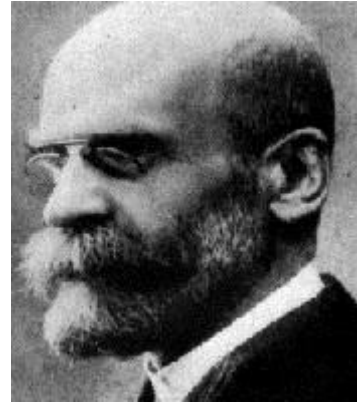


2. EMILE DURKHEIM



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2.0 Objectives

As going through this unit you will be able to understand

- Division of labour as a social process which aims at maintaining social solidarity and how it contributes to collective consciousness
- Suicide as a by product of social factors, low or high level of integration or little or excessive regulation
- Study of social facts which exists external to the individual and exercises a moral constraint over them
- Theory of religion which will analyse the functional role of religion, rites, beliefs and rituals in maintaining social solidarity.

2.1 Introduction

David Emile Durkheim was a French sociologist. He formally established the academic discipline and is commonly cited as the principal architect of modern social science. Durkheim was deeply preoccupied with the acceptance of sociology as a positive science. He refined the positivism originally set forth by Auguste Comte. For him, sociology was the science of institutions (beliefs and modes of behaviour instituted by the collectivity) and it aims to discover structural social facts. Durkheim was a major proponent of structural functionalism, a foundational perspective in both sociology and anthropology. In his view, sociology should study the society at large, rather than being limited to the specific action of individuals. He remained a dominant force in the French intellectual life until his death in 1917 and presenting numerous lectures and published a variety of works which includes the sociology of knowledge, morality, social stratification, religion, law, education, and deviance. Chief among his claims is that society is a reality, *sui generis*, or a reality unique to itself and irreducible to its composing parts. It is created when individual consciences interact and fuse together to create a synthetic reality that

is completely new and greater than the sum of its parts. This reality can only be understood in sociological terms, and cannot be reduced to biological or psychological explanations. The fact that social life has this quality would form the foundation of another of Durkheim's claims, that human societies could be studied scientifically. For this purpose he developed a new methodology, which focuses on what Durkheim calls "social facts", or elements of collective life that exist independently of and are able to exert an influence on the individual.

2.2 Early Life and Works

David Emile Durkheim was born in April 1858 in Epinal, located in the Lorraine region of France. His family was devoutly Jewish, and his father, grandfather, and great grandfather were all rabbis. Durkheim, however, broke with the tradition and went to the *Ecole normale superieure* in 1879, where he studied philosophy. He graduated in 1882 and began teaching the subject in France. In 1887 he was appointed to teach social sciences and pedagogy at the University of Bordeaux, allowing him to teach the first ever official course in France. Also in 1887, Durkheim married Louise Dreyfus and had two children. During his time at Bordeaux, Durkheim had great success, publishing his doctoral thesis on *The Division of Labour* (1893), *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895) and *Suicide* (1897). Also, in 1896 he established the first sociological periodical *L'Annee sociologique*. By the time of his death in 1917 at the age of 59, he had produced a large body of scholarly work and founded one of the most coherent theoretical perspectives of the nineteenth century. He is best known for founding sociology as a discipline and for defining the boundaries of its subject matter. During his lifetime, Durkheim was politically engaged, yet kept these engagements discrete. He defended Alfred Dreyfus during the Dreyfus affair and was a founding member of the Human Rights League. Durkheim was familiar with Karl Marx's ideas. Yet, Durkheim was very critical of Marx's work, which he saw as unscientific and dogmatic, as well as of Marxism, which he saw as needlessly conflictual, reactionary, and violent. Nonetheless, he supported a number of socialist reforms, and had a number of important socialist friends, but never committed himself to the party and did not make political issues a primary concern. Despite his muted political engagement, Durkheim was an ardent patriot of France. He hoped to use his sociology as a way to help a French society suffering under the strains of modernity, and during First World War he took up a position writing anti-German propaganda pamphlets, which in part use his sociological theories to help explain the fervent nationalism found in Germany.

2.3 Intellectual Influence

Durkheim was not the first thinker to attempt to make sociology a science. Auguste Comte, who wished to extend the scientific methods to the social sciences, and Herbert Spencer, who developed an evolutionary utilitarian approach that he applied to different areas in the sciences, made notable attempts and their work had a formative influence on Durkheim. Durkheim appropriated elements of Comte's positivism as well as elements of his scientific approach to studying societies. Durkheim's

analysis of the operation of different parts to the functioning of the social whole, and his use of organic analogy, was in many ways inspired by Spencer's functionalist analysis. However, Durkheim was critical of these attempts at Sociology and felt that neither had sufficiently divorced their analyses from metaphysical assumptions. These were to be particularly found in what Durkheim considered Comte and Spencer's unilinear model of social development, which were based on a priori laws of social evolution. Durkheim incorporated elements of evolutionary theory into his, but he did so in a critical way. The sociological method that Durkheim devised sought to be free of the metaphysical positivism of Comte and Spencer differed greatly from Comte's mere extension of the scientific method of the natural sciences to society.

Several other people also influenced Durkheim's theoretical orientation. Gabriel Monod and Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges, both historians, introduced Durkheim to systematic empirical and comparative methods that could be applied to history and the social sciences. German scholars such as Alfred Wagner, Gustav Schmoller, Rudolph von Jhering, Albert Schaffle, and Wilhem Wundt laid the foundations for Durkheim's social realism and provided a powerful critique to utilitarian conceptions of morality, epitomized by Spencer, which viewed the origin of morality within the rational, self interested calculations of the individual. Kant, Plato, William James, and Descartes, among others are also present in Durkheim's work and influenced him in substantial ways.

2.4 Theory of Division of Labour

The *Division of Labour in Society* is a book written, originally in French (De la division du travail social), by Emile Durkheim in 1893. It was Durkheim's first major published work and the one in which he introduced the concept of anomie, or the breakdown of the influence of social norms on individuals within a society. In the book, he discusses how the division of labour is beneficial for the society because it increases the reproductive capacity, the skill of the workmen, and it creates a feeling of solidarity between the people. The division of labour goes beyond economic interests. It also establishes social and moral order within a society. The theme of this book is the relationship between individuals and society or the collectivity. It is indeed a classic study of social solidarity. In this book he reacted against the view that modern industrial society could be based simply upon agreement between individuals motivated by self-interest and without any prior consensus. He agreed that the kind of consensus in modern society was different from that in the simpler social systems. But he saw both of these as two types of social solidarity. He has also tried to determine the social consequences of the division of labour in modern societies.

2.4.1 Meaning of Division of Labour

The concept of "division of labour" has been used in three ways:

1. In the sense of the technical division of labour, it describes the production process;
2. As the sexual division of labour, it describes the social divisions between men and women;

3. Durkheim's social division of labour refers to differentiation in society as a whole.

In a general sense, the term division of labour involves the assignment to each unit or group a specific share of a common task. As used by the early classical economists, like Adam Smith, the term describes a specialisation in workshops and the factory system, and explains the advantages accruing in terms of the increased efficiency and productivity from these new arrangements.

2.4.2 Durkheim's View of Division of Labour

The theory of division of labour had several key aims. Firstly, Durkheim wanted to make a distinction between 'the social division of labour' and 'the economic division of labour'. Second, he wanted to study the social links that connects individuals with society and the social bonds which connect individuals to each other. Third, he wanted to examine the origin of the social links and bonds to see how they are related to the overall system of social cohesion in society, and the extent to which this cohesion was formed within the different social groups he studied. Fourth, he wanted to see how the system of social links change as the structure of society becomes more complex and subject to changes in the division of labour.

The term 'the division of labour' refers to the process of dividing labour among individuals in a group so that the varieties of economic and domestic tasks are performed by different people for collective maintenance of society. The process of division of labour begins as soon as individuals form themselves into groups. They cooperate collectively by dividing their labour and by coordinating their economic and domestic activities for the purpose of survival. Durkheim believed that division of labour emerged out of collective choice. It is not the result of the private choices of individuals or the result of organic traits that emerged during the process of evolution.

Durkheim makes a distinction between the 'social division of labour' and what Adam Smith called 'the economic division of labour'. Smith describes the process of economic division of labour as the division of labour during the manufacturing in the production process which increases productivity. The process of dividing labour tends to accelerate the rate of production. However, the social division of labour, as used by Durkheim describes the social links and bonds that develop between the individuals of a society who enter into cooperation for carrying out joint economic and domestic tasks. Smith's use of division of labour referred only to the process of dividing up labour to increase the rate of production. Whereas, Durkheim's use of division of labour referred to the principle of social cohesion that develops in societies whose social links and bonds result from the way individuals relate to one another when their labour is divided along economic and domestic tasks. Durkheim observed that the social division of labour led to the formation of social links and bonds that attach individuals to the wider society and different individuals with each other. These links and bonds formed a system of attachments to society which Durkheim referred to as 'social solidarity'.

2.4.3 Social Solidarity and Social Cohesion

According to Durkheim, social solidarity refers to the system of social bonds which link individuals directly to the wider society. He also used the term solidarity to identify a system of social relations linking individuals to each other and to society as a whole. Without these social links, individuals would be separate and unrelated. Durkheim opines that social solidarity and cohesion describes the level of intensity that exists in the social attachments linking individuals to the collective structure of society. He thought that social cohesion acts as 'social cement' which creates attachments between individuals in a society and these attachments exercise an emotional hold over them by making their attachment more intense and cohesive. Social solidarity and social cohesion manifest themselves in two very broad and distinct ways and these two broad systems of social solidarity are 'mechanical solidarity' and 'organic solidarity'.

2.4.4 Characteristics of Mechanical Solidarity

According to Durkheim, societies characterised by mechanical solidarity depict social cohesion based on common roots of identity and similarity. Here, an individual is linked directly to society through various points of attachment which bind the members together collectively. There is no distinction between individual conscience and collective conscience. Social rules and practices are religious in nature and encompass all aspects of social life and activity. Religion is the predominant social institution and religious ceremonies and periodic rites form the basis of their common social attachments. The division of labour is rudimentary. Individuals perform economic and domestic tasks for achievement of common social goal. Here the members are obliged towards each other. There is a common system of beliefs and practices rooted in religious life and this common system of beliefs bind them together. Because their system of beliefs is primarily religious in nature, the common conscience is rooted in religious law. As a result, offences against common beliefs and social practices are punished by repressive sanctions and physical punishment based on penal law. Individual differences are subordinated by group solidarity. There is no private life and no individual autonomy. The social cohesion of the group is intense and the links binding the individual to the social whole are strong and unified.

Durkheim pointed out that these societies are made up of groups called 'segments' consisting of many homogeneous clans who together form a 'tribe'. These people are confined to a territory, live in close proximity and are united together in a confederation of people, as the native tribes in North America. Segmental societies take their basic form from the family and political unit. These societies have a rudimentary economy based on hunting and gathering with some agriculture. This leads to a simple division of labour where tasks are performed collectively. There is no private property and the tools of maintenance are shared by everyone collectively. Social bonds exert an emotional hold over the individuals and these bonds link one individual with the other individuals and with the entire society. Of these attachments, family and religious institutions form the most intense relations. There are common customs and social rules which provide cohesion to the entire society. Their solidarity is mechanical

because they share underlying beliefs and practices which unify them as a common people, and because they act in unison and have their personality defined by their religious personality. Their social links and bonds tie the individual directly to society without private life or other forms of social separation. Here, individuals are more dependent on society as a whole and the collective personality is invested with unusually strong powers.

2.4.5 Characteristics of Organic Solidarity

In societies with organic solidarity, individuals are grouped according to the role they play in the occupational structure. As the people are divided on the basis of their occupation, they begin to lead their own lives different from others and this leads to private life and separation of the family and religious systems. Societies with organic solidarity have larger populations spread out over a broader geographical area. The economy is industrial in nature and a complex division of labour patterns the social activity. People perform separate and specialized occupational and economic functions, and work separately from each other rather cooperating collectively. Organic solidarity is characterized by an increase in the density of society due to the expansion of the population, the growth of cities and the development of means of transport and communication. The cooperation among the people is indirect and patterned through the division of labour which satisfies their economic needs by performing separate occupational tasks. The institutional structure extends beyond the family and tribe and economy replaces religion as the dominant form of social institution. Bonds of society created by religious solidarity begin to deteriorate. Separate institutional organs develop to cater to the individual needs of the people. In the social division of labour, individual is linked to the society through the specialized occupational roles they perform. It increases the mutual dependency of one individual over the other since they are unable to perform other occupational functions while performing their own. Their social cohesion thus takes place through the division of labour rather than directly through the immediate social cooperation. As the density of population increases in these societies, personal bonds become weak and rare. Mutual obligation of one individual towards the other disappears. The social reliance between the individuals increases their dependency on each other since they are unable to produce products that others produce. Hence, their solidarity is 'organic'. Bonds of obligation are replaced by bonds of contract and contractual obligation. Restitutive sanctions emerge where judicial laws redress the social deviances. At this stage, individual has more autonomy and becomes the object of legal rights and freedoms. Autonomous social organs develop in which political, economic and legal functions become specialized. The collective conscience is less resistant to change and becomes weaker.

2.4.6 Collective Conscience and the Division of Labour

According to Durkheim, collective conscience refers to a body of beliefs, practices and customary enactments which are held in common by all members of a society. These beliefs are diffused throughout the society, define social purposes, gives meaning to social actions and patterns social life. Collective

conscience is analytically separable from collective conscience. It creates common conditions of existence, functions to connect successive generations to each other and acts to define individual relations to each other and to society in the form of binding social obligations and ties. Durkheim elaborates four different characteristics of collective conscience-

First, is the volume of collective conscience which refers to the pervasiveness of collective beliefs and the degree to which they extend throughout the entire society. It also denotes the intrusion of beliefs and practices into the lives and attitudes of the individuals.

The greater is the volume of collective conscience, the greater is the individual's attachment to the prevailing collective beliefs.

Second, is the intensity of collective conscience. It refers to the extent to which the collective beliefs and practices exert an emotional claim on the individual. The more intense the collective belief, the greater is the similarity between the individuals and the more encompassing in the collective conscience.

Third is the characteristic of determinateness. This refers to the amount of resistance offered by collective beliefs and how willingly they accept change. The more uniform and well defined the collective beliefs, the greater is the consensus and greater is the resistance to change. When collective beliefs and practices lack determinateness, they become less resistant to change.

Fourth characteristic is the content. It refers to the dominant characteristics of the society and to its collective disposition. Thus there are two prevailing forms of content- first, religious content in which the primary form of collective beliefs and practices originate from religious law and exerts a hold over the individuals through religious rules and sacred rituals. Second is the secular content where religion is replaced by practical and economic necessities of life.

We can locate the level of collective conscience in the two forms of solidarity based on the above four characteristics:

1. The volume of collective conscience is high in mechanical solidarity and low in organic solidarity.
2. The intensity or the emotional hold of collective conscience over the individuals is higher in mechanical solidarity and lower in organic solidarity.
3. Societies based on mechanical solidarity are rigid and more resistant to change, whereas change comes much easily in societies based on organic solidarity.
4. The content of collective conscience is primarily religious in nature in mechanical solidarity. But in organic solidarity, the content of collective conscience is secular in nature. Here more stress is laid on individualism.

2.4.7 System of Laws and Social Solidarity

Durkheim believed that there was a fundamental relationship between judicial rules and social solidarity. The legal rules and the system of punishment reflect the system of social solidarity and social cohesion. We will classify the different types of law in order to discover the different corresponding types of social solidarity.

2.4.7.1 Repressive Sanctions and Penal Law

Penal law imposes harm and suffering upon the offender. It does this in either of the two ways: first, by reducing the social honour of the offender and thus inflicting some form of loss or damage; second, by depriving the offender of either their freedom or their life. Penal law corresponds to societies whose solidarity is mechanical and whose social cohesion is intense. Punishment is severe bringing physical harm to the offender and applying sanctions against offenders which are 'repressive'. It is the essential function of the repressive sanctions

to maintain social cohesion by setting examples by means of punishment which act to preserve and reinforce the collective rules and sacred beliefs and by repairing the damage done to the collective conscience as a whole as a sequel to the offence.

2.4.7.2 Restitutive Sanctions and Contract Law

In contrast to the repressive sanctions and penal laws, the system of contract law arises only in industrial societies whose social cohesion is organic. Contract law refers to the system of modern law in advanced societies. Under this system of judicial rules, sanctions are restitutive rather than repressive. Industrial society leads to the development of various social institutions which become increasingly specialized as they replace the institutions of the tribal segment. These social institutions begin to function through specialized agencies such as the courts, arbitration council, tribunals and administrative bodies. The authority of the legal rules is exercised through specific functionaries such as judges, magistrates and lawyers. Restitutive sanctions have the job of restoring things to the way they were before the offence took place. The intention is to undertake compensation and restore the damage created by the offence rather than to inflict suffering upon the offender. The job of contract law is to develop rules which bind individuals to each other by regulating contractual obligations. According to Durkheim, contractual laws do not arouse collective social sentiments and thus do not contribute directly to the overall cohesion of the society.

2.4.8 Causes of division of labour

According to Durkheim, there were three primary causes leading to the changes in the division of labour. First, with the increasing growth of population, people began to concentrate themselves in confined areas rather than being spread over large territories. This led to the tightening of the social fabric as individuals came in close proximity with each other. Second is the growth of cities due to increasing social density. This

created an intensification of interaction between individuals leading to an increase in the social mass. This tended to accelerate the mixing of segments into more consolidated social organs. Third was the increase in social volume. Improvement in the new means of transportation and communication led to new forms of social interchange. This reduced the gaps between the various segments of the society leading to an increase in moral density, intra-social relations and the frequency of contacts between individuals.

The stages in the division of labour are as follows: first, division of labour grows as survival becomes the basic need for the increasing population. Second, individuals living in close proximity feel that they must live cooperatively and here the cooperation takes the form of division of labour because it is the most efficient means of material survival for the individuals. Third, division of labour leads to specialization of occupations in which the labour is separated or specialized to meet the various material needs. Fourth, a system of mutual dependence is developed by the division of labour which is expressed in the form of rights, contracts, laws and social rules that forms an overall normative order. At this stage the struggle for existence becomes acute. Fifth, the material relations give birth to a system of social links which make up the new system of social cohesion based on the functional division of labour.

As the division of labour develops, major social functions in society are broken down into smaller segments with specialized functions. Individuals are functionally interconnected through the division of labour since they are dependent upon others to produce what they cannot produce on their own. This mutual dependence is the key to the new system of social cohesion, since individuals are more dependent upon society while at the same time being more autonomous. The division of labour compels the individual to form new social bonds based on their occupational interconnectedness. These new social links produce spheres of competence and work whose allocation is no longer determined by custom.

2.4.9 Abnormal Forms of Division of Labour

At the end of 'The Division of Labour in Society', however, Durkheim does note that there can be problems in the society. There are two abnormal forms of the division of labour, and the division of labour itself does not always function as well as it could in modern society.

2.4.9.1 Anomic Division of Labour

Anomic division of labour arises during an economic crisis when there is widespread commercial failure. This crisis undermines the social cohesion existing between specialized functions and creates a decline in overall social solidarity. Industrial and commercial crises constitute examples of the anomic division of labour. There is an increasing intervention of different interest groups who attempts to reconcile the different interests between capital and labour. Consequently, the social cohesion previously existing in social groups is no longer mediated by traditional social processes, rather by individuals whose private interests are channelled for purposes of protecting their specialized roles. Social groups previously mediated by links of social cohesion grow rigid and social solidarity is jeopardized. Private interest

shadows the existence of a common authority. As a result, the social institutions grow opaque and lose their ability to maintain social linkage between individuals and groups.

2.4.9.2 Forced Division of Labour

Forced division of labour focuses on structural inequalities. Because of the different social classes, people who are in a lower class will not receive the same type of opportunities. Because of inheritance, people who are undeserving of wealth will receive all the advantages that people who are deserving wont. The division of labour no longer meets the social needs of cohesion, but rather serves the specialized interests of certain social groups. It undermines social attachments between individuals and between individuals and social institutions. It creates conflict not only by imposing social inequalities, but by creating irregular and unjust forms of exchange. When the division of labour is forced, restraint does not come from a centralized authority and social cohesion diminishes.

2.5 Theory of Suicide

Durkheim first began to study the problem of suicide in the year 1888 while he was working on an article related to suicide and birth rate. In 1897, he published his book entitled “*Suicide*” and this was his third major social work, after “The theory of division of labour” and “The rules of sociological method”. There were several reasons for which Durkheim was interested to work on this theme. First, suicide was a growing social problem in the then European society and industrialisation was seen as the major cause responsible for it, as it promoted individualism, social fragmentation, and weakening of social bonds among the individuals. Second, in the growing industrial society economic institutions dominated over the social institutions. Individual self interest and economic gain was given priority over collective interests which reduced the level of social constraint. Third, the political crisis in French society created due to the Dreyfus affair in 1894 made Durkheim believe that social dissolution in industrial society could be understood sociologically by studying the bonds that links individual with the outside society. Fourth, factual evidence linked suicide to social factors like industrial change, occupation, family life and religion rather than on complex psychological factors.

2.5.1 A Social Theory of Suicide

The main purpose of Durkheim’s attempt to study suicide was search for the social factors responsible for suicide rather than looking at the psychological states of individuals who take their own lives. Before Durkheim began his study on suicide, it was largely treated as a nervous disorder and its causes were believed to derive from the psychological states of individuals. Many believed that suicide was the result of mental illness, depression, sudden tragedy, reversal of fortune, personal setbacks or bankruptcy. Durkheim shifted his focus from individual motives and psychological states to social causes. Durkheim began to look for causes of suicide within the social framework of society. He tried to focus on the social attachments that exist between the individuals and the wider society and how these attachments link the individuals to basically three distinct groups outside themselves: the religious group, the family group and

the political group. The central thesis of Durkheim's study was that people take their own lives not because of the psychological states of depression or mental illness but because of the social forces acting on them which reduce their attachments to the wider society to the point that become isolated, separate and autonomous from others. According to Durkheim, in industrial society private ego, excessive preoccupation with the self and excessive self-reflection compels the individuals to commit suicide. Durkheim also rejected the theory of imitation by Gabriel Tarde who argued that suicide was the result of a type of psychological contagion and that suicide proliferated in a medium he referred to as psychological imitation.

Durkheim arrived at the concept of the social suicide rate after a careful examination of the mortality data which was obtained from public records of France, Germany, England, Denmark and Austria. It contained information about cause of death, age, marital background, religion and the total number of deaths by suicide of the country from which they were gathered. The term 'social suicide rate' refers to the number of suicidal deaths in a given society and the extent to which the suicide rates themselves could be looked upon as establishing a pattern of suicide for a given society. By then, it was a common belief that suicide is an act performed by an individual driven by psychological causes. However, Durkheim took a completely different approach. He concentrated his study on the social factors that drives the individual to commit suicide and wanted to find out whether all the individual cases of suicide could be studied collectively. The data collected by Durkheim related to suicide rates hinted upon the social factors like marital status, religion, occupation and military service.

2.5.2 Types of Suicide

Durkheim's theory of suicide is divided into two explanatory parts. In the first part, Durkheim explains suicide by drawing on the concept of social integration or the bond that exists between the individual and society. In this case, egoistic and altruistic suicide forms opposite poles of social integration. In the second part, Durkheim explained suicide drawing on the concept of social regulation which refers to the restraints imposed by the society on individual wants and desires. Anomic and fatalistic suicide form opposite poles in relation to the changes in the regulatory functions of the society.

2.5.2.1 Egoistic Suicide

The concept of 'egoism' developed in the nineteenth century industrial society which refers to the breakdown of social ties and pursuance of private interests. The individual is detached from the society and retreats into himself. It is characterised by excessive self-reflection on personal matters and withdrawal from the outside world. According to Durkheim, egoism occurs when the social bonds binding the individuals are slackened and are not sufficiently integrated at the points where the individual is in contact with the wider society. Egoism thus results from too much individualism and the weakening of the social fabric. Here, the individual ends become more important than the collective end of the society and the

individual's personality dominates over the collective personality. The individual ego over shadows the social ego and becomes a threat to the social equilibrium.

Durkheim here asserts that religion, the major institution promoting social integration, gradually loses its importance. The primary function of religion is to promote integration of individuals with the different spheres of life by placing restrictions on the individual autonomy and self reflection. Taking religious integration into account, the first thing that Durkheim observed was that Protestants countries had higher number of suicidal deaths than Roman Catholic countries. Even though both the religions condemn suicide with equal intensity, Protestants kills themselves more frequently than the Catholics. Durkheim reasoned that the most significant difference between Protestantism and Catholicism was the structure of their religious doctrine and teaching. Catholics accept their doctrine without question and criticism. But the Protestants encourage change and innovation at all levels of religious life and adopt a critical attitude towards formal doctrine. The result is a breakdown of the social mechanism attaching individuals to the religious group and encourages social and religious with drawl. Individuals withdraw from religious society and reject the demands that religious beliefs impose upon their lives. This undermines religious integration and leads to religious individualism and a higher rate of suicide among Protestants in contrast to Catholics. The second point of attachment between the individual and society is the family group or the domestic environment. Durkheim began by looking at the commonly held view about marriage and suicide. It was a common notion that as the burdens and responsibilities in a marriage increase, the risk of suicide of suicide also increases among the marital partners. But Durkheim said these views were false. Suicide rates show that unmarried persons commit suicide more frequently than the married people because conjugal relations contribute to social integration and link the individual to the group as a whole. The suicide rate is even lower for families with children. Further, the larger the family, the greater the sentiments and historical memories and therefore greater the social cohesion. This is reflected in the lower suicide rates for larger families. Smaller families, by contrast, develop fewer sentiments and fewer collective memories which lead to social cohesion and thus their shared experiences are not so intense. In the family, individuals have responsibilities and obligations lying outside themselves which reduces the inclination towards self and retreat to the private ego. These responsibilities and obligations act as the greater immunity to suicide.

The third point of attachment between the individual and society is the political or national group. The attachments to political society refer to the loyalty an individual has to their country or nation. By then it was a common view that political upheaval and social crisis increase the number of suicides. But, Durkheim contradicted this view. During revolution in France and political crisis in 1848, suicide cases actually declined. In Bavaria and Prussia the suicide rate declined during the crisis of 1849. Durkheim argued that several social disruptions brought about by a political crisis actually increased the intensity of collective sentiments and stimulates patriotism and therefore increased social attachments. Political crisis

creates a sense of nationalism among the individuals and forces them to think more of the common causes. This increases the social attachments among the individuals and the group and causes a greater integration in the society. It places moral demands on individuals and increases their patriotic spirit. When there is an absence of this patriotism and individuals cannot attach themselves with the larger political group, suicide rates tend to increase with the increase in political turmoil.

Simply stated egoistic suicide results from the absence of social integration and weakening of social bonds. Individuals retreat to themselves and withdraw from collective life. Individual ego prevails over the social ego. Durkheim believed that the chance of individual committing egoistic suicide becomes less if their link with the family, religion and the political group is strong enough to provide the required emotional support. The weaker these bonds, the more they depend on themselves and get preoccupied with personal and private matters. Durkheim believed, egoistic suicide is a common feature of industrial society because the bonds connecting the individuals and the social institutions are slackened and grow weak.

2.5.2.2 Altruistic Suicide

Altruistic suicide results from too much integration. Durkheim, while studying the tribal societies, observed that the social customs in these societies placed a high degree of social honour on individuals who take their own lives in the name of social purposes greater than themselves. People take their lives not because of their personal choice or right but as a 'social duty' imposed upon them by the society. The individual ego is overwhelmed by the social ego and individualism gets less chance to express itself. Altruistic suicide is, therefore, at the polar opposite of social integration in relation to egoistic suicide.

Durkheim maintained that altruistic suicide is expressed in three distinct forms: (1) obligatory altruistic suicide, (2) optional altruistic suicide, and (3) acute altruistic or mystical suicide.

Obligatory suicide is a form of altruistic suicide where individuals take their own lives because the social customs and religious sanctions. Examples of obligatory suicide are found in India where there is the prevalence of the 'sati pratha'. It involves the practice of a voluntary self-immolation where the widow burns herself on the funeral pyre of the dead husband. In this type of altruistic suicide, the 'obligation' is imposed externally by religious society rather than by personal choice or private will.

Optional altruistic suicide is a form of suicide where individuals consider taking their own lives as a social duty. The society attaches honour to the renunciation of life and the dignity of the group is considered more important than the individual's life.

Acute altruistic suicide is the most extreme form of altruistic self-destruction. In this case, the individual's attachment to the group is so great that the individual renounces life for the actual felt 'joy of sacrifice'. Examples of this can be found in Hindu society where suicide takes the form of religious hysteria and is looked upon with enthusiasm and great excitement. Individuals believe that their true self can only be realised when they will renounce themselves for the social good. Altruistic suicide occurs because of an

excess of social integration and attachment that develops within the confines of the group. Individualism hardly develops since the purposes of the group are valued over individual existence. Under these circumstances acute altruistic suicide is the clearest case of suicide imposed by social ends and is thus a form of suicide induced by society. Examples of acute altruistic suicide can be found in the case of the suicide bombings that occurred during the terrorist attacks in the United States on 9/11. These types of suicide also include cases of military suicides.

2.5.2.3 Anomic Suicide

According to Durkheim, 'anomie' refers to the decline that takes place in the regulatory functions of the society and social institutions during industrial development because of the weakening of the social control mechanisms. The regulatory function of society imposes restraints and sets limit on individual needs and wants for wealth, power and prestige. Historically, social regulation was performed by society through specific social institutions, which operated to set social and moral restraints on individual appetites by linking social wants to the available means for attaining these wants and by imposing limitations based on moral and religious guidelines. These social restraints gradually weakened with the development of the industrial society.

Durkheim's discussion of anomic suicide begins by looking at the suicide rate of industrial society during periods of economic crisis created by financial recession and periods of economic decline. He observed that there was a rapid increase in the suicide rate during the

European crisis. As the crisis disappeared, suicide rates declined. However, according to Durkheim argued that the rise in the rates cannot be directly linked to economic disaster. He asserts that suicide rates increases not only with economic depression but also with economic prosperity. In fact, he believed that whenever an abrupt shift in social stability occurs, it alters the mechanism which places restraint on individual desires and social wants. Durkheim stressed the importance of the regulatory mechanisms of society, and believed that a system of social regulation serves to set limits on individual desires by placing restraints on social wants and by serving the important purpose of balancing individual wants with the means for obtaining these wants. In a state of anomie, the regulatory limits usually imposed by society are absent and limits are not well defined. It leads to disappointment among the individuals who finally commit suicide. In traditional societies, religion is the primary means of social control that sets limit to individual wants and desires. With the development of society towards industrialisation, religion loses its importance and economy assumes a pivotal role. When the primary goal in life is to obtain material satisfaction through economic want and desires, there is an increased risk and a greater possibility for social crisis, especially at the level of the economy. Thus, it is the economically related functions, according to Durkheim, which create the largest category of suicide in contrast to other spheres of society in which the 'old regulatory forces' still prevail in practice more than does the new commercial spirit.

2.5.2.4 Fatalistic Suicide

Fatalism signifies a form of suicide which occurs because of an excess of social regulation. It occurs because of an overly developed system of control over the individual. Fatalistic suicide was prevalent in slave society.

2.6 Social Facts

In sociology, social facts are the values, cultural norms, and social structures which transcend the individual and are capable of exercising a social constraint. For Durkheim, sociology is nothing but the study of social facts and social facts must be considered as things. The task of the sociologist is to search for correlations between social facts in order to reveal laws of social structure. Having discovered these, the sociologist can then determine whether a given society is 'healthy' or 'pathological' and prescribe appropriate remedies. Within social facts, Durkheim distinguishes between material social facts and non-material social facts. Material social facts deals with the physical social structure which influence the individual and non-material social facts are the values, norms and conceptually held beliefs.

2.6.1 Meaning of Social Facts

Durkheim introduced the term 'social fact' in his phenomenal work "The Rules of Sociological Method". He defines social facts as "ways of acting, thinking and feeling, external to the individual and endowed with power of coercion by reason of which they control him". To Durkheim, society is a reality 'sui generis'. Society comes into being by the association of individuals. Hence society represents a specific reality which has its own characteristics. This unique reality of society is distinct from the other realities studied by the physical or biological sciences. Social reality has an independent existence of its own, which is over and above the individual. Therefore, the reality of society must be the subject matter of sociology.

Social fact is that way of acting, thinking or feeling which is more or less general in given society. Durkheim treated social facts as things. They are real and exist independent of the individual's wills and desires. They are external to individual and are capable of exerting constraint upon them. In other words, they are coercive in nature. Social facts exist in their own right and are independent of individual manifestations. The true nature of social facts lies in the collective or associational characteristics inherent in society. Legal codes and customs, moral rules, religious beliefs and practices, language etc. are all social facts.

2.6.2 Types of Social Facts

1. Structural or Morphological social facts- they make up the substratum of the collective life. These are the facts relating to the overall density and the size of the population of society and the complexity of its social and institutional structure. In these category of social facts are included the distribution of population over the surface of the territory, the forms of dwellings, nature of communication system etc.

2. Institutionalised social facts- they are more or less general and widely spread throughout the society. They represent the collective nature of society as a whole. Under this category fall the legal and moral rules, religious dogma and established beliefs and practices prevalent in a society.

3. Non-institutionalised social facts- these social facts have not yet been crystallised by the society and fall beyond the institutionalised norms of the society. These facts do not have an independent existence and their externality to and ascendancy over the individuals is yet not complete. For example, sporadic currents of opinion generated in a specific situation, enthusiasm generated in a crowd etc.

All these above mentioned social facts form a continuum and constitute social milieu of society.

Durkheim also makes a distinction between normal and pathological social facts. A social fact is normal when it is generally encountered in a society of a certain type at certain phase of its evolution. Every deviation from this standard is a pathological social fact. According to Durkheim, for example, crime is a normal social fact. However, an extraordinary increase in the rate of crime is pathological.

2.6.3 Characteristics of Social Facts

The main characteristics of social facts are- externality, constraint, independence and generality.

Social facts exist outside individual conscience. Their existence is external to the individuals.

For example, civic or customary obligations are defined externally to the individual in laws and customs. Religious beliefs and practices exist outside and prior to the individual. Social facts are already given in a society and remain in existence irrespective of the birth and death of an individual. For example, language continues to function independently of any single individual.

Social facts exercise a constraint over the individual. Social facts are recognized because it forces itself over the individual. For example, the institutions of law, education, beliefs etc. are commanding and obligatory for all. The social facts are endowed with a power of coercion by reason of which they exert control.

Social facts are general throughout the society and diffused within the group. It is independent of the personal features of individuals and individual attributes of human nature. Examples are the beliefs, feelings and practices of the group taken collectively.

In sum, the social fact is specific. It is born of the association of individuals. It represents a collective content of social group or society. It differs in kind from what occurs in individual consciousness. Social facts can be subjected to categorisation and classification.

2.6.4 Externality and Constraint

A. There are two related senses in which social facts are external to the individual.

1. Every individual is born into an ongoing society, which has a definite structure or organisation. There are norms, values and belief in the society which exists before the birth of the individual and these are internalised by the individual through the process of socialisation. Since these social facts exist prior to the individual and have an objective reality, they are external to the individual.

2. 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. Durkheim argued that social facts are distinct from individual or psychological facts.

B. Social facts exercise a moral constraint over the individual. When the individual attempts to resist social facts they assert themselves. The assertion may range from a mild ridicule to social isolation and moral and legal sanctions.

Durkheim adds that social facts cannot be defined merely by their universality. Thus a thought or movement repeated by individuals is not thereby a social fact. What are important are the collective aspects of the beliefs, tendencies and practices of a group that characterise truly social phenomena. These social phenomena are transmitted through the collective means of socialisation.

Thus social facts can be recognised because they are external to the individuals on the one hand, and are capable of exercising coercion over them on the other. Since they are external they are also general and because they are collective, they can be imposed on the individuals who form a given society.

2.6.5 Rules for the observation of social facts

According to Durkheim, social facts must be considered as things. Social facts are real. Social facts have to be studied by the empirical method and not direct intuition; and also, they cannot be modified by a simple effort of the will. While studying social facts as ‘things’ the following three rules have to be followed in order to be objective.

1. All preconceptions must be eradicated. Sociologists must emancipate themselves from the common place ideas that dominate the mind of the layperson and adopt an emotionally neutral attitude towards what they set out to investigate.
2. Sociologists have to formulate the concepts precisely. At the outset of the research the sociologists are likely to have very little knowledge of the phenomenon in question. They must study those properties that are external enough to be observed. For example, in Division of Labour the type of solidarity in a society can be perceived by looking at the type of law- repressive or restitutive, criminal or civil- which is dominant in the society.
3. When sociologists undertake the investigation of some form of social facts, they must study it from an aspect that is independent of their individual manifestations. The objectivity of social facts depends on their being separated from individual facts. Social facts provide a common standard for members of the society. Social facts exist in the form of legal rules, moral regulations, proverbs, social conventions etc. It is these that sociologists must study to gain an understanding of social life.

2.6.6 Rules for distinguishing between the normal and pathological

Durkheim explains that the social fact is considered to be normal when it is understood in the context of the society in which it exists. A social fact is ‘normal’ for a given society when it has its utility for that

societal type. Durkheim illustrates the example of crime. Durkheim argues that even though crime involves the deviation of individual behaviour from the approved set of social behaviours, it cannot be considered abnormal. First, crime as a social fact exists in all type of societies. Second, if there would be no deviation, there will be no change in the human behaviour and no modification of the existing social norms. To show that crime is normal Durkheim cites the example of Socrates, who according to the Athenian law was a criminal, his crime being the independence of his thought. His crime rendered a service to his country because it served to prepare a new morality and faith, which the Athenians needed. Durkheim applied the method used by the study of medicine to study social facts. He considered crime and punishment to be normal. When the rate of crime exceeds what is more or less constant for a given social type, then it becomes an abnormal or pathological social fact. Similarly, suicide is a normal social fact. But the sudden rise in the suicide rate in the Western Europe during the 19th century was a cause for concern for Durkheim and one of the reasons why he decided to study this phenomenon.

2.6.7 Rules for the explanation of social facts

There are two approaches used for the explanation of social facts- the causal and the functional.

- a. **Why-** It explains why the social phenomenon in question exists. The causes, which give rise to a given social fact, must be identified separately from whatever social functions it may fulfil. Knowledge of the causes, which bring a phenomenon into being, can under certain circumstances allow us to drive some insight into its possible functions.
- b. **How-** Durkheim's next concern is to determine the method by which they may be developed. The nature of social facts determines the method of explaining these facts. Since the subject matter of sociology has a social character, it is collective in nature, the explanation should also have a social character. According to Durkheim, explanation of social facts in terms directly in terms of individual characteristics or in terms of psychology would make the explanation false. Therefore, in the case of causal explanation "the determining cause of a social fact should be sought among the social facts preceding it and not among the states of the individual consciousness". In the case of functional explanation "the function of a social fact ought always to be sought in its relation to some social end".

The final point about Durkheim's logic of explanation is his stress upon the comparative nature of social science. To show that a given fact is the cause of another ""we have to compare cases in which they are simultaneously present or absent, to see if the variations they present in these different combinations of circumstances indicate that one depends on the other". The comparative method is the very framework of the science of society for Durkheim.

2.7 Theory of Religion

Durkheim in his classical work "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life", published in the year 1912, develops his sociological theory of religion. In this work, Durkheim tries to explore the origin and cause of religion. He sought the origin of religion in society rather than in individual mind. Durkheim's main

interest was the ways in which society is bound together. He investigated the role of religion in keeping society together, and sought the origin of religion in communal emotion. He thought the model for relationships between the people and the supernatural was the relationship between individual and community.

For Durkheim, religion is a group phenomenon because it is religion which gives religion its specific character and unity. On the other hand, religion unifies the group and binds the people together. This essential function of solidifying a society makes it universal and permanent institution. Durkheim develops this theory in religion by studying the aboriginal tribes of Australia.

2.7.1 A Functionalist Perspective of Religion

Religion is a social institution. Functional perspective analyse religion in terms of its functions or contributions that the religion makes for the meeting the functional pre-requisites of society like social solidarity, value consensus, harmony and integration between different parts of the society. According to the functionalists, religion is functional and ensures the survival of the social system. Religion is an integrating force that make the people feel that they belong to the society. It gives the people the feeling of having something in common with others in society. It is a means for the people to express collective beliefs concerning the social commitment and social solidarity. It provides a way for the people to affirm to common values, beliefs and ideals. It is collective consciousness. It also serves as the central value system.

2.7.2 Durkheim and Elementary Forms of Religious Life

Durkheim explores the functional role of religion in his book “The Elementary Forms of Religious Life”. His aim was to understand the basic forms of religious life in all societies and also to why it is a permanent social institution. Durkheim makes an in depth study of the religion of Arunta tribe of Australian aborigines, which he calls ‘the simplest and most primitive known today’. The book contains a description and a detailed analysis of the clan system and of totemism of Arunta tribes. Based on this study he developed a general theory of religion. Durkheim believed that the study of the primitive religion and its basic structure will lead to a detailed understanding of religion and religious nature of society. He takes an examination of religion from the perspective of positive science rather than from a spirit world as done by earlier theorists like Animism of Tylor, Naturism of Max Muller etc. He believed that a scientific investigation of the observable aspects of religion would lead to the discovery of most basic elements underlying the religious life, which he calls the elementary forms. The study of these elementary forms will facilitate the discovery of what is fundamental to the religious life in all societies.

He insisted that religious phenomena are communal rather than individual and religion is essentially social. For Durkheim, humans are religious because they are members of collectivities, and neither the group nor the individual can exist without religious or moral constraint. Religion was an expression of

social cohesion. In this book, Durkheim argues that the totemic gods the aborigines worship are actually expressions of their own conceptions of society itself. Religion is not imaginary but real. It is an expression of our collective consciousness.

2.7.3 Durkheim's Definition of Religion

Durkheim defines religion “as a unified system of beliefs and practices forbidden to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden...beliefs and practices which unite in one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them”. Church here refers to the existence of a regularized ceremonial organization pertaining to a particular to a definite group of worshippers. The above definition of religion has two central parts. First, all religions can be defined in terms of a system of rites and beliefs. Belief refers to a set of ideas and attitudes held in relation to sacred things, where as rites refers to the system of action, which is developed towards the religious things or objects. Second, religion can defined on the basis of its tendency to divide the world in two regions, sacred and profane.

2.7.4 Sacred and Profane

Durkheim argued that religion is primarily concerned with three kinds of activities: first, maintain a separation between the sacred and profane; second, laying down a system of beliefs for the faithful; third, setting up of rule that forbids certain ways of acting. Religion emerges in a society where there is distinction made between the sacred- the area that is set apart, transcendental, the extraordinary- and the profane- the realm of everyday utilitarian activities. An object becomes sacred or profane when the men choose to consider its utilitarian value, not the instrumental value. According to Durkheim, this distinction between the sacred and profane is common to all religions. He also perceived that the belief in supernatural power is not common to all religions (for example, in Buddhism there is no common deity), but separation between the sacred and profane is common. Sacred objects and behaviours are considered a part of the spiritual or religious realm, which includes the rites, the object of reverence etc. Profane does not have a religious value. Sacred may embody transcendental gods and deities and natural things and objects or beliefs, rites and practices or words, expressions or combination of words or anything socially defined as requiring special religious treatment. ‘The sacred thing’, Durkheim wrote, ‘is par excellence that which the profane should not touch and cannot touch with impunity’. The special character of the sacred is the religious prescriptions or proscriptions, which separate it radically from profane. The profane, according to Durkheim, is something subordinated in dignity to the sacred and is radically opposite to sacred. However, these two interact with each other and depend on each other for survival.

Durkheim outlines six basic characteristics of sacred and profane:

- The sacred is always separated from all other objects and therefore constitutes things that set apart.
- A system of rites and social practices arise which sets out how the sacred to be approached and how members of the group are to conduct themselves in the presence of sacred objects.

- Sacred things are things protected by interdictions which have the force of prohibitions or taboos acting to protect and isolated sacred.
- Sacred things are segregated from profane things and thought to be superior in dignity.
- The sacred and profane represent a unifying principle which separates the natural from the spiritual world and in this way provides society with a model of opposites such as good and evil, clean and dirty, holy and defiled etc.
- Passage from the profane to the sacred must be accompanied by rites which are thought to transform one state into the other through rituals of initiation or rebirth.

2.7.5 Totemism as the elementary form of religion

Durkheim studied totemism among the Australian tribes, instead of animism and naturism, because he thought it to be the most elementary form of religion and that the underlying system of beliefs and practices best exemplifies the nature of religious life. He makes a sociological investigation to the totemic beliefs and the structure of totemism and discovers the causes leading to the rise of religious sentiment in humanity. Totemism is intrinsically connected to the clan system of organisation of the Australian tribes. Totem is a material object that is believed to possess certain special properties and the clan derives its name from that totem. The members of a particular clan are not bound by blood relations but by the relation they share with the same totem. The totem is believed to possess certain mysterious or sacred force or principle that provides sanctions for violations of taboos and inculcates moral responsibility in the group. Two clans within the same tribe cannot have the same totem. A totem may be an animal, a vegetable or any inanimate object. The sacred character of the totem manifests itself in the ritual observances, and is separated from the ordinary object that may be used to utilitarian ends. Totem is the name of the object from which beliefs and rites flow, and Durkheim calls this totem as the ‘emblem’ which represents the group. The totem emblem designates the name of the group and stands for the group as its badge. The totem emblem takes the form of “churinga”, which according to Durkheim, is the physical embodiment of the totem and is typically a piece of wood or a polished stone on which there is a design representing the totem of the particular group. It is believed to have extraordinary sacredness and various ritual prescriptions and prohibitions surround them. Clan members are thus forbidden to kill or eat the totemic animal or plant, except at certain mystical feasts, and the violation of this interdiction is assumed to produce death instantly.

Moreover, the clan members are themselves considered ‘sacred’ in so far as they belong to the same totemic species and are believed to have animal or vegetable ancestors. Thus, totemism as a religion has three things- the totemic emblem, the totem, and the members of the totemic clan who are considered to be sacred.

2.7.5.1 Totemism and Cosmology

For Durkheim religions are cosmologies because they are the primitive ways of ordering and classifying the world. Religions are a system of ideas that embraces the universality of things and gives us a complete representation of the world. The totem is divided into the sacred and profane and the divisions are projected into the nature. All things arranged in the same clan are regarded as extensions of the totemic animal, as “of the same flesh”. The natural world is divided into different classes and categories and in this view all the things in the natural world, including the sun, moon, stars, earth, planets, etc. are believed to belong to different classes and groups. Thus, totemism constitutes a cosmology, in which all known things are distributed among the various clans and phratries, so that everything is classified according to the social organisation of the tribe. Such things are regarded as sharing qualities in common and are believed by the members of the clan to be affiliated to the same flesh as themselves. Since all the beliefs clearly imply a division of things between sacred and profane, they were called religious; and since they appear not only related, but inseparably connected, to the simplest form of social organisation known, Durkheim insisted that they are surely the most elementary forms of the religious life. Durkheim also deduced that all understanding of the natural and social world derives from a religious system of ideas, since there exists a strong connection between the religious beliefs and organisation of individuals into groups.

2.7.5.2 Totem and society

The totemic emblem, the totem and the members of the clan all are considered sacred in totemism. Everything under a clan is considered to have certain quality of religiosity and sacredness though in varying degrees. Durkheim wanted to find out the origin of this sacredness. The religious energy found in a diffuse and all pervasive form in Australian totemism is the original source of all later more particularised incarnations of this general force which become manifest as gods, spirits and demons in more complex religions. Durkheim finds that the totem symbolises both the sacred energy and the identity of the clan group. Thus he reaches the inference that totem at the same time represents both the god and the society, and hence both god and society are the same. He argued by worshipping god people actually worshipping society itself. Society commands obligation and respect, the twin characteristics of sacred. Whether it exists as a diffuse impersonal force or whether it is personalised, the sacred object is conceived as a superior entity, which in fact symbolises the superiority of the society over the individual. This is how Durkheim draws his theory of religion.

2.7.6 Religious rites and their social functions

The beliefs and rites are found in all religions and it is one of the fundamental aspects of religion. Beliefs are the ideas and attitudes, which are held in regard to religious objects. Rites are the categories of actions taken towards sacred objects and they involve the important capacity of laying down the interdictions, which means limitations or restrictions on what is permissible with regards to the sacred. There are two

broad important systems of interdicts or ritual practices; those which proscribe things or objects which are incompatible and those which require separation between the sacred profane.

Durkheim identified four distinct categories of religious rites.

1. **Sacrificial rites**, which are related to initiation and sacrifice. These are the class of rites, which specify and regulate the obligations individuals have toward objects of the group, which either serve the clan as a totem or are designated as fundamental to life. These include the objects related to survival such as essential foods and the powers related to regeneration. These rites involve ceremonies in which the productive powers of the natural world are celebrated. Sacrificial rites involve two important functions. They sanctify the individuals who take part in them and they re-enact and revive the collective practices and social sentiments of the group.
2. **Imitative rites**, permitting the imitation of the totem animal for the purpose of reproduction. These rituals imitate the various movements and habits of animals whose reproductive powers are desired. The action of these rites entails ceremonies in which individuals decorate themselves in a ritual manner by imitating the figurative forms and actions of animals or insects. In the rites of imitation the members of the tribe assume that the condition and the qualities of the objects being imitated are transferred to the members of the group and along with this something new is created. By imitating the animal's being they create the belief that the animal will be reproduced.
3. **Commemorative rites** are the rites which relate to how the group represent itself to the group. These rites consist solely in recollecting the past and making it present by means of representation. The function of these rites is to represent the group by putting into practice the mythical history of the ancestors from the moment they emerge and they commemorate their actions and works faithfully in a ceremony. These rites serve to sustain the vitality of the beliefs and to keep them from being forgotten. This is the way to renew the sentiments which society has of itself and its unity and strengthening the social nature of the group.
4. **Piacular rites**, which are rites performed to represent loss or suffering. This class of rites is reserved for assigning the ritual and religious importance to everything that involves misfortune, loss and death. Whereas the other system of rites celebrates the positive events in a group, piacular rites affirm the religious significance and seriousness of misfortune and distress. Occasions of ceremonies where the dead are mourned or where a bad harvest threatens the survival of the group involve piacular rituals. These rites functions to renew the group to its prior state of unity preceding the misfortune and may involve all sorts of collective activity such as weeping, lamenting, kissing and wailing.

2.7.7 Critical Remarks

Even though Durkheim provides an explicit theory of religion, he has been criticized on various grounds-

- Durkheim largely ignores the role of individual religious leaders, as well as the way religion functions in social conflict and asymmetrical relations of power.

- The “collective consciousness” stimulated by religious assemblies infer more of a social psychology, which is never made explicit.
- Durkheim’s theory of religion is based on the case study of a single tribe in Australia. He either ignored the counter instances among the neighbouring Australian tribes, or interpreted them arbitrarily according to some ad hoc, evolutionary speculations.
- Some argue that Australian totemism is not the earliest totemism, let alone the earliest religion; and, though technically less advanced than the North American Indians, the Australians have a kinship system which is far more complex.
- Even if it is limited to Australian tribes, it is found that the major cohesive force among aborigines is the tribe rather than the clan; that there are clans without totems and totems without clans; that most totems are not represented by the carvings and inscriptions on which Durkheim placed so much weight; and that the ‘high gods’ of Australia are not born of a synthesis of totems.

2.8 Lets Sum Up

Emile Durkheim was a positivist and wanted to nourish sociology as a science, like Auguste Comte. He clearly considered sociology to be an independent scientific discipline with its distinct subject matter. Durkheim is widely acknowledged as a structural functionalist because he attaches more importance to the society than the individuals. He argued that the parts do not have any independent existence and they exist to contribute their part to the functioning of the whole. This unit briefly discusses the theories developed by Durkheim which include-

- Theory of division of labour where he explains the various forms of social solidarity that is maintained in the society due to division of labour and also studies the change in this solidarity with the change in the structure of the society.
- Theory of suicide where he explains that suicide is a social fact and not a psychological phenomenon. He also explains the various types of suicide that occurs due to low or high regulation and low or excessive integration.
- Theory of social facts where he treats social facts as things. Social facts are external to the individual and exercise a constraint over them, according to Durkheim. He also insists that the study of social facts is the subject matter of sociology. He also discusses the rules for the observation, classification and explanation of social facts.
- Theory of religion discusses the functional role played by religion in maintaining social solidarity. He describes the universality of religion and briefly elaborates the role beliefs, rites and rituals play in contributing to social cohesion.

2.9 Key Words

Clan- Descent from a common ancestry; common ancestor signifies a relationship through blood. Hence, marriages within the same clan are prohibited.

Collective Conscience- A set of beliefs and customs, which on an average is common in a society and forms a determinant system which has its own style of life.

Social Solidarity- The condition within the group in which there is social cohesion and cooperation, and the collective action is directed towards the achievement of group goals and in which social organisation is shown by permanency. These conditions are changeable according to the social conditions.

Repressive Law- Law that punishes the wrong doer to re-establish the power and authority of the group or the collectivity. The most prevalent type of law in primitive societies. **Restitutive Law-** Law for restitution or reform. Its function is not to expiate but rather to restore to the rightful person what he or she has lost.

Sui Generis- That which generates itself; that which exists by itself; that which does not depend upon on some other being for its origin or existence.

2.10 Suggested Further Readings

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