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The Division of Labor

[We] shall recognize only two kinds of positive solidarity which are distinguishable by the following qualities:

1. The first binds the individual directly to society without any intermediary. In the second, he depends upon society, because he depends upon the parts of which it is composed.
2. Society is not seen in the same aspect in the two cases. In the first, what we call society is a more or less organized totality of beliefs and sentiments common to all the members of the group: this is the collective type. On the other hand, the society in which we are solidary in the second instance is a system of different, special functions which definite relations unite. These two societies really make up only one. They are two aspects of one and the same reality, but none the less they must be distinguished.
3. From this second difference there arises another which helps us to characterize and name the two kinds of solidarity.

The first can be strong only if the ideas and tendencies common to all the members of the society are greater in number and intensity than those which pertain personally to each member. It is as much stronger as the excess is more considerable. But what makes our personality is how much of our own individual qualities we have, what distinguishes us from others. This solidarity can grow only in inverse ratio to personality. There are in each of us, as we have said, two consciences: one which is common to our group in its entirety, which, consequently, is not ourself, but society living and acting within us; the other, on the contrary, represents that in us which is personal and distinct, that which makes us an individual. [1] Solidarity which comes from likenesses is at its maximum when the collective conscience completely envelops our whole conscience and coincides in all points with it. But, at that moment, our individuality is nil. It can be born only if the community takes smaller toll of us. There are, here, two contrary forces, one centripetal, the other centrifugal, which cannot flourish at the same time. We cannot, at one and the same time, develop ourselves in two opposite senses. If we have a lively desire to think and act for ourselves, we cannot be strongly inclined to think and act as others do. If our ideal is to present a singular and personal appearance, we do not want to resemble everybody else. Moreover, at the moment when this solidarity exercises its force, our personality vanishes, as our definition permits us to say, for we are no longer ourselves, but the collective life.

The social molecules which can be coherent in this way can act together only in the measure that they have no actions of their own, as the molecules of inorganic bodies. That is why we propose to call this type of solidarity mechanical. The term does not signify that it is produced by mechanical and artificial means. We call it that only by analogy to the cohesion which unites the elements of an inanimate body, as opposed to that which makes a unity out of the elements of a living body. What justifies this term is that the link which thus unites the individual to society is wholly analogous to that which attaches a thing to a person. The individual conscience, considered in this light, is a simple dependent upon the collective type and follows all of its movements, as the possessed object follows those of its owner. In societies where this type of solidarity is highly developed, the individual does not appear, as we shall see later. Individuality is something which the society possesses. Thus, in these social types, personal rights are not

yet distinguished from real rights.

It is quite otherwise with the solidarity which the division of labor produces. Whereas the previous type implies that individuals resemble each other, this type presumes their difference. The first is possible only in so far as the individual personality is absorbed into the collective personality; the second is possible only if each one has a sphere of action which is peculiar to him; that is, a personality. It is necessary, then, that the collective conscience leave open a part of the individual conscience in order that special functions may be established there, functions which it cannot regulate. The more this region is extended, the stronger is the cohesion which results from this solidarity. In effect, on the one hand, each one depends as much more strictly on society as labor is more divided; and, on the other, the activity of each is as much more personal as it is more specialized. Doubtless, as circumscribed as it is, it is never completely original. Even in the exercise of our occupation, we conform to usages, to practices which are common to our whole professional brotherhood. But, even in this instance, the yoke that we submit to is much less heavy than when society completely controls us, and it leaves much more place open for the free play of our initiative. Here, then, the individuality of all grows at the same time as that of its parts. Society becomes more capable of collective movement, at the same time that each of its elements has more freedom of movement. This solidarity resembles that which we observe among the higher animals. Each organ, in effect, has its special physiognomy, its autonomy. And, moreover, the unity of the organism is as great as the individuation of the parts is more marked. Because of this analogy, we propose to call the solidarity which is due to the division of labor, organic.

In determining the principal cause of the progress of the division of labor, we have at the same time determined the essential factor of what is called civilization.

Civilization is itself the necessary consequence of the changes which are produced in the volume and in the density of societies. If science, art, and economic activity develop it is in accordance with a necessity which is imposed upon men. It is because there is, for them, no other way of living in the new conditions in which they have been placed. From the time that the number of individuals among whom social relations are established begins to increase, they can maintain themselves only by greater specialization, harder work, and intensification of their faculties. From this general stimulation, there inevitably results a much higher degree of culture. From this point of view, civilization appears, not as an end which moves people by its attraction for them, not as a good foreseen and desired in advance, of which they seek to assure themselves the largest possible part, but as the effect of a cause, as the necessary resultant of a given state. It is not the pole towards which historic development is moving and to which men seek to get nearer in order to be happier or better, for neither happiness nor morality necessarily increases with the intensity of life. They move because they must move, and what determines the speed of this march is the more or less strong pressure which they exercise upon one another, according to their number.

This does not mean that civilization has no use, but that it is not the services that it renders that make it progress. It develops because it cannot fail to develop. Once effectuated, this development is found to be generally useful, or, at least, it is utilized. It responds to needs formed at the same time because they depend upon the same causes. But this is an adjustment after the fact. Yet, we must notice that the good it renders in this direction is not a positive enrichment, a growth in our stock of happiness, but only repairs the losses that it has itself caused. It is because this superactivity of general life fatigues and weakens our nervous system that it needs reparations proportionate to its expenditures, that is to say, more varied and complex satisfactions. In that, we see even better how false it is to make civilization the function of the division of labor; it is only a consequence of it. It can explain neither the existence nor the progress of the division of labor, since it has, of itself, no intrinsic or absolute value, but, on the contrary, has a reason for existing only in so far as the division of labor is itself found necessary.

We shall not be astonished by the importance attached to the numerical factor if we notice the very capital role it plays in the history of organisms. In effect, what defines a living being is the double property it has of nourishing itself and reproducing itself, and reproduction is itself only a consequence of nourishment. Therefore, the intensity of

organic life is proportional, all things being equal, to the activity of nourishment, that is, to the number of elements that the organism is capable of incorporating. Hence, what has not only made possible, but even necessitated the appearance of complex organisms is that, under certain conditions, the more simple organisms remain grouped together in a way to form more voluminous aggregates. As the constitutive parts of the animal are more numerous, their relations are no longer the same, the conditions of social life are changed, and it is these changes which, in turn, determine both the division of labor, polymorphism, and the concentration of vital forces and their greater energy. The growth of organic substance is, then, the fact which dominates all zoological development. It is not surprising that social development is submitted to the same law.

Moreover, without recourse to arguments by analogy, it is easy to explain the fundamental role of this factor. All social life is made up of a system of facts which come from positive and durable relations established between a plurality of individuals. It is, thus, as much more intense as the reactions exchanged between the component units are themselves more frequent and more energetic. But, upon what does this frequency and this energy depend? Upon the nature of the elements present, upon their more or less great vitality? But . . . individuals are much more a product of common life than they are determinants of it. If from each of them we take away everything due to social action, the residue that we obtain, besides being pitiful, is not capable of presenting much variety. Without the diversity of social conditions upon which they depend, the differences which separate them would be inexplicable. It is not, then, in the unequal aptitudes of men that we must seek the cause for the unequal development of societies. Will it be the unequal duration of these relations? But time, by itself, produces nothing. It is only necessary in bringing latent energies to light. There remains no other variable factor than the number of individuals in relation and their material and moral proximity, that is to say, the volume and density of society. The more numerous they are and the more they act upon one another, the more they react with force and rapidity; consequently, the more intense social life becomes. But it is this intensification which constitutes civilization. [2]

But, while being an effect of necessary causes, civilization can become an end, an object of desire, in short, an ideal. Indeed, at each moment of a society's history, there is a certain intensity of the collective life which is normal, given the number and distribution of the social units. Assuredly, if everything happens normally, this state will be realized of itself, but we cannot bring it to pass that things will happen normally. If health is in nature, so is sickness. Health is, indeed, in societies as in individual organisms, only an ideal type which is nowhere entirely realized. Each healthy individual has more or less numerous traits of it, but there is none that unites them all. Thus, it is an end worthy of pursuit to seek to bring society to this degree of perfection.

Moreover, the direction to follow in order to attain this end can be laid out. If, instead of letting causes engender their effects by chance and according to the energy in them, thought intervenes to direct the course, it can spare men many painful efforts. The development of the individual reproduces that of the species in abridged fashion; he does not pass through all the stages that it passed through; there are some he omits and others he passes through more quickly because the experiences of the race help him to accelerate them. But thought can produce analogous results, for it is equally a utilization of anterior experience, with a view to facilitating future experience. By thought, moreover, one must not understand exclusively scientific knowledge of means and ends. Sociology, in its present state, is hardly in a position to lead us efficaciously to the solution of these practical problems. But beyond these clear representations in the milieu in which the scholar moves, there are obscure ones to which tendencies are linked. For need to stimulate the will, it is not necessary that it be clarified by science. Obscure gropings are enough to teach men that there is something lacking, to awaken their aspirations and at the same time make them feel in what direction they ought to bend their efforts.

Hence, a mechanistic conception of society does not preclude ideals, and it is wrong to reproach it with reducing man to the status of an inactive witness of his own history. What is an ideal, really, if not an anticipated representation of a desired result whose realization is possible only thanks to this very anticipation? Because things happen in accordance with laws, it does not follow that we have nothing to do. We shall perhaps find such an objective mean, because, in sum, it is only a question of living in a state of health. But this is to forget that, for the

cultivated man, health consists in regularly satisfying his most elevated needs as well as others, for the first are no less firmly rooted in his nature than the second. It is true that such an ideal is near, that the horizons it opens before us have nothing unlimited about them. In any event, it cannot consist in exalting the forces of society beyond measure, but only in developing them to the limit marked by the definite state of the social milieu. All excess is bad as well as all insufficiency. But what other ideal can we propose? To seek to realize a civilization superior to that demanded by the nature of surrounding conditions is to desire to turn illness loose in the very society of which we are part, for it is not possible to increase collective activity beyond the degree determined by the state of the social organism without compromising health. In fact, in every epoch there is a certain refinement of civilization whose sickly character is attested by the uneasiness and restlessness which accompanies it. But there is never anything desirable about sickness.

But if the ideal is always definite, it is never definitive. Since progress is a consequence of changes in the social milieu, there is no reason for supposing that it must ever end. For it to have a limit, it would be necessary for the milieu to become stationary at some given moment. But such a hypothesis is contrary to the most legitimate inductions. As long as there are distinct societies, the number of social units will necessarily be variable in each of them. Even supposing that the number of births ever becomes constant, there will always be movements of population from one country to another, through violent conquests or slow and unobtrusive infiltrations. Indeed, it is impossible for the strongest peoples not to tend to incorporate the feeblest, as the most dense overflow into the least dense. That is a mechanical law of social equilibrium not less necessary than that which governs the equilibrium of liquids. For it to be otherwise, it would be necessary for all human societies to have the same vital energy and the same density. What is irreparable would only be so because of the diversity of habitats.

It is true that this source of variations would be exhausted if all humanity formed one and the same society. But, besides our not knowing whether such an ideal is realizable, in order for progress to cease it would still be necessary for the relations between social units in the interior of this gigantic society to be themselves recalcitrant to all change. It would be necessary for them always to remain distributed in the same way, for not only the total aggregate but also each of the elementary aggregates of which it would be formed, to keep the same dimensions. But such a uniformity is impossible, solely because these partial groups do not all have the same extent nor the same vitality. Population cannot be concentrated in the same way at all points; it is inevitable that the greatest centres, those where life is most intense, exercise an attraction for the others proportionate to their importance. The migrations which are thus produced result in further concentrating social units in certain regions, and, consequently, in determining new advances there which irradiate little by little from the homes in which they were born into the rest of the country. Moreover, these changes call forth others, without it being possible to say where the repercussions stop. In fact, far from societies approaching a stationary position in proportion to their development, they become, on the contrary, more mobile and more plastic.

With societies, individuals are transformed in accordance with the changes produced in the number of social units and their relations.

First, they are made more and more free of the yoke of the organism. An animal is almost completely under the influence of his physical environment; its biological constitution predetermines its existence. Man, on the contrary, is dependent upon social causes. Of course, animals also form societies, but, as they are very restricted, collective life is very simple. They are also stationary because the equilibrium of such small societies is necessarily stable. For these two reasons, it easily fixes itself in the organism. It not only has its roots in the organism, but it is entirely enveloped in it to such a point that it loses its own characteristics. It functions through a system of instincts, of reflexes which are not essentially distinct from those which assure the functioning of organic life. They present, it is true, the particular characteristic of adapting the individual to the social environment, not to the physical environment, and are caused by occurrences of the common life. They are not of different nature, however, from those which, in certain cases, determine without any previous education the necessary movements in locomotion. It is

quite otherwise with man, because the societies he forms are much vaster. Even the smallest we know of are more extensive than the majority of animal societies. Being more complex, they also change more, and these two causes together see to it that social life with man is not congealed in a biological form. Even where it is most simple, it clings to its specificity. There are always beliefs and practices common to men which are not inscribed in their tissues. But this character is more manifest as the social mass and density grow. The more people there are in association, and the more they react upon one another, the more also does the product of these reactions pass beyond the bounds of the organism. Man thus finds himself placed under the sway of causes *sui generis* whose relative part in the constitution of human nature becomes ever more considerable.

Moreover, the influence of this factor increases not only in relative value, but also in absolute value. The same cause which increases the importance of the collective environment weakens the organic environment in such a manner as to make it accessible to the action of social causes and to subordinate it to them. Because there are more individuals living together, common life is richer and more varied, but for this variety to be possible, the organic type must be less definite to be able to diversify itself. We have seen, in effect, that the tendencies and aptitudes transmitted by heredity became ever more general and more indeterminate, more refractory consequently, to assuming the form of instincts. Thus, a phenomenon is produced which is exactly the inverse of that which we observe at the beginning of evolution. With animals, the organism assimilates social facts to it, and, stripping them of their special nature, transforms them into biological facts. Social life is materialized. In man, on the contrary, and particularly in higher societies, social causes substitute themselves for organic causes. The organism is spiritualized.

The individual is transformed in accordance with this change in dependence. Since this activity which calls forth the special action of social causes cannot be fixed in the organism, a new life, also *sui generis*, is superimposed upon that of the body. Freer, more complex, more independent of the organs which support it, its distinguishing characteristics become ever more apparent as it progresses and becomes solid. From this description we can recognize the essential traits of psychic life. To be sure, it would be exaggerating to say that psychic life begins only with societies, but certainly it becomes extensive only as societies develop. That is why, as has often been remarked, the progress of conscience is in inverse ratio to that of instinct. Whatever may be said of them, it is not the first which breaks up the second. Instinct, the product of the accumulated experience of generations, has a much greater resistive force to dissolution simply because it becomes conscious. Truly, conscience only invades the ground which instinct has ceased to occupy, or where instinct cannot be established. Conscience does not make instinct recede; it only fills the space instinct leaves free. Moreover, if instinct regresses rather than extends as general life extends, the greater importance of the social factor is the cause of this. Hence, the great difference which separates man from animals, that is, the greater development of his psychic life, comes from his greater sociability. To understand why psychic functions have been carried, from the very beginnings of the human species, to a degree of perfection unknown among animal species, one would first have to know why it is that men, instead of living in solitude or in small bands, were led to form more extensive societies. To put it in terms of the classical definition, if man is a reasonable animal, that is because he is a sociable animal, or at least infinitely more sociable than other animals. [3]

This is not all. In so far as societies do not reach certain dimensions nor a certain degree of concentration, the only psychic life which may be truly developed is that which is common to all the members of the group, which is found identical in each. But, as societies become more vast and, particularly, more condensed, a psychic life of a new sort appears. Individual diversities, at first lost and confused amidst the mass of social likenesses, become disengaged, become conspicuous, and multiply. A multitude of things which used to remain outside consciences because they did not affect the collective being become objects of representations. Whereas individuals used to act only by involving one another, except in cases where their conduct was determined by physical needs, each of them becomes a source of spontaneous activity. Particular personalities become constituted, take conscience of themselves. Moreover, this growth of psychic life in the individual does not obliterate the psychic life of society, but only transforms it. It becomes freer, more extensive, and as it has, after all, no other bases than individual consciences, these extend, become complex, and thus become flexible.

Hence, the cause which called forth the differences separating man from animals is also that which has forced him to elevate himself above himself. The ever growing distance between the savage and the civilized man has no other source. If the faculty of ideation is slowly disengaged from the confused feeling of its origin, if man has learned to formulate concepts and laws, if his spirit has embraced more and more extensive portions of space and time, if, not content with clinging to the past, he has trespassed upon the future, if his emotions and his tendencies, at first simple and not very numerous, have multiplied and diversified, that is because the social milieu has changed without interruption. In effect, unless these transformations were born from nothing, they can have had for causes only the corresponding transformations of surrounding milieu. But, man depends only upon three sorts of milieu: the organism, the external world, society. If one leaves aside the accidental variations due to combinations of heredity,--and their role in human progress is certainly not very considerable,--the organism is not automatically modified; it is necessary that it be impelled by some external cause. As for the physical world, since the beginning of history it has remained sensibly the same, at least if one does not take account of novelties which are of social origin. [4] Consequently, there is only society which has changed enough to be able to explain the parallel changes in individual nature.


It is not, then, audacious to affirm that, from now on, whatever progress is made in psycho-physiology will never represent more than a fraction of psychology, since the major part of psychic phenomena does not come from organic causes. This is what spiritualist philosophers have learned, and the great service that they have rendered science has been to combat the doctrines which reduce psychic life merely to an efflorescence of physical life. They have very justly felt that the first, in its highest manifestations, is much too free and complex to be merely a prolongation of the second. Because it is partly independent of the organism, however, it does not follow that it depends upon no natural cause, and that it must be put outside nature. But all these facts whose explanation we cannot find in the constitution of tissues derive from properties of the social milieu. This hypothesis assumes, at least, very great probability from what has preceded. But the social realm is not less natural than the organic realm. Consequently, because there is a vast region of conscience whose genesis is unintelligible through psycho-physiology alone, we must not conclude that it has been formed of itself and that it is, accordingly, refractory to scientific investigation, but only that it derives from some other positive science which can be called sociopsychology. The phenomena which would constitute its matter are, in effect, of a mixed nature. They have the same essential characters as other psychic facts, but they arise from social causes.

NOTES

1. However, these two consciences are not in regions geographically distinct from us, but penetrate from all sides.
2. We do not here have to look to see if the fact which determines the progress of the division of labor and civilization, growth in social mass and density, explains itself automatically; if it is an necessary product of efficient causes, or else an imagined means in view of a desired end or of a very great foreseen good. We content ourselves with stating this law of gravitation in the social world without going any farther. It does not seem, however, that there is a greater demand here than elsewhere for a teleological explanation. The walls which separate different parts of society are torn down by the force of things, through a sort of natural usury, whose effect can be further enforced by the action of violent causes. The movements of population thus become more numerous and rapid and the passage-lines through which these movements are effected--the means of communication--deepen. They are more particularly active at points where several of these lines cross; these are cities. Thus social density grows. As for the growth in volume, it is due to causes of the same kind. The barriers which separate peoples are analogous to those which separate the different cells of the same society and they disappear in the same way.
3. The definition of de Quatrefages which makes man a religious animal is a particular instance of the preceding, for man's religiosity is a consequence of his eminent sociability. See *supra*, pp. 168ff.

4. Transformations of the soil, of streams, through the art of husbandry, engineers, etc.



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