which the principal problems should be formulated, the direction research should take, the specific methods of work which may enable it to reach its conclusions—all these remained completely undetermined.

A happy combination of circumstances, among the most important of which may rightly be placed the proposal to establish a regular course in sociology in the Faculty of Letters at Bordeaux, enabled us to devote ourselves early to the study of social science and, indeed, to make it our vocation. Therefore, we have been able to abandon these very general questions and to attack a certain number of definite problems. The very force of events has thus led us to construct a method that is, we believe, more precise and more exactly adapted to the distinctive characteristics of social phenomena. We wish here to expound the results of our work in applied sociology in their entirety and to submit them for discussion. They are, of course, contained by implication in the book which we published recently on the Division in Social Labor. But it seems to us that it is of some advantage to make them explicit and to give them separate formulation, accompanying them with proofs and illustrations drawn either from that work or from works still unpublished. The public will thus be better able to judge of the direction we are trying to give to sociological studies.

CHAPTER I
WHAT IS A SOCIAL FACT?

Before inquiring into the method suited to the study of social facts, it is important to know which facts are commonly called “social.” This information is all the more necessary since the designation “social” is used with little precision. It is currently employed for practically all phenomena generally diffused within society, however small their social interest. But on that basis, there are, as it were, no human events that may not be called social. Each individual drinks, sleeps, eats, reasons; and it is to society’s interest that these functions be exercised in an orderly manner. If, then, all these facts are counted as “social” facts, sociology would have no subject matter exclusively its own, and its domain would be confused with that of biology and psychology.

But in reality there is in every society a certain group of phenomena which may be differentiated from those studied by the other natural sciences. When I fulfil my obligations as brother, husband, or citizen, when I execute my contracts, I perform duties which are defined, externally to myself and my acts, in law and in custom. Even if they conform to my own sentiments and I feel their reality subjectively, such reality is still objective, for I did not create them; I merely inherited them through my education. How many times it happens, moreover, that we are ignorant of the details of the obligations incumbent upon us, and that in order to acquaint ourselves with them we must consult the law and its authorized interpreters! Similarly, the church-member
finds the beliefs and practices of his religious life ready-made at birth; their existence prior to his own implies their existence outside of himself. The system of signs I use to express my thought, the system of currency I employ to pay my debts, the instruments of credit I utilize in my commercial relations, the practices followed in my profession, etc., function independently of my own use of them. And these statements can be repeated for each member of society. Here, then, are ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that present the noteworthy property of existing outside the individual consciousness.

These types of conduct or thought are not only external to the individual but are, moreover, endowed with coercive power, by virtue of which they impose themselves upon him, independent of his individual will. Of course, when I fully consent and conform to them, this constraint is felt only slightly, if at all, and is therefore unnecessary. But it is, nonetheless, an intrinsic characteristic of these facts, the proof thereof being that it asserts itself as soon as I attempt to resist it. If I attempt to violate the law, it reacts against me so as to prevent my act before its accomplishment, or to nullify my violation by restoring the damage, if it is accomplished and reparable, or to make me expiate it if it cannot be compensated for otherwise.

In the case of purely moral maxims, the public conscience exercises a check on every act which offends it by means of the surveillance it exercises over the conduct of citizens, and the appropriate penalties at its disposal. In many cases the constraint is less violent, but nevertheless it always exists. If I do not submit to the conventions of society, if in my dress I do not conform to the customs observed in my country and in my class, the ridicule I provoke, the social

isolation in which I am kept, produce, although in an attenuated form, the same effects as a punishment in the strict sense of the word. The constraint is nonetheless efficacious for being indirect. I am not obliged to speak French with my fellow-countrymen nor to use the legal currency, but I cannot possibly do otherwise. If I tried to escape this necessity, my attempt would fail miserably. As an industrialist, I am free to apply the technical methods of former centuries; but by doing so, I should invite certain ruin. Even when I free myself from these rules and violate them successfully, I am always compelled to struggle with them. When finally overcome, they make their constraining power sufficiently felt by the resistance they offer. The enterprises of all innovators, including successful ones, come up against resistance of this kind.

Here, then, is a category of facts with very distinctive characteristics: it consists of ways of acting, thinking, and feeling, external to the individual, and endowed with a power of coercion, by reason of which they control him. These ways of thinking could not be confused with biological phenomena, since they consist of representations and of actions; nor with psychological phenomena, which exist only in the individual consciousness and through it. They constitute, thus, a new variety of phenomena; and it is to them exclusively that the term "social" ought to be applied. And this term fits them quite well, for it is clear that, since their source is not in the individual, their substratum can be no other than society, either the political society as a whole or some one of the partial groups it includes, such as religious denominations, political, literary, and occupational associations, etc. On the other hand, this term "social" applies to them exclusively, for it has a distinct meaning only if it
designates exclusively the phenomena which are not included in any of the categories of facts that have already been established and classified. These ways of thinking and acting therefore constitute the proper domain of sociology. It is true that, when we define them with this word "constraint," we risk shocking the zealous partisans of absolute individualism. For those who profess the complete autonomy of the individual, man's dignity is diminished whenever he is made to feel that he is not completely self-determinant. It is generally accepted today, however, that most of our ideas and our tendencies are not developed by ourselves but come to us from without. How can they become a part of us except by imposing themselves upon us? This is the whole meaning of our definition. And it is generally accepted, moreover, that social constraint is not necessarily incompatible with the individual personality. 

Since the examples that we have just cited (legal and moral regulations, religious faiths, financial systems, etc.) all consist of established beliefs and practices, one might be led to believe that social facts exist only where there is some social organization. But there are other facts without such crystallized form which have the same objectivity and the same ascendancy over the individual. These are called "social currents." Thus the great movements of enthusiasm, indignation, and pity in a crowd do not originate in any one of the particular individual consciousnesses. They come to each one of us from without and can carry us away in spite of ourselves. Of course, it may happen that, in abandoning myself to them unreservedly, I do not feel the pressure they exert upon me. But it is revealed as soon as I try to resist them. Let an individual attempt to oppose one of these collective manifestations, and the emotions that he denies will turn against him. Now, if this power of external coercion asserts itself so clearly in cases of resistance, it must exist also in the first-mentioned cases, although we are unconscious of it. We are then victims of the illusion of having ourselves created that which actually forced itself from without. If the complacency with which we permit ourselves to be carried along conceals the pressure undergone, nevertheless it does not abolish it. Thus, air is no less heavy because we do not detect its weight. So, even if we ourselves have spontaneously contributed to the production of the common emotion, the impression we have received differs markedly from that which we would have experienced if we had been alone. Also, once the crowd has dispersed, that is, once these social influences have ceased to act upon us and we are alone again, the emotions which have passed through the mind appear strange to us, and we no longer recognize them as ours. We realize that these feelings have been impressed upon us to a much greater extent than they were created by us. It may even happen that they horrify us, so much were they contrary to our nature. Thus, a group of individuals, most of whom are perfectly inoffensive, may, when gathered in a crowd, be drawn into acts of atrocity. And what we say of these transitory outbursts applies similarly to those more permanent currents of opinion on religious, political, literary, or artistic matters which are constantly being formed around us, whether in society as a whole or in more limited circles.

To confirm this definition of the social fact by a characteristic illustration from common experience, one need only observe the manner in which children are brought up. Con-
sidering the facts as they are and as they have always been, it becomes immediately evident that all education is a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling, and acting which he could not have arrived at spontaneously. From the very first hours of his life, we compel him to eat, drink, and sleep at regular hours; we constrain him to cleanliness, calmness, and obedience; later we exert pressure upon him in order that he may learn proper consideration for others, respect for customs and conventions, the need for work, etc. If, in time, this constraint ceases to be felt, it is because it gradually gives rise to habits and to internal tendencies that render constraint unnecessary; but nevertheless it is not abolished, for it is still the source from which these habits were derived. It is true that, according to Spencer, a rational education ought to reject such methods, allowing the child to act in complete liberty; but as this pedagogic theory has never been applied by any known people, it must be accepted only as an expression of personal opinion, not as a fact which can contradict the aforementioned observations. What makes these facts particularly instructive is that the aim of education is, precisely, the socialization of the human being; the process of education, therefore, gives us in a nutshell the historical fashion in which the social being is constituted. This unremitting pressure to which the child is subjected is the very pressure of the social milieu which tends to fashion him in its own image, and of which parents and teachers are merely the representatives and intermediaries.

It follows that sociological phenomena cannot be defined by their universality. A thought which we find in every individual consciousness, a movement repeated by all individuals, is not thereby a social fact. If sociologists have been satisfied with defining them by this characteristic, it is because they confused them with what one might call their reincarnation in the individual. It is, however, the collective aspects of the beliefs, tendencies, and practices of a group that characterize truly social phenomena. As for the forms that the collective states assume when refracted in the individual, these are things of another sort. This duality is clearly demonstrated by the fact that these two orders of phenomena are frequently found dissociated from one another. Indeed, certain of these social manners of acting and thinking acquire, by reason of their repetition, a certain rigidity which on its own account crystallizes them, so to speak, and isolates them from the particular events which reflect them. They thus acquire a body, a tangible form, and constitute a reality in their own right, quite distinct from the individual facts which produce it. Collective habits are inherent not only in the successive acts which they determine but, by a privilege of which we find no example in the biological realm, they are given permanent expression in a formula which is repeated from mouth to mouth, transmitted by education, and fixed even in writing. Such is the origin and nature of legal and moral rules, popular aphorisms and proverbs, articles of faith wherein religious or political groups condense their beliefs, standards of taste established by literary schools, etc. None of these can be found entirely reproduced in the applications made of them by individuals, since they can exist even without being actually applied.

No doubt, this dissociation does not always manifest itself with equal distinctness, but its obvious existence in the important and numerous cases just cited is sufficient to prove that the social fact is a thing distinct from its individual manifestations. Moreover, even when this dissocia-
tion is not immediately apparent, it may often be disclosed by certain devices of method. Such dissociation is indispensable if one wishes to separate social facts from their alloys in order to observe them in a state of purity. Currents of opinion, with an intensity varying according to the time and place, impel certain groups either to more marriages, for example, or to more suicides, or to a higher or lower birth-rate, etc. These currents are plainly social facts. At first sight they seem inseparable from the forms they take in individual cases. But statistics furnish us with the means of isolating them. They are, in fact, represented with considerable exactness by the rates of births, marriages, and suicides, that is, by the number obtained by dividing the average annual total of marriages, births, suicides, by the number of persons whose ages lie within the range in which marriages, births, and suicides occur.

Since each of these figures contains all the individual cases indiscriminately, the individual circumstances which may have had a share in the production of the phenomenon are neutralized and, consequently, do not contribute to its determination. The average, then, expresses a certain state of the group mind (l'âme collective).

Such are social phenomena, when disentangled from all foreign matter. As for their individual manifestations, these are indeed, to a certain extent, social, since they partly reproduce a social model. Each of them also depends, and to a large extent, on the organopsychological constitution of the individual and on the particular circumstances in which he is placed. Thus they are not sociological phenomena in the strict sense of the word. They belong to two realms at once; one could call them sociopsychological. They interest

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*Suicides do not occur at every age, and they take place with varying intensity at the different ages in which they occur.

the sociologist without constituting the immediate subject matter of sociology. There exist in the interior of organisms similar phenomena, compound in their nature, which form in their turn the subject matter of the "hybrid sciences," such as physiological chemistry, for example.

The objection may be raised that a phenomenon is collective only if it is common to all members of society, or at least to most of them—in other words, if it is truly general. This may be true; but it is general because it is collective (that is, more or less obligatory), and certainly not collective because general. It is a group condition repeated in the individual because imposed on him. It is to be found in each part because it exists in the whole, rather than in the whole because it exists in the parts. This becomes conspicuously evident in those beliefs and practices which are transmitted to us ready-made by previous generations; we receive and adopt them because, being both collective and ancient, they are invested with a particular authority that education has taught us to recognize and respect. It is, of course, true that a vast portion of our social culture is transmitted to us in this way; but even when the social fact is due in part to our direct collaboration, its nature is not different. A collective emotion which bursts forth suddenly and violently in a crowd does not express merely what all the individual sentiments had in common; it is something entirely different, as we have shown. It results from their being together, a product of the actions and reactions which take place between individual consciousnesses; and if each individual consciousness echoes the collective sentiment, it is by virtue of the special energy resident in its collective origin. If all hearts beat in unison, this is not the result of a spontaneous and pre-established harmony but rather because an identical
force propels them in the same direction. Each is carried along by all.

We thus arrive at the point where we can formulate and delimit in a precise way the domain of sociology. It comprises only a limited group of phenomena. A social fact is to be recognized by the power of external coercion which it exercises or is capable of exercising over individuals, and the presence of this power may be recognized in its turn either by the existence of some specific sanction or by the resistance offered against every individual effort that tends to violate it. One can, however, define it also by its diffusion within the group, provided that, in conformity with our previous remarks, one takes care to add as a second and essential characteristic that its own existence is independent of the individual forms it assumes in its diffusion. This last criterion is perhaps, in certain cases, easier to apply than the preceding one. In fact, the constraint is easy to ascertain when it expresses itself externally by some direct reaction of society, as is the case in law, morals, beliefs, customs, and even fashions. But when it is only indirect, like the constraint which an economic organization exercises, it cannot always be so easily detected. Generality combined with externality may, then, be easier to establish. Moreover, this second definition is but another form of the first; for if a mode of behavior whose existence is external to individual consciousnesses becomes general, this can only be brought about by its being imposed upon them.  

3 It will be seen how this definition of the social fact diverges from that which forms the basis of the ingenious system of M. Tarde. First of all, we wish to state that our researches have nowhere led us to observe that preponderant influence in the genesis of collective facts which M. Tarde attributes to imitation. Moreover, from the preceding definition, which is not a theory but simply a résumé of the immediate data of observation, it seems indeed to follow, not only that imitation does not always express the essential and characteristic features of the social fact, but even that it never expresses them. No doubt, every social fact is imitated; it has, as we have just shown, a tendency to become general, but that is because it is social, i.e., obligatory. Its power of expansion is not the cause but the consequence of its sociological character. If, further, only social facts produced this consequence, imitation could perhaps serve, if not to explain them, at least to define them. But an individual condition which produces a whole series of effects remains individual nevertheless. Moreover, one may ask whether the word "imitation" is indeed fitted to designate an effect due to a coercive influence. Thus, by this single expression, very different phenomena, which ought to be distinguished, are confused.
even their extent. Consequently, at the very most, it should be necessary to add to the list of phenomena which we have enumerated as presenting the distinctive criterion of a social fact only one additional category, "ways of existing"; and, as this enumeration was not meant to be rigorously exhaustive, the addition would not be absolutely necessary.

Such an addition is perhaps not necessary, for these "ways of existing" are only crystallized "ways of acting." The political structure of a society is merely the way in which its component segments have become accustomed to live with one another. If their relations are traditionally intimate, the segments tend to fuse with one another, or, in the contrary case, to retain their identity. The type of habitation imposed upon us is merely the way in which our contemporaries and our ancestors have been accustomed to construct their houses. The methods of communication are merely the channels which the regular currents of commerce and migrations have dug, by flowing in the same direction. To be sure, if the phenomena of a structural character alone presented this permanence, one might believe that they constituted a distinct species. A legal regulation is an arrangement no less permanent than a type of architecture, and yet the regulation is a "physiological" fact. A simple moral maxim is assuredly somewhat more malleable, but it is much more rigid than a simple professional custom or a fashion. There is thus a whole series of degrees without a break in continuity between the facts of the most articulated structure and those free currents of social life which are not yet definitely molded. The differences between them are, therefore, only differences in the degree of consolidation they present. Both are simply life, more or less crystallized. No doubt, it may be of some advantage to reserve the term "morphological" for those social facts which concern the social substratum, but only on condition of not overlooking the fact that they are of the same nature as the others. Our definition will then include the whole relevant range of facts if we say: A social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint; or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations.\footnote{This close connection between life and structure, organ and function, may be easily proved in sociology because between these two extreme terms there exists a whole series of immediately observable intermediate stages which show the bond between them. Biology is not in the same favorable position. But we may well believe that the inductions on this subject made by sociology are applicable to biology and that, in organisms as well as in societies, only differences in degree exist between these two orders of facts.}
of consciousness can and ought to be considered from without, and not from the point of view of the consciousness experiencing them. Such is the great revolution accomplished in this branch of studies. All the specific procedures and all the new methods by which this science has been enriched are only diverse means of realizing more completely this fundamental idea. It remains for sociology to make this same advance, to pass from the subjective stage, which it has still scarcely outgrown, to the objective.

Fortunately, this transformation is less difficult to effect here than in psychology. Indeed, psychological facts are naturally given as conscious states of the individual, from whom they do not seem to be even separable. Internal by definition, it seems that they can be treated as external only by doing violence to their nature. Not only is an effort of abstraction necessary, but in addition a whole series of procedures and artifices in order to hold them continuously within this point of view. Social facts, on the contrary, qualify far more naturally and immediately as things. Law is embodied in codes; the currents of daily life are recorded in statistical figures and historical monuments; fashions are preserved in costumes; and taste in works of art. By their very nature they tend toward an independent existence outside the individual consciousnesses, which they dominate. In order to disclose their character as things, it is unnecessary to manipulate them ingeniously. From this point of view, sociology has a significant advantage over psychology, an advantage not hitherto perceived, and one which should hasten its development. Its facts are perhaps more difficult to interpret because more complex, but they are more easily arrived at. Psychology, on the contrary, has difficulties not only in the manipulation of its facts but also in rendering

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them explicit. Consequently, we believe that, once this principle of sociological method is generally recognized and practiced, sociology will progress with a rapidity difficult to forecast from its present tardiness of development and will even overtake psychology, whose present relative advantage is due solely to historical priority.¹⁰

II

But the experience of our predecessors has shown that, in order to assure the practical realization of the truth just enunciated, it is not enough to be thoroughly convinced one's self, or even to set forth a theoretical demonstration of it. The mind is so naturally inclined to underrate and disregard this particular truth that a relapse into the old errors will inevitably follow unless sociologists are willing to submit themselves to a rigorous discipline. We shall therefore formulate the principal rules for such a discipline, all of them corollaries of the foregoing theorem.

1. The first corollary is: All preconceptions must be eradicated. A special demonstration of this rule is unnecessary; it follows easily from all our previous statements. It is, moreover, the basis of all scientific method. The logical doubt of Descartes is, in its essence, only an application of it. If, at the moment of the foundation of science, Descartes resolves to question all ideas he had previously received, it is because he wishes to employ only scientifically developed concepts, that is, concepts constructed according to the method instituted by himself; all those having some other origin, then, ¹⁰It is true that the greater complexity of social facts makes the science more difficult. But, in compensation, precisely because sociology is the latest comer, it is in a position to profit by the progress made in the sciences concerned with lower stages of existence and to learn from them. This utilization of previous experiments will certainly accelerate its development.
must be rejected, at least provisionally. We have already seen that Bacon’s theory of the “idols” has the same meaning. The two great doctrines that have been so often opposed to one another thus agree on this essential point. The sociologist ought, therefore, whether at the moment of the determination of his research objectives or in the course of his demonstrations, to repudiate resolutely the use of concepts originating outside of science for totally unscientific needs. He must emancipate himself from the fallacious ideas that dominate the mind of the layman; he must throw off, once and for all, the yoke of these empirical categories, which from long continued habit have become tyrannical. At the very least, if at times he is obliged to resort to them, he ought to do so fully conscious of their trifling value, so that he will not assign to them a role out of proportion to their real importance.

The frequent interference of sentiment makes this emancipation from lay ideas particularly difficult in sociology. Indeed, our political and religious beliefs and our moral standards carry with them an emotional tone that is not characteristic of our attitude toward physical objects; consequently, this emotional character infects our manner of conceiving and explaining them. The ideas we form of things have a vital interest for us, just as the objects, themselves, and thus assume an authority which brooks no contradiction. Every opinion that disturbs them is treated with hostility. If a proposition is not in agreement, for example, with one’s idea of patriotism or of individual dignity, it is denied, whatever its proofs may be. We cannot admit its truth; it is given no consideration at all; and our emotion, to justify our attitude, has no difficulty in suggesting reasons that are readily found convincing. These ideas may, indeed,

have such prestige that they do not even tolerate scientific examination. The very fact of submitting them, as well as the phenomena they represent, to cold, dry analysis, is revolting to certain minds. Whoever undertakes the study of morality objectively, and as an external reality, seems to these sensitive creatures to be devoid of all moral sense, just as the vivisectionist seems to the layman devoid of common sensibility. Far from admitting that these sentiments should themselves be drawn under scientific scrutiny, it is to them that these writers feel they must appeal in order to treat scientifically the parallel social facts.

“Woe to the scholar,” writes an eloquent historian of religions, “who approaches divine matters without having in the depths of his consciousness, in the innermost indestructible regions of his being, where the souls of his ancestors sleep, an unknown sanctuary from which rises now and then the aroma of incense, a line of a psalm, a sorrowful or triumphal cry that as a child he sent to heaven along with his brothers, and that creates immediate communion with the prophets of yore!”

One cannot protest too strongly against this mystical doctrine, which, like all mysticism, is essentially a disguised empiricism, the negation of all science. Sentiments pertaining to social things enjoy no privilege not possessed by other sentiments, for their origin is the same. They, too, have been formed in the course of history; they are a product of human experience, which is, however, confused and unorganized. They are not due to some transcendent insight into reality but result from all sorts of impressions and emotions accumulated according to circumstances, without order and without methodical interpretation. Far from conveying in-

\[ J. \text{Darmesteter, } Les \text{ Prophétes d’Israël, } p. \text{ 9.} \]
sights superior to rational ones, these sentiments are simply strong but confused states of mind. To accord them a dominant role means giving supremacy to the inferior faculties of intelligence over the superior, condemning one's self to pure logomachy. Such a science can satisfy only those who prefer to think with their feelings and emotions rather than with their understanding, and who prefer the immediate and confused syntheses of first impression to the patient and luminous analyses of reason. Sentiment is a subject for scientific study, not the criterion of scientific truth. Moreover, every science encounters analogous resistances at the outset. There was a time when sentiments relating to the things of the physical world opposed with equal energy the establishment of the physical sciences, because they, too, had a religious or moral character. We believe, therefore, that this prejudice, pursued from one science to the next, will finally disappear also from its last retreat, sociology, leaving a free field for the true scientific endeavor.

2. As it happens, this first rule for sociology is entirely negative. It teaches the sociologist to escape the realm of lay ideas and to turn his attention toward facts, but it does not tell him how to take hold of the facts in order to study them objectively.

Every scientific investigation is directed toward a limited class of phenomena, included in the same definition. The first step of the sociologist, then, ought to be to define the things he treats, in order that his subject matter may be known. This is the first and most indispensable condition of all proofs and verifications. A theory, indeed, can be checked only if we know how to recognize the facts of which it is intended to give an account. Moreover, since this initial definition determines the very subject matter of science, this subject matter will or will not be a thing, depending on the nature of the definition.

In order to be objective, the definition must obviously deal with phenomena not as ideas but in terms of their inherent properties. It must characterize them by elements essential to their nature, not by their conformity to an intellectual ideal. Now, at the very beginning of research, when the facts have not yet been analyzed, the only ascertainable characteristics are those external enough to be immediately perceived. Those that are less obvious may be perhaps more significant, and their explanatory value is more important; but they are unknown to science at this stage, and they can be anticipated only by substituting some hypothetical conception in the place of reality. It is imperative, then, that the material included under this fundamental definition be sought among the more external characteristics of sociological phenomena. On the other hand, this definition should include, without exception or distinction, all phenomena presenting to an equal extent these characteristics, for we have neither the reason nor the means for choosing among them. These characteristics are our only clue to reality; consequently, they must be given complete authority in our selection of facts. No other criterion could even partially justify any suspension of, or exception to, this rule. Whence our second corollary: The subject matter of every sociological study should comprise a group of phenomena defined in advance by certain common external characteristics, and all phenomena so defined should be included within this group.

For example, we note the existence of certain acts, all presenting the external characteristic that they evoke from society the particular reaction called punishment. We constitute them as a separate group, to which we give a common
label; we call every punished act a crime, and crime thus defined becomes the object of a special science, criminology. Similarly, we observe within all known societies small groups whose special characteristic is that they are composed preponderantly of individuals who are blood-kin, united by legal bonds. We classify together the facts relating thereto, and give a particular name to the group of facts so created, "domestic relations." We call every aggregate of this kind a family, and this becomes the subject of a special investigation which has not yet received a specific name in sociological terminology. In passing from the family in general to the different family types, the same rule should be applied. For example, the study of the clan and the matriarchal or the patriarchal family should begin with a definition constructed according to the same method. The field of each problem, whether general or particular, must be similarly circumscribed.

By proceeding thus, the sociologist, from the very first, is firmly grounded in reality. Indeed, the pattern of such a classification does not depend on him or on the cast of his individual mind but on the nature of things. The criteria according to which they are placed in a particular category can be recognized by everyone; and the concepts thus formed do not always, or even generally, tally with that of the layman. For example, manifestations of free thought or violations of etiquette, so regularly and severely penalized in many societies, are evidently considered crimes in the common-sense view even in these societies. Similarly, in the usual acceptance of the words a clan is not a family. But such discrepancies are not important, for it is not our aim simply to discover a method for identifying with sufficient accuracy the facts to which the words of ordinary language refer and the ideas they convey. We need, rather, to formulate entirely new concepts, appropriate to the requirements of science and expressed in an appropriate terminology. Of course, lay concepts are not entirely useless to the scholar; they serve as suggestions and guides. They inform us of the existence, somewhere, of an aggregation of phenomena which, bearing the same name, must, in consequence, probably have certain characteristics in common. Since these concepts have always had some reference to phenomena, they even indicate to us at times, though roughly, where these phenomena are to be found. But, as they have been crudely formed, they quite naturally do not coincide exactly with the scientific concepts, which have been established for a set purpose.19

This rule, as obvious and important as it is, is seldom observed in sociology. Precisely because it treats everyday things, such as the family, property, crime, etc., the sociologist most often thinks it unnecessary to define them rigorously at the outset. We are so accustomed to use these terms, and they recur so constantly in our conversation, that it seems unnecessary to render their meaning precise. We simply refer to the common notion, but this common notion is very often ambiguous. As a result of this ambiguity, things that are very different in reality are given the same

19 In actual practice one always starts with the lay concept and the lay term. One inquires whether, among the things which this word confusedly connotes, there are some which present common external characteristics. If this is the case, and if the concept formed by the grouping of the facts thus brought together coincides, if not totally (which is rare), at least to a large extent, with the lay concept, it will be possible to continue to designate the former by the same term as the latter, that is, to retain in science the expression used in everyday language. But if the gap is too considerable, if the common notion confused a plurality of distinct ideas, the creation of new and distinctive terms becomes necessary.
name and the same explanation, and this leads to boundless confusion.

For example, two sorts of monogamous unions exist: those monogamous in fact, and those monogamous by law. In the former, the husband has only one wife, although he is allowed by law to possess several; in the latter, polygamy is legally forbidden. In several animal species and in certain primitive societies monogamy "in fact" is to be found, not sporadically, but with the same prevalence as if imposed by law. When a tribe is dispersed over a vast area, there is little social contact, and consequently the individuals live isolated from one another. In such a case each man naturally seeks only one wife, because in this state of isolation it is difficult for him to secure several. Compulsory monogamy, on the contrary, is observed only in the highest societies. These two types of conjugal unions have, then, a very different significance; and yet the same word serves to designate them both. We commonly call certain animals "monogamous," although they have nothing resembling legal control. Now Spencer, in his study of marriage, uses the word "monogamy" in its ordinary equivocal meaning, without defining it. As a result the evolution of marriage seems to him to present an unaccountable anomaly, since he thinks he observes a higher form of the sexual union as early as the first phases of historical development, while it seems to disappear in the intermediate period, only to reappear later. He then concludes that there is no positive correlation between social progress in general and progress toward a perfect type of family life. A timely definition would have prevented this error.13

13 The same absence of definition caused the occasional statements that democracy is realized both at the beginning and at the end of history. The truth is that primitive and modern democracy are very different from one another.

In other cases great care may be exercised in defining the objects of investigation; but instead of grouping under the same heading all phenomena having the same external properties, only a selected number of them are included. Thus, only certain ones are designated as a kind of "elite," and these alone are regarded as coming within the category. As for the others, they are considered as having usurped these distinctive signs and are disregarded. It is easy to foresee that in this way only a subjective and incomplete picture can be attained. Such an omission can be made only by applying a preconceived idea, since, at the beginning of science, no research could possibly have already established the legitimacy of this usurpation, even if it were possible to have done so. The only possible reason for retaining the phenomena chosen was, then, that they conformed, more than the others, to a certain ideal conception concerning this sort of reality.

For example, M. Garofalo, at the beginning of his *Criminologie,* demonstrates very well that "the sociological concept of crime" has to form the point of departure of this science. Only, in setting up his concept, he does not compare indiscriminately all acts which have been repressed by regular punishments in the different social types. He compares only certain ones among them, namely, those offending the most general and universal of the moral feelings. The moral sentiments which have disappeared in the course of evolution are not, to him, grounded in the nature of things, since they have not survived; consequently, the acts which have been deemed criminal because of their violation of these particular sentiments seem to him to have owed this designation only to accidental and more or less pathological circumstances. But it is by virtue of an entirely personal

conception of morality that he makes this elimination. He
starts from the idea that moral evolution, taken at its very
fount or near its source, carries with it all sorts of dross and
impurities, which it then progressively eliminates, and that
it is only today that it has succeeded in freeing itself from
all the adventitious elements which, in primitive times,
troubled its course. But this principle is neither an evident
axiom nor a demonstrated truth; it is only a hypothesis, and
indeed one without justification. The variable aspects of the
moral sense are not less grounded in the nature of things
than are the immutable; the variations in standards of
morality merely testify to the corresponding variations in
life. In zoölogy, the forms peculiar to the lower species are
not regarded as less natural than those occurring at the other
points on the evolutionary scale. Similarly, these acts which
were condemned as crimes by primitive societies and have
since lost this designation are really criminal in relation to
these societies, quite like those which we continue to repress
today. The former correspond to the changing, the latter to
the constant, conditions of social life; but the former are not
any more artificial than those acts which are considered
crimes today.

But, even if these acts had unduly assumed the criminal
character, they ought not to be sharply separated from the
others; for the pathological forms of a phenomenon are not
different in nature from the normal forms, and it is therefore
necessary to observe the former as well as the latter in order
to determine this nature. Morbidity is not absolutely anti-
theetical to health; these are two varieties of the same phe-
omenon, and each tends to explain the other. This is a rule
long recognized and practiced in biology and in psychology,
and the sociologist is equally under an obligation to respect
it. Unless one asserts that the same phenomenon can be due
sometimes to one cause and sometimes to another, that is,
unless one denies the principle of causality, the causes which
impress on an act the mark of crime, in an abnormal manner,
cannot differ qualitatively from those producing the same
effect in a normal manner; they differ only in degree or they
differ because they do not act in the same environment. The
abnormal crime, then, is still a crime and ought, consequent-
ly, to be included in the definition of crime. What M. Garo-
falo actually does is to take as the genus that which is only
a species or merely a simple variety. The facts to which his
definition of criminality applies represent only an infinites-
imal minority among those it should include, for it applies
neither to religious crimes, nor to violations of etiquette,
ceremonial, tradition, etc. If these have disappeared from
our modern codes, they make up, on the contrary, almost
the entire penal law of former societies.

The same flaw in method causes certain observers to deny
the existence of any species of morality among savages. They
start with the idea that our morality is the morality. It is
evident, however, that our morality is either unknown
or in a rudimentary state among primitive peoples and that
this discrimination is clearly arbitrary. If we apply our sec-
ond corollary in this case, everything changes. To decide
whether a precept belongs to the moral order, we must de-
termine whether or not it presents the external mark of
morality; this mark is a widespread repressive sanction, that
is, a condemnation by public opinion that punishes all
violations of the precept. Whenever we are presented with

\footnote{See Lubbock, \textit{Origin of Civilization}, chap. viii: It is a still more wide-
spread, and not less false, opinion that the ancient religions are amoral or
immoral. The truth is that they have a morality of their own.}
a fact having this characteristic, we have no right to deny its moral character, for this characteristic proves that it has the same nature as other moral facts. Not only are social regulations of this kind met with in primitive societies, but they are even more numerous there than in civilized societies. A large number of acts which today are left to the free choice of individuals are obligatory among them. Thus we may realize the errors we commit by omitting definitions or by defining inadequately.

But, it will be said that, in defining phenomena by their apparent characteristics, we are allowing to certain superficial properties a significance greater than that of more fundamental attributes. Are we not, by a veritable inversion of logical order, beginning at the summit instead of the base? Thus, when we define crime in terms of punishment, one is almost inevitably exposed to the accusation of deriving crime from punishment, or, as a well-known quotation puts it, of considering the scaffold, and not the crime, as the source of ignominy. This reproach rests upon a confusion. Since the definition in question is placed at the beginnings of the science, it cannot possibly aim at a statement concerning the essence of reality; that must be attained subsequently. The sole function of the definition is to establish contact with things; and since the latter can be grasped by the mind only from its exteriors, the definition expresses them in terms of their external qualities. It does not explain these things thereby; it furnishes merely a just basis for further explanations. Certainly, punishment is not the essence of crime; but it does constitute a symptom thereof, and consequently, in order to understand crime, we must begin with punishment.

The aforementioned objection would be well founded only if these external characteristics were at the same time accidental, that is, if they were not bound up with the fundamental properties of things. Under these conditions indeed, after science had pointed them out, it could not possibly go farther; it could not penetrate the deeper layers of reality, since there would be no necessary connection between surface and essence. But, if the principle of causality is valid, when certain characteristics are found identically and without exceptions in all the phenomena of a certain order, one may be assured that they are closely connected with the nature of the latter and bound up with it. And if to a given group of acts there is attached also the peculiarity of a penal sanction, an intimate bond must exist between punishment and the intrinsic attributes of these acts. Consequently, however superficial they may be, these properties, provided that they have been systematically observed, clearly point out to the scientist the course which he must follow in order to penetrate more to the core of the things in question. They are the first and indispensable link in the sequence to be unfolded by science in the course of its explanations.

Since objects are perceived only through sense perception, we can conclude: Science, to be objective, ought to start, not with concepts formed independent to them, but with these same perceptions. It ought to borrow the materials for its initial definitions directly from perceptual data. And, as a matter of fact, one need only reflect on the real nature of scientific work to understand that it cannot proceed otherwise. It needs concepts that adequately express things as they actually are, and not as everyday life finds it useful to conceive them. Now those concepts formulated without the discipline of science do not fulfill this condition. Science, then, has to create new concepts; it must
dismiss all lay notions and the terms expressing them, and return to sense perception, the primary and necessary substance underlying all concepts. From sensation all general ideas flow, whether they be true or false, scientific or impressionistic. The point of departure of science, or speculative knowledge, cannot be different from that of lay, or practical, knowledge. It is only beyond this point, namely, in the manner of elaboration of these common data, that divergences begin.

3. But sensation may easily be subjective. It is a rule in the natural sciences to discard those data of sensation that are too subjective, in order to retain exclusively those presenting a sufficient degree of objectivity. Thus the physicist substitutes, for the vague impressions of temperature and electricity, the visual registrations of the thermometer or the electrometer. The sociologist must take the same precautions. The external characteristics in terms of which he defines the objects of his researches should be as objective as possible.

We may lay down as a principle that social facts lend themselves more readily to objective representation in proportion as their separation from the individual facts expressing them is more complete. Indeed, the degree of objectivity of a sense perception is proportionate to the degree of stability of its object; for objectivity depends upon the existence of a constant and identical point of reference to which the representation can be referred and which permits the elimination of what is variable, and hence subjective, in it. But if the points of reference themselves are variable, if they are perpetually shifting in relation to each other, there is no common standard, and the scientist has no means of distinguishing between those impressions which are external and those that are subjective. So long as social life is not separated from the individual or particular events which comprise it, and has no separate existence, it will present this dilemma. As these events differ among themselves and change in time, and as we assume the life of society to be inseparable from them, they communicate their mutability to it. Social life consists, then, of free currents perpetually in the process of transformation and incapable of being mentally fixed by the observer, and the scholar cannot approach the study of social reality from this angle. But we know that it possesses the power of crystallization without ceasing to be itself. Thus, apart from the individual acts to which they give rise, collective habits find expression in definite forms: legal rules, moral regulations, popular proverbs, social conventions, etc. As these forms have a permanent existence and do not change with the diverse applications made of them, they constitute a fixed object, a constant standard within the observer’s reach, exclusive of subjective impressions and purely personal observations. A legal regulation is what it is, and there are no two ways of looking at it. Since, on the other hand, these practices are merely social life consolidated, it is legitimate, except where otherwise stated, to study the latter through the former.

When, then, the sociologist undertakes the investigation of some order of social facts, he must endeavor to consider them from an aspect that is independent of their individual manifestations. It is this principle that we have applied in studying the diverse forms of social solidarity and their evolution, through the medium of the legal structure which reflects

14 It would be necessary, for example, in order to invalidate this substitution, to have reason to believe that, at a given moment, law no longer expresses the actual state of social relations.
them." On the other hand, an attempt to distinguish and classify the different family types on the basis of the literary description given us by travelers and historians is exposed to the danger of confusing the most diverse species and of bringing together the most dissimilar types. If the legal structure of the family and, more specifically, the right of succession are taken as the basis of classification, objective criteria are at hand which, while not infallible, will prevent many errors. In order to classify the different kinds of crimes, one has to try to reconstruct the ways of living and the occupational customs that are practiced in the different worlds of crime. One will then recognize as many criminological types as there are different forms of this organization. To achieve an understanding of customs and popular beliefs, one must investigate the proverbs and epigrams that express them. No doubt, in proceeding thus, we leave the concrete data of collective life temporarily outside the realm of science; and yet, however changeable and unstable it may be, its unintelligibility need not be assumed. In order to follow a methodical course, we must establish the foundations of science on solid ground and not on shifting sand. We must approach the social realm where it offers the easiest access to scientific investigation. Only subsequently will it be possible to push research further and, by successive approximations, to encompass, little by little, this fleeting reality, which the human mind will never, perhaps, be able to grasp completely.

17 See Division du travail social, Book I.
18 Cf. the author's "Introduction à la sociologie de la famille," in Annales de la Faculté des lettres de Bordeaux, 1889.

CHAPTER III

RULES FOR DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN THE NORMAL AND THE PATHOLOGICAL

Observation conducted according to the preceding rules covers two types of facts which are very dissimilar in certain respects: those which conform to given standards and those which "ought" to be different—in other words, normal and pathological phenomena. We have seen that it is necessary to include them both in the definition with which all research must begin. But if their nature is in certain respects identical, they constitute, nevertheless, two different varieties of facts, which need to be distinguished. Can science make this distinction?

The question is of the greatest importance, for on its solution depends the role assigned to science, and especially to the science of man. According to a theory whose partisans belong to most diverse schools, science can teach us nothing about what we ought to desire. It is concerned, they say, only with facts which all have the same value and interest for us; it observes and explains, but does not judge them. Good and evil do not exist for science. It can, indeed, tell us how given causes produce their effects, but not what ends should be pursued. In order to determine not what is but what is desirable, we need to resort to the unconscious, by whatever name it may be designated: "feeling," "instinct," "vital urge," etc. Science, says a writer already quoted, can indeed illuminate the world, but it