Introduction
by W. S. F. Pickering

Durkheim's sociological approach to morals and moral systems has always aroused considerable interest, be it by way of criticism or praise. Two notable contributions to the subject have recently appeared in English, that of Ernest Wallwork, *Durkheim: Morality and Milieu* (1972), and relevant chapters in Steven Lukes's *Émile Durkheim* (1972). Mention should also be made of the work of the French philosopher, J. Henriot (1967). An introduction such as this cannot hope to emulate these and other commendable studies, or even offer resumes of them. Its purpose must be quite different. The subjects within the area of moral life which Durkheim raised were many and complex and provoked much discussion amongst both sociologists and philosophers. The items which have been selected for translation are intended to bring to the attention of readers certain aspects of Durkheim's sociology of morals, which need further documentation for the English-speaking world, or which have not received adequate attention up to now. Therefore, only those aspects of Durkheim's thought of which the items make mention will be dealt with, albeit briefly. The topics that will be covered are the definition of the subject matter, moral reality, the science of morality, the obligatory nature of moral facts, relativism, rationality, and so on. The intention is not to present a comprehensive or overall introduction to Durkheim's sociology of morals. The raising of these topics, it is hoped however, will provide an outline of much of Durkheim's moral thought, and at the same time will demonstrate the reason for the selection of the items which have been translated. They will not be considered individually, because certain topics are to be found in more than one item.

Having said that, the principle is momentarily broken by referring at the very outset, and again at the end, to the importance of Durkheim's 'Introduction to ethics' (1920a), which could be seen as the most significant item in this small collection. It is important for many reasons. It was amongst the last things that he wrote just

before he died. In the face of alleged changes in his thought, one may conclude that it represents his mind at its most developed point, although, as the title suggests, it forms but part of an introduction to a comprehensive study of morals. Although the *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912a) stands as his masterpiece, his ambition was to crown it with something greater, something closer to his heart, a sociological study of moral behaviour. He was a wholly moral person and this fact projected into his academic interests, and as Davy, a close disciple of Durkheim, said, no one could understand his work unless he was seen as a moralist (1920:71-2). However, he had never written anything systematic on morality, but he had planned such a work. Marcel Mauss, his nephew, wrote: '*Morale* was the goal of his existence, the centre point of his intellect' (*AS*, 1925, n.s., I:9). The years 1914-18, which meant the redirection of his energies to more pressing, practical concerns in supporting France's war effort, prevented him from embarking on his quest. Accelerated by the death of his beloved son André, killed on the eastern front, his health began to fail and as the end drew near, all he could produce was the opening chapter of the introductory section of *La Morale*. In such circumstances Mauss described Durkheim's endeavours as 'a supreme act of faith' (ibid.). Durkheim wrote the introduction in Paris and in Fontainebleau during the summer before he died in 1917 at the age of only fifty-nine. He departed life a sad man, sad because of the loss of so many of his disciples who died in the war, sad perhaps at the apparent failure of that form of humanism in which he believed; and sad also, it might be said, by his unfulfilled ambition to write a definitive book on ethics.

Defining morality

There is merit in referring at the outset to Durkheim's 'Introduction to ethics' since nowhere else does he so clearly attempt to define the area covered by morality. As a conceptualist Durkheim was convinced that it was necessary to begin any systematic study with a statement of definition. According to him, the French word *morale* implies one of two possibilities – it means moral actions, decisions, judgments, virtues; but it also relates to reasoning and

speculation about such actions, decisions, judgments and virtues. The contrast between the two meanings is to be seen in that the first is associated with what is spontaneous, whereas the second is reflective, involving rational principles and speculation, even a doctrine of man. Further, the moralist, working within the limits of the second meaning, may criticize moral actions and attitudes within the first meaning and may even suggest changes. In modern terminology, the first meaning might be said to correspond to descriptive ethics, based on observed action and attitude. The second roughly corresponds to traditional ethics, or as the French in Durkheim's day called it, *la morale théorique*. Today this might be subdivided into normative ethics related to reasoning about right action – what is moral and what is not; and metaethics which deals with the ultimate nature of moral action and discourse (see Nielsen 1967:118ff.).

Moral reality

There are also two major theses on which Durkheim's study of morals is based. The first is that there exists what is called moral reality; and second, that this reality constitutes the subject matter of a valid scientific analysis.

There is a moral reality, as indicated in the word *morale*, because it is generally agreed that in history, in everyday life, there are institutions, laws, customs, modes of behaviour and thought, individual and collective, which are associated with the word moral. They constitute a set of facts or data which have an existence and stand outside the individual (see 1905b, translated here). They do not have to be constructed or deduced by the moralist. Acts of honour, loyalty, duty, are in society for everyone to see. Since the point of commencement has to be with moral behaviour as it is actually practised, Durkheim saw that speculation about the ultimate nature of what is moral or what is desirable is never legitimate as a first stage of the enquiry (see 1920a; also 1925a: 133ff./t.1961a:116ff.). Morality has its own reality independent of any theories which might be used to justify it or describe its essence (1907a(3):356). It is little wonder therefore that Durkheim attacked every piece of abstract or platitudinous reasoning about morals.

Such arguments could form no basis to develop a study of moral facts of a given society because those who used the arguments never began at the point of action or fact. Durkheim's attitude in this matter is patently clear in the debates in which he was involved in the Société Française de Philosophie which have been translated in the pages ahead (see especially 1909a(2)). The point of commencement can never be moral action in general; but must be specific actions – practices as they are found in concrete societies. His attack was often levelled against idealist tendencies, such as appeared in the arguments of Delvolvé (ibid.). Likewise Durkheim supported critics of Guyau who put forward an approach to morals, in which he made much use of a basic concept, which was akin to poetic intuition, 'the principle of life' (1906f).

A scientific discipline

The other thesis, basic to Durkheim's analysis of morality, is that the reality circumscribed as moral should be the subject of scientific investigation. His commitment to science as a means of acquiring knowledge and understanding in the world of human and social behaviour, as much as in the physical world, hardly needs to be emphasized. It is apparent in many of the pieces translated here, as well as in nearly all his major works (see, for example, 1893b; 1895a). He saw science as a discipline armed with a superior method to that of philosophers, artists or theologians. So many of their conclusions, stemming from a *priori*, not empirical methods, turned out to be unsatisfactory. His commitment was epitomized in his vocation to sociology – a subject he so skilfully developed. His interest in applying the scientific method to morality has probably deep and complex roots but it may well have been strengthened when he visited Germany in the academic year 1885/6 and listened to the lectures of such thinkers as Wundt and Post, whose approach to ethics was of a positivist kind (see 1887c).

Durkheim's plea for a scientific approach to the study of morals was evident throughout his academic life but it reached its clearest expression in the important paper he gave to the Société Française de Philosophie, 'La Determination du fait moral' (1906b (see also its close parallel to *L'Éducation morale* 1925a)). Durkheim held

that the science of morality has a proper place within the province of sociology, since sociology itself consists of a scientific analysis of social facts, and moral facts are part of the category of social facts (see also 1895a). One of the difficulties Durkheim saw in applying the scientific method to morality, which raises more problems than in other areas of human behaviour, is that it contains a strong component of the 'ought'. The 'is' must always be dissociated from the 'ought', that is, what people actually do in the realm of moral behaviour must be rigidly differentiated from what they ought to do. The difficulty is that moral action and belief are impregnated with the concept of the 'ought'. The problem can be said to be largely of Durkheim's own making since by definition he held that morality was concerned with the 'ought'. But the main methodological point is that the sociology of morals, which concentrates on moral behaviour as it is practised, is to be contrasted with the more traditional discipline where the starting point is theoretical morality, or what traditionalists have sometimes called normative science, which for Durkheim was a contradiction in terms. Speculation about morality has its place, but philosophers are to be criticized because, at the very outset of their studies, they fail to liberate moral behaviour from sentiment and prejudice (1907a(3): 356). It must be said with great emphasis that support for upholding a scientific procedure is evident in Durkheim's thought in the items translated. At no point did he ever abandon what he held to be the necessity of an initial scientific approach to the study of moral and social behaviour.

All the items translated in this Part, except 'Introduction to ethics', were published between 1904 and 1910. They were years not only marked by great activity on the part of Durkheim but they also witnessed the publication of a number of books on the subject of positive ethics, which caused considerable academic stir. It should never be thought therefore that Durkheim was alone in propounding a scientific or sociological approach to morality. There were many writers in this period who were fully convinced that traditional ethics or *la morale théorique* was no longer tenable in the face of increasing knowledge and new ways of thought about the universe. For these reasons if for no other, they explored the possibility of positive ethics. Some of them attributed much of their thinking to Durkheim himself, having been influenced by his early works (see Bibliography, Durkheim on Morals). Reference

should be made to A. Landry, *Principes de morale rationnelle* (1906); A. Fouillée, *Les Élements sociologiques de la morale* (1905); articles by G. Belot, 'En Quête d'une morale positive' (1905-6) and later a book, *Études de morale positive* (1907). (See reviews by Durkheim, 1907a(3)(4)(5).) There was also the book by Albert Bayet, *La Morale scientifique: essai sur les applications morales des sciences sociologiques* (1905) (reviewed by Durkheim, 1906a(11), translated here). Pleased though Durkheim was that he had had such an influence on thinkers of the day, his point of criticism was that as philosophers, as indeed most of them were, they had failed to apply a rigorous scientific method to the subject on hand and that they had developed their thought in ways which were not in keeping with such procedure. In Britain the philosopher and sociologist, Edward Westermarck, perhaps influenced by Wundt, had written *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* (1906) and this was also criticized by Durkheim for its lack of scientific rigour (see 1907a(10), translated here). Amidst other books which were published on the subject at the time, one stood out in Durkheim's view, and indeed if continued editions is a criterion, stands as a classic. It was Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's *La Morale et la science des moeurs* (1903). Lévy-Bruhl, then lecturer in philosophy at the Sorbonne, attempted to justify and develop the concept of a scientific and sociological approach to morals. In this he was much influenced by both Comte and Durkheim. However, there is another side to the coin, for Lévy-Bruhl in turn influenced Durkheim (see below). He was never one of Durkheim's close followers and disciples who helped in the production of the important journal *L'Année sociologique*. He was very sympathetic to the new sociological school which was developing at the time but stood no further than on its periphery. Durkheim's review of the book just mentioned (1904a(5), translated here) is of measured admiration, although at least one of Durkheim's disciples, Paul Fauconnet, was critical (1904). Durkheim used the opportunity of reviewing the book as an occasion not only of supporting Lévy-Bruhl but of expanding his own ideas and implying that they were similar to those of the author. Lévy-Bruhl had two specific aims – to challenge the legitimacy of theoretical ethics and to develop the idea of rational moral art (see below). But over and above such particularities he argued strongly for the rightness of a positive or scientific approach to the study of morality – *la science des*

moeurs or a sociology of moral actions, habits, customs, norms, such as Durkheim advocated, and indeed he used such phrases as *la science des moeurs* or *le physique des moeurs*. The book gave rise to much contention, especially among philosophers some of whose names have just been mentioned, and the result was that Lévy-Bruhl was forced to defend himself publicly (1906). (For an analysis of Lévy-Bruhl 1903, see Gurvitch 1937b and 1939.)

Whilst the sociology of morals or *la science des moeurs* was the source of considerable debate, relatively little controversy waged over the actual application of the scientific method to moral reality in terms of comparative studies or particular societies (e.g. Parodi 1910:ch.2). Rather, the points at issue in France were more of a theoretical kind, dealing with the nature of moral reality – its definition and characteristics, along with the possible application of the findings of the science once they had been established. In passing it should be noted that Durkheim argued that his critics attacked him at the level of theory rather than in the way he approached specific issues in such works as *Division of Labour* (1893b) or *Suicide* (1897a). The commendability of science lies not in its theory or in its philosophy but in the results it achieves in practice in the understanding of the data with which it deals. (For Durkheim's methodology of morals, see 1907a(3).)

Moral forces and moral facts

To emphasize the fact that morals constitute a reality to which the scientific method could be legitimately applied, Durkheim frequently called components of society 'forces'. He was well aware of the dangers of trying to use too literally the concept of force, common enough in physics. Nevertheless he felt it was valuable to use the word, not least to demonstrate the existence in experience of the data to which he was pointing. On numberless occasions he referred to religion, morality, and law as exerting force. This is another idea that remained with him from beginning to end. In his notes on Rousseau's *Émile* (translated in the section on Education) which date from the same period as his 'Introduction to ethics', he wrote: 'If the citizen is to be natural, he must feel that he is under the sway of a moral force, comparable in strength to a

physical force' (1919a). Durkheim stated that social forces of course could not be physical forces but were mental or moral ones, derived from *representations* or states of *conscience* (1910b).

But if the concept of force within morals is open to criticism so is that of fact. Is it legitimate to refer to moral actions as facts? Belot, a philosopher within the rationalist school, disagreed with Durkheim over what constituted the data of the science of morals. Durkheim's insistence on facts, rather than say personal action, caused Belot to retort that facts were like dead things (1908a(2), translated here). Durkheim remained unmoved. To the very end of his days he held that 'a science of morality, if it is not to be other than a matter of mere common sense, can only be arrived at by the scientific study of moral facts' (1920a). He wished to hammer home two points – the importance of empirical data and that they should be related to the social. The focus on what is now called 'facticity' is borne out by what he wrote in his lectures, *L'Évolution pédagogique en France:* 'Ethics . . . operate in the realm of action, which either gets to grips with real objects or else loses itself in the void. To act morally is to do good to creatures of flesh and blood, to change some feature of reality' (1938a:240/t.1977a:207). Although one does not know the essence of the moral ideal or of reality, *les faits moraux* must form the base on which to build a study of morality. Only in this way can the nature of the moral be slowly revealed.

But in the beginning, how are moral facts to be recognized? For Durkheim they are a sub-division of social facts and to find the answer to the question, one naturally turns to *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895a:ch.I). Of the several characteristics Durkheim enunciates, one is underlined here, which is highly relevant to moral behaviour, namely, the notion of coercion. Social facts control or constrain ways of thinking and acting of the individual, in other words, they exert a force on man's behaviour. Durkheim constantly referred to this characteristic of social facts, particularly in the realm of religious belief and ritual, as in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912a). The problem, however, which cannot be discussed here, is to carefully differentiate a cluster of concepts such as constraint, coercion, obligation, and so on. For Durkheim the coercive force in moral action is obligation – demands made by society – rather than sanction – penalty and reward (see below). Despite difficulties in handling these concepts,

Durkheim never repudiated the primacy of obligation. In his 'Introduction to ethics' he still emphasized it as being 'inherent and indispensable' (1920a). (For a general criticism of the notion of constraint, the reader is referred to Lukes 1972:12-14.)

The emphasis on individualism and freedom of choice, current among philosophers at the time, encouraged many to reject from the moral all that was mechanical or habitual. With intention and motive as key characteristics, actions which might be labelled 'automatic' could hardly be counted as being within the realm of the moral. Bayet in his *La Morale scientifique* (1905) rejected the notion that duty constituted the moral, because for him duty was a sort of illusion. It could not be therefore a subject of scientific study. Bayet saw a concern for duty as the preserve not of philosophy, or science, but of art. It was something not to be developed or corrected but to be dispelled, as a kind of nightmare which has been an obsession and a source of anguish to humanity for centuries. Gaston Richard (1925a) held that Durkheim's review of Bayet's book was of great importance in understanding Durkheim's approach to morality in so far as he took the opportunity in the review to correct errors that positivists had made in their approach to morality (1906a(11), translated here).[2] Bayet, who was a disciple of Lévy-Bruhl, had in Durkheim's eyes misunderstood the notion of duty. Although morality, Durkheim held, was made up of ideas and sentiments, duties were very much within its realm. Indeed, morality could be seen as consisting of little more than a code of duties. Durkheim rejected the idea that sanction was the chief characteristic of duty (1907a(10); see also 1906b/r.1924a/t.1953b:43). In another review he partly agreed with Westermarck that sanction was a sign or expression of duty. However, he criticized the English moralist who held that sanction alone was the basis of duty. What constituted duty for Durkheim was the notion of command, in other words, that of coercion, which fits in neatly with *The Rules.* The notion of duty had therefore to be fully understood and its origins discovered if any progress were to be made in the sociology of morality. Here and in other matters Durkheim showed certain affinities with Kant.[3] Elsewhere Durkheim argued that the concept of duty was unknown in Greek or Latin thought but was born in Christianity. It has however survived its progenitor. Above all, the concept indicated that man is to rise above his nature and this is what was absent in classical thought (1938a:242/t.1977a:209).

As is commonly realized, Durkheim clung to the notion of duty on a number of counts. He saw it almost axiomatically as being the main characteristic of morality, but also as a major component of discipline which is necessary in human life as the antidote of egoism (see, for example, 1897a: Book II, ch.VI; 1898c; 1925a:ch.IX).

Durkheim, it might be said, was never able to solve the dichotomy between the individual and the social, despite the fact that so many of his endeavours were centred on this problem. By virtually equating the moral with the social, linked by the notion of duty, the personal or individual is either disregarded or underplayed. According to Durkheim man is only moral if he is at one with the social. The 'individual' component does not have a place of any significance. Indeed, individual *représentations* are seen as profane, over and against the social which is held to be sacred. It must not be forgotten that Durkheim's basic position was, on his own declaration, one of opposition to the moral individualism of Kant and the utilitarians (see 1893b; 1901a(i)). On the other hand, Durkheim admitted that the individual today is not dominated by an 'automatic' sociality. As man advances the personal element becomes more important and is allowed a greater place by public conscience. An unreflective morality is now seen as an imperfect morality (1907a(9)).

Relativism

Moral data, which constitute the subject matter of the positive science of morals, not only cover *man's* present behaviour, they are also concerned with such behaviour in the past, and not only in one society but in societies around the world (see 1905b and 1907a(10)). History and ethnography are therefore handmaids to the science of morals. Such disciplines demonstrate at least one thing: that empirical morality is subject to a great deal of variation. As Durkheim wrote:

> It can no longer be maintained nowadays that there is one, single morality which is valid for all men at all times and in all places. We know full well that morality has varied. It has varied not only because men have lost sight of their true destiny, but also

> because it is in the nature of things that morality should vary. The moral system of the Romans and Hebrews was not our own, nor could it be. . . . There is not just one morality but several and as many as there are social types [1909a(2), translated here in Part II, Education; see also 1910b].

This contradicts and was intended to contradict any explanation of moralities in terms of underlying universal principles, such as love or hatred (as in Westermarck's book, see 1907a(10)). The reasons or justification for a particular moral system lie in the nature of the society in which it is found (1910b), that is, each society has its own rationality. As Durkheim said in his 'Introduction to ethics' the morality of a nation, which consists of ideas about actions associated with the concept of obligation, fully expresses the society's 'temperament, its mentality and the conditions in which it lives' (1920a). Thus, morality expresses man – something Durkheim frequently stated. It also means that the study of morality is a key to the understanding of a society.

Durkheim, in opposition to much traditional philosophy, in which it is assumed that human nature is universally the same, argued for relativism in connection with human nature (1904a(5)). The nature of man, he suggests, varies with regard to time and the type of society in which particular men live. Because early and primitive types of morality preceded those of modern western societies, it was necessary to study them in order to understand contemporary morality and its accompanying doctrine of man and nature. Durkheim's 'anthropological' approach emerges in his statement: 'since man is the product of history, it is only through comparative history that he can be understood' (ibid.). And elsewhere he wrote: 'if disregarding his historical context, we attempt to see him (man) as fixed, static, and outside time, we only denature him' (1920a). And these variations in man's nature are not external or minor issues – but 'deep-seated, essential qualities, ways of acting and basic patterns of thought' (ibid.). But precisely what these qualities, acts and thoughts were, Durkheim did not enunciate.

Since moral systems show such wide variations, a historical and ethnographical approach undermines the notion that one particular system is superior to another, either on the grounds of internal criteria or because of divine revelation. Durkheim realized that in

principle science clearly separates the 'is' from the 'ought' and therefore it cannot pass judgment either by way of praise or criticism on specific moral systems. Ethical relativism is the inevitable consequence.

But what are the wider issues resulting from such relativism? Can one break out of the relativist circle? If all is relative, then there is nothing which is true in a universal sense. Relativism itself is only relatively true. But apart from such epistemological problems, why should any man want to accept a moral code that has only merit for his own society? In short, why should one trouble to be moral? Durkheim attempted to defend this weakness of the relativist's armour in a debate on the effectiveness of moral doctrines, which is discussed here in the Introduction on Education and which has been translated in this volume (1909a(2)).

At least the relativism of the kind supported by Durkheim is an acknowledgement of the fact of change, and this should not be forgotten by those who would charge Durkheim with the sin of examining societies in a static mode. The moral idea is always in the process of being formed, it 'is not immutable: despite the respect with which it is invested, it is alive, constantly changing and evolving' (1920a). These transformations come about through the agency of the moralist who prepares the ground for changes and indeed proposes them. This attitude is similar to the one he adopted in his essay, 'The determination of moral facts' (1906b; see below). But Durkheim will not go further. No philosopher can produce a new system of morals and no new moral theory has given rise to a revolution (1904a(5)). One wonders if Durkheim would have been prepared to change his views if he had been alive to witness the present growth of Marxism in one form or another. For Durkheim changes occur when the legitimacy of reasons for moral actions and commands are challenged or are no longer thought to be adequate. As is commonly said, he failed to produce an adequate theory of social change; and, as is to be noted in these translations, he referred to history in a somewhat vague and mysterious way (see 1910b).

Rationality

It is often assumed that Durkheim made little use of the concept of

rationality within sociology; and it is true that he did not give the term as prominent a place in his thought as did, not only Max Weber, but also Vilfredo Pareto. For Durkheim the rational was frequently associated with science and its method: indeed, the two were often equated (see, for example: 1925a: ch. 1; and Lukes 1972:72-6). In these essays, we present two items in which rationality is the key subject, 'A discussion on positive morality' (1908a(2)) and 'A discussion on the notion of social equality' (1910b). The topic is raised in other items as well.

Durkheim refused to call himself a positivist because of the associations of the term with Auguste Comte, but he was happy enough to accept the word rationalist and was ready to be identified with those who would call themselves rationalists. He was opposed to a facile or naive rationalism – a rationalism that implied quickly acquired knowledge, but he, and all Frenchmen recalling their Cartesian heritage, must, to use his own words, 'remain impenitent rationalists' (1925a:304/t.1961a:265). He used this highly ambivalent word, as many people did and still do, both to the application of reason and the acceptance of what is reasonable. He also based his thought on what he held were the realities of existence, but this did not mean that reality was that which was determined by the senses. He would not countenance the lowering of reason to sense experience. Reason itself must always be paramount. In the realm of morality, rationality for Durkheim and other rationalists meant a rejection of the claims and traditions of Catholicism and Protestantism to create a morality based on religious foundations. In the place of a religious morality the wish was to establish a secular or rational morality. Through this, man is encouraged to create a system that is designed to function according to the principles of reason. Amongst the many affected by the enthusiasm of the times for such a morality was Gustave Belot, in some ways sympathetic to Durkheim's general outlook, who expounded his own approach to rational morality (*Études de morale positive* (1907)). Durkheim in turn supported Belot but observed that rationality is not only what is imposed on ethical behaviour or on a newly created system of ideas, but is inherent in a system already established (1908a(2)). It is thus legitimate to refer to a particular moral system as being rational, in contrast to other systems which are less rational or which are not rational at all. Progressive rational morality is a more human notion of morality based on the need for

man to be at harmony with himself (1910b). Durkheim calls this ideal rationality. It is a system invented by man which is claimed to be based on reason. But there is another concept of rationality, which is more fundamental and of greater interest to science. This is what might be called rationality in things as they are.[4] It does not have to be 'created' in the mind of the scientist, for he discovers it in the data themselves (1908a(2)). Such a definition of rationality Durkheim had given at a previous meeting of the Société Française de Philosophie when he chose as his subject 'La Determination du fait moral' (1906b). With this notion in mind, it can be said that each moral system is rational in so far as 'at each moment of time', as it is observed, it 'constitutes a system of *intelligible data*' (1908a(2)). The claim is that there is here a direct parallel with the presuppositions of the natural sciences and the way they view phenomena. Morality is rational to the degree it can be translated into an intelligible system of rules and relationships. In another debate (1909a(2), translated in Part II, Education), Parodi preferred the term intelligibility to rationality in dealing with this concept. For Durkheim, rationality according to his second definition meant fundamentally a relation between two entities. Thus, an institution cannot be rational (therefore presumably irrational) in itself, it can only be rational in relation to the social milieu, in the 'entire series of historical conditions on which it depends' (1910b). Useful connections with other institutions thus determine whether or not an institution is rational. Similarly, an institution can only be irrational if it loses relations with other social institutions.

This notion of an inbuilt or *inherent* rationality in ethical systems leads once again to relativism, since 'all moral systems have their own rationality' (1910b). All of them are 'natural' and therefore there is no objective criterion of judging one to be superior to the other on grounds of rationality. Thus, rationalism is relative to the society in question. In the second discussion previously mentioned, Durkheim adopted such a position in connection with egalitarianism. He held that it was impossible to justify the contention that inequalities of caste and class, as they existed in the past, 'were less rational' than inequalities in his day (1910b). To the scientist all social systems must be equally rational. Parodi, attempting to break such relativism, spoke not only about the rationality of the scientist, but of the individual within the moral

system, who was fully aware of its inequalities and weaknesses. Then as today, Durkheim's focusing on objectivity in explanation and at the same time adopting a relativist position raised the criticism that such an approach inevitably produced a conservative outlook and the rejection of reform. Durkheim's reply was interesting. History proceeds along its way, and it would seem in an inexorable fashion. As it proceeds it settles problems which beset man. New moral systems emerge which are brought about by changes in social conditions which are themselves the product of history (ibid.). It is quite remarkable that once again when the problem of change is raised, Durkheim falls back on such an un-sociological or non-scientific defence, hiding within the mysteriousness of history.

Durkheim's criticism of Belot was that, although he implied both meanings, he did not clearly differentiate them in a way that Durkheim thought necessary, and in speaking of rationality in connection with morals, slid all too easily from one meaning to the other, thus introducing confusion. But it is not a confusion of communication which is at stake. Far more important is the fact that it is logically inadmissible to move from one meaning to the other. They must be rigidly isolated – fact cannot establish value. Belot tried to transcend the dichotomy by pointing to the unity of reason and claiming that moral progress had taken place in such a way that each stage of history had built on and surpassed the previous one. For Durkheim such a use of rationality was no answer to the dichotomy, and in many respects we see here another reason for Durkheim wishing to dissociate himself from Comte and the idea of progress, although admittedly Comte defined progress in different terms to those of Belot. However, Durkheim never hesitated to affirm that the moral ideal of contemporary western Europe was more humane than once it was (e.g. 1910b), but whether this was right for all mankind was a different matter. What is general is not in itself rational. Therefore, the moral ideal of his day could not be considered to be more rational than the ideal of other systems of morality because it was tending to become universal or was thought to be desirable for the whole of mankind.

But there is yet another issue which arises from the use of rationality within ethical behaviour. It is the contention that moral behaviour is rational when it is reflective, and therefore irrational when it is non-reflective.[5] This view attracted liberal-minded people

of Durkheim's day, such as Belot. Durkheim held that this was an example of ideal rationality, and he demanded to know on what rational grounds reflective morality was more rational than non-reflective morality. An example of the second was in action carried out in the name of duty – a subject we have already briefly considered. The position adopted by such thinkers as Belot, Durkheim argued, meant that in the last analysis very few actions could be labelled moral. He also doubted whether rational ethical behaviour in this sense was universal either with regard to time or culture. Of course, such behaviour existed, but it was the province of only a minority.

Moral art

Apart from providing knowledge about the present and the past, can science – can the sociology of morals – offer help and guidance about the future? In other words can scientific information lead to amelioration – can what is known help to establish what ought to be? These sorts of questions occupied a great deal of the attention of French moralists at the time, who supported or were challenged by a positivist approach to morality. Even today within the realm of sociology the issues are no nearer a solution. There were and are two extreme positions to adopt. One is to maintain a rigid line of demarcation between the 'is' and the 'ought' and to state that at no point can there be a movement from one to the other. The two remain in watertight compartments. Science can never determine ends of individual or social behaviour and until these are declared by philosophers, religious leaders or the state, scientific knowledge about morality must remain unto itself. Over and against what might be called this thoroughgoing rationalism, stands a positivism which maintains that science has an immediate application to the future because such an approach to morality can reveal the ends to which social and individual conduct ought to be directed. Even in its early days therefore science is an immediate handmaid to society. Between these two extremes stand both Lévy-Bruhl and Émile Durkheim who, rejecting the validity or immediate usefulness of traditional ethics, wanted to see the findings of the sociology of morals applied to the moral problems of society (see Karady

1970:99ff.). In this sense they were utilitarian. Durkheim argued that true knowledge cannot close in on itself and must serve future human activity; therein lies its essential destination (see preface to 1893b).

Critics have pointed to Durkheim's earlier works, such as *The Division of Labour* (1893b) and *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895a), as indicating his attachment to a form of positivism that has just been mentioned. In these works there is considerable attention to the concepts of normal and abnormal in social conduct which would seem to be derived from scientific analysis. Without pursuing the arguments of this longstanding controversy, suffice it to say that such concepts refer to the past and the present of a society and do not relate to the future or to the problem of how science can be applied practically to social issues. Although Durkheim wanted science to have a full part in the study of morality, he set his face against a complete dominance or takeover by science. Science has its limitations and nowhere more so than in the area of values. The sociology of morals may well be able to account for changes and perhaps even the origins of values but it can do no more. It cannot formulate moral beliefs and invent values. A science can determine the goal or end of a particular moral system of the past or present and it is concerned with ends in a way that engineering and medicine are not (1920a). But when it comes to demonstrating new ends a society should pursue, or the adoption of new moral rules, science is forced to remain silent.

Bayet, in *La Morale scientifique*, stated that if ethics were to become a science of moral facts, it could inform man about the technical means whereby he could obtain moral ends. Man is indeed a social creature: he receives pleasure in being involved in a common life. If morality leads to sociability, it has to be admitted that morality will be based on such pleasure. And if life as it occurs in society imposes constraints in the name of duty, it is because society is imperfect. Hence the task of the sociology of morals has as its practical outcome ways of eliminating what is imperfect, that is the abolition of duty (1906a(11); see also Richard 1925a). Not surprisingly, Durkheim strongly opposed such reasoning as being a false application of sociology. There was in what Bayet and others like him were saying a confusion between moral truth and technique: they had nothing in common. Technique is something only known to the natural scientist. The notion of duty, which is at the

base of morality, is not in the province of the engineer or the scientist.

In order to escape possible attacks by those of a positivist outlook and of certain rationalists, Durkheim chose art, moral art, as the area in which the findings of the sociology of morals could be legitimately applied to problems of future human behaviour.

It seems certain that Durkheim was not original in his use of the concept of moral art. He may well have seen the value of the idea from reading Lévy-Bruhl's book, mentioned earlier, where the possibility of applying the results of *la science des moeurs* within the area of what he called *l'art moral rationnel* (rational moral art) was one of the main themes (see Durkheim's review, 1904a(5)). Lévy-Bruhl held that like all sciences, the sociological study of morals could have application in dealing with practical problems. It stood in relation to rational moral art as biology and physics stood in relation to medicine and engineering. Lévy-Bruhl's rejection of *la morale théorique* to be substituted by *la science des moeurs* coupled with *l'art moral rationnel* gave rise to various kinds of attack that might be anticipated about the eternal issue of ends and means (see Bayet 1905; Belot 1905-6, 1907; Cantecor 1904; Fauconnet 1904; Fouillée 1905; Landry 1906; etc.).

Durkheim was given to arguing the case for the legitimacy of moral art on grounds of expediency. Science moves slowly. It is hoped that one day it will provide answers to many problems, but in the meantime man cannot wait for the answers to be produced. He has to face practical issues and make decisions. Hence the time comes when he must leave the realm of science and enter that of faith or art and so anticipate the future as best he can. This kind of movement applies as much to morality as it does to medicine (cf. Lévy-Bruhl). The moralist is thus forced to make the best judgments he can using such scientific knowledge as is available but realizing its limitations (1906a(11)). (The same order of reasoning is behind Durkheim's concept of educational theory (*pédagogie*) which is a combination of science and art. See Introduction on Education.) Art has to abandon the real since it is concerned with the future it seeks to anticipate. As with so many terms Durkheim uses, the word art is employed in various senses, even in a derogatory way (see Introduction on Education). Durkheim visualizes art based on imagination and not bounded by the limits of reason, as in the visual arts. However, moral art – and it would seem he

would accept the term rational moral art (1904a(5)) – is, as he says in his 'Introduction to ethics', never without bounds, for it always has to presuppose the science of morals and this it cannot contradict. Similarly, science must be true to itself and maintain self-imposed boundaries. In the case of morality the 'ought' of the future is excluded from its concern.

Durkheim did not speculate about the extent to which moral art could in fact modify conduct. It is probable that he was in sympathy with Lévy-Bruhl who claimed for rational moral art only very limited changes, largely because the science on which it depended was itself in its infancy (1903:205). This cannot be said of biology in the help that it gives to medicine.

A change in Durkheim's thought?

It has long been the contention of commentators on Durkheim that his thought underwent significant changes in the course of its development (see, for example, Davy 1920:102-6; Parsons 1937: 441-50). We confine our attention strictly to the realm of morals and ethics. The material that has been translated does not prompt comment on Wallwork's contention that a complicated change in Durkheim's approach to morals occurred around 1893, when there was a move from ethical naturalism to a position in which society was seen as the goal of moral behaviour (1972:ch.VI). Rather, the argument which will be considered briefly might be stated along the following lines. In the early years – years associated with the publication of *De la Division du travail social* (1893b) and *Les Regles* (1895a) and for a short time afterwards – Durkheim visualized morality very much in terms of obligation, of rules, of discipline, of ends centred on society. Here morality could be easily recognized and its reality instantly agreed on. Certainly by the time he died a change appears to have occurred and he saw the key to the understanding of morality to be located in ideals and beliefs, about society and man, which underlay the moral superstructure. The 'Introduction' stands as an important piece of evidence in supporting or challenging such a transformation. Mauss and Davy held that the intended book, *La Morale*, pointed to a radical recasting of Durkheim's approach to morality. And Lukes

has said that in the 'Introduction' Durkheim took a further step in connecting the sociology of morality with the sociology of knowledge (1972:420). 'The moral idea is always strictly dependent upon the conception that men have of themselves and their place in the universe' (1920a). On the other hand, Mark Traugott has taken a position which would deny any serious change. He has recently written: 'I find nothing new in the outline of the book's prospective contents which represents a significant departure from the arguments Durkheim had made many times before' (1978:257 n.36).

Since no one knows the contents of the chapters of the long book Durkheim planned, it seems pointless to base arguments on such tentative data as chapter headings alone. As Lukes suggests, attention must be focused on the evidence of the 'Introduction' not on notes Durkheim appended to its conclusion.

Part of Lukes's case rests on the distinction he held Durkheim made in the 'Introduction', which was something new – a distinction between *morale* and *moeurs* 'which amounted to that between ideals, values and norms, on the one hand, and practices, or rule-governed behaviour, on the other' (1972:420). It is undeniably true that Durkheim does make a contrast between these terms, emphasized in a footnote where he writes: 'Opposition between *moeurs* and *morale*' (see note 15, English translation of 1920a, on p. 96). The reason for this can be seen in the second half of the 'Introduction' where Durkheim argues that although man lives by what he believes are moral truths, he does not understand their real nature. In dealing with the world in any of its dimensions, or in trying to understand his experience, man has made full use of *représentations*, by which data are portrayed, understood and accepted. Durkheim used by way of illustration man's thinking about the sun. He observed that man all down the ages had *représentations* of the sun. But these *représentations* are different from those the scientist uses to portray it. He employs other concepts and reaches his conclusions about the sun by different methods from those used by the man in the street. The scientist knows what the sun is – its reality – in a way the layman does not. Scientific inquiry starts with ignorance, of not knowing precisely the nature of the phenomena being studied, and in the case of morals, not knowing how moral ideas or moral behaviour are to be recognized or distinguished. There is no self-evident truth about morality, as indeed there is no self-evident truth in science. External

signs are used in the beginning of a study which reveal or indicate the reality which the scientist attempts to explain. Later, the outward signs are replaced by others, and when these are mastered it is possible to know the innermost characteristics of the reality. Nevertheless, Durkheim holds that certain characteristics can be stated initially, and in the realm of moral behaviour and moral ideals such characteristics are: every morality has an ideal, embedded in its institutions and traditions; moral ideals change; acts are directed by moral rules; morality as part of behaviour is concerned with ends; morality is part of a natural order; and so on. In the world of morality such arguments lead to the conclusion that the *representations* which the common man has of morality are not adequate to gain a comprehensive understanding of moral behaviour. Thus, the scientific approach uses *representations* and concepts that the common practitioner will not himself employ or know about. The actual morality that men indulge in is a reflection – a manifestation – and a poor one at that, of moral ideals (*morale*). Durkheim writes: 'It seems clear that the morality (*morale*) obtaining in a particular epoch is embodied in social norms (*moeurs*) though in a degraded form and reduced to the level of human mediocrity' (1920a). Man's motives are always mixed, including what is noble and vulgar. *Moeurs* therefore can be seen as *la morale vulgaire* – a term not actually used by Durkheim, but not unknown amongst moralists, and it certainly seems to fit what he is saying at this point. *Moeurs* is thus the area of everyday ethics, of norms which are the average way of applying the rules of morality (see Mauss 1925:9). *Morale* covers moral precepts 'in all their purity and impersonality' (1920a). It is morality *per se*, ideal morality above human misuse. These two well-defined areas within moral life give rise to two sciences. They are called *la science ou physique des moeurs* (the science of natural philosophy of social norms) and *la science morale* (the science of morality) or *la science des faits moraux* (the science of moral facts). These two disciplines would roughly correspond to descriptive ethics and to theoretical ethics, metaethics, mentioned earlier.

The two sciences stand side by side, not in a mutual relation, but in a hierarchical one, the nature of which is not altogether clear. But there seems no doubt that Durkheim sees the science of morality as a theoretical science over and against the phenomenal science or descriptive science of *moeurs*. He argues that for each

area of social life, family, law, religion, specific moral issues are raised which have to be dealt with on their own, that is within the area of *moeurs.* Thus there emerges as it were a number of sciences of the moral life. However, the overall science, the pure or theoretical science, is not determined by a synthesis of the moralities of these specific areas. They tell us nothing about the fundamental nature of what moral life is. Quite clearly the science of morality (*morale*) has to use and above all integrate 'the science of areas of moral life'.

How far are these ideas new in Durkheim's approach to the study of moral life? Before that question is answered it is worthwhile to rehearse what has not changed. First, the starting point is that moral reality exists both in terms of the area of *moeurs* and that of *morale* – norms as well as ideals exist outside the individual observer. Second, the necessity is reiterated that to begin a discipline one must point to a number of assumptions and in the realm of morals these relate to the notions of obligation and duty. Third, and very strongly sustained, is the contention that the scientific method, as Durkheim sees it, is the only valid method. There is not the slightest hint that any reliance should be made on intuition, on metaphysics, or religion. Whether it is in fact possible to have a science of morality as Durkheim defined it is a different matter. Durkheim thought that it was. A matter which is less clear is the role of *la science des moeurs.* Has its importance been played down? Durkheim lectured on the subject frequently throughout his academic life (cf. 1950a) and it is not likely that he would now write it off as being of little or no value. It still has a valid place in his scheme and in the 'Introduction' he admitted that only relatively few people are working in the subject. He declared that he was planning to write the book on the science of morality, not on the science of social norms, and it would appear that he evaluates the former discipline as being more abstract and general than the latter, and in this way perhaps more important.

What one sees in the 'Introduction' is certainly no denial of a past position or the casting off of a former method. What is evident is a shift of focus from one area of study to another that is closely associated with it. Such a shift is parallel, it might be argued, with a change in his thinking about the nature of science and scientific procedure. Surely what he wanted to do in the book he was planning was to *pursue* the *science* of the moral life at a deeper level –

at a more theoretical level. The search was for scientific statements which would be more abstract and general and which would contain more information than those derived from sciences whose subject area was narrower. It might also be argued that just before the First World War Durkheim saw that sociology had made sufficient progress to be in a position to tackle more abstract areas and per-haps to contribute to knowledge which might in some cases be thought to border on the ultimate.[6] One should also recall in this respect his classic work, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, published in 1912, in which he dealt with religion and philosophical issues which bordered on the metaphysical and for which he was subsequently criticized. The change from the early article on religion, 'De la Définition des phénomènes religieux' (1899a(ii)), to that of the *Elementary Forms* shows a similar movement from his earlier works on morals, such as the *Division of Labour*, to the final 'Introduction to ethics'; that is, from a study of phenomena to a study of the essence of the phenomena themselves.

Durkheim's aims contained in the 'Introduction' give rise to a multitude of problems. For example, can one have a *science* of idealized morality so that the nature of the moral can be fully understood? Many would deny this. Gurvitch might see in Durkheim's aim but another example of what he pointed to in the earlier works of Durkheim, namely, that Durkheim was in fact not dealing with the sociology of *moeurs* but entering the field of metaethics (*métamorale*) concerned with the ultimate goal of moral action and belief (1937a). Posed in a slightly different way, what kinds of scientific procedure can be used to develop a science of morality? It seems difficult to suggest them. Again, the relation between the two areas *moeurs* and *morale* is problematic. How did the two emerge? And can the relation be understood by the mediation of society, so that society stands between the ideal and what is practised? If this is so, then Durkheim's concept of the role of society in morality would have to be changed. More puzzling still is Durkheim's equation of *la science de la morale* with *la science des faits moraux*. Are *les faits moraux* the same as those which are referred to in *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895a)? Might they be seen as the results of *la science des moeurs* which would make some contribution to *la science de la morale?*

Since we have, unfortunately, only the opening pages of the book Durkheim was so keen to write, it is idle to speculate how far he

would have forestalled such questions and criticisms had the book been finished. That which he hoped would make a contribution to the solution of moral problems must for ever remain hidden. Thus, while there are signs of a change of subject matter to which Durkheim wished to turn, the full extent of those changes and their consequences can never be known because of a lack of evidence.

A move of a different kind, which has not often been noted in his last works, is also associated with what we have suggested is a changed attitude to science. The point at issue is an elitism which surrounds the scientist. In the 'Introduction to ethics' he is seen as someone who stands above the rest of society as a somewhat superior being. By being able to use *representations* not known to people at large, he possesses knowledge by which he is able to grasp the *nature* of the reality of his subject matter in a way others cannot understand. He is thus an unassailable specialist. The scientist working in morality is no exception. He comprehends the nature of the moral actions of the layman in a way the layman is unable to understand himself. Also, the moralist within the realm of moral art is accorded a special place in society. He has assimilated the findings of the sociology of the moral life and is capable of applying it to the future. In this way he too stands above the layman by reason of his superior knowledge and perspicacity. He is like the educational theorist who has the potential for bringing about change. He is thus a reformer, an agent of amelioration, an 'engineer'. There are signs in what Durkheim says – no more than that that the 'moralist' is a manipulator of men with the power to bring about changes on which the layman is ignorant and over which he has little control. These ideas are not to be found in the earlier writings of Durkheim, though it might be possible to argue that they are present but hidden.

The neglected subject

It is remarkable that there is a dearth of classics in the sociology of morals. This is not the case in, say, the sociology of religion or criminal sociology. Morality is a field that has not attracted a large number of scholars devoted to sociology. Although French philosophers and sociologists continued to debate the scientific approach

to morality after Durkheim's death, the subject made little headway. Nor did those disciples of Durkheim who lived after him take up his great interest and supply the masterpiece on morality which still has to be written. Commentators from the 1920s onwards were pleased to write about his approach to moral science, often in a critical vein, but very little of a creative kind emerged. The lack of interest in the discipline is particularly the case amongst sociologists in the English-speaking world, especially since the Second World War (see Lukes 1972:432 n.19). The reason is something of an enigma. That modern western man has rejected much traditional morality and from time to time swum in the rivers of permissiveness is hardly an answer. Sociologists of religion in the face of the decline of institutional religion are numerous and active in research. Is it that the subject contains certain internal characteristics that make it difficult to study scientifically, as Durkheim himself suggested? One thing is certain: anyone who ventures into the sociology of morals will have to take the contributions of Durkheim very seriously, fragmentary though alas they are.

Notes

1 It can be well argued that Durkheim defined moral facts in different ways. See, for example, Henriot 1967:40ff.

2 For information about Richard, see Pickering 1975:343-59; and 1979.

3 Kant's influence on Durkheim is treated in detail in various parts of Wallwork 1972.

Parallels with Durkheim's two concepts of rationality can be seen in the thought of two English philosophers, Michael Oakeshott and Peter Winch. See Winch 1958:54ff.

5 See also Oakeshott and Winch on this problem in Winch 1958:62ff. Cf. in this Introduction the section 'Moral forces and moral facts'.

6 Cannot one detect this kind of change reflected in the launching by Durkheim in 1908 of Travaux de l'Année sociologique, when the time had come for his group to publish books rather than articles in the journal, *L'Année sociologue?* See Durkheim's editorial note in C. Bouglé, *Essais sur le régime des castes,* Alcan, Paris, 1908, which was the first book in the new series.

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