

Department of
Sociology
CC 06-
Sociology of
Religion

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EMILE DURKHEIM

David Emile Durkheim (15 April 1858 – 15 November 1917) was a French sociologist. He formally established the academic discipline of sociology and is commonly cited as one of the principal architects of modern social science, along with both Karl Marx and Max Weber.

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Education:

Durkheim to receive a major academic appointment in Paris was inhibited by his approach to society. From 1882 to 1887 he taught philosophy at several provincial schools. In 1885 he decided to leave for Germany, where for two years he studied sociology at the universities of Marburg, Berlin and Leipzig. As Durkheim indicated in several essays, it was in Leipzig that he learned to appreciate the value of empiricism and its language of concrete, complex things, in sharp contrast to the more abstract, clear and simple ideas of the Cartesian method. By 1886, as part of his doctoral dissertation, he had completed the draft of his *The Division of Labour in Society*, and was working towards establishing the new science of sociology.

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Émile Durkheim's major works included

1. The Division of Labour in Society (1893),
2. The Rules of Sociological Method (1895),
3. Suicide (1897),
4. Pedagogical Evolution in France (published posthumously in 1938), and
5. The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (1912).

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ÉMILE DURKHEIM

*The Elementary
Forms of the
Religious Life*

Methodology

According to Durkheim, sociologists, without preconceptions and prejudices, must study social facts as real, objective phenomena. Durkheim wrote, "The first and most fundamental rule is: Consider social facts as things." This implies that sociology must respect and apply a recognized objective, scientific method, bringing it as close as possible to the other exact sciences. This method must at all cost avoid prejudice and subjective judgment.

Furthermore Durkheim talks about social phenomena and how they must be studied. Durkheim wrote:

Social phenomena must be considered in themselves, detached from the conscious beings who form their own mental representations of them. They must be studied from the outside, as external things, because it is in this guise that they present themselves to us
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Durkheim understanding of Religion :

Durkheim defined religion as: "a unified system of beliefs and practices

relative to sacred things, i.e., things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and

practices which unite in one single moral community called a Church, all

those who adhere to them."

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Durkheim's Sociology of Religion

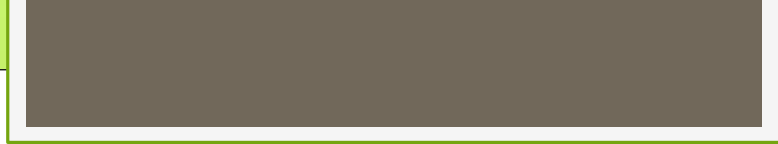
Durkheim's last major book "The elementary forms of Religious life" (1912) has been regarded as one of the most profound and most original work upon Religion. It is regarded as his best and most mature work. Where suicide focused on a large amount of statistics from varying sources, the elementary forms of Religious life used one case study in depth, the Australian aborigines.

Durkheim choose this group because he felt they represented the most basic, elementary forms of religion within a culture. Durkheim set out to do two things, established the fact that religion was not divinely or super naturally inspired and was in fact a product of society. Durkheim also sought to identify the common things that religion placed an emphasis upon, as well as what effects those religious beliefs had on the lives of all within a society

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CONCLUSION

According to Durkheim, religion is something eminently social. Religious representations are collective representations which express collective reality. Recognizing the social origin of religion, Durkheim argued that religion acted as a source of solidarity. Religion provides a meaning for life. Durkheim saw it as a critical part of the social system. Religion provides social control, cohesion and purpose for people as well as another means of communication and gathering for individuals to interact and reaffirm social norms.



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