

more closely, without at the same time having a general feeling of social solidarity and fraternity? Thus socialism was exposed to communism; it undertook to play a role in it at the same time as it pursued its own course. In this sense it was actually the heir of communism; and, without being derived from it, socialism absorbed it while remaining distinct.

Soc., pp. 38-9, 42, 47-9, 50-2 and 74-7

8. Anomie and the moral structure of industry

THE PROBLEM OF ANOMIE

The totality of moral rules truly forms about each person an imaginary wall, at the foot of which the flood of human passions simply dies without being able to go further. For the same reason - that they are contained - it becomes possible to satisfy them. But if at any point this barrier weakens, these previously restrained human forces pour tumultuously through the open breach; once loosed they find no limits where they can stop. They can only devote themselves, without hope of satisfaction, to the pursuit of an end that always eludes them. For example, if the rules of the conjugal morality lose their authority, and the mutual obligations of husband and wife become less respected, the emotions and appetites ruled by this sector of morality will become unrestricted and uncontained, and accentuated by this very release; powerless to fulfil themselves because they have been freed from all limitations, these emotions will produce a disillusionment which manifests itself visibly in the statistics of suicide. In the same way, should the morality governing economic life be shaken, and the search for gain become excited and inflamed beyond bounds, then one would observe a rise in the annual quota of suicides. One could multiply such examples. Furthermore, it is because morality has the function of limiting and containing that too much wealth so easily becomes a source of immorality. Through the power wealth confers on us, it actually diminishes the power of things to oppose us. Consequently, it lends strength to our desires and makes it harder to hold them in check. Under such conditions, moral equilibrium is unstable: it requires but a slight blow to disrupt it. Thus, we can understand the nature and source of this malady of infiniteness which torments our age. For man to see before him boundless, free, and open space, he must have lost sight of the moral barrier which under normal conditions would cut off his view. He no longer feels

those moral forces that restrain him and limit his horizon. But if he no longer feels them it is because they no longer carry their normal degree of authority, because they are weakened and no longer as they should be. The notion of the infinite, then, appears only at those times when moral discipline has lost its ascendancy over wants; it is a sign of the attrition that occurs during periods when the moral system which has prevailed for centuries is shaken, and fails to respond to new conditions of human life, without any new system having yet been formed to replace that which has disappeared.

EM, 47-9

No living being can be happy, or even exist, unless his needs are adequately related to his means. In other words, if his needs require more than can be allocated to them, or even merely something of a different sort, they will be under continual friction and can only function painfully. Now an action which cannot be effected without suffering tends not to be reproduced. Unsatisfied tendencies atrophy, and as the impulse to live is merely the result of all other motivations, it is bound to weaken as the others lose their hold.

In the animal, at least in the normal state, this equilibrium is established with automatic spontaneity because the animal depends on purely material conditions. All the organism needs is that the supplies of substance and energy constantly employed in the process of living should be periodically renewed by equivalent quantities; that the replacement be equivalent to what is used up. When the gap created by the exigencies of life is filled, the animal, satisfied, asks nothing further. Its powers of thought are not sufficiently developed to imagine other ends than those implicit in its physical nature. Moreover, as the work demanded of each particular organ depends on the general state of vital energy and the needs of organic equilibrium, what is used up is in turn replaced and the balance is automatic. The limits of one are also those of the other; both are fundamental to the constitution of the existence in question, which cannot exceed them.

This is not the case with man, because most of his needs are not dependent on his body, or not to the same extent. Strictly speaking, we may consider that the quantity of material supplies necessary to the physical maintenance of a human life can be calculated, though this be less precise than in the preceding case, with a wider margin left for the free combinations of the will; for beyond the indispensable minimum which satisfies nature

when instinctive, a more developed intelligence creates a wider range of conditions and desired ends demanding fulfilment. Such appetites, however, admittedly sooner or later reach a limit which they cannot pass. But how can we specify the quantity of well-being, comfort or luxury legitimately to be desired by a human being? Nothing appears in man's organic nor in his psychological constitution which sets a limit to such tendencies. The functioning of individual life does not require them to cease at one point rather than at another; this is shown by the fact that they have constantly increased since the beginnings of history, becoming satisfied more and more, without any weakening of average health. Above all, how can we establish their proper variation with different conditions of life, occupations, relative importance of services, etc.? In no society are they equally developed at the different levels of the social hierarchy. Yet human nature is substantially the same among all men, in its essential qualities. It is not human nature which can assign the variable limit necessary to our needs. These are thus unlimited so far as they depend on the individual alone. Irrespective of any external regulatory force, our capacity for feeling is in itself an insatiable and bottomless abyss.

But if nothing external can restrain this capacity, it can only be a source of torment to itself. Unlimited desires are insatiable by definition and insatiability is rightly considered a sign of morbidity. Being unlimited, they constantly and infinitely surpass the means at their command; they cannot be quenched. Inextinguishable thirst is constantly renewed torture. It has been claimed, it is true, that human activity naturally aspires beyond assignable limits and sets itself unattainable goals. But how can such an indeterminate state be any more reconciled with the conditions of mental life than with the demands of physical life? All man's pleasure in acting, moving and exerting himself implies the sense that his efforts are not in vain and that by walking he advances. However, one does not advance when one proceeds toward no goal, or — which is the same thing — when the goal is in infinity. Since the distance between us and it is always the same, whatever road we take, it is just as if we have not moved. Even our feeling of pride looking back at the distance covered can only give a deceptive satisfaction, since the remaining distance is not proportionately reduced. To pursue a goal which is by definition unattainable is to condemn oneself to a state of perpetual unhappiness. Of course, a man may hope contrary to all reason, and hope has its pleasures even when irrational. It may sustain him

for a time; but it cannot indefinitely survive the repeated disappointments of experience. What more can the future offer him than the past, since he can never reach an acceptable position nor even approach the glimpsed ideal? Thus, the more one has, the more one wants, and satisfactions received only stimulate instead of filling needs. Shall action as such be considered pleasurable? First only on condition that we are blind to its uselessness. Secondly, for this pleasure to be felt and to temper and partly veil the disquiet and distress which goes with it, such unending motion must at least always be easy and unhampered. If it is frustrated, only restlessness is left, with the unhappiness which it brings in tow. Now it would be a miracle if no insurmountable obstacle were ever encountered. In this situation, one is held to life only by a very thin thread, which can be broken at any moment. To achieve any other result, the passions first must be limited. Only then can they be harmonised with capacities and satisfied. But since the individual has no way of limiting them, this must necessarily be accomplished by some force outside him. A regulative force must play the same role for moral needs which the organism plays for physical needs. This means that the force can only be moral.

Su, pp. 272-5

To [socialists] it appears that the way to realise social peace is to free economic appetites of all restraint on the one hand, and on the other to satisfy them by fulfilling them. But such an undertaking is contradictory. For these appetites cannot be appeased unless they are limited, and they cannot be limited except by something other than themselves. They cannot be regarded as the only purpose of society since they must be subordinated to some end which surpasses them, and it is only on this condition that they are capable of being really satisfied. Imagine the most productive economic organisation possible, and a distribution of wealth which assures abundance even for the most humble: perhaps such a transformation, at the very moment it was effected, would produce a measure of gratification. But this gratification could be no more than transitory. For although they may be temporarily assuaged, these demands will quickly make themselves felt again. Unless it is admitted that each individual should be equally compensated – and such levelling, if it conforms to the communist ideal, is completely opposed to the Saint-Simon doctrine, as to every socialist theory – there will always be some workers who will receive more and others less. So it is inevitable

that at the end of a short time, the latter find their share inadequate compared with what others receive, and as a result new demands arise, at all levels of the social scale. Moreover, quite apart from any feelings of envy, desires will tend naturally to keep outstripping their goals, for the very reason that there will be nothing before them which stops them. Thus new satisfactions will be demanded, even more imperiously, since those already secured will have given them more strength and vitality. This is why those at the very top of the hierarchy, who consequently would have nothing above them to stimulate their ambition, could nevertheless not be held at the point they had reached, but would continue to be plagued by the same restlessness that torments them today. What is needed if social order is to reign is that the mass of men be content with their lot. But what is needed for them to be content, is not that they have more or less but that they be convinced they have no right to more. And for this, it is absolutely essential that there be an authority whose superiority they acknowledge and which tells them what is right. For an individual committed only to the pressure of his needs will never admit he has reached the extreme limits of his rightful portion. If he is not conscious of a force above him which he respects, which stops him and tells him authoritatively he has received his just due, then inevitably he will expect everything his needs demand. And since in our hypothesis these needs are limitless, their demands are necessarily without limit. For it to be otherwise, a moral power is required whose superiority he recognises, and which cries out 'you must go no further'.

This is precisely the role played in ancient society by the powers whose progressive dethronement Saint-Simon notes. Religion instructed the humble to be content with their situation, and, at the same time it taught them that the social order is providential: that it is God himself who has determined each one's share. Religion gave men a perception of a world beyond this earth where everything would be rectified; this prospect made inequalities less noticeable, it stopped men from feeling aggrieved. Secular power, too, precisely because it held economic functions under its domination, contained and limited them. But even *a priori* it is impossible to suppose that, while for centuries it was in the nature of economic interests to be subordinated, in the future the roles will become completely reversed. This would be to admit that the nature of things could be completely transformed in the course of evolution. Undoubtedly one can be certain that this regulating function can no longer be fulfilled by the

old forces, since nothing appears likely to stop their decline. Undoubtedly, too, this same function could not be exercised today in the same manner or spirit as formerly. Industry is now more highly developed and more essential to the social organism; thus it can no longer be contained within the same narrow bounds, subjected to a system as heavily repressive, and regulated to such a subordinate position. But it does not follow that it should be freed of all regulation, liberated from all limitations.

The problem is to know, under the present conditions of social life, what moderating functions are necessary and what forces are capable of executing them.

Soc., pp. 290-3

The preceding has removed one of the most serious charges which has been made against the division of labour.

It has often been accused of degrading the individual by reducing him to a mere machine. And if he does not know what the significance is of the operations he is called upon to perform, if he relates them to no end, he must indeed become wedded to routine. Every day he repeats the same movements with monotonous regularity, without being interested in them and without understanding them. He is no longer a living cell of a living organism which unceasingly interacts with neighbouring cells, which influences them, responds to their actions, and transforms itself in relation to changing circumstances and needs. He is no longer anything but an inert cog in the machinery, set in motion by an external force, and always moving in the same direction and in the same way. Obviously, no matter how one may represent the moral ideal, one cannot remain indifferent to such a debasement of human nature. If morality has individual perfection as its goal, it cannot permit such a degradation of the individual, and if it has society as its goal, it cannot let the very source of social life be drained; for the evil does not threaten only economic functions, but all social functions, however elevated they may be...

As a remedy, it has sometimes been proposed that, in addition to technical and specialised training, workers should be given a general education. But even if we can thus relieve some of the deleterious effects attributed to the division of labour, this is not a way of preventing them. The division of labour does not change its nature because it has been preceded by a general education. No doubt, it is good for the worker to be interested in art, literature, etc.; but it is still wrong that he should be treated as a machine all day long. Who cannot see, moreover, that two such

forms of existence are too opposed to be reconciled, and cannot be followed by the same individual! If a man has become accustomed to vast horizons, total views, and fine abstractions, he cannot be confined within the strict limits of a specialised task without becoming frustrated. Such a remedy would make specialisation unobjectionable by making it intolerable and, consequently, more or less impossible.

What solves the contradiction is that, contrary to what is often said, the division of labour does not produce these consequences because of a necessity of its own nature, but only in exceptional and abnormal circumstances. In order for it to develop without having such a disastrous influence on the human mind, it is not necessary to temper it with its opposite. It is necessary and it is sufficient for it to be itself, for nothing to come from without to rob it of its specific character. For, normally, the role of each special function does not require that the individual close himself in, but that he keep himself in constant relations with neighbouring functions, take heed of their needs, of the changes which these needs undergo, etc. The division of labour presumes that the worker, far from being hemmed in by his task, does not lose sight of his collaborators, that he acts upon them and reacts to them. Then he is not a machine which repeats its actions without knowing their meaning, but he knows that they tend, in some way, towards an end that he can see fairly distinctly. He feels that he is of some use. For that, he need not embrace vast portions of the social horizon; it is sufficient that he perceive enough of it to understand that his actions have an aim beyond themselves. From that time on, as specialised and uniform as his activity may be, it is that of an intelligent being, for it has direction, and he knows it. The economists would not have allowed this intrinsic characteristic of the division of labour to remain obscured and consequently exposed to this unwarranted criticism, if they had not reduced it to being merely a means of increasing social productivity: if they had seen that it is above all a source of solidarity.

DTS, pp. 363 and 364-5

THE FORCED DIVISION OF LABOUR

It is not enough for there to be rules, however, for sometimes the rules themselves are what is at fault. That is what occurs in class wars. The institution of classes or of castes constitutes an organisation of the division of labour, and it is a strictly regulated

organisation; but it is often a source of conflict. The lower classes not being, or no longer being, satisfied with the rôle which is theirs by custom or law, aspire to functions which are closed to them and seek to dispossess those who are exercising them. Thus civil wars arise which are due to the manner in which labour is distributed.

Nothing comparable to this can be observed in the organism. No doubt, during periods of crisis, the different tissues war against one another and nourish themselves at the expense of others. But a cell or organ never seeks to usurp a rôle different from the one which it possesses. The reason for this is that each anatomical element automatically executes its purpose. Its structure and its place in the organism determines its task; its function is a consequence of its nature. It can acquit itself poorly, but it cannot assume another's task unless the latter abandons it, as happens in rare cases of substitution. . It is not so in societies. Here the possibility is greater: there is a wider gulf between the hereditary dispositions of the individual and the social functions he will fill. The first do not imply the second with such immediate necessity. The field which is thus open to striving and resolution is also subject to many factors which can make the individual nature deviate from its normal direction, and create a pathological condition. Because this organisation is more flexible, it is also more delicate and more open to change. No doubt we are not from birth predestined to some specific position; but we do have tastes and aptitudes which limit our choice. If no heed is given to them, and they are constantly contradicted by our daily occupation, we shall suffer and seek a way out of our suffering. Now there is no other way out than to change the established order and to set up a new one. For the division of labour to produce solidarity, it is not sufficient, then, for every individual to be given a task to perform; he has also to be suited to this task.

But this precondition is not realised in the example we are examining. If the institution of classes or castes sometimes gives rise to unfortunate frictions instead of producing solidarity, this is because the distribution of social functions on which it rests does not correspond, or rather no longer corresponds to the distribution of natural talents. . For wants to spread from one class to another, the differences which originally separated these classes must have diminished or disappeared. As a consequence of changes produced in society, some must have become capable of functions which were at first beyond them, while others have lost their original superiority. When the Plebeians aimed to dispute the

right to religious and administrative functions with the Patricians, it was not only in imitation of the latter, but because they had become more intelligent, richer, more numerous, and their tastes and ambitions had developed correspondingly. As a consequence of such changes, the correspondence between the aptitudes of individuals and the kind of activity assigned to them is broken in a whole large area of society; constraint alone, more or less violent and direct in character, ties them to their functions. Hence the solidarity which results is defective and strained.

This consequence is thus not a necessary characteristic of the division of labour. It comes about only under specific circumstances, that is, as the effect of external constraint. It is quite different when the division of labour is established in virtue of purely internal spontaneity, and where nothing hampers individual initiative. In this situation, harmony between individual natures and social functions is necessarily produced, at least in the majority of cases. For, if there is nothing which either unduly hinders or favours the chances of those competing for occupations, it is inevitable that only those who are most capable at each type of activity will move into it. The only factor which then determines the manner in which work is divided is the diversity of capacities; it comes about, inevitably, on the basis of aptitude, since this is the only determining element. Thus, the congruence between the constitution of each individual and his position is brought about of its own accord. It might be argued that this is still not enough to make men content, since there are some men whose aspirations outstrip their faculties. This is true, but these are exceptional and, one may say, morbid cases. Normally, man finds happiness in realising his nature; his needs are relative to his means. Thus, in the organism, each organ demands only as much food as it requires. The 'forced division of labour' is, then, the second abnormal type that we meet. But the meaning of the word 'forced' must not be misunderstood. Not every form of regulation is the same as constraint, since, as we have seen, the division of labour cannot operate without regulation. Even when functions are divided in accordance with pre-established rules, this is not necessarily the result of constraint. Such is the case even in a caste system, as long as it is founded in the nature of the society. This institution is never completely and wholly arbitrary. When it functions in a society in a regular way, and without opposition, it expresses, at least in a general way, the fixed manner in which occupation capacities are distributed. That is why, although tasks are, in certain measure, assigned by law, each organ

executes its own function spontaneously. Constraint only begins when regulation, no longer corresponding to the real character of existence and, accordingly, no longer having any basis in customs, is only maintained by force.

Conversely, we may say that the division of labour produces solidarity only if, and in so far as, it is spontaneous. But by 'spontaneity' we should understand not simply the absence of all express and manifest violence, but also of everything that can even indirectly shackle the free unfolding of the social force that each carries in himself. It supposes, not only that individuals are not forcibly assigned to specific tasks, but also that no obstacle, of whatever nature, prevents them from occupying the place in the social framework which is compatible with their faculties. In short, labour is divided spontaneously only if society is constituted in such a way that social inequalities exactly express natural inequalities...

It is, moreover, easy to understand what makes this levelling process necessary. We have just seen that all external inequality compromises organic solidarity. There is nothing disturbing in this for less developed societies, where solidarity is determined primarily by common beliefs and sentiments. However strained the ties which come from the division of labour, since they are not the ones which most strongly attach the individual to society, social cohesion is not placed in jeopardy. The unhappiness which results from frustrated aspirations is not enough to turn men against the social order which creates them; they cling to this social order, not because they find it the necessary field for the development of their occupational activity, but because in their eyes it expresses the sum total of the beliefs and practices by which they live. They cling to it because their whole internal life is linked with it. All their convictions presuppose the existence of this order, because, serving as a basis for the moral and religious system, it appears to them as sacred. Personal, and temporal, frustrations are obviously too insignificant to upset states of consciousness which derive such an exceptional force from this origin. Moreover, since occupational life is not highly developed, these clashes occur only infrequently. For all these reasons, they have only a slight impact; they are accepted without difficulty. Men find these inequalities not only tolerable but even natural.

It is quite the opposite which occurs when organic solidarity becomes predominant: whatever undermines it attacks the social tie in its most essential form. In the first place, since in these conditions specialised activities are pursued almost continuously, they

cannot be opposed without producing protracted discontent. Secondly, since the *conscience collective* is weaker, the frictions which are thus created can no longer be so completely nullified. Common sentiments no longer have the same capacity to keep the individual attached to the group under any circumstances. Subversive tendencies, no longer having the same counterweight, occur more frequently. Since it increasingly loses the transcendent character which placed it in a sphere above human interests, social organisation no longer has the same force of resistance, and at the same time becomes more subject to attack. As a purely human construction, it can no longer so directly oppose human demands. At the very moment at which the flood becomes more violent, the dam which holds it in is broken down; it thus becomes a greater threat. This is why, in organised societies, the division of labour must be increasingly placed in harmony with this ideal of spontaneity that we have just defined. If such societies direct, and must direct, their energies to abolishing external inequalities as far as possible, this is not only because enterprise is intrinsically worthwhile, but because their very existence is bound up with this problem. For these societies can survive only if there is solidarity between the elements of which they are composed; solidarity is possible only given this situation. Thus we may predict that this work of justice will become ever more complete, as the organised type develops. No matter how important the progress already made in this direction, in all probability it only gives a small idea of what will be achieved in the future.

DTS, pp. 367-70 and 373-4

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ROLE OF THE OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS

The absence of corporative institutions thus creates in the organisation of a society like ours a void whose importance it is difficult to exaggerate. What is lacking is a complete system of agencies necessary to the functioning of social life. This structural defect is evidently not a localised failure, limited to one part of society; it is a malady *totius substantiae*, affecting the whole organism. Consequently, any attempt to put an end to it cannot fail to produce the most far-reaching consequences. It is the general health of the social body which is in question here.

That does not mean to say, however, that the corporation is a