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7. Spencer, op. cit., II, p. 244: 'Cooperation, then, is at once that which cannot exist without a society, and that for which a society exists.'
8. J.S. Mill, *A System of Logic*, vol. 2, book VI, ch. IX, p. 496 (London, Longmans, Green Reader & Dyer, 1872): 'Political economy shows mankind as occupied solely in acquiring and consuming wealth.'
9. This trait emerges from the very expressions used by economists. They continually talk of ideas, of the ideas of utility, savings, investment and cost. (Cf. C. Gide, *Principes de l'économie politique* book III, ch. 1, ss. 1; ch. 2, ss. 1; ch. 3, ss. 1 [First edition, Paris, 1884].)
10. It is true that the greater complexity of social facts renders the science that relates to them more difficult. But, as compensation, precisely because sociology is the latest arrival on the scene, it is in a position to benefit from the progress realised by the lesser sciences and to learn from them. This use of previous experience cannot fail to hasten its development.
11. J. Darmsteter, *Les Prophètes d'Israël* (Paris, 1892) p. 9.
12. It is in practice always the common concept and the common term which are the point of departure. Among the things that in a confused fashion this term denotes, we seek to discover whether any exist which present common external characteristics. If there are any, and if the concept formed by grouping the facts brought together in this way coincides, if not entirely (which is rare) but at least for the most part, with the common concept, it will be possible to continue to designate the former by the same common term, retaining in the science the expression used in everyday parlance. But if the difference is too considerable, if the common notion mixes up a number of different notions, the creation of new and special terms becomes a necessity.
13. It is the same absence of definition which has sometimes caused it to be stated that democracy occurred both at the beginning and the end of history. The truth is that primitive and present-day democracy are very different from each other.
14. R. Garofalo, *Criminologie* (Paris, 1888) p. 2 (trans. by the author from the Italian).
15. J. Lubbock, *Origins of Civilization*, ch. VIII. More generally still, it is stated, no less inaccurately, that ancient religions are amoral or immoral. The truth is that they have their own morality. [Durkheim may have read Sir John Lubbock's work in translation. It was published in French translation by E. Barbier in 1873. Two further editions in French followed in 1877 and 1881.]
16. For example, one should have grounds to believe that, at a given moment, law no longer expressed the real state of social relationships for this substitution to be invalid.
17. Cf. *Division du travail social*, I, 1.
18. Cf. Durkheim, 'Introduction à la sociologie de la famille', *Annales de la Faculté des Lettres de Bordeaux*, 1889.

Chapter III

Rules for the Distinction of the Normal from the Pathological

Observation conducted according to the preceding rules mixes up two orders of facts, very dissimilar in certain respects: those that are entirely appropriate and those that should be different from what they are – normal phenomena and pathological phenomena. We have even seen that it is necessary to include both in the definition with which all research should begin. Yet if, in certain aspects, they are of the same nature, they nevertheless constitute two different varieties between which it is important to distinguish. Does science have the means available to make this distinction?

The question is of the utmost importance, for on its solution depends one's conception of the role that science, and above all the science of man, has to play. According to a theory whose exponents are recruited from the most varied schools of thought, science cannot instruct us in any way about what we ought to desire. It takes cognisance, they say, only of facts which all have the same value and the same utility; it observes, explains, but does not judge them; for it, there are none that are reprehensible. For science, good and evil do not exist. Whereas it can certainly tell us how causes produce their effects, it cannot tell us what ends should be pursued. To know not what is, but what is desirable, we must resort to the suggestions of the unconscious – sentiment, instinct, vital urge, etc., – by whatever name we call it. Science, says a writer already quoted, can well light up the world, but leaves a darkness in the human heart. The heart must create its own illumination. Thus science is stripped, or nearly, of all practical effectiveness and consequently of any real justification for its existence. For what good is it to strive after a knowledge of reality if the knowledge we acquire cannot serve us in our lives? Can we reply that by revealing to us the causes of phenomena knowledge

offers us the means of producing the causes at will, and thereby to achieve the ends our will pursues for reasons that go beyond science? But, from one point of view, every means is an end, for to set the means in motion it requires an act of the will, just as it does to achieve the end for which it prepares the way. There are always several paths leading to a given goal, and a choice must therefore be made between them. Now if science cannot assist us in choosing the best goal, how can it indicate the best path to follow to arrive at the goal? Why should it commend to us the swiftest path in preference to the most economical one, the most certain rather than the most simple one, or vice versa? If it cannot guide us in the determination of our highest ends, it is no less powerless to determine those secondary and subordinate ends we call means.

It is true that the ideological method affords an avenue of escape from this mysticism, and indeed the desire to escape from it has in part been responsible for the persistence of this method. Its devotees were certainly too rationalist to agree that human conduct did not require the guidance of reflective thought. Yet they saw in the phenomena, considered by themselves independently of any subjective data, nothing to justify their classifying them according to their practical value. It therefore seemed that the sole means of judging them was to relate them to some overriding concept. Hence the use of notions to govern the collation of facts, rather than deriving notions from them, became indispensable for any rational sociology. But we know that, in these conditions, although practice has been reflected upon, such reflection is not scientific.

The solution to the problem just posed will nevertheless allow us to lay claim to the rights of reason without falling back into ideology. For societies, as for individuals, health is good and desirable; sickness, on the other hand, is bad and must be avoided. If therefore we find an objective criterion, inherent in the facts themselves, to allow us to distinguish scientifically health from sickness in the various orders of social phenomena, science will be in a position to throw light on practical matters while remaining true to its own method. Since at present science is incapable of directly affecting the individual, it can doubtless only furnish us with general guidelines which cannot be diversified appropriately for the particular individual unless he is approached through the senses. The state known as health, in so far as it is capable of

definition, cannot apply exactly to any individual, since it can only be established for the most common circumstances, from which everyone deviates to some extent. None the less it is a valuable reference point to guide our actions. Because it must be adjusted later to fit each individual case, it does not follow that knowledge of it lacks all utility. Indeed, precisely the opposite is true, because it establishes the norm which must serve as a basis for all our practical reasoning. Under these conditions we are no longer justified in stating that thought is useless for action. Between science and art there is no longer a gulf, and one may pass from one to the other without any break in continuity. It is true that science can only concern itself with the facts through the mediation of art, but art is only the extension of science. We may even speculate whether the practical shortcomings of science must not continue to decrease as the laws it is establishing express ever more fully individual reality.

I

Pain is commonly regarded as the index of sickness. It is certain that in general a relationship exists between these two phenomena, although one lacking uniformity and precision. There are serious physical dispositions of a painless nature, whereas minor ailments of no importance, such as that resulting from a speck of coal-dust in the eye, cause real torment. In certain cases it is even the absence of pain, or indeed the presence of positive pleasure, which is the symptom of ill-health. There is certain lack of vulnerability to pain which is pathological. In circumstances where a healthy man would be suffering, the neurasthenic would experience a sensation of enjoyment, the morbid nature of which is indisputable. Conversely, pain accompanies many conditions, such as hunger, tiredness and childbirth, which are purely physiological phenomena.

May we assert that health, consisting in the joyous development of vital energy, is recognisable when there is perfect adaptation of the organism to its environment, and on the other hand may we term sickness as all that which upsets that adaptation? But first – and we shall have to return to this point later – it is by no means demonstrated that every state of the organism corresponds to some external state. Furthermore, even if the criterion of adapta-

tion were truly distinctive of a state of health, some other criterion would be needed for it to be recognisable. In any case we should need to be informed of the principle to decide whether one particular mode of adaptation is more 'perfect' than another.

Is it according to the manner in which one mode rather than another affects our chances of survival? Health would be the state of the organism in which those chances were greatest, whereas sickness would be anything which reduced those chances. Unquestionably sickness has generally the effect of really weakening the organism. Yet sickness is not alone in being capable of producing this result. In certain lower species the reproductive functions inevitably entail death, and even in higher species carry risks with them. Yet this is normal. Old age and infancy are subject to the same effect, for both the old person and the infant are more vulnerable to the causes of destruction. But are they therefore sick persons, and must we admit that the healthy type is represented only by the adult? This would be singularly to restrict the domain of health and physiology. Moreover, if old age is already a sickness in itself, how does one distinguish between a healthy old person and a sick one? By the same reasoning menstruation would have to be classified under pathological phenomena, for by the troubles that it brings on, it increases for a woman the liability to illness. Yet how can one term unhealthy a condition whose absence or premature disappearance constitutes without question a pathological phenomenon? We argue about this question as if in a healthy organism each element, so to speak, had a useful part to play, as if every internal state corresponded exactly to some external condition and consequently contributed to maintaining the vital equilibrium and reducing the chances of dying. On the contrary it may legitimately be presumed that certain anatomical or functional arrangements serve no direct purpose, but exist simply because they are, and cannot cease, given the general conditions of life. They cannot, however, be characterised as morbid, for sickness is eminently something avoidable which is not intrinsic to the normal constitution of a living creature. It may even be true that, instead of strengthening the organism, these arrangements lower its powers of resistance and consequently increase the risk of death.

On the other hand it is by no means sure that sickness always entails the consequence by which people have sought to define it. Do not a number of illnesses exist that are too slight for us to be

able to attribute to them any perceptible effect upon the basic functions of the organism? Even among the gravest afflictions there are some whose effects are wholly innocuous, if we know how to combat them with the weapons at our command. The gastritis-prone individual who follows a good, hygienic way of living can live as long as the healthy man. Undoubtedly he is forced to take precautions, but are we not all subject to the same constraint, and can life be sustained otherwise? Each of us has his own hygiene to follow. That of the sick person differs considerably from that of his average contemporary, living in the same environment. But this may be seen to be the sole difference between them. Sickness does not always leave us at a loss, not knowing what to do, in an irremediable state of inadaptability; it merely obliges us to adapt ourselves differently from most of our fellows. Who is there to say that some sicknesses even exist which in the end are not useful to us? Smallpox, a vaccine of which we use to inoculate ourselves, is a true disease that we give ourselves voluntarily, yet it increases our chance of survival. There may be many other cases where the damage caused by the sickness is insignificant compared with the immunities that it confers upon us.

Finally and most importantly, this criterion is very often inapplicable. At the very most it can be established that the lowest mortality rate known is encountered in a particular group of individuals, but it cannot be demonstrated that an even lower rate might not be feasible. Who is to say that other conditions might not be envisaged which would have the effect of lowering it still further? The actual minimum is not therefore proof of perfect adaptation and is consequently not a reliable index of the state of health, to come back to the preceding definition. Moreover, a group with this characteristic is very difficult to constitute and to isolate from all other groups. Yet this would be necessary to be able to observe the bodily constitution of its members which is the alleged cause of their superiority. Conversely, in the case of a generally fatal illness it is evident that the probability of survival is lower, but the proof is signally more difficult to demonstrate in the case of an affliction which does not necessarily cause death. In fact there is only one objective way to prove that creatures placed in closely defined conditions have less chance of survival than others: this is to show that in fact the majority do not live as long. Now although in cases of purely individual sickness this can often be

demonstrated, it is utterly impracticable in sociology. For here we have not the criterion of reference available to the biologist, namely, the figures of the average mortality rate. We do not even know how to determine approximately the moment when a society is born and when it dies. All these problems, which even in biology are far from being clearly resolved, still remain wrapped in mystery for the sociologist. Moreover, the events occurring in social life and which are repeated almost identically in all societies of the same type, are much too diverse to be able to determine to what extent any particular one has contributed to hastening a society's final demise. In the case of individuals, as there are very many, one can select those to be compared so that they present only the same one irregularity. This factor is thus isolated from all concomitant phenomena, so that one can study the nature of its influence upon the organism. If, for example, about a thousand rheumatism sufferers taken at random exhibit a mortality rate above the average, there are good grounds for imputing this outcome to a rheumatoid tendency. But in sociology, since each social species accounts for only a small number of individuals, the field of comparison is too limited for groupings of this kind to afford valid proof.

Lacking this factual proof, there is no alternative to deductive reasoning, whose conclusions can have no value except as subjective presumptions. We will be able to demonstrate, not that a particular occurrence does in fact weaken the social organism, but that it *should* have that effect. To do this it will be shown that the occurrence cannot fail to entail a special consequence esteemed to be harmful to society, and on these grounds it will be declared pathological. But, granted that it does bring about this consequence, it can happen that its deleterious effects are compensated, even over-compensated, by advantages that are not perceived. Moreover, only one reason will justify our deeming it to be socially injurious: it must disturb the normal operation of the social functions. Such a proof presumes that the problem has already been solved. The proof is only possible if the nature of the normal state has been determined beforehand and consequently the signs whereby normality may be recognised are already known. Could one try to construct *a priori* the normal state from scratch? There is no need to show what such a construction would be worth. This is why it happens in sociology, as in history, that the same events

are judged to be salutary or disastrous, according to the scholar's personal convictions. Thus it constantly happens that a theorist lacking religious belief identifies as a pathological phenomenon the vestiges of faith that survive among the general collapse of religious beliefs, while for the believer it is the very absence of belief which is the great social sickness. Likewise for the socialist, the present economic organisation is a fact of social abnormality, whereas for the orthodox economist it is above all the socialist tendencies which are pathological. To support his view each finds syllogisms that he esteems well founded.

The common weakness in these definitions is the attempt to reach prematurely the essence of phenomena. Thus they assume that propositions have already been demonstrated which, whether true or false, can only be proved when the progress of science is sufficiently advanced. This is nevertheless a case where we should conform to the rule already established. Instead of claiming to determine at the outset the relationship of the normal state, and the contrary state, to the vital forces, we should simply look for some immediately perceptible outward sign, but an objective one, to enable us to distinguish these two orders of facts from each other.

Every sociological phenomenon, just as every biological phenomenon, although staying essentially unchanged, can assume a different form for each particular case. Among these forms exist two kinds. The first are common to the whole species. They are to be found, if not in all, at least in most individuals. If they are not replicated exactly in all the cases where they are observed, but vary from one person to another, their variations are confined within very narrow limits. On the other hand, other forms exist which are exceptional. These are encountered only in a minority of cases, but even when they occur, most frequently they do not last the whole lifetime of an individual. They are exceptions in time as they are in space.¹ We are therefore faced with two distinct types of phenomena which must be designated by different terms. Those facts which appear in the most common forms we shall call normal, and the rest morbid or pathological. Let us agree to designate as the average type the hypothetical being which might be constituted by assembling in one entity, as a kind of individual abstraction, the most frequently occurring characteristics of the species in their most frequent forms. We may then say that the normal type

merges into the average type and that any deviation from that standard of healthiness is a morbid phenomenon. It is true that the average type cannot be delineated with the same distinctness as an individual type, since the attributes from which it is constituted are not absolutely fixed but are capable of variation. Yet it can unquestionably be constituted in this way since it is the immediate subject matter of science and blends with the generic type. The physiologist studies the functions of the average organism; the same is true of the sociologist. Once we know how to distinguish between the various social species – this question will be dealt with later – it is always possible to discover the most general form presented by a phenomenon in any given species.

It can be seen that a fact can be termed pathological only in relation to a given species. The conditions of health and sickness cannot be defined *in abstracto* or absolutely. This rule is not questioned in biology: it has never occurred to anybody to think that what is normal in a mollusc should be also for a vertebrate. Each species has its own state of health, because it has an average type peculiar to it, and the health of the lowest species is no less than that of the highest. The same principle is applicable to sociology, although it is often misunderstood. The habit, far too widespread, must be abandoned of judging an institution, a practice or a moral maxim as if they were good or bad in or by themselves for all social types without distinction.

Since the reference point for judging the state of health or sickness varies according to the species, it can vary also within the same species, if that happens to change. Thus from the purely biological viewpoint, what is normal for the savage is not always so for the civilised person and vice versa.² There is one order of variations above all which it is important to take into account because these occur regularly in all species: they are those which relate to age. Health for the old person is not the same as it is for the adult, just as the adult's is different from the child's. The same is likewise true of societies.³ Thus a social fact can only be termed normal in a given species in relation to a particular phase, likewise determinate, of its development. Consequently, to know whether the term is merited for a social fact, it is not enough to observe the form in which it occurs in the majority of societies which belong to a species: we must also be careful to observe the societies at the corresponding phase of their evolution.

We may seem to have arrived merely at a definition of terms, for

we have done no more than group phenomena according to their similarities and differences and label the groups formed in this way. Yet in reality the concepts so formed, while they possess the great merit of being identifiable because of characteristics which are objective and easily perceptible, are not far removed from the notion commonly held of sickness and health. In fact, does not everybody consider sickness to be an accident, doubtless bound up with the state of being alive, but one which is not produced normally? This is what the ancient philosophers meant when they declared that sickness does not derive from the nature of things but is the product of a kind of contingent state immanent in the organism. Such a conception is assuredly the negation of all science, for sickness is no more miraculous than health, which also inheres in the nature of creatures. Yet sickness is not grounded in their normal nature, bound up with their ordinary temperament or linked to the conditions of existence upon which they usually depend. Conversely the type of health is closely joined for everybody to the type of species. We cannot conceive incontestably of a species which in itself and through its own basic constitution would be incurably sick. Health is the paramount norm and consequently cannot be in any way abnormal.

It is true that health is commonly understood as a state generally preferable to sickness. But this definition is contained in the one just stated. It is not without good reason that those characteristics which have come together to form the normal type have been able to generalise themselves throughout the species. This generalisation is itself a fact requiring explanation and therefore necessitating a cause. It would be inexplicable if the most widespread forms of organisation were not also – at least in the aggregate – the most advantageous. How could they have sustained themselves in such a wide variety of circumstances if they did not enable the individual better to resist the causes of destruction? On the other hand, if the other forms are rarer it is plainly because – in the average number of cases – those individuals displaying such forms have greater difficulty in surviving. The greater frequency of the former class is thus the proof of their superiority.⁴

II

This last observation even provides a means of verifying the results of the preceding method.

Since the generality which outwardly characterises normal phenomena, once directly established by observation, is itself an explicable phenomenon, it demands explanation. Doubtless we can have the prior conviction that it is not without a cause, but it is better to know exactly what that cause is. The normality of the phenomenon will be less open to question if it is demonstrated that the external sign whereby it was revealed to us is not merely apparent but grounded in the nature of things—if in short, we can convert this factual normality into one which exists by right. Moreover, the demonstration of this will not always consist in showing that the phenomenon is useful to the organism, although for reasons just stated this is most frequently the case. But, as previously remarked, an arrangement may happen to be normal without serving any useful purpose, simply because it inheres in the nature of a creature. Thus it would perhaps be useful for childbirth not to occasion such violent disturbances in the female organism, but this is impossible. Consequently the normality of a phenomenon can be explained only through it being bound up with the conditions of existence in the species under consideration, either as the mechanically essential effect of these conditions or as a means allowing the organism to adapt to these conditions.⁵

This proof is not merely useful as a check. We must not forget that the advantage of distinguishing the normal from the abnormal is principally to throw light upon practice. Now, in order to act in full knowledge of the facts, it is not sufficient to know what we should want, but why we should want it. Scientific propositions relating to the normal state will be more immediately applicable to individual cases when they are accompanied by the reasons for them, for then it will be more feasible to pick out those cases where it is appropriate to modify their application, and in what way.

Circumstances even exist where this verification is indispensable, because the first method, if it were applied in isolation, might lead to error. This is what occurs in transition periods when the whole species is in the process of evolving, without yet being stabilised in a new and definitive form. In that situation the only normal type extant at the time and grounded in the facts is one that relates to the past but no longer corresponds to the new conditions of existence. A fact can therefore persist through a whole species but no longer correspond to the requirements of the situation. It

therefore has only the appearance of normality, and the generality it displays is deceptive; persisting only through the force of blind habit, it is no longer the sign that the phenomenon observed is closely linked to the general conditions of collective existence. Moreover, this difficulty is peculiar to sociology. It does not exist, in a manner of speaking, for the biologist. Only very rarely do animal species require to assume unexpected forms. The only normal modifications through which they pass are those which occur regularly in each individual, principally under the influence of age. Thus they are already known or knowable, since they have already taken place in a large number of cases. Consequently at every stage in the development of the animal, and even in periods of crisis, the normal state may be ascertained. This is also still true in sociology for those societies belonging to inferior species. This is because, since a number of them have already run their complete course, the law of their normal evolution has been, or at least can be, established. But in the case of the highest and most recent societies, by definition this law is unknown, since they have not been through their whole history. The sociologist may therefore be at a loss to know whether a phenomenon is normal, since he lacks any reference point.

He can get out of this difficulty by proceeding along the lines we have just laid down. Having established by observation that the fact is general, he will trace back the conditions which determined this general character in the past and then investigate whether these conditions still pertain in the present or, on the contrary, have changed. In the first case he will be justified in treating the phenomenon as normal; in the other eventuality he will deny it that characteristic. For instance, to know whether the present economic state of the peoples of Europe, with the lack of organisation⁶ that characterises it, is normal or not, we must investigate what in the past gave rise to it. If the conditions are still those appertaining to our societies, it is because the situation is normal, despite the protest that it stirs up. If, on the other hand, it is linked to that old social structure which elsewhere we have termed segmentary⁷ and which, after providing the essential skeletal framework of societies, is now increasingly dying out, we shall be forced to conclude that this now constitutes a morbid state, however universal it may be. It is by the same method that all such controversial questions of this nature will have to be

resolved, such as those relating to ascertaining whether the weakening of religious belief and the development of state power are normal phenomena or not.⁸

Nevertheless this method should in no case be substituted for the previous one, nor even be the first one employed. Firstly it raises questions which require later discussion and which cannot be tackled save at an already fairly advanced stage of science. This is because, in short, it entails an almost comprehensive explanation of phenomena, since it presupposes that either their causes or their functions are determined. At the very beginning of our research it is important to be able to classify facts as normal or abnormal, except for a few exceptional cases, in order to assign physiology and pathology each to its proper domain. Next, it is in relation to the normal type that a fact must be found useful or necessary in order to be itself termed normal. Otherwise it could be demonstrated that sickness and health are indistinguishable, since the former necessarily derives from the organism suffering from it. It is only with the average organism that sickness does not sustain the same relationship. In the same way the application of a remedy, since it is useful to the sick organism, might pass for a normal phenomenon, although it is plainly abnormal, since only in abnormal circumstances does it possess this utility. This method can therefore only be used if the normal type has previously been constituted, which could only have occurred using a different procedure. Finally, and above all, if it is true that everything which is normal is useful without being necessary, it is untrue that everything which is useful is normal. We can indeed be certain that those states which have become generalised in the species are more useful than those which have continued to be exceptional. We cannot, however, be certain that they are the most useful that exist or can exist. We have no grounds for believing that all the possible combinations have been tried out in the course of the process; among those which have never been realised but are conceivable, there are perhaps some which are much more advantageous than those known to us. The notion of utility goes beyond that of the normal, and is to the normal what the genus is to the species. But it is impossible to deduce the greater from the lesser, the species from the genus, although we may discover the genus from the species, since it is contained within it. This is why, once the general nature of the phenomena has been ascertained, we

may confirm the results of the first method by demonstrating how it is useful.⁹ We can then formulate the three following rules:

- (1) *A social fact is normal for a given social type, viewed at a given phase of its development, when it occurs in the average society of that species, considered at the corresponding phase of its evolution.*
- (2) *The results of the preceding method can be verified by demonstrating that the general character of the phenomenon is related to the general conditions of collective life in the social type under consideration.*
- (3) *This verification is necessary when this fact relates to a social species which has not yet gone through its complete evolution.*

III

We are so accustomed to resolving glibly these difficult questions and to deciding rapidly, after cursory observation and by dint of syllogisms, whether a social fact is normal or not, that this procedure will perhaps be adjudged uselessly complicated. It seems unnecessary to have to go to such lengths to distinguish sickness from health. Do we not make these distinctions every day? This is true, but it remains to be seen whether we make them appositely. The difficulty of these problems is concealed because we see the biologist resolve them with comparative ease. Yet we forget that it is much easier for him than for the sociologist to see how each phenomenon affects the strength of the organism and thereby to determine its normal or abnormal character with an accuracy which is adequate for all practical purposes. In sociology the complexity and the much more changing nature of the facts constrain us to take many more precautions, as is proved by the conflicting judgements on the same phenomenon emitted by the different parties concerned. To show clearly how great this circumspection must be, we shall illustrate by a few examples to what errors we are exposed when we do not constrain ourselves in this way and in how different a light the most vital phenomena appear when they are dealt with methodically.

If there is a fact whose pathological nature appears indisputable, it is crime. All criminologists agree on this score. Although they explain this pathology differently, they none the less unanimously

acknowledge it. However, the problem needs to be treated less summarily.

Let us in fact apply the rules previously laid down. Crime is not only observed in most societies of a particular species, but in all societies of all types. There is not one in which criminality does not exist, although it changes in form and the actions which are termed criminal are not everywhere the same. Yet everywhere and always there have been men who have conducted themselves in such a way as to bring down punishment upon their heads. If at least, as societies pass from lower to higher types, the crime rate (the relationship between the annual crime figures and population figures) tended to fall, we might believe that, although still remaining a normal phenomenon, crime tended to lose that character of normality. Yet there is no single ground for believing such a regression to be real. Many facts would rather seem to point to the existence of a movement in the opposite direction. From the beginning of the century statistics provide us with a means of following the progression of criminality. It has everywhere increased, and in France the increase is of the order of 300 per cent. Thus there is no phenomenon which represents more incontrovertibly all the symptoms of normality, since it appears to be closely bound up with the conditions of all collective life. To make crime a social illness would be to concede that sickness is not something accidental, but on the contrary derives in certain cases from the fundamental constitution of the living creature. This would be to erase any distinction between the physiological and the pathological. It can certainly happen that crime itself has normal forms; this is what happens, for instance, when it reaches an excessively high level. There is no doubt that this excessiveness is pathological in nature. What is normal is simply that criminality exists, provided that for each social type it does not reach or go beyond a certain level which it is perhaps not impossible to fix in conformity with the previous rules.¹⁰

We are faced with a conclusion which is apparently somewhat paradoxical. Let us make no mistake: to classify crime among the phenomena of normal sociology is not merely to declare that it is an inevitable though regrettable phenomenon arising from the incorrigible wickedness of men; it is to assert that it is a factor in public health, an integrative element in any healthy society. At first sight this result is so surprising that it disconcerted even

ourselves for a long time. However, once that first impression of surprise has been overcome it is not difficult to discover reasons to explain this normality and at the same time to confirm it.

In the first place, crime is normal because it is completely impossible for any society entirely free of it to exist.

Crime, as we have shown elsewhere, consists of an action which offends certain collective feelings which are especially strong and clear-cut. In any society, for actions regarded as criminal to cease, the feelings that they offend would need to be found in each individual consciousness without exception and in the degree of strength requisite to counteract the opposing feelings. Even supposing that this condition could effectively be fulfilled, crime would not thereby disappear; it would merely change in form, for the very cause which made the well-springs of criminality to dry up would immediately open up new ones.

Indeed, for the collective feelings, which the penal law of a people at a particular moment in its history protects, to penetrate individual consciousnesses that had hitherto remained closed to them, or to assume greater authority — whereas previously they had not possessed enough — they would have to acquire an intensity greater than they had had up to then. The community as a whole must feel them more keenly, for they cannot draw from any other source the additional force which enables them to bear down upon individuals who formerly were the most refractory. For murderers to disappear, the horror of bloodshed must increase in those strata of society from which murderers are recruited; but for this to happen the abhorrence must increase throughout society. Moreover, the very absence of crime would contribute directly to bringing about that result, for a sentiment appears much more respectable when it is always and uniformly respected. But we overlook the fact that these strong states of the common consciousness cannot be reinforced in this way without the weaker states, the violation of which previously gave rise to mere breaches of convention, being reinforced at the same time, for the weaker states are no more than the extension and attenuated form of the stronger ones. Thus, for example, theft and mere misappropriation of property offend the same altruistic sentiment, the respect for other people's possessions. However, this sentiment is offended less strongly by the latter action than the former. Moreover, since the average consciousness does not have suffi-

cient intensity of feeling to feel strongly about the lesser of these two offences, the latter is the object of greater tolerance. This is why the misappropriator is merely censured, while the thief is punished. But if this sentiment grows stronger, to such a degree that it extinguishes in the consciousness the tendency to theft that men possess, they will become more sensitive to these minor offences, which up to then had had only a marginal effect upon them. They will react with greater intensity against these lesser faults, which will become the object of severer condemnation, so that, from the mere moral errors that they were, some will pass into the category of crimes. For example, dishonest contracts or those fulfilled dishonestly, which only incur public censure or civil redress, will become crimes. Imagine a community of saints in an exemplary and perfect monastery. In it crime as such will be unknown, but faults that appear venial to the ordinary person will arouse the same scandal as does normal crime in ordinary consciences. If therefore that community has the power to judge and punish, it will term such acts criminal and deal with them as such. It is for the same reason that the completely honourable man judges his slightest moral failings with a severity that the mass of people reserves for acts that are truly criminal. In former times acts of violence against the person were more frequent than they are today because respect for individual dignity was weaker. As it has increased, such crimes have become less frequent, but many acts which offended against that sentiment have been incorporated into the penal code, which did not previously include them."

In order to exhaust all the logically possible hypotheses, it will perhaps be asked why this unanimity should not cover all collective sentiments without exception, and why even the weakest sentiments should not evoke sufficient power to forestall any dissentient voice. The moral conscience of society would be found in its entirety in every individual, endowed with sufficient force to prevent the commission of any act offending against it, whether purely conventional failings or crimes. But such universal and absolute uniformity is utterly impossible, for the immediate physical environment in which each one of us is placed, our hereditary antecedents, the social influences upon which we depend, vary from one individual to another and consequently cause a diversity of consciences. It is impossible for everyone to be alike in this matter, by virtue of the fact that we each have our own

organic constitution and occupy different areas in space. This is why, even among lower peoples where individual originality is very little developed, such originality does however exist. Thus, since there cannot be a society in which individuals do not diverge to some extent from the collective type, it is also inevitable that among these deviations some assume a criminal character. What confers upon them this character is not the intrinsic importance of the acts but the importance which the common consciousness ascribes to them. Thus if the latter is stronger and possesses sufficient authority to make these divergences very weak in absolute terms, it will also be more sensitive and exacting. By reacting against the slightest deviations with an energy which it elsewhere employs against those that are more weighty, it endues them with the same gravity and will brand them as criminal.

Thus crime is necessary. It is linked to the basic conditions of social life, but on this very account is useful, for the conditions to which it is bound are themselves indispensable to the normal evolution of morality and law.

Indeed today we can no longer dispute the fact that not only do law and morality vary from one social type to another, but they even change within the same type if the conditions of collective existence are modified. Yet for these transformations to be made possible, the collective sentiments at the basis of morality should not prove unyielding to change, and consequently should be only moderately intense. If they were too strong, they would no longer be malleable. Any arrangement is indeed an obstacle to a new arrangement; this is even more the case the more deep-seated the original arrangement. The more strongly a structure is articulated, the more it resists modification; this is as true for functional as for anatomical patterns. If there were no crimes, this condition would not be fulfilled, for such a hypothesis presumes that collective sentiments would have attained a degree of intensity unparalleled in history. Nothing is good indefinitely and without limits. The authority which the moral consciousness enjoys must not be excessive, for otherwise no one would dare to attack it and it would petrify too easily into an immutable form. For it to evolve, individual originality must be allowed to manifest itself. But so that the originality of the idealist who dreams of transcending his era may display itself, that of the criminal, which falls short of the age, must also be possible. One does not go without the other.

Nor is this all. Beyond this indirect utility, crime itself may play a useful part in this evolution. Not only does it imply that the way to necessary changes remains open, but in certain cases it also directly prepares for these changes. Where crime exists, collective sentiments are not only in the state of plasticity necessary to assume a new form, but sometimes it even contributes to determining beforehand the shape they will take on. Indeed, how often is it only an anticipation of the morality to come, a progression towards what will be! According to Athenian law, Socrates was a criminal and his condemnation was entirely just. However, his crime – his independence of thought – was useful not only for humanity but for his country. It served to prepare a way for a new morality and a new faith, which the Athenians then needed because the traditions by which they had hitherto lived no longer corresponded to the conditions of their existence. Socrates's case is not an isolated one, for it recurs periodically in history. The freedom of thought that we at present enjoy could never have been asserted if the rules that forbade it had not been violated before they were solemnly abrogated. However, at the time the violation was a crime, since it was an offence against sentiments still keenly felt in the average consciousness. Yet this crime was useful since it was the prelude to changes which were daily becoming more necessary. Liberal philosophy has had as its precursors heretics of all kinds whom the secular arm rightly punished through the Middle Ages and has continued to do so almost up to the present day.

From this viewpoint the fundamental facts of criminology appear to us in an entirely new light. Contrary to current ideas, the criminal no longer appears as an utterly unsociable creature, a sort of parasitic element, a foreign, unassimilable body introduced into the bosom of society.¹² He plays a normal role in social life. For its part, crime must no longer be conceived of as an evil which cannot be circumscribed closely enough. Far from there being cause for congratulation when it drops too noticeably below the normal level, this apparent progress assuredly coincides with and is linked to some social disturbance. Thus the number of crimes of assault never falls so low as it does in times of scarcity.¹³ Consequently, at the same time, and as a reaction, the theory of punishment is revised, or rather should be revised. If in fact crime is a sickness, punishment is the cure for it and cannot be conceived of otherwise;

thus all the discussion aroused revolves round knowing what punishment should be to fulfil its role as a remedy. But if crime is in no way pathological, the object of punishment cannot be to cure it and its true function must be sought elsewhere.

Thus the rules previously enunciated are far from having as their sole reason to satisfy a logical formalism which lacks any great utility. This is because, on the contrary, according to whether they are applied or not, the most essential social facts totally change their character. If the example quoted is particularly cogent – and this is why we thought we should dwell upon it – there are nevertheless many others which could usefully be cited. There is no society where it is not the rule that the punishment should fit the crime – and yet for the Italian school of thought this principle is a mere invention of legal theoreticians devoid of any solid basis.¹⁴ For these criminologists the whole institution of punishment, as it has functioned up to the present among all known peoples, is a phenomenon which goes against nature. We have already seen that for Garofalo the criminality peculiar to the lower forms of society has nothing natural about it. For the socialists it is capitalist organisation, despite its widespread nature, which constitutes a deviation from the normal state and is an organisation brought about by violence and trickery. On the other hand for Spencer it is our administrative centralisation and the extension of governmental power which are the radical vices of our societies, in spite of the fact that both have developed entirely regularly and universally over the course of history. The belief is that one is never obliged systematically to decide on the normal or abnormal character of social facts according to their degree of generality. It is always by a great display of dialectic that these questions are resolved.

However, by laying this criterion on one side, not only is one exposed to confusion and partial errors like those just discussed, but science itself becomes impossible. Indeed its immediate object is the study of the normal type, but if the most general facts can be pathological, it may well be that the normal type has never really existed. Hence what use is it to study facts? They can only confirm our prejudices and root us more deeply in our errors, since they spring from them. If punishment and responsibility, as they exist in history, are merely a product of ignorance and barbarism, what use is it to strive to know them in order to determine their normal forms? Thus the mind is led to turn away from a reality which from

then on lacks interest for us, turning in upon itself to seek the materials necessary to reconstruct that reality. For sociology to deal with facts as things, the sociologist must feel a need to learn from them. The principal purpose of any science of life, whether individual or social, is in the end to define and explain the normal state and distinguish it from the abnormal. If normality does not inhere in the things themselves, if on the contrary it is a characteristic which we impose upon them externally or, for whatever reason, refuse to do so, this salutary state of dependence on things is lost. The mind complacently faces a reality that has not much to teach it. It is no longer contained by the subject matter to which it applies itself, since in some respects it determines that subject matter. The different rules that we have established up to now are therefore closely linked. For sociology really to be a science of things, the generality of phenomena must be taken as the criterion of their normality.

Moreover, our method has the advantage of regulating action at the same time as thought. If what is deemed desirable is not the object of observation, but can and must be determined by some sort of mental calculus, no limit, in a manner of speaking, can be laid down to the free inventions of the imagination in their search for the best. For how can one assign to perfection bounds that it cannot exceed? By definition it escapes all limitations. The goal of humanity thus recedes to infinity, discouraging not a few by its very remoteness, arousing and exciting others, on the other hand, who, so as to draw a little nearer to it, hasten their steps and throw themselves into revolutionary activity. This practical dilemma is avoided if what is desirable is declared to be what is healthy, and if the state of health is something definite, inherent in things, for at the same time the extent of our effort is given and defined. There is no longer need to pursue desperately an end which recedes as we move forward; we need only to work steadily and persistently to maintain the normal state, to re-establish it if it is disturbed, and to rediscover the conditions of normality if they happen to change. The duty of the statesman is no longer to propel societies violently towards an ideal which appears attractive to him. His role is rather that of the doctor: he forestalls the outbreak of sickness by maintaining good hygiene, or when it does break out, seeks to cure it.¹⁵

Notes

1. Through this we can distinguish the case of sickness from monstrosity. The second is an exception only in space; it is not met with in the average member of the species, but it lasts the whole lifetime of the individuals in which it is to be found. Yet it is clear that these two orders of facts differ only in degree and basically are of the same nature. The boundaries drawn between them are very imprecise, for sickness can also have a lasting character and abnormality can evolve. Thus in defining them we can hardly separate them rigidly. The distinction between them cannot be more categorical than that between the morphological and the physiological, since after all morbidity is abnormal in the physiological order just as monstrosity is in the anatomical order.
2. For example, the savage who had the reduced digestive tube and developed nervous system of the civilised healthy being would be considered sick in relationship to his environment.
3. This section of our argument is abridged, for we can only reiterate here regarding social facts in general what we have said elsewhere concerning the division of moral facts into the normal and abnormal. (Cf. *Division du travail social*, pp.33-9.)
4. It is true that Garofalo has attempted to distinguish the sick from the abnormal (*Criminologie*, pp.109, 110). But the sole two arguments on which he relies to make this distinction are:
 (1) The word 'sickness' always signifies something which tends to the total or partial destruction of the organism. If there is not destruction, there is a cure, but never stability, such as exists in several abnormalities. But we have just seen that the abnormal is also, in the average case, a threat to the living creature. It is true that this is not always so, but the dangers that sickness entails likewise exist only in average circumstances. As for the absence of stability allegedly distinctive of the morbid, this leaves out of account chronic illnesses and is to divide the study of monstrosities from that of the pathological. The monstrosities are permanent.
 (2) It is stated that the normal and abnormal vary according to different races, while the distinction between the physiological and the pathological is valid for all the human race. On the contrary, we have shown that what is morbid for the savage is not so for the civilised person. The conditions of physical health vary according to different environments.
5. It is true that one may speculate whether, when a phenomenon derives necessarily from the general conditions of life, this very fact does not make it useful. We cannot deal with this philosophical question, although we touch upon it a little later.
6. Cf. on this point a note we published in the *Revue philosophique* (November 1893) on 'La définition du socialisme'.

7. Segmentary societies, particularly those which have a territorial basis, are ones whose essential components correspond to territorial divisions (cf. *Division du travail social*, pp. 189-210).
8. In certain cases one may proceed somewhat differently and demonstrate whether a fact whose normal character is suspect justifies this suspicion by showing whether it is closely linked to the previous development of the social type under consideration, and even to the totality of social evolution in general; or on the other hand whether it contradicts both. By this means we have been able to show that the present weakening of religious beliefs and, more generally, of collective sentiments towards collective objects, is utterly normal; we have proved that such weakening becomes increasingly marked as societies evolve towards our present type, and that this type, in turn, is more developed (cf. *Division du travail social* pp. 73-182). But basically this method is only a special case of the preceding one. For if the normality of the phenomenon has been established in this way, it is because at the same time it has been linked to the most general conditions of our collective existence. Indeed, on the one hand, if this regression of religious consciousness is more apparent as the structure of our societies becomes more precisely determinate, it is because it does not depend on any accidental cause but on the very constitution of our social environment. Moreover, on the other hand, since the special characteristics of that constitution are certainly more developed today than formerly, it is entirely normal that the phenomena that depend upon it should themselves be more developed. This method differs only from the preceding one in that the conditions which explain and justify the general character of the phenomenon have been induced and not observed directly. We know that the phenomenon relates to the nature of the social environment without knowing by what, or how, it is connected. But then it will be said that the realisation of the normal type is not the highest objective that can be proposed and, in order to go beyond it, one must also go beyond the bounds of science. We need not deal with this question here *ex professo*; let us merely reply: (1) that the question is purely theoretical because in fact the normal type, a state of health, is already somewhat difficult to determine and rarely enough attained for us to exercise our imagination to discover something better; (2) that these improvements, objectively more advantageous, are not for that reason objectively desirable. For if they do not correspond to any latent or actual tendency they would add nothing to happiness and, if they *do* correspond to some tendency, it is because the normal type has not been realised; (3) finally, that, in order to improve the normal type, it must first be known. One cannot therefore in any case go beyond science except by first relying upon it.
10. From the fact that crime is a phenomenon of normal sociology it does not follow that the criminal is a person normally constituted from the biological and psychological viewpoints. The two questions

are independent of each other. This independence will be better understood when we have shown later the difference which exists between psychological and sociological facts.

11. Calumny, insults, slander, deception, etc.
12. We have ourselves committed the error of speaking of the criminal in this way through not having applied our rule (cf. *Division du travail social*, pp. 395, 396).
13. But, although crime is a fact of normal sociology, it does not follow that we should not abhor it. Pain has likewise nothing desirable about it: the individual detests it just as society detests crime, and yet it is a normal physiological function. Not only does it necessarily derive from the very constitution of every living creature, but it plays a useful and irreplaceable role in life. Thus it would be a peculiar distortion to represent our thinking as an apologia for crime. We would not even have envisaged protesting against such an interpretation were we not aware of the strange accusations and misunderstandings to which one is exposed in undertaking to study moral facts objectively and to speak of them in language that is not commonly used.
14. Cf. Garofalo, *Criminologie*, pp. 299.
15. From the theory developed in this chapter it has sometimes been concluded that, in our view, the upward trend in criminality during the nineteenth century was a normal phenomenon. Nothing is farther from our thoughts. Several facts which we have pointed out in connexion with suicide (cf. *le Suicide*, p. 420ff.) tend, on the contrary, to cause us to believe that this development has been, in general, pathological. However, it may be that a certain increase in certain forms of criminality would be normal, for every state of civilisation has its own criminality. But on this matter one can only hypothesise.