

## Emile Durkheim

- Born on April 15, 1858 in Épinal, France, died November 15<sup>th</sup> 1917.
- One of the first founders of modern sociology.
- Disagreed that individual psychology was the basis of sociology and believed that sociology was the study of the society that surrounds and influences the individual.
- He set out to: 1. establish scientific legitimacy of sociology and to then use it to maintain social order. 2. Find an alternative to the Marxian, materialist approach.
- Structural Functionalism is when societies are held together by shared values, common symbols or systems of exchanges, which creates stability. It states that parts of society work together towards the maintenance of the overall living environment.

## The Division of Labour (1893)

- Society is held together by: 1. Mechanical solidarity (collective consciousness) – the shared similarities (values, norms, beliefs) of individuals. 2. Organic solidarity – division of labour into specialized jobs creates a dependence on one another.
- Durkheim believed that this collective consciousness was the basis of social order
- When individual consciousness collided with the collective consciousness, crime (an act that offends the strong collective consciousness) would occur. However, Durkheim believed that crime is essential to a society as it allows for an evolution of morals. Also, the punishments given for the crime affirms the collective consciousness.

## The Rules of Sociological Method (1895)

- To Durkheim, sociology was a scientific study of *sui generis* (a clearly defined group of phenomena different from those studied by other sciences). He called these phenomena, social facts, which consisted of actions, thoughts, and feelings that have an existence in and of themselves but are not bound to the acts of individuals.
- These social facts impact all actions and behaviours of an individual in the given society.

## Suicide (1897)

- Suicide should not be viewed as an individual act on psychological terms.
- An individual is connected to society through certain bonds which regulates conduct and aspirations as well as provides purpose and ideals, suicide occurs when such a bond is weakened.
- Anomie: a condition where moral norms are unclear.

## Durkheim's Importance

- His major works became the classical approach which dominated in the 1930's – 1960's.
- He is credited with making sociology a science with his empirical methodology in Suicide.