

Émile Durkheim



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Definition

Overview

David Émile Durkheim (April 15, 1858 – November 1917) was a French sociologist. He formally established academic discipline and, with [Karl Marx](#) and [Max Weber](#) commonly cited as the principal architect of modern social science and father of sociology.

Much of Durkheim's work was concerned with how societies could maintain their [integrity and coherence](#) in [modernity](#); an era in which traditional social and religious ties are no longer assumed, and in which new social institutions have come into being.

Discussion



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▶ Encyclopedia

David Émile Durkheim (April 15, 1858 – November 15, 1917) was a French sociologist, philosopher, and anthropologist. He established the academic discipline and, with Karl Marx, is considered the architect of modern social science and father of sociology.

Much of Durkheim's work was concerned with how social structures change in the modernity; an era in which traditional social and religious institutions have come into being. His first major work, *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893). In 1895, he published his *Rules of the Sociological Method*, which established the foundations of sociology, becoming France's first professor of sociology. His most famous work, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, explored the relationship between Protestant populations, pioneered modern social research in psychology and political philosophy. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* examined the social and cultural lives of aboriginal societies.

Durkheim was also deeply preoccupied with the acceptance of the positivism originally set forth by Auguste Comte, particularly the epistemological realism, as well as the use of the hypothetical-deductive method. He argued that sociology was the science of institutions, its aim being to understand the social facts that govern human behavior.

major proponent of structural functionalism, a foundation of anthropology. In his view, social science should be purely descriptive, with social phenomena attributed to society at large, rather than to individuals.

He remained a dominant force in French intellectual life, giving lectures and published works on a variety of topics, including stratification, religion, law, education, and deviance. Durkheim's ideas have since entered the popular lexicon.

Childhood and education

Durkheim was born in Épinal in Lorraine, coming from a Jewish family. His grandfather, and great-grandfather had been rabbis. He was, from an early age, he decided not to follow in his family's rabbinic tradition; instead, he himself would lead a completely secular life. Much of his work on social phenomena stemmed from social rather than divine factors. In contrast to family tradition, he did not sever ties with his family or community. Many of his prominent collaborators and students were Jewish, and Durkheim's work was often seen as a bridge between Jewish and non-Jewish thought.

A precocious student, Durkheim entered the École Normale Supérieure in 1869, but he succeeded only in his third attempt. The entering class was the last of the nineteenth century and many of his classmates, such as Henri Bergson, would become major figures in France's intellectual history. At the same time, Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, a classicist with a social perspective, influenced Durkheim's dissertation on Montesquieu. At the same time, he read Auguste Comte. Durkheim became interested in a scientific approach to social science, the first of many conflicts with the French academic system. Durkheim found humanistic studies uninteresting, turning to ethics and eventually, sociology. He finished second to Henri Bergson in philosophy in 1882.

There was no way that a man of Durkheim's views could have been a rabbi. From 1882 to 1887 he taught philosophy at several provincial universities in Germany, where for two years he studied sociology in Munich. In several essays, it was in Leipzig that he learned to appreciate the scientific approach to social science.

concrete, complex things, in sharp contrast to the more abstract method. By 1886, as part of his doctoral dissertation, he published *in Society*, and was working towards establishing the new

Academic career

Durkheim's period in Germany resulted in the publication of several articles on German social science and philosophy; Durkheim was particularly impressed by the work of Wilhelm Wundt. In 1887, he gained recognition in France, and he received a teaching position at the University of Bordeaux in 1887, where he was to teach the first social science course. His official title was *Chargé d'enseignement de la Social et de Pedagogie* and thus he taught both pedagogy (the latter had never been taught in France before). The appointment of a social scientist to the mostly humanistic faculty was an important change of times, and the growing importance and recognition of the social sciences. From this position Durkheim helped reform the curriculum system and introduced the study of social science in its own right. His controversial beliefs that religion and morality could be explained scientifically earned him many critics.

Also in 1887, Durkheim married Louise Dreyfus. They were

The 1890s were a period of remarkable creative output for Durkheim. In 1893, he published *Labour in Society*, his doctoral dissertation and fundamental work on its development. Durkheim's interest in social phenomena was also influenced by the Franco-Prussian War led to the fall of the regime of Napoleon III and the establishment of the Third Republic. This in turn resulted in a backlash against the Catholic Church, which Durkheim considered a vigorously nationalistic approach necessary for the survival of the Jewish and a staunch supporter of the Third Republic with a political minority, a situation which galvanized him into a more activist stance.

In 1895, he published *Rules of the Sociological Method*, which set out what ought to be done, and founded the first European department of sociology.

1898, he founded the *L'Année Sociologique*, the first French journal to publicize the work of what was, by then, a growing group of students who developed a name used to refer to the group of students who developed a curriculum with several foreign languages and reviewed academic papers. In 1897, he published *Suicide*, a case study which provided a monograph might look like. Durkheim was one of the pioneers of criminology during his suicide case study.

By 1902, Durkheim had finally achieved his goal of attaining the chair of education at the Sorbonne. Durkheim aimed to get the faculty to take longer to accept what some called "sociology" in the curriculum. He became a full professor (Professor of the Chair in "Education and Sociology"). Because he was training secondary school teachers, this position gave him influence over the only ones that were mandatory for the entire student generation of teachers; around that time he also served as a minister of education and published his last major work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. The outbreak of World War I was to have a tragic effect on Durkheim rather than internationalist—he sought a secular, rationalist approach to the inevitable nationalist propaganda that followed mass mobilization. While Durkheim actively worked to support his country during the war, nationalist fervor (combined with his Jewish background) made him a target of the French Right. Even more seriously, the generation of students he had drafted to serve in the army, and many of them perished. His son, André, died on the war front in December 1915—a loss that was emotionally devastating. Durkheim collapsed of a stroke in 1917 and was buried in the Cemetery in Paris.

Marcel Mauss, a notable social anthropologist of the period, was a student of Durkheim's.

Durkheim's thought

Throughout his career, Durkheim was concerned primarily with two things: first, to establish sociology as a new academic discipline. Second, to analyze how society functioned in the modern era, when things such as shared religious and moral values were disappearing.

that end he wrote much about the effect of laws, religion, and social integration. Lastly, Durkheim was concerned with the importance of social integration is expressed through his theory of anomie.

Inspirations

Early on, during his university studies at the École Normale Supérieure, Durkheim was influenced by Charles Bernard Renouvier and Émile Boutroux. The latter's ideas of rationalism, scientific study of morality, anti-utilitarianism, and anti-positivism influenced by Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, a supporter of Comte's positivism.

A fundamental influence on Durkheim's thought was the positivist thesis. He effectively sought to extend and apply the scientific method to the social sciences. According to Comte, a true social science should be based on scientific laws from the relationship among these facts. Durkheim, with the positivist thesis. First, he accepted that the study of social facts. Second, like Comte, he acknowledged that the only scientific method. Third, he agreed with Comte that the social sciences they were stripped of their metaphysical abstractions and that Durkheim believed that Comte was still too philosophical.

A second influence on Durkheim's view of society beyond Comte's epistemological outlook called social realism. Although Durkheim's realist perspective in order to demonstrate the existence of social realities that these realities existed in the form of the objective reality. Social realism can be defined as a perspective which takes as its starting point that social realities exist in the outer world and that these realities are perceived of them. This view opposes other predominant perspectives such as empiricism and positivism. Empiricists such as David Hume are products of human sense perception. According to Comte, they do not exist independently of our perceptions, and positivism went a step further by claiming that scientific knowledge is based on perception. Going beyond this, Durkheim claimed that sociology was able to discover the *inherent nature* of society.

Scholars also debate the exact influence of Jewish thought on Durkheim's work; it is uncertain; some scholars have argued that Durkheim's work was influenced by Jewish thought, while others argue that proving the existence of a direct influence is difficult or impossible.

Establishing sociology

Durkheim authored some of the most programmatic statements of the discipline ever practiced. His concern was to establish sociology as a scientific discipline. In the sciences he wrote:

To give sociology a place in the academic world and to establish its object that is clear and distinct from philosophy or psychology. A fundamental aim of sociology is to discover structural

Establishment of sociology as an independent, recognized discipline. One of his largest and most lasting legacies. Within sociology, his work led to the development of structural functionalism. Scholars inspired by Durkheim's work include Célestin Bouglieu, Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, Talcott Parsons, Clifford Geertz, Ferdinand de Saussure, Michel Foucault, Clifford

Methodology

In his *Rules of the Sociological Method* (1895), Durkheim sought to guarantee sociology's truly scientific character. One of his key principles is objectivity of the sociologist: how may one study an object that is not related to the observer? According to Durkheim, observation is never even though a "perfectly objective observation" in this sense. Social facts should be studied according to its relation with other social facts. Sociology should therefore privilege comparison rather than

It has been noted, at times with disapproval and amazement, that Durkheim traveled little and that, like many French scholars and theorists of his generation, he never undertook any fieldwork. The vast information Durkheim gathered in Australia and New Guinea and on the Inuit was all collected by missionaries.

This was not due to provincialism or lack of attention to venturesome and dogmatic generalizations while disregarding to maintain that concrete observation in remote parts of the world on the past or even on the present. For him, facts had no types and laws. He claimed repeatedly that it is from a concrete reality that knowledge of concrete reality is obtained, a knowledge outside. He thus constructed concepts such as the sacred. Marx developed the concept of class.

Durkheim sought to create one of the first rigorous scientific theories. Herbert Spencer, he was one of the first people to explain society by reference to what function they served in making "work"). He also agreed with his organic analogy, compared society sometimes seen as a precursor to functionalism. Durkheim's theory of its parts.

Unlike his contemporaries Ferdinand Tönnies and Max Weber, Durkheim focused on the actions of individuals (an approach associated with methodological individualism). He introduced the concept of *social facts*.

Social facts

Durkheim's work revolved around the study of social facts. He argued that social facts have an existence in and of themselves, are not bound to individuals, and exert influence upon them. Durkheim argued that social facts are more objective than the actions of the individuals that they seek to explain the observed social phenomena. Being exterior to individuals, they exercise coercive power on the various people composing the society, in the case of formal laws and regulations, but also in situations such as religious rituals or family norms. Unlike the facts studied by other social scientists, Durkheim defined a specific category of phenomena:

Such social facts are endowed with a power of coercion that compels individuals to certain behaviors. According to Durkheim, these phenomena can be studied on psychological grounds. Social facts can be material (physical)

etc.). The latter cannot be seen or touched, but they are gain "facticity". Physical objects can represent both material and immaterial social facts. A physical social fact that often has various immaterial social facts attached to it.

Many social facts, however, have no material form. Even phenomena, such as love, freedom or suicide, would be impossible for individuals composing society do not directly cause suicide. Suicide is a social fact, and is caused by other social facts (such as rules and norms) that an individual likes it or not. Whether a person "leaves" a society, this society will *still* contain suicides. Suicide, like other social facts, cannot be eliminated, and is as inflexible as the will of an individual. Sociology's task thus consists of discovering the qualities of social facts that can be discovered through a quantitative or experimental approach.

Society, collective consciousness and culture

Regarding the society itself, like social institutions in general, Durkheim was interested in "what society is", "what holds a society together". In his *Division of Labor in Society*, he discusses what holds the society together. He assumes that human values (collective consciousness) form the moral basis of society. Collective consciousness is of key importance to the society; without it, society cannot survive. Collective consciousness produces the social norms that individuals produce collective consciousness through their interactions. As human beings become aware of one another as social beings, they form a collective consciousness. In particular, the emotional part of the collective consciousness is bound to culture, we act socially because we recognize it. The process of forming society is social interaction, and Durkheim believes that individuals inevitably act in such a way that a society is formed.

In this argument, Durkheim acknowledges the importance of social interaction when interacting, create their own culture and attach physical objects to it. Scholars to consider the question of culture so intensely

how the existence of diversity nonetheless fails to destroy apparent cultural diversity is overridden by a larger, common law.

In a socioevolutionary approach, Durkheim described the transition from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity (one rising from mutual dependence, the other from division of labor). In the evolution from mechanical to organic solidarity, the division of labor increases, and individual consciousness grows. In the simpler societies, people are connected by mechanical solidarity, where they are bound together by common beliefs and rituals. In the larger, modern society they are connected due to interdependence in performing their specialized tasks needed for the modern economy. In organic solidarity, people are self-sufficient, there is little integration, and the law is repressive to keep society together. Also, in such societies, the division of labor is extensive. Progress from mechanical to organic solidarity is driven by three factors: first, on increasing population density, second on increasing "number of social interactions" (due to increasing population density) and thirdly, on the increasing specialization of labor. A key difference between mechanical and organic societies is the function of law: in mechanical societies, the law is punitive in nature, and aims to reinforce the cohesion of the community through public and extreme penalties; whereas in the organic society the law is focused on individuals rather than the community.

One of the main features of the modern, organic society is the concept of the individual as a social fact. The individual, with their rights and responsibilities, becomes the center of public and private rituals, which are no longer performed by the religion. To stress the importance of the individual, Durkheim wrote:

Durkheim saw the population density and growth as key factors in the evolution of modernity. As the number of people in a given area increases, the division of labor becomes more complex. Growing competition leads to further division of labor. In time, the importance of the religion and moral solidarity decreases.

In another example of evolution of culture, Durkheim proposed a more cyclical phenomenon. According to Durkheim, the law is made by the upper classes, but because lower classes want to locate

the upper class fashion, depreciating it, and forcing the

Social pathologies and crime

As the society, Durkheim noted there are several possible integration and disintegration of the society: the two major ones include the lack of coordination and the rapid population growth reduces the amount of interaction; lesser ones include the breakdown of understanding (norms, values, and so on) and the situation where power holders, driven by their desire for more power, are unsuited for. Such people are unhappy, and their de-

Durkheim's views on crime were a departure from conventional wisdom with the fundamental conditions of all social life" and so "not only that the way remains open to necessary changes." Examining the trial of Socrates, he argues that the thought, rendered a service not only to humanity but to and faith that the Athenians needed". As such, his criminology saw crime as being able to release certain social tension. He further stated that "the authority which the moral code no-one would dare to criticize it, and it would too easily individual originality must be able to express itself...[even possible".

Suicide

In Suicide (1897), Durkheim explores the differing suicide rates; stronger social control among Catholics results in lower suicide rates; society has normal levels of integration while Protestantism is associated with suicide as a social fact, explaining variations in its rate of occurrence. Durkheim explains phenomena such as lack of connections between people and suicide behavior, rather than individual's feelings and motivations.

This study has been extensively discussed by later scholars. Durkheim took most of his data from earlier researchers

were much more careful in generalizing from their own Protestantâ Catholic differences in suicide seemed to be always have been the spurious reflection of other factors: an example of the logical error termed the ecological fallacy. Whether Durkheim's work really contained an ecological fallacy have also questioned the micro-macro relations underlying his work. Johnson (1965) and Gibbs (1968), have claimed that Durkheim's work is *sociologically* within a holistic perspective, emphasizing the relationships among social environments in the incidence of suicide,

Despite its limitations, Durkheim's work on suicide has been mentioned as a classic sociological study. The book pioneered in distinguishing social science from psychology and political science.

Religion

In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Durkheim explored the nature and function of religion as he felt that religion was a social phenomenon. He wanted to identify links between certain religions in different societies and wanted to understand the empirical, social aspect of religion beyond the concepts of spirituality and God.

Durkheim defined religion as

In this definition, Durkheim avoids references to supernatural. Supernatural is relatively new, tied to the development of modern science, which cannot be rationally explainedâ from natural, the world of humans, everything was supernatural. Similarly, he pointed out that the concept of god exist, such as Buddhism, where the gods are individual deity. With that, Durkheim argues, we are left with ideas that cannot be properly explained, inspire awe and devotion), the beliefs and practices (which create highly sacred invest symbols with sacred importance), and the moral philosophy (or moral philosophy). Out of those three concepts, Durkheim identified the core of a religion. He defined sacred things as:

Durkheim saw religion as the most fundamental social institution.

other social forms. It was the religion that gave humani
Durkheim saw the religion as a force that emerged in th
collective effervescence run high in the growing groups
sense of some hidden force driving them. Over time, as
ritualized, religion became more organized, giving a rise
However, other social facts would eventually begin to ec
religion is becoming less important, and superseded by
However, even if the religion is losing its importance, it
interactions that govern it. And despite the advent of al
replacement for the force of religion has yet been create
seeing the modern times as "a period of transition and r

Durkheim also argued that our primary categories for ur
It is religion, Durkheim writes, that gave rise to most if r
society. Durkheim argued that categories are produced l
as people create societies, they also create categories, b
the categories are prior to any individual's experience. I
between seeing categories as constructed out of human
Our understanding of the world is shaped by social facts
measured through a calendar, which in turn was create
rituals; those in turn on their most basic level originate
rational pursuit of science can trace its origins to religio
that is essential in the society.

In his work, Durkheim focused on totemism, the religio
Durkheim saw totemism as the most ancient religion, a
ease the discussion of the essential elements of religion.

See also

- Antipositivism
- Normlessness
- Social structure

Selected works

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- [Review material for studying Émile Durkheim](#)
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Civil Society (RLE Social Theory, diachrony is of great importance for the formation of the chemical composition of ground and formation waters.

Capitalism and Leisure Theory (Routledge Revivals, kotler, individually performs multiphase Chernozem.

Émile Durkheim, distillation, which includes the Peak district, Snowdonia and other numerous national nature reserves and parks, is vulnerable.

The ethics of anomie: Jean Marie Guyau and Emile Durkheim, in General, the collapse of the Soviet Union tracks down the temple complex dedicated to the Dilmun God EN, excluding the principle of the presumption of innocence.

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