development with the idea he had of it, which does not differ much from that of the layman. Viewed from a distance, history does convey well enough this serial and simple aspect, appearing as a mere succession of individuals proceeding in the same direction because they have the same human nature. Since, moreover, it seems inconceivable to these writers that social evolution could possibly be anything but the development of some human idea, it appears quite natural to define it by the idea men form about it. Now, in proceeding thus, not only does one remain in the sphere of ideology but one assigns to sociology a concept which is not even truly sociological.

Spencer rejects this concept, but only to replace it by another which has the same faulty origin. With him societies, and not humanity, become the subject matter of science. However, in the definition he gives of society at the outset, the thing itself disappears, giving way to the preconception he has of it. He postulates as a self-evident proposition that "a society is formed only when, in addition to juxtaposition, there is co-operation"—that only by this combination does the union of individuals become a society in the strict sense of the world.[4] Then, starting from the idea that co-operation is the essence of social life, he distinguishes between two classes of societies according to the nature of the co-operation prevailing in them. "There is," he says, "a spontaneous co-operation which grows up without thought during the pursuit of private ends; and there is co-operation which, consciously devised, implies distinct recognition of common ends."[5] The former he terms "industrial"; the latter "military societies." This distinction is certainly the germinal idea of his sociology.

[4] H. Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology* (New York: D. Appleton & Co.), II, 244.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

But this initial definition defines as a thing that which is merely an idea. It is presented as the expression of an immediately observable fact since the definition is formulated at the outset as an axiom. However, mere inspection does not reveal that co-operation is the core of social life. Such an affirmation would be scientifically legitimate only after all the manifestations of collective existence had been reviewed, and it had been shown that they are all various forms of co-operation. So here again a certain conception of social reality is substituted for reality itself.[6] What is thus defined is clearly not society but Spencer's idea of it. And he has no scruples in proceeding thus, because for him, also, society is and can be only the embodiment of an idea, namely, this very idea of co-operation by which he defines it.[7] It would be easy to show that, in each of the particular problems he treats, his method remains the same. Thus, although he claims to proceed empirically, the facts accumulated in his sociology seem to function principally as arguments, since they are employed to illustrate analyses of concepts rather than to describe and explain things. Actually, all the essential points of his doctrines are capable of direct deduction from his definition of society and the different forms of co-operation. For, if our only choice is between a tyrannically imposed co-operation and a free and spontaneous one, the latter is only too evidently the ideal toward which humanity does and ought to tend.

[6] A conception, moreover, subject to controversy. (See *Division du travail social*, II, 2, 4.)

[7] "Co-operation, then, is at once that which cannot exist without a society, and that for which a society exists" (*op. cit.*, II, 244).

These lay notions are to be found not only in the basic principles of the science but also constantly in the course of the arguments. In the present state of knowledge, we cannot be certain of the exact nature of the state, of sovereignty, political liberty, democracy, socialism, communism, etc. Our method should, then, require our avoidance of all use of these concepts so long as they have not been scientifically established. And yet the words which express them recur constantly in the discussions of sociologists. They are freely employed with great assurance, as though they corresponded to things well known and precisely defined, whereas they awaken in us nothing but confused ideas, a tangle of vague impressions, prejudices, and emotions. We ridicule today the strange polemics built up by the doctors of the Middle Ages upon the basis of their concept of cold, warm, humid, dry, etc.; and we do not realize that we continue to apply that same method to that very order of phenomena which, because of its extreme complexity, admits of it less than any other.

In the special branches of sociology this ideological character is even more pronounced, especially in the case of ethics. One may, indeed, say that there is not a single system of ethics which has not developed from an initial idea in which its entire development was contained implicitly. Some believe that man possesses that idea at birth. Others, on the contrary, believe that it evolves more or less slowly in the course of history. But for all empiricists as well as for rationalists, this idea is the sole true datum in ethics. As for the details of legal and moral laws, it is affirmed that they have, as it were, no existence in their own right but are merely applications of this fundamental notion to the particular circumstances of life, varied somewhat to suit the different

cases. Accordingly, the subject matter of the science of ethics cannot be this system of precepts which has no reality, but must be the idea from which the precepts are derived and of which they are only diverse applications. Furthermore, all the problems ordinarily raised in ethics refer not to things but to ideas. Moralists think it necessary to determine with precision the essence of the ideas of law and ethics, and not the nature of ethics and law. They have not yet arrived at the very simple truth that, as our ideas (*représentations*) of physical things are derived from these things themselves and express them more or less exactly, so our idea of ethics must be derived from the observable manifestation of the rules that are functioning under our eyes, rules that reproduce them in systematic form. Consequently, these rules, and not our superficial idea of them, are actually the subject matter of science, just as actual physical bodies, and not the layman's idea of them, constitute the subject matter of physics. Therefore, it is only the superstructure of ethics, viz., its prolongations and echoes in the individual consciousness, that becomes the basis of the ethical systems of these writers. And this method is applied not only to the most general problems of this science but likewise to special questions. From the fundamental ethical concepts which are treated first, the moralist proceeds to the derived ideas of family, country, responsibility, charity, and justice; and it is always with ideas that his reflection is concerned.

In political economy the same situation exists. Its subject matter, says John Stuart Mill, consists of those social facts the goal of which, principally or exclusively, is the acquisition of wealth.[8] But in order to be able to relate the

[8] *System of Logic*, III, 496.

facts thus defined as things, to the observation of the scholar, it would, at the very least, be necessary to indicate by what criteria the facts satisfying this condition are to be recognized. Now, when a science is in its infancy, we do not have the right to affirm the existence of such facts, to say nothing of asserting the possibility of their identification. Indeed, in every branch of research, it is possible to establish that facts have a meaning, and what the meaning is, only when the explanation of the facts is sufficiently advanced. There is no problem more complex or less likely to be solved on the first attempt. Nothing, then, assures us in advance of the existence of a sphere of social activity wherein the desire for wealth really plays such a preponderant role. Consequently, the subject matter of economics, so defined, comprises not the realities given to immediate observation but merely conjectures that are the product of pure intellect. They are "facts" imagined by the economist as being related to the above-mentioned end, and they are facts to the extent that he recognizes them as facts. For example, when he undertakes the study of what he calls "production," he thinks he can straightway enumerate and review the principal agents of that process. He does not, then, determine them by observing the conditions upon which the thing he was studying depends, for then he would have begun by a description of his observations from which he drew his conclusion. If, from the beginning of his research and in a few words, he proceeds to this classification, it is because he has obtained it by a simple, logical analysis. He starts from the idea of production; in analyzing it, he finds that it implies logically the ideas of natural forces, of work, and of tools or

capital, and he likewise treats in their turn these derivative ideas.[9]

The most fundamental of all economic theories, that of value, is manifestly constructed according to this same method. If value had been studied as any fact of reality ought to be studied, the economist would indicate, first of all, by what characteristics one might recognize the thing so designated, then classify its varieties, investigate by methodical inductions what the causes of its variations are, and finally compare these various results in order to abstract a general formula. Theory would be introduced only when science had reached a sufficient stage of advancement. On the contrary, it is introduced at the very outset. In order to construct economic theory, the economist is content to meditate and to focus his attention on his own idea of value, that is, as an object capable of being exchanged; he finds therein the idea of utility, scarcity, etc., and with these products of his analysis he constructs his definition. To be sure, he confirms it by several examples. But, considering the innumerable facts such a theory must account for, how can one grant even the slightest validity to the necessarily limited number of facts thus cited at random?

Thus, the actual contribution of scientific investigation to economics and ethics is very limited, while that of art is preponderant. Ethical theory is limited merely to a few discussions on the idea of duty, the good and right. And even these abstract speculations do not constitute a science,

[9] The ideological nature of economics is implied even in the expressions used by economists. The question is always one of the concept of utility, savings, investment, expenditure. (See Gide, *Principes d'économie politique*, Book III, chap. i, § i; chap. ii, § i; chap. iii, § i.)

strictly speaking, since their object is the determination not of that which is, in fact, the supreme rule of morality but of what it ought to be. Similarly, economists are today principally occupied with the problem of whether society *ought to* be organized on an individualistic or socialistic basis, whether it is *better* that the state should intervene in industrial and commercial relations, or whether it is *better* to abandon them to private initiative; whether one ought to use a single monetary standard, or a bimetallic system, etc. It contains few laws in the proper sense of the word; even what are commonly called "laws" are generally unworthy of this designation since they are merely maxims for action, or practical precepts in disguise. The famous law of supply and demand, for example, has never been inductively established, as should be the case with a law referring to economic reality. No experiment or systematic comparison has ever been undertaken for the purpose of establishing that, *in fact*, economic relations *do* conform to this law. All that these economists could do, and actually did do, was to demonstrate by dialectics that, in order properly to promote their interests, individuals ought to proceed according to this law, and that every other line of action would be harmful to those who engage in it and would imply a serious error of judgment. It is fair and logical that the most productive industries should be the most attractive and that the holders of the products most in demand and most scarce should sell them at the highest prices. But this quite logical necessity resembles in no way the necessity that the true laws of nature present. The latter express the regulations according to which facts are really interconnected, not the way in which it is good that they should be interconnected.

What we say of this law may be repeated for all those that

orthodox economics designates as "natural" and which, moreover, are scarcely more than particular cases of it. They are natural, if one likes, in the sense that they enunciate the means which it is really or seemingly natural to employ in order to attain a certain hypothetical end, but they do not deserve this designation if natural law means an inductively determined way of behavior in nature. In brief, they are merely maxims of practical wisdom; and they have been more or less plausibly presented as the very expression of reality only because it was supposed, rightly or wrongly, that these counsels were indeed followed by the average man in the average case.

In spite of all these doctrines, social phenomena are things and ought to be treated as things. To demonstrate this proposition, it is unnecessary to philosophize on their nature and to discuss the analogies they present with the phenomena of lower realms of existence. It is sufficient to note that they are the unique data of the sociologist. All that is given, all that is subject to observation, has thereby the character of a thing. To treat phenomena as things is to treat them as data, and these constitute the point of departure of science. Now, social phenomena present this character incontestably. What is given is not the idea that men form of value, for that is inaccessible, but only the values established in the course of economic relations; not conceptions of the moral ideal, but the totality of rules which actually determine conduct; not the idea of utility or wealth, but all the details of economic organization. Even assuming the possibility that social life is merely the development of certain ideas, these ideas are nevertheless not immediately given. They cannot be perceived or known directly, but only through the phenomenal reality expressing them. We do not know

a priori whether ideas form the basis of the diverse currents of social life, nor what they are. Only after having traced these currents back to their sources shall we know whence they issue.

We must, therefore, consider social phenomena in themselves as distinct from the consciously formed representations of them in the mind; we must study them objectively as external things, for it is this character that they present to us. If this exteriority should prove to be only apparent, the advance of science will bring the disillusionment and we shall see our conception of social phenomena change, as it were, from the objective to the subjective. But in any case, the solution cannot be anticipated; and even if we finally arrive at the result that social phenomena do not possess all the intrinsic characteristics of the thing, we ought at first to treat them as if they had. This rule is applicable, then, to all social reality without exception. Even phenomena which give the strongest impression of being arbitrary arrangements ought to be thus considered. *The voluntary character of a practice or an institution should never be assumed beforehand.* Moreover, if we may introduce our personal observation, it has always been our experience that, when this procedure is followed, facts most arbitrary in appearance will come to present, after more attentive observation, qualities of consistency and regularity that are symptomatic of their objectivity.

The foregoing statements concerning the distinctive characteristics of the social fact give us sufficient assurance about the nature of this objectivity to prove that it is not illusory. Indeed, the most important characteristic of a "thing" is the impossibility of its modification by a simple effort of the will. Not that the thing is refractory to all

modification, but a mere act of the will is insufficient to produce a change in it; it requires a more or less strenuous effort due to the resistance which it offers, and, moreover, the effort is not always successful. We have already seen that social facts have this characteristic. Far from being a product of the will, they determine it from without; they are like molds in which our actions are inevitably shaped. This necessity is often inescapable. But even when we triumph over it, the opposition encountered signifies clearly to us the presence of something not depending upon ourselves. Thus, in considering social phenomena as things, we merely adjust our conceptions in conformity to their nature.

Clearly, the reform needed in sociology is at all points identical with that which has transformed psychology in the last thirty years. Just as Comte and Spencer declare that social facts are facts of nature, without, however, treating them as things, so the different empirical schools had long recognized the natural character of psychological phenomena, but continued to apply to them a purely ideological method. In fact, the empiricists, not less than their adversaries, proceeded exclusively by introspection. Now, the facts obtained thereby are too few in number, too fleeting and plastic, to be able to control and to correct the corresponding ideas fixed in us by habit. If they are not subjected to some other check, nothing counterbalances them; consequently, they take the place of facts and become the subject matter of science. Thus, neither Locke nor Condillac studied psychological phenomena objectively. They did not study sensation in itself but their particular idea of it. Therefore, although in certain respects they prepared the way for scientific psychology, its actual origin is to be dated much later, when it had finally been established that states

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

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,

[10] It 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 orginating 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!"[11]

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 transcendental 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-

[11] J. Darmesteter, *Les Prophètes d'Israël*, p. 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, manfestations 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.[12]

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

[12] 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 confuses 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 "élite," 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"[14] 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

[14] *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

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 antithetical to health; these are two varieties of the same phenomenon, 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, consequently, to be included in the definition of crime. What M. Garofalo 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 infinitesimal 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.[15] 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 second corollary in this case, everything changes. To decide whether a precept belongs to the moral order, we must determine 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

[15] See Lubbock, *Origin of Civilization*, chap. viii: It is a still more widespread, 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 fulfil 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,[16] 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

[16] 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.[17] 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.[18] 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