norms. If it is a common culture that keeps society integrated, then any cultural transgression would be a threat to social unity. Accordingly, deviance is treated harshly; social and legal repression is the dominant logic of social control. Durkheim is proposing a sort of unconscious social logic: individuals act as the unwitting vehicles of social forces. Primitives repress deviance because it is unconsciously felt as a threat to personal and social coherence. Like Comte and Marx, Durkheim believed that, in primitive societies, humankind is under the control of social forces that are not understood. As we will see, the story Durkheim relates is one of humanity evolving towards a condition of rational understanding and social control. Western modernity signals the key turning point in human evolution; science destroys the illusions of supernatural powers giving to humanity the potential to fashion its own destiny.

Societies organized in a segmental way are inherently unstable. Drawing from Darwinian biological theory, Durkheim reasons that the very social insularity and parochialism of primitive societies limits their capacity to respond effectively to changes in their natural and social environments. Social invasions, encounters with foreign civilizations, changes in natural resources, climate, or population compel primitive societies to change in order to survive. Social adaptation requires introducing more social complexity and differentiation. For example, kinship groups would evolve toward economic specialization, thereby permitting the emergence of a market system. However, once humanity starts down the path of social differentiation, social evolution will inevitably ensue. In other words, natural and social events set in motion an inexorable dynamic pushing humanity forward. The endpoint of social evolution is a modern type of society characterized by an "organized" social structure and "organic" type of solidarity.

Modern societies are the antithesis of primitive ones. Modernity is said to be characterized by a highly differentiated social structure. Whereas the

basic social units of primitive societies reveal a high level of **segmental** functional uniformity, in modern societies, they are **differentiated** encompassing multifunctional kin groups are replaced by a **multitude of** specialized social institutions (e.g., the economy, polity, family, welfare, military, educational), each regulating a sector of individual behavior. For example, primitive kin groups satisfied a range of political, emotional, economic, religious, and educational needs. The modern Western family specializes in attending to the emotional and psychological needs of the individual. Nonfamilial institutions have developed that specialize in economic, political, or educational functions. Social differentiation and specialization is internal to institutions as well. Thus, the production of knowledge becomes a specialized role of the educational system, but, within this sphere, a process of differentiation transpires. Knowledge is broken down into disciplines, specialties, and subspecialties.

The evolution of society towards increased social differentiation is paralleled by a dynamic of cultural pluralism. In a modern, differentiated society, individual experiences exhibit a wide variation depending on social class, nationality, religion, occupation, age, or regional location. As individuals are allowed more latitude in shaping their ideas, the range of culture held in common shrinks. Moreover, those beliefs and values held in common will be highly general and abstract. For example, moderns may share a general belief in the value of the individual but disagree about the meaning and social role of the individual. Indeed, Durkheim was convinced that, as modern culture becomes pluralistic, one of the few beliefs we share is individualism. Moderns make the individual sacred; individualism is our public religion. Despite the deification of the individual, modern culture undergoes a thorough process of secularization. The world of natural and human events is more clearly differentiated from the world of supernatural forces. Whereas the former sphere is, in principle, intelligible through science, the latter sphere is a matter of private faith. Modern culture projects a human-centered world; institutions are judged by their value to the individual.

The evolution of humanity towards a modern society is accompanied by a process of individualism. Durkheim observes two powerful social forces promoting individualism. First, the advance in the division of labor requires that individuals be given more freedom to regulate their institutional behavior. In a differentiated society, neither the state nor the church has the capacity to impose social rules that can regulate institutions as varied as the economy, the state, family, school, and the military. Their regulation must be left in large part to individuals who occupy social roles in those institutions. This institutional pressure to permit greater individualism is reinforced by cultural pluralism. If there are fewer common ideas

in modern societies, then society *must* rely more on individuals than on institutional authorities such as the state or church to create social rules and norms. The very survival of society depends upon permitting the individual more freedom to make rules and regulate social affairs. To translate this empirical proposition into moral terms, Durkheim is invoking supposedly objective principles of social organization to justify modern individualism and cultural pluralism.

A final question remains: Assuming that modernization entails social differentiation, cultural pluralism, secularism, and individualism, how are modern societies unified? What prevents such societies from being wrenched apart by the centrifugal forces of modernization? Contrary to some on the Left, Durkheim does not believe that the modern state can impose moral order in a society where social rules and norms are decentralized and heterogeneous. Against conservatives, Durkheim argues that any effort to impose a religious order will create disorder. Social order must arise from the very organization of modern social and cultural structures. How does this happen? In its routine, everyday functioning, institutional differentiation and specialization (the social division of labor) create an interdependent, socially integrated, and unified society.

Durkheim proposes that the division of labor functions not only as an economic but as a moral force. Specialization and interdependence of social roles and a corresponding system of moral rights, duties, and exchanges create social bonds. Durkheim explains:

Where society relies most completely upon the division of labor, it does not become a jumble of juxtaposed atoms. . . . Rather the members are united by ties which extend deeper and far beyond the short moments during which exchange is made. Each of the functions that they [individuals] exercise is . . . dependent upon others, and with them forms a solidary system. . . . Because we fill some . . . social function, we are involved in a complex of obligations. . . . There is, above all, . . . the state . . . [which] is entrusted with the duty of reminding us of the sentiment of common solidarity [5].

Modern social institutions – the family, economy, government, church, educational system – are mutually dependent; they are locked into a network of exchanges that bind them together through functional interdependency, shared social norms, and the moral authority of the state into an integrated system. For example, the economy depends upon the family to socialize individuals who are disciplined and motivated by work and career values. Similarly, the family depends upon the economy for its material basis; in addition, an economic system functioning independently of the family makes it possible for individuals to establish households

apart from their family of origin. The functional and moral interconnectedness of modern societies is, moreover, more **stable and durable** than the culturally enforced solidarity of primitive societies **because they** are more adaptable to environmental changes. Thus, contrary to critics on the Right and Left, Durkheim held that, in principle, modern societies successfully combine economic and cultural dynamism, individualism, and a stable, coherent social order.

Durkheim was aware that the actual state of social affairs in France and Europe did not mirror the social ideal he outlined. He perceived endemic social conflict, economic crises, and moral disarray across the continent. In fact, he wrote *The Division of Labor in Society* to provide a perspective on current social developments that would offer a different interpretation than that of socialists, conservatives, and individualistic liberals. Thus, whereas the socialist Left described economic crises as symptomatic of the inherent contradictions of capitalism, and therefore requiring a socialist transformation, Durkheim believed that such crises reflect the disruption of norms coordinating production and consumption that result from the rapidity of change. In other words, in the initial phases of economic modernization, especially as substantial spatial separation between producers and consumers is introduced, producers are unclear about market demand. Regular communication will allow producers to adjust levels of production to consumer need. Similarly, whereas conservatives denounced modern individualism and secularism for causing social chaos and, accordingly, called for a restoration of the power of religion, Durkheim viewed these social strains as transient or the birth pangs of a new order. In a modern social structure, a period of adjustment is needed in order to determine the appropriate set of social rules, norms, rights, and obligations, to fine-tune, as it were, institutional functioning.

Although Durkheim defended modern Western social developments against critics from the Left and Right, he was equally critical of liberal ideologies. English-styled liberals uncritically celebrated Western modernity. They defined individual freedom and creativity as the very essence of social modernization. They held that unrestrained freedom yields productivity, civic harmony, and the public welfare. They advocated a free market unencumbered by governmental regulation. Durkheim believed that they were blind to the realities of coercion, social domination, and the socially and personally destructive aspects of modernization. For example, these individualistic liberals championed the market system for unleashing individual freedom but did not consider the division of labor that compels individuals to exchange; they saw only individual opportunity but not the inequalities of social classes. Durkheim did. He did not, though, follow the Marxist view of class conflict. Rather, he believed that a rigid

class system would disappear as modernity was democratized. Durkheim was convinced that social democratization, by which he meant equal opportunity for individual advancement in economic, political, and educational institutions, was an intrinsic aspect of modernization. He advocated reforms that would equalize social competition (e.g., abolishing inherited property) and promote a condition of social justice.

Durkheim sketched a broad social perspective for a liberal social regime that he intended to defend without becoming an apologist for a narrow economic liberalism. Unlike individualistic liberals, Durkheim acknowledged serious disturbances in current social developments. In particular, he was alarmed at the potential personal and social costs of individualism. Whereas, in *The Division of Labor*, his focus was on social structure and the problem of social order, subsequently, his attention shifted somewhat to the social and moral meaning of individualism. Durkheim never retreated from his commitment to individualism, but he wished to defend the individual as part of a stable moral and social framework. This rethinking of individualism, which was fundamental to Durkheim's social liberalism, is clarified in a major study, *Suicide*.

Suicide: individualism and community revisited

Durkheim disagreed with conservatives who criticized modern society for promoting individualism at the expense of moral and social values. In *The Division of Labor in Society*, Durkheim argued that social differentiation, cultural pluralism, and secularism stimulate individualism. Modern societies necessitate that individuals have more freedom to create the social rules that regulate their lives. Far from undermining social coherence, individual freedom makes it possible because social norms and values cannot be legislated by the state, church, or the family. Modern society creates the individual as a social agent, so to speak, because individualism is necessary for its ongoing social functioning.

The social importance of the individual in modern societies is symbolized by the reverence surrounding the individual. Durkheim argued that, when intense group feelings are attached to an idea or object, and these feelings are articulated in shared beliefs and social practices, we are witnessing what is in essence a religion. Despite the secularity of modernity, as evidenced in the separation of the church and state and in the decline of Judeo-Christian dogma, it evolves its own religion of humanity. The individual functions as a sacred object; laws, social institutions, and customs construct and protect the rights and dignity of the individual. Subsequent to *The Division of Labor*, Durkheim emphasized the contribution of this religious culture of individualism to social coherence.

Durkheim distinguished his own defense of individualism from the individualism which celebrated individualism **freed from all constraints**. Unbridled individualism was supposed to **guarantee social progress**. For example, economic greed was said to **promote the public welfare** by producing more and better goods at a **cheaper price for the consumer** or by encouraging the virtues of hard work, self-sacrifice, and risk taking. Durkheim disagreed. Championing a form of individualism that resisted all social limits is personally and socially destructive. Individualism is a social good only when it occurs within a social and moral framework. This moral claim was what Durkheim intended to prove in the book that has been hailed as the first work of scientific sociology: *Suicide*.

Durkheim's decision to study suicide was a calculated, even if provocative, gesture. His reasons were twofold. First, Durkheim was struggling to legitimate sociology as a science. At the time, sociology was a fledgling field of study that had no academic status. In early twentieth century France, sociology was not a recognized science. Few sociology courses were taught, and professors advocating sociology were in a bitter struggle with their colleagues. Chief among the enemies of sociology were humanists (secular and religious) who believed that sociology denied free will and therefore undermined moral responsibility. Perhaps an even more formidable opponent were social scientists for whom society was reducible to individual psychology and behavior. To legitimate sociology as a science, Durkheim had to persuade his detractors that society is a reality irreducible to the psychology of the individual. What better way to make his case than to show that suicide, an act that seemed so obviously explainable by individual psychology, was a social fact. At the same time that a study of suicide could disarm critics of sociology, Durkheim could show the social dangers of unbridled individualism. *Suicide* would be an ideal vehicle for trumpeting his social liberal vision under the sign of science.

Durkheim does not deny that psychological distress prompts individuals to take their own lives knowingly. Rather, his chief claim is that social conditions produce this suicidal disposition. Durkheim's three basic types of suicide (egoistic, altruistic, anomic) indicate different social conditions of integration and regulation. I provide an overview of each type with an eye to spotlighting Durkheim's social liberal values.

In egoistic suicide, individuals take their lives because of the psychological distress that stems from their lack of social integration. "In this case the bond attaching man to life relaxes because that attaching him to society is itself slack. The incidents of private life which . . . are considered its [suicide's] determining causes are in reality only incidental causes. The

individual yields to the slightest shock of circumstance because the state of society has made him a ready prey to suicide" [6]. Durkheim explores the dynamics of egoistic suicide through an empirical case study relating religion and suicide. He observes that statistical portraits of suicides in Western industrial nations consistently show that Protestants have higher suicide rates than do Catholics. There is no credible reason to assume any psychological difference between these two populations. There is little difference, moreover, in terms of doctrine; both denominations condemn suicide. However, Durkheim notes some key social differences. In particular, Protestantism is highly individualistic. Protestants arrive at their faith through an appeal to individual conscience. They share few common beliefs and practices; accordingly, they are less socially integrated into their religious community. By contrast, the centralized bureaucratic organization of Catholicism imposes a unified faith on its practitioners. Catholics share most of the same beliefs and practices; accordingly, they are strongly integrated into their religious social community.

Durkheim infers a general social principle: suicide rates increase as social integration decreases. Why? Because, lacking close social ties, the individual loses moral purpose and falls prey to ennui and a deadly melancholic isolation. "Social man necessarily presupposes a society which he expresses and serves. If this dissolves . . . we are bereft of reasons for existence. . . . In this sense it is true to say that our activity needs an object [social goal] transcending it" [7]. Translating this "scientific principle" into a more explicitly moral language, Durkheim suggests that lacking a stable social framework individualism is a social danger.

Although Durkheim's analysis of egoistic suicide voiced the message that unrestrained individualism is undesirable, he insisted that too much social integration is equally harmful. This empirical and moral position is sounded in his comments on altruistic suicide. Altruism is the flip side to egoism. It indicates a condition of excessive social integration in that the needs, interests, and identity of the group overwhelm and extinguish a separate individual existence. If the individual's life is so completely fused with the well-being of the group, any disturbances in this social fusion threaten individual well-being. Suicide is one symptom of this disruption. Given the pronounced individualism of modern societies, altruistic suicide is rare; it is almost exclusively confined to the military. War situations provide the clearest illustration. Inspired by the spirit of intense group identification and nationalism, individuals perform heroic acts of self-sacrifice for the sake of higher social principles. The moral message here is that too much group control is unhealthy, at least in modern societies. Social integration represented one social axis of suicide; the other was social regulation. Anomic suicide illustrates a condition in which the

individual lacks sufficient social direction. Durkheim assumed that society defines and directs individual wants, desires, and goals. Lacking adequate social regulation, individuals cannot organize their own lives in a stable and coherent way. Durkheim's example of anomic suicide is the rise in suicide rates during economic crises. He asserted that this social phenomenon is less the product of economic decline (since it affects upwardly and downwardly mobile individuals) than the result of the moral disorder that accompanies abrupt socioeconomic change. As individuals quickly shift their socioeconomic status (up or down), there occurs, at least temporarily, a disruption in expectations and goals as social opportunities are dramatically altered. Suicide is one expected outcome of the moral confusion and distress experienced in an anomic state. Interpreted from a moral perspective, Durkheim's analysis of anomic suicide contains an unpleasant message to English-styled liberals and to the socialist Left. Despite their good intentions to free the individual from repressive social controls, too much freedom may bring its opposite, suicide. Durkheim concludes that individuals require a stable, intact social and moral framework to set limits, give direction and purpose to their behavior.

Durkheim insisted upon the scientific status of his analysis, but is it merely coincidental that the principles he claims to have discovered coincide precisely with his own social liberal values? *Suicide* served Durkheim as a medium through which to engage current public debates regarding the proper relation between the individual and the social community. Against conservatives, he insisted upon individualism as a condition of a healthy society. Against individualistic liberals and socialists, he maintained the necessity of social and moral regulation as a condition of a healthy individualism.

If Durkheim's social agenda is not entirely clear in the analysis of types of suicide, it is spelled out in the concluding section where he assumes the explicit role of social reformer. If suicide rates indicate a social disturbance in the relation of the individual to the group — a breakdown of social integration and regulation, the remedy must be social. Durkheim believed that neither the family, church, nor state could function to offset currents of egoism and anomie in modern societies. For example, secularization has weakened the social role of the church; the loss of social functions has similarly weakened the family; the removal of the state from daily affairs has rendered it incapable of directing individual life. Durkheim imagined that, as the workplace becomes central to modern life, forms of community and moral regulation will crystallize, providing a kind of moral and social center for the individual. As in *The Division of Labor in Society*, *Suicide* served Durkheim as a vehicle to imagine and recommend a society that combined individualism, moral coherence, and social justice.

Science, truth, and moral hope

Durkheim made it clear that science would have little value if it did not contribute to advancing human welfare. "We should judge our researches to have no worth at all if they were to have only a speculative interest. If we separate carefully the theoretical from the practical problems, it is not to the neglect of the latter; but, on the contrary, to be in a better position to solve them" [8]. In his sociological studies of the division of labor, suicide, the family, education, and religion, Durkheim never restricted social analysis to stating facts and proposing explanations and theories. This initial stage was followed by moral judgments and proposed social reforms. For example, in the first two major sections of *The Division of Labor in Society*, Durkheim sets out the social facts pertaining to the evolution of humankind from a primitive to a modern society. He sketches an ideal of modern society that serves as a norm to judge current developments. In the third section of *Division* entitled, "Abnormal Forms," Durkheim tells us what is wrong in the current social division of labor and what reforms would be appropriate (in light of the "normal" evolutionary process) [9]. Thus, present economic crises are interpreted as temporary maladjustments to rapid social change, requiring expanded communication between producers and consumers, not the transformation of capitalism into socialism. For Durkheim, science, morality, and social policy go hand in hand, though they remain distinct phases of social analysis.

Durkheim offered a justification for this sociological logic in *The Rules of Sociological Method* [10]. He outlined the assumptions and the steps involved in sociological analysis. His strategy was, broadly speaking, to distinguish the establishment of scientific facts and explanations from ideology for the purpose of making moral and social policy recommendations.

Durkheim defines the subject matter of sociology as those shared institutions, cultural beliefs, and social conventions that are irreducible to individual psychology. He calls these phenomena "social facts." Their key feature is that, though produced by individuals, they exist external to us and constrain our behaviour. For example, the division of labor is a social fact in that it constrains our behavior (e.g., we must specialize and buy and sell on the market), seemingly irrespective of our personal wishes.

Sociology studies social facts as if, in Durkheim's phrase, they were "things." Durkheim counsels that we view social facts dispassionately – without feelings or preconceptions. Our ideas of social facts should come from the world as it is, not from our individual biases. By immersing ourselves in the study of facts, we can avoid contaminating our sociological ideas with personal values. The sociologist aims to establish social

facts, relate them to their appropriate societal type (e.g., primitive, feudal, or modernity), and offer historical, causal, and functional explanations. This allows sociology to ascertain the "normal" structure and functioning of social facts. Durkheim believed that the normality of social facts is a function of their being "general" to a given social type and useful or contributing to its stability. Thus, since individualism in a modern differentiated society is both general and socially useful, it is normal. By contrast, individualism would be abnormal in a primitive society because it would be an isolated phenomenon and dysfunctional.

Durkheim asserted that his methodological rules made it possible for science to produce universal truths about social facts. This would permit sociologists to make objective moral judgments. He was, I am convinced, badly mistaken.

His claim that sociologists can somehow set aside their prejudices and preconceptions in order to gain access to social reality "as it actually is" ignores the important role that human interests and values play in social knowledge. Contrary to Durkheim's recommendation that "all preconceptions must be eradicated" [11], our preconceptions guide our perceptions. They tell us what is important, how to relate perceptions to form concepts and frame relations between concepts, and make it possible to fashion disparate bits of information into a coherent social story or picture. Durkheim thought that, if we could open ourselves to the world, it would impress its essential nature upon us. However, the world is always experienced as meaningful. We can never get around our preconceptions to get to a world that exists as raw experience. To the extent that our social perceptions are guided by our interests and preconceptions, our social ideas are saturated with particular social interests, values, and culturally biased assumptions. Consider Durkheim's social evolutionary theory. Durkheim's image of primitive society exhibits the standard Western stereotypes of the time, for example, primitive society as socially simple, culturally homogeneous, mired in supernatural religiosity, anti-individualistic, socially intolerant, and resistant to change. His concept of modernity is no less stereotyped, even if in an idealized way, for example, modernity as socially complex, secular, culturally pluralistic, individualistic, tolerant, and socially dynamic. If there is any doubt that this "typology" is little more than a thinly disguised story of human progress, the subtitle of *Division*, "A Study of the Organization of Superior Societies," betrays Durkheim's modern, European, middle class values.

Durkheim imagined an intimate tie between scientific knowledge and morality. Science was not only to serve moral ends but was to give morality an objective status. Yet Durkheim wished to maintain the separation between science, morality, and politics. In the end, he did not succeed.

For example, his retreat into a view that assumes an unambiguous separation between the scientist and society in order to justify a value-neutral, objective view of science is contradicted by Durkheim's insistence on the social formation of consciousness. If the culture of a society is shaped by its social structure, then doesn't this hold true for the sociologies as well? As we have seen, Durkheim's ideas about social knowledge, social evolution, and modernity look suspiciously like the social values and ideas of a modern, middle class, liberal Frenchman.

His moral vision bursts into center stage in his last great work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* [12]. Durkheim attempted to explain the origin and nature of religion. His thesis, to simplify enormously, was that religious beliefs are really symbolic ways of understanding the power of society to fashion the individual; religious rituals are interpreted as socially integrating practices. Prior to the advent of the Enlightenment, humankind lacked the power of reason to grasp that the supernatural and spiritual forces that they assumed governed human affairs were social forces (e.g., the division of labor, cultural beliefs, law). Modern science destroys this illusion; science forces humanity to confront a reality governed by human and natural forces. In particular, sociology steps forward as the successor to religious social beliefs and ethics. The sociologist occupies the social role previously held by shamans, prophets, and priests. Clearly, there are strong echoes of Comte's fusion of sociology and religion. Durkheim seems to open up the possibility that, by uncovering the true reality of society as a transcendent power productive of human life in the sense of giving our lives coherence and purpose, sociology may become the centerpiece of a religious cult.

Durkheim inherited a dilemma: how to make science both a medium of pure truth and yet socially useful. A science of society too detached from social problems seemed pointless; a science too close to public conflicts was in danger of losing its moral authority by becoming a mere ideology. Durkheim was not alone in wrestling with this problem; his German counterpart, Max Weber, seemed at times preoccupied with the blurring of the lines between science, truth, and values.