

MORAL EDUCATION

Moral Education

A STUDY IN THE
THEORY AND APPLICATION OF THE
SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

By *Emile Durkheim*

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The Free Press, New York

COLLIER-MACMILLAN LIMITED, LONDON

*This edition translated from L'éducation morale,
published by Librairie Félix Alcan, 1925*

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Printed in the United States of America

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Collier-Macmillan Canada, Ltd., Toronto, Ontario
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 59-6815

Second printing April 1968



FOREWORD

THIS COURSE ON MORAL EDUCATION WAS THE FIRST IN THE science of education that Durkheim offered at the Sorbonne in 1902-3. He had for some time sketched it out in his teaching at Bordeaux. He repeated it later, e.g., in 1906-7, without change or editing. The course consisted of twenty lectures. We present here only eighteen; the first two dealt with methods of teaching. The introductory lecture was published in January, 1903, in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* and reproduced in the small volume *Éducation et sociologie*, published in 1922.¹

Durkheim wrote out his lectures *in extenso*. The reader will find here a textual reproduction of his manuscript. Our corrections are purely matters of form or are substantively insignificant, and we have felt it unnecessary to indicate them. In any case, they do not affect the thought.

We ask the reader to indulge the inevitable shortcomings of the book. Almost invariably, the beginning of a lecture overlaps the past pages of the preceding lecture: Durkheim repeated himself in order to tie things up better, or to develop further what he had not had time to handle the preceding week. To correct this defect it would have been necessary to undertake extensive and inevitably arbitrary

1. The recently published American edition was translated, with an introduction, by Sherwood D. Fox (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1956).

changes. We concluded that purely literary compunctions ought not prevail over the regard due the original text. Moreover, the two successive treatments often differ in some interesting details.

The first part of the course, which Durkheim left more complete, deals with what is called moral theory—theory of duty, of the good, of autonomy. One part of these lectures went into a communication on “The Determination of Moral Behavior,” inserted in the *Bulletin de la société française de philosophie*, in 1906, and reprinted in the volume entitled *Philosophie et sociologie* (1924).² The same questions would have been taken up again in the introduction of *La morale*, on which Durkheim was working during the last months of his life, and of which Marcel Mauss has given a fragment in the *Revue philosophique*, LXXXIX (1920), 79. Doubtless Durkheim’s thinking had changed on certain points between 1902 and 1917.

The second part of the course, paralleling the first, should comprise three sections—one on the spirit of discipline, the second on sacrifice and altruism, and the third on autonomy of the will—each of them studied this time from a specifically pedagogical point of view. The last of these three sections is missing here. Education in autonomy is a matter of moral instruction in the elementary school, a subject to which Durkheim had many times—notably in 1907–8—devoted a whole year’s course. The manuscript for this course is not so organized as to permit publication.

The lectures do not correspond exactly with the chapters and often in the course of one lecture a transition to the following subject is effected. The plan of the work is given in the table of contents.

PAUL FAUCONNET
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2. This volume is available in an English translation by D. F. Pocock (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1953).



PREFACE

PROFESSOR FAUCONNET'S FOREWORD WOULD SERVE VERY WELL to get this essay under way were it not for three circumstances that differentiate this from the edition of 1925.¹ First, that was in French and this is in English. Thus, the translator must follow ancient precedent by stressing the non-equivalence of key terms and the plausibility of the decisions made in rendering difficult terms. Second, in the French edition, M. Fauconnet's editorial decision was *stet*; our decision has been the very opposite. Third, the French edition went to an audience quite familiar with Durkheim's work. Beyond the small fraternity of sociologists, one cannot assume familiarity for a United States audience.

Problems of translation stemmed chiefly from two sources. First, Durkheim's conception of society involves him in the use of terms that have mystical, even supernatural, connotations for English and American readers. Society, as he states toward the end of the last chapter, is not bound in time and space, since it is "first of all a complex of ideas and sentiments, of ways of seeing and feeling, a certain intellectual and moral framework distinctive of the entire group. . . . society is above all a [shared] consciousness, [and] it is therefore this collective consciousness that must be imparted to the child." And so we are confronted with words like *conscience*, *esprit*, *représentations collectives*, and

1. *L'éducation morale* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1925).

âme, all of which refer in one way or another to the knowledge, beliefs, and values shared by members of the group. Such terms have been rendered in each case as the context required. Durkheim was expressing some important ideas half a century ago—powerful and influential ideas, congenial to much current thinking in sociology and social psychology, if not to education. But the translator must take care lest the language repel the reader or obscure Durkheim's intended meaning.

A second problem of translation results from the very significance of Durkheim's ideas. Precisely because they are still relevant, still fruitful, there is the danger of over-modernizing him. We have tried not to put current terminology in his mouth except where his meaning might otherwise be unclear.

Hence, we could not follow M. Fauconnet's decision for Durkheim's French audience of 1925. What he did, in effect, was to hand a set of classroom lectures to the printer. We have had to translate and edit with a different audience in mind. Our concern has been to convey Durkheim's ideas; and to eliminate everything that might impede this communication. The translation is free. We have omitted redundant phrases here and there. Conscious of the danger of reading the present into the past we have, nonetheless, occasionally used current terminology—e.g., rendering *role* as "function"—where Durkheim's intent seemed to justify it. We have italicized where it served to clarify the author's meaning. We have substituted the word "chapter" for "lecture" throughout. In short, we have done whatever seemed necessary to bridge some fifty years and two languages in order to bring Durkheim's ideas on moral education to an English-reading audience.

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THERE IS NO POINT IN REPEATING DETAILS OF DURKHEIM'S life (1858-1917) that are recounted elsewhere.¹ It may be useful to isolate the major themes in *Moral Education*, underlining the points that bear on current concerns in education and sociology.

In a generation suffering post-Victorian recoil and invoking the wrath of Viennese gods upon the superego, morality is a niggling word implying an obsequious and unpalatable primness. For Durkheim, however, morality was crucial, from both a theoretical and a practical point of view. Theoretically, any enduring system of human relationships must be seen as intrinsically moral, involving obligatory elements that coerce conduct and that, since they represent shared conceptions of the good, provide the basis for social unity. From a practical standpoint, a sound secular morality was for Durkheim the condition of national health—or even survival.

“Our first obligation at this time is to create a moral consensus.’ Thus Durkheim concludes his thesis which began with the assertion ‘that science can help us determine the way in which we ought to orient our conduct.’”² The

1. See especially the excellent sketch in Part I of Harry Alpert, *Emile Durkheim and His Sociology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939).

2. Georges Gurvitch, “La morale de Durkheim,” in *Essais de sociologie* (Paris: Libraire du Recueil Sirey, 1939), p. 279.

critical times inspired a real anxiety in Durkheim; and he did not think the intellectual exempt from the obligation to apply his special knowledge. *Voir pour prévoir; prévoir pour pouvoir*. Durkheim accepted the Comtean injunction. In both *The Division of Labor*³ and *The Rules of Sociological Method*,⁴ he asserts that the ultimate justification for basic research lies in its practical uses. The art-for-art's-sake argument would have been altogether inconsistent with a theory that views man as pre-eminently a social creation, endowed with society's gifts of mind and literacy, and both responsive and responsible to this single source of his humanity. His objective was the moral integration that he saw as necessary for the well-being of French society—or, for that matter, of any society. This unity was to be based upon a secular morality, founded in reason rather than revealed religion. The seedbed for germinating this morality was, he contended, the public school.

Part I of this work, therefore, presents a theory of morality that grew out of years of inquiry and reflection. It lays the foundation for practical prescriptions addressed to the teacher in Part II. The theoretical discussion is so central, not only to this work, but to the whole pattern of Durkheim's thought, that it deserves special emphasis.

Durkheim begins, as is his wont, with definitions. What is meant by morality as we see it in practice? Certainly it involves consistency, regularity of conduct: what is moral today must be moral tomorrow. It also invariably involves some sense of authority: we are constrained to act in certain ways; we feel a resistance to strictly idiosyncratic impulses. Now, these two features of morality—regularity of conduct and authority—are in fact aspects of a single thing:

3. Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. George Simpson (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1949).

4. Émile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, trans. Sarah A. Solovay and John H. Mueller, ed. George E. G. Catlin (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950).

discipline. (The union of different or apparently antithetical aspects of reality in a single conception is a familiar tactic with Durkheim. He uses the reverse procedure, too. A single concept, such as suicide, is logically subdivided or qualified so as to provide an exhaustive and exclusive classification of the phenomena under inquiry.) Thus, the first element of morality is discipline, compounded of regularity of conduct and authority.

Discipline is not to be viewed as sheer constraint, for at least two reasons. In the first place, it predetermines appropriate modes of response, without which order and organized life would be unthinkable. It emancipates us from the need to contrive each solution *de novo*. Second, it responds to the individual's need for restraint, enabling him to reach, successively, determinate goals. Without such limits he would suffer the inevitable frustration and disillusionment entailed by limitless aspiration. (Here we see reflected a central theme of his classical study, *Suicide*.)

Morality involves an impersonal orientation of activity. Behavior dominated by self-interest is never regarded as moral. But if behavior properly deemed moral is not oriented toward the self, what object is its proper focus? Since others cannot legitimately demand gratification that if directed toward ourselves would be amoral, the object of moral behavior must be something beyond the individual, or beyond any number of individuals *qua* individuals. All that is left as the object of moral behavior is the group, or society. "To act morally is to act in terms of the collective interest . . . the domain of the moral begins where the domain of the social begins."⁵ Thus, we arrive at the second element of morality, attachment to, or identification with, the group.

Once again, both these elements of morality are aspects of a single thing: society. Discipline is society seen as the

5. Émile Durkheim, *L'éducation morale* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1925), p. 68.

father, as commanding us, as prompting us to do our duty. Attachment to the group implies society as mother, the image of the good, attracting us.

However, there remains, as in all good academic enumerations, a third element. The third essential of morality is autonomy. If strictly self-centered conduct must be regarded as amoral, that which denies the agent's autonomy is equally so; for controlled behavior is not "good" behavior. Yet Durkheim has strongly emphasized the coercive character of the first two elements of morality—discipline and commitment to the group. How does he resolve this dilemma? Reliable knowledge is the answer. The difference between self-determination and witless submission lies in the ability to predict accurately the consequences of alternative courses of action. Autonomy involves a personal decision in full knowledge of the inexorable consequences of different courses of action. Thus, an understanding of the laws of morality promotes autonomy. A comparable situation is this: On a cold and blustery day a man has the option of donning his Bermuda shorts and T-shirt or his overcoat and muffler. He *freely* chooses in terms of the laws of health, which suggest differing consequences for different choices. Fundamental to the notion of autonomy is the imperative need for a science of morality.⁶

These are the major theses in Durkheim's theoretical discussion of moral education. They are aspects of a conception of education that differs dramatically from that which apparently prevails among Americans. For the latter, education is much more child-centered, an individual matter, an enterprise dedicated, as the stock phrase puts it, to the maximum development of the individual personality. The adaptation

6. This expression of a need for a science of morality points to the core of his conception of society and the nature of sociology. In 1893, he wrote as the first sentence of his preface to *Division of Labor*: "This book is pre-eminently an attempt to treat the facts of the moral life according to the methods of the positive sciences." *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

of curriculum, personnel, and facilities to the needs of the individual child—this is the great good in the pantheon of pedagogical virtues.

It is at least plausible that this emphasis upon the individual child, in American education, draws support from: (1) a short history in which the self-reliance and self-determination of frontier life became celebrated elements of the American way; (2) a tradition in Protestant theology that minimized the community and emphasized a personal responsibility, both for success and salvation—if these are to be differently construed; (3) the virtual monopoly of psychology, among the social sciences, over matters of educational theory and practice. The great preoccupation with testing, beginning with World War I, led to instruments promoting the focus on the individual. With few exceptions, the contributions in learning theory and perception bore on individual processes. In the United States, Willard Waller was for many years almost the only observer who expressed the view that something might be gained by looking at a school system *as a social system*—as a system of interdependent and interlocking roles.⁷

If we have erred on the side of excessive individualism, Durkheim stands ready to rectify the imbalance. For him, education is above all a social means to a social end—the means by which a society guarantees its own survival. The teacher is society's agent, the critical link in cultural transmission. It is his task to create a social, a moral, being. Through him, society creates man in its image. "That," says Durkheim, "is the task and the glory of education. It is not merely a matter of allowing an individual to develop in ac-

7. Of course, one could scarcely accuse John Dewey of neglecting the social aspects of education. But the reference here is to research on and within the school or classroom as a social system. Dewey's insights leaped from the philosophic to the applied level. The intervening level, that of social analysis and empirical research, was left pretty much virgin territory. Certainly Willard Waller's work stood out in splendid isolation. See his *The Sociology of Teaching* (New York: John Wiley and Co., 1932).

cordance with his nature, disclosing whatever hidden capacities lie there only waiting to be revealed. *Education creates a new being.*⁸ (Elle crée dans l'homme un être nouveau.)

For us in the United States, the school has become increasingly important in unanticipated ways. Although the figure is inelegant, one might suggest that the school is used as an institutional garbage can, taking on a host of residual activities either relinquished or not yet pre-empted by other agencies—e.g., driver-training, entertainment, baby-sitting, domestic and industrial “arts,” guidance and therapy, and the like. For Durkheim, the school had a crucial and clearly specified function: to create a new being, shaped according to the needs of society. While this might seem restrictive and repressive to child-centered educators, Durkheim argues that the very reverse is true. Only by imposing limits can the child be liberated from the inevitable frustrations of incessant striving. Only as the child is systematically involved in his country's cultural heritage can he achieve a sense of identity and personal fulfillment. Only as he is conscious of his implication in a society to which he is bound by duty and desire can he become a moral being. In short, excessive individualism in education can lead to personal defeat and social chaos. Moral education is the specific against such maladies.

The exclusion of clerical influence from the French public schools is quite understandable to people whose constitution specifies a separation of church and state. But a proposal for systematic instruction in a secular morality stripped of all supernatural elements doubtless would be pushing things too far. Our sanctions for morality tend, at the least, to be non-rational—i.e., the coercion of the conventional—if not supernatural. Yet just such a secular morality is what Durkheim is proposing and what, in effect, was becoming an integral part of the public school program in France.

8. Émile Durkheim, *Education et sociologie* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1922), p. 51.

Why is the school the proper setting for moral education? Durkheim eliminates the church because a sound morality must be founded in reason, not revelation. The family is out since the indulgent warmth of kinship ties is incompatible with the sterner demands of morality. On the other hand, moral education cannot be deferred until adulthood, nor can it be entrusted to adult agencies whose demands are excessive for the young child. The task of moral education devolves upon the school. Ways of accomplishing the task are discussed in Part II. Although some of these lectures date back to 1903, any reader interested in the problems of education will find many provocative ideas. While the argument is often better than the evidence, Durkheim is always perceptive, the issues are topical and relevant, and the discussion is profitable. It would, for example, be enormously profitable were teachers to discuss seriously Durkheim's suggestions on school discipline and punishment; or the part to be played by biology and other sciences in moral education. This Sorbonne Professor of Education and Sociology still has much to say to teachers.

* * *

The student of the social sciences must be impressed with the consistency and unity of Durkheim's thinking. Unity and solidarity—qualities he sought for French society—were realized to an unusual degree in his own intellectual life. Theory, research, and practical applications were part of a single fabric. His theoretical preoccupation was with the nature of the social bond, the nature and conditions of social solidarity. This is altogether explicit, of course, in *The Rules of Sociological Method*; the same concern for specifying the nature of the social fact and for determining the legitimate province of sociology as a distinct discipline runs through *The Division of Labor* and his two other major works, *Suicide* and *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*.

His research was oriented in two directions. On the one hand, it was clearly articulated with theory. With Durkheim we do not find that schizoid division between pedestrian and intuitive, between the tedious testing of trivial hypotheses and the generative but undisciplined imagination, between the hard head and the soft head—a division that has been the subject of much fruitless contention in the United States. On the other hand, his research was expressly articulated with certain practical concerns. All three interests—theory, empirical research, and applied sociology—are revealed in this work on moral education. We also find here certain recurrent themes in Durkheim's thinking: (1) his methodological position; (2) the central position accorded ideas, symbols of the collectivity, representations—in this case, the rule; (3) society and school as realities *suorum generum*; and (4) the ideas of system and function.

*Durkheim's Methodology
and the Sociology
of Moral Education*

Durkheim stood in the positivist tradition. The first article in his methodological creed was reliance on reason. There is nothing in reality that is inherently beyond the scope of human reason. He denies that anyone has the right to regard any category of phenomena as irreducible to scientific thought. Durkheim's confidence in the power of reason to apprehend, order, and relate the phenomena of social life seems scarcely revolutionary to us today. Even so, what with the spate of essays on the organization man and the alarms about the manipulatory powers of the social scientist, there are still those who would be startled at this statement: "we are witnessing the establishment of a sci-

ence that is still in its infancy but that undertakes to treat the phenomena of moral life as natural phenomena—in other words as rationally comprehensible phenomena.”⁹ He anticipated the explosive potential of a rational analysis of moral life in these words: “It is not a trifling matter to stimulate free inquiry, to accord a new authority to reason; for the power thus granted cannot but turn against those traditions that persist only insofar as they are divorced from its influence [that is, from the influence of reason].”¹⁰ The rationalization of moral education not only liberates the individual from an intellectual servitude; it enriches and refines his moral sensibilities and, in the process, it may reveal injustices in human relationships of which he was hitherto unconscious. For this reason, Durkheim points out, the educator must foresee and prepare for the development of new sentiments.

A second characteristic of his method is to define his terms by looking at things as they are “out there.” He enjoins us to look at the social fact *comme une chose*. So too with morality. We are not to inquire what it ought to be, or to deal with it as a fixed and immutable set of principles. On the contrary, we have to ask what behavior is deemed moral, by whom and under what conditions. This is, of course, a major departure from the approach to morality characteristic of moral philosophers, theologians, and political economists in Durkheim’s day.

A third typical feature of Durkheim’s methodology, generally minimized by certain critics, is to check a functional analysis of social patterns against the nature of the individual. Durkheim’s work has been classified by Sorokin as “sociologism.” Others have seen in his thought a cavalier disregard of the individual, who is the pliant subject of a coercive, monolithic society. Yet here we find Durkheim

9. Emile Durkheim, *L'Education morale*, p. 24.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

enunciating this methodological rule. It is not enough to demonstrate the social function of the moral code—in this case the guarantee of regularity—which is the moral analogue of periodicity in the organism; a social institution cannot be explained simply by demonstrating its functional utility. Beyond this, it must not encounter insuperable resistance in the individual. If it does violence to human nature, however socially useful it may be, it cannot persist. Recurrent patterns of human behavior are oriented toward social interests, not toward the individual as such. On the other hand, if such institutions threaten or disorganize the life of the individual, they disorganize at the same time the foundation for their own existence. And so he proceeds to demonstrate the salutary influence of moral prescriptions for the *psychological* well-being of the individual. Here is an example of the argument.

The totality of moral regulations really forms about each person an imaginary wall, at the foot of which a multitude of human passions simply die 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, human forces—until now restrained—pour tumultuously through the open breach. . . . then, powerless to fulfill themselves because they have been emancipated from all limitation, such passions would entail a disillusionment, which translates itself graphically into statistics on suicide.¹¹

Finally, in this study as elsewhere in his work, we encounter a methodological injunction that stems from Durkheim's conception of social reality. Throughout all his writing there recurs the conception of society as an emergent reality, a thing *sui generis*, which cannot be understood in terms of its constituent elements. He often reverts to the analogies of copper and tin producing bronze, of hydrogen and oxygen uniting to form water, of inanimate elements combining to create the living cell—in each case, an emergent synthesis, the properties of which cannot be understood in terms of the separate elements. In chapter sixteen of this essay on

11. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

moral education, he continues the attack on what he calls the "oversimplified rationalism," which would attempt to get at the nature of things via reductionism—the treatment of phenomena in terms of their simplest elements and preferably in mathematical form. To treat society in this fashion is to see in it only the sum of a number of individuals. Its distinctive character, growing out of the interaction and union of its parts, is lost. In effect, it has no reality independent of the individuals who happen to comprise it at a given time.

By this kind of reasoning, our moral behavior finds itself stripped of any objective. To cherish society, devote one's self to it, take it as the objective of one's conduct . . . a living reality is needed, one animated by a special existence distinct from the individuals who compose it. It is only such a reality that can draw us out of ourselves and so perform the function of providing a moral goal. We can see how this dangerous view of reality can influence behavior and why, therefore, it is important to correct it. The teaching of science can help us in this.¹²

. . . it is especially the biological sciences that are most useful in making the child understand the complexity of things and the vital importance of that complexity. . . . We have here inorganic elements which, in combination and association suddenly manifest completely new properties characterizing life. Here is one thing that will make the child understand . . . that in one sense a whole is not identical with the sum of its parts. This can lead him on the road to understanding that society is not simply the sum of individuals who compose it.¹³

The Rule (Norms)

Conceived as Central—

Theoretically and Practically

Durkheim's writings are shot through with a sense of the significance of shared convictions and commitments. The notions of "collective representations" and the "collective conscience" recur throughout his work. If culture is distinguished from the acts and artifacts that symbolize it, we

12. *Ibid.*, p. 318.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 334, 335.

can think of Durkheim as a cultural anthropologist, dealing with behavioral *représentations* of those common commitments underlying them, which constitute the cohesive matrix of a society. A discussion of moral education, then, provides him an opportunity to expand upon a favorite theme—shared understandings represented in rules, maxims, laws, and popular opinion as the *sine qua non* both for personal integrity and social stability. The social and the moral become inextricably intertwined. Society endows us; we are therefore morally obligated to it. Society defines the proper and the good; the authority with which moral conduct is invested is a function of others' judgments. These judgments are, then, the necessary objects of empirical inquiry. Morality is a social thing, and, being supra-individual, it is endowed with a kind of transcendent ideal. Beyond the injunction "thou shalt not kill" lie the collective sentiments rendering effective the rules, which merely express the underlying condition of public opinion.

If such a conception of morality, emphasizing the pre-eminence of society and our obligation to it seems to demand self-renunciation, Durkheim warns that we must not be trapped in the old antithesis between individual and society.

For it is through doing his duty that man achieves a preference for moderation—that self-limitation which is the necessary condition of happiness and health. Similarly, it is in attaching himself to the group that he comes to share in that superior life which resides in the group. . . . it is [only] in submitting to rules and devoting himself to the group that he becomes truly a man. Morality is a pre-eminently human thing; for *in prompting man to go beyond himself it only stimulates him to realize his own nature as a man.*¹⁴

Durkheim levels his guns against those who see in discipline a necessary but altogether regrettable evil—those who feel that rules and their sanctions do violence to human nature, yet reluctantly conclude that they are necessary, since man's nature, being still more evil, must somehow be

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 161, 162 (italics mine).

regulated. The view that man's destiny is not so much to develop, as to triumph over, his nature, to engage in an heroic effort against himself, Durkheim views as arrant nonsense. The notions of emancipation through rulelessness are apologies for a diseased state of affairs, for real freedom is the fruit of regulation. Thus, in applying Durkheim's theory to our children and the problems of education, we must not view discipline merely as a means of constraint, reverted to grudgingly. On the contrary, certain aspects of the moral character can be achieved only through discipline. Discipline sets limits to otherwise boundless appetites, enabling one to define clearly the goals of activity. This limitation is the condition of happiness and moral health. Durkheim reacts against the discredit into which discipline had apparently fallen in his day. School rules may seem, taken separately, like tedious trivia. Yet the child must accept the obligation to perform the petty tasks, to learn respect for the rules, to do his duty simply because it is his duty. Indeed, children themselves are the first to appreciate good discipline. As with adults, so with children: if they are to be happy, they must be governed well. Not only does the law constrain, it also sustains. "The absence of discipline, on the contrary, produces a confusion from which those suffer most who would seem to delight in it."¹⁵

*Society and School as
Realities, suorum generum:
Durkheim's Realism*

There has long been a warfare of words about Durkheim's realism—the assumption that society has an independent reality, the hypostatization of the group. The social fact, he asserts, is to be identified by its generality, its externality,

15. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

and its coercive character. These views are reflected in his discussion of moral education; but at the same time he goes far to meet the criticisms of a naïve realism.

The rule, he asserts, is outside the person. It is felt as an order, which implies a source outside ourselves. Not only are the rules of morality external to us in the sense that we are ordered; they are also outside of and beyond us, insofar as they are embodied in something to which we are committed. Morality requires something (Durkheim uses the word *être*) on which our wills may be fixed. This something must have a character distinct from its elements (people); otherwise it fails to meet the criterion of impersonality that Durkheim has fixed as a property of morality. This external object is, of course, society. The evidence of its independent existence lies in the way in which "a kind of collective personality sustains itself and persists through time, retaining its identity despite the endless changes that are produced in the mass of individual personalities."¹⁶

In addition, morality is binding and not merely advisory. The element of choice is taken out of it. If we *choose* one course of action rather than another, we do it because we prefer the probable outcome. But morality, the rule, eliminates calculating the consequences. A "prudential morality" is a contradiction in terms. A genuine morality requires us to act in a given way simply because we ought to do so and regardless of the consequences our conduct may have for us.

Morality, therefore, has the properties of a social fact: it is shared generally by members of the group, it is outside of and beyond each person, and it is coercive. Does this support the accusations of realism and hypostatization? If one reads literally Durkheim's often metaphorical language, the answer must be yes. However, there is his explicit rejection of a mystical brand of realism. Furthermore, there are several

16. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

points at which the self-society dichotomy is resolved in a way that would be altogether congenial to the symbolic interactionists—e.g., Charles Horton Cooley or George Herbert Mead. He says, for example, that society lives in, and expresses itself through, the individual. Of course, it is infinitely greater than the individual: it is outside of us and envelops us. But at the same time it is within us. We are fused with it.

The question is raised whether the child is not by nature such a self-centered creature that it is futile to expect it to develop an attachment to the group. Durkheim insists that the child is not fundamentally resistant to altruistic tendencies. In this discussion he rejects the conventional distinction between things external to us and ourselves. Perhaps more clearly than anywhere else, he here reveals a conception of society that is by no means mystical, and is certainly not that of a monolithic social giant placing its imprint upon the impotent individual. Here is what he says:

. . . we cannot become attached to an external thing, whatever its nature, without representing that thing to ourselves—without having an idea of it, a sentiment about it, no matter how confused. [And thus] . . . it becomes, in certain respects, internal. It exists in us in the form of that representation which expresses it, which reflects it, which is closely related to it. Thus . . . the [external] object becomes an element of ourselves, a state of our consciousness . . . in this sense, we have become attached to ourselves.¹⁷

. . . our personality is not a metaphysical entity, a sort of absolute beginning exactly at one determined point and finishing at another. . . . On the contrary, the external world echoes inside of us, extends into us in the same way that we overflow into it. Things—beings from the outside—penetrate our consciousness, mingle intimately there, become entwined in our existence, and, conversely, we merge our existence with theirs. Our ideas, our sentiments, pass from our minds to others'. . . . There is in us something else than ourselves and we are not entire in ourselves. . . .¹⁸

17. *Ibid.*, p. 276.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 277, 278.

Durkheim has stated that the rule, when violated, must assert itself and demonstrate a strength proportionate to the attack against it. As if conscious of the accusation of hypostatization, he adds:

It is true that in speaking of a law which affirms itself, which reacts, I may seem to be reifying abstractions. But everything that has just been said can easily be put in quite concrete terms. Certainly it is not the rule that reacts and asserts itself; but it reacts and affirms itself through the intermediation of its instrument, that is to say, through the intermediation of the teacher.¹⁹

This theoretical position is brought to bear on practical issues. Education must facilitate the process of fusing self and other if our children are to get a moral education. They have to acquire the capacity to merge self with other. The habit of common life in the class, of identification with it, with the school, and with the nation provides the elementary basis for morality. The classroom provides many favorable opportunities for the development of group commitments, for sensitizing the individual to the obligations of group membership. A moving piece of literature may evoke some common emotion. An incident of daily life or the discussion of an historical event may elicit judgments of praise or blame. The teacher must be alert to such opportunities. Always, Durkheim insists, the meaning of the particular must be generalized, the sense of tradition and continuity sharpened, identity with the group deepened, and the code of conduct made explicit. The code that develops in the classroom—a sort of condensed summary of the children's collective experiences—reveals its spirit, just as the spirit of a people is revealed in its precepts, adages, and laws.

Collective punishment, much as it frowned upon, may provide a means for crystallizing group identification and group commitment, and for promoting the fusion of self and other.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 212.

We cannot, of course, discriminate between individual and collective responsibility for every misdeed. Collective responsibility is reduced to very little in each particular act taken apart and isolated from all the others. In reality it is felt only in the whole pattern of all the actions performed by everybody during a given period of time, in the general temper of the class. To evaluate it, one must set up, as it were, a moral balance sheet at regular intervals, not for such and such an individual, but for the class taken collectively. We must judge it as a whole and impose appropriate sanctions. . . . the important thing is for the child to realize clearly and constantly that, to a certain extent, he is working for everybody and everybody is working for him.²⁰

The Concepts of Function and System

Throughout Durkheim's work there are clear intimations of the point of view termed "functionalism." In this respect, at least, he could come to terms with Herbert Spencer, with whom he disagreed at almost every other point. (The organicist influence of Schäffle and Espinas is reflected here, too.) History has demonstrated beyond doubt, Durkheim says, that the morality of each people is directly related to its social structure. Just as a given biological form has the necessary and appropriate nervous system, so a given social system has a morality appropriate to it. Morality must, therefore, differ through time and space.

Indeed, Durkheim felt that French society had undergone changes requiring a new, adaptive morality. His concern for the development of a secular morality is a concern for developing the *functional equivalent* of Catholicism. Morals, he points out, have been so intimately bound up with the established church that, in withdrawing from moral discipline everything that is religious (including supernatural sanc-

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 313, 314.

tions), there is the danger of torpedoing morality itself. The social system is indeed a system; its elements are interdependent and functionally related. We tamper with a given element of the system at our own risk. The central purpose of the essay on moral education is to persuade the reader that the development of such a functional equivalent is possible. Religion readily symbolized the transcendental power and authority enforcing morality. The imperative quality of the rule was conceived as an emanation from the sovereign will. But the divine being, in addition to being a lawmaker and guardian of the moral order, also represented an ideal, which the individual hoped and tried to realize. In short, under divine auspices the rule had two aspects—mandatory and attractive. Durkheim claims to have translated both of these aspects of moral reality into rational terms.

All that we needed was to substitute for the conception of a supernatural being the empirical idea of a directly observable being which is society. . . . We have shown how society so conceived constrains us, since it dominates us; and how it draws our wills to it, because while it dominates us, it attracts. Just as the faithful see in the loftier part of conscience a reflection of divinity, we have seen here an element and a reflection of the collectivity.²¹

Durkheim suggests that, since the abstract sense of duty must somehow be instilled and since morality should be essentially an impersonal thing, the family cannot provide the functional requisites for moral education. Familial roles lack the necessary neutrality. If the family, small and intimate as it has become, can provide for tension release, it is not the setting for cultivating the abstract idea of duty. It is the school that provides the more appropriate setting for moral education.

In his discussion of punishment, we find an argument familiar in Durkheim's work—to wit, the primary function of punishment is not to prevent recurrent misbehavior. If

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 138, 139.

to some extent it achieves this end, it does so simply as a way of guaranteeing overt and superficial propriety. It is a police procedure, in no sense an instrument of morality. Nor is it a way of expunging the evil deed by a counter-offense which nullifies the former. This, it is suggested, is as though a physician, in order to heal a diseased arm, began by amputating the other. The essential function of punishment is to reaffirm those beliefs and commitments that are challenged by defections and delinquencies. Again, this theoretical position is brought to bear on the practical problem of moral education.

This is the . . . moral evil caused by misbehavior. It shatters the children's faith in the authority of school law.²²

Punishment does not give discipline its authority; but it prevents discipline from losing its authority.²³

Severity of treatment is justified only to the extent that it is necessary to make disapproval of the act utterly unequivocal.²⁴

For the child . . . punishment is only the palpable symbol through which an inner state is represented: it is a notation, a language through which either the general social conscience or that of the schoolteacher expresses the feeling inspired by the deviant behavior.²⁵

The true sanction . . . is blame.²⁶

Thus, we have a principle on which we can rely for determining what punishment in the school ought to be. Since to punish is to reproach, the best punishment is that which puts the blame . . . in the most expressive but least costly way possible.²⁷

Finally, and most generally, Durkheim clearly specifies the social function of morality. It creates order and predictability, and conserves our energies since we need not solve each problem daily and *de novo*. Beyond this, insofar as it constrains us, it enables us to achieve proximate goals and forestalls frustrations, preventing what Durkheim refers to as "the malady of infinite aspiration." "Infinite aspiration" is

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 211, 212.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 213, 214.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 232.

dysfunctional, since one never reaches his goals and is therefore doomed to disenchantment.

* * *

In England and America, *L'éducation morale* is probably least well known among Durkheim's longer works. It is perhaps the best illustration of his applied sociology. However, because his theory, research, and practical prescriptions were all of a piece, we find it clearly linked at many points with his theoretical and methodological position. One central idea—his *idée fixe*—informs his work. This is the problem of the nature of the social bond. Even in his work in applied fields, such as the sociology of education, he held closely and consistently to this central issue. Since this issue lies at the heart of social theory, his discussion of moral education touches the core of sociological interest.

There is much that is wrong in this essay. Child psychology has advanced considerably beyond the state in which James Sully left it; and neither anthropologist nor sociologist will be content with much of Durkheim's evidence and some of his argument. Yet despite the dross, the gold in Durkheim sparkles through, in those perceptive and provocative propositions that demonstrate their generative power by the response they produce in us.

EVERETT K. WILSON



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MORAL EDUCATION



INTRODUCTION:

SECULAR MORALITY

I PROPOSE TO TALK ABOUT MORAL EDUCATION AS AN EDUCATOR; therefore, I ought to give you my conception of education at the very outset. I have previously suggested that we are not dealing with a science.¹ A science of education is not impossible; but education itself is not that science. This distinction is necessary lest we judge education by standards applicable only to strictly scientific research. Scientific inquiry must proceed most deliberately; it does not have to meet deadlines. Education is not justified in being patient to the same extent; it must supply answers to vital needs that brook no delay. When a change in the environment demands appropriate action of us, our hand is forced. All that the educator can and should do is to combine as conscientiously as possible all the data that science puts at his disposal, at a given moment, as a guide to action. No one can ask more of him.

1. As Paul Fauconnet points out in his preface, this refers to the first two lectures in this series. The first of these was published in 1903 in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*. In 1922, it was reproduced in *Education et sociologie*, recently translated and published by The Free Press.

However, if education is not a science, neither is it an art. Art, indeed, is made up of habit, practice, and organized skills. Pedagogy is not the art of teaching; it is the *savoir faire* of the educator, the practical experience of the teacher.

What we have here are two clearly differentiated things: one may be a good teacher, yet not very clever at educational theory. Conversely, the educational theorist may be completely lacking in practical skill. It would have been unwise to entrust a class to Montaigne or to Rousseau; and the repeated failures of Pestalozzi prove that he was not a very good teacher. Education is therefore intermediate between art and science. It is not art, for it is not a system of organized practices but of ideas bearing on these practices. It is a body of theories. By that token it is close to science. However, scientific theory has only one goal—the expression of reality; whereas educational theories have the immediate aim of guiding conduct. While these theories do not constitute action in themselves, they are a preparation for it, and they are very close to it. Their *raison d'être* is in action. It is this dual nature that I have been trying to express in referring to education as a practical theory. The uses that may be expected of it are determined by this ambivalent nature. It is not action itself and thus cannot replace action. But it can provide *insight* into action. It is therefore useful to the extent that thought is useful to professional experience.

If educational theory goes beyond its proper limits, if it pretends to supplant experience, to promulgate ready-made formulae that are then applied mechanically, it degenerates into dead matter. If, on the other hand, experience disregards pedagogical thinking, it in turn degenerates into blind routine or else is at the mercy of ill-informed or unsystematic thinking. Educational theory essentially is the most methodical and best-documented thinking available, put at the service of teaching.

These preliminaries over, I can now go on to the problem

of moral education. To treat this question methodically, we must look at the conditions under which it is posed today. It is within the framework of our traditional, national educational system that the crisis to which I have alluded before has reached particularly serious proportions. Let us examine it a little more closely.

The question is not only intrinsically interesting to all teachers. It is especially urgent today. Anything that reduces the effectiveness of moral education, whatever disrupts patterns of relationships, threatens public morality at its very roots. The last twenty years in France have seen a great educational revolution, which was latent and half-realized before then. We decided to give our children in our state-supported schools a purely secular moral education. It is essential to understand that this means an education that is not derived from revealed religion, but that rests exclusively on ideas, sentiments, and practices accountable to reason only—in short, a purely rationalistic education.

Such a change could not take place without disturbing traditional ideas, disrupting old habits, entailing sweeping organizational changes, and without posing, in turn, new problems with which we must come to grips.

I know that I am now touching on questions that have the unfortunate effect of arousing passionate argument. But we must broach these questions resolutely. We cannot speak of moral education without being very clear as to the conditions under which we are educating. Otherwise we will bog down in vague and meaningless generalities. In this book, our aim is not to formulate moral education for man in general; but for men of our time in this country.

It is in our public schools that the majority of our children are being formed.² These schools must be the guardians par

2. Again, this refers to the preceding lecture, which was omitted from the 1925 volume.

3. The reference here is to the elementary school system.

excellence of our national character. They are the heart of our general education system. We must, therefore, focus our attention on them, and consequently on moral education as it is understood and practiced in them and as it should be understood and practiced. As a matter of fact, I am quite sure that if we bring to our discussion of these questions just a modicum of the scientific attitude, it will not be hard to treat them without arousing passions and without giving offense to legitimate feelings.

In the first place, a rational moral education is entirely possible; this is implied in the postulate that is at the basis of science. I refer to the rationalist postulate, which may be stated thus: there is nothing in reality that one is justified in considering as fundamentally beyond the scope of human reason. When I call this principle a postulate, I am in fact using a very improper expression. That principle had the character of a postulate when mind first undertook to master reality—if indeed one can say that this intellectual quest ever had a beginning. When science began to organize itself, it necessarily had to postulate that it, itself, was possible and that things could be expressed in scientific language—or, in other words, rational language, for the two terms are synonymous. However, something that, at the time, was only an anticipation of the mind, a tentative conjecture, found itself progressively demonstrated by all the results of science. It proved that facts should be connected with each other in accordance with rational relationships, by discovering the existence of such relationships.

There are of course many things—in fact, an infinity of things—of which we are still ignorant. Nothing guarantees that all of them will ever be discovered, that a moment will come when science will have finished its task and will have expressed adequately the totality of things. Rather, everything leads us to think that scientific progress will never end. But the rationalist principle does not imply that science can

in fact exhaust the real. It only denies that one has the right to look at any part of reality or any category of facts as invincibly irreducible to scientific thought—in other words, as irrational in its essence.

Rationalism does not at all suppose that science can ever reach the limits of knowledge. If it is understood in this fashion, we might say that this principle is demonstrated by the history of science itself. The manner in which it has progressed shows that it is impossible to mark a point beyond which scientific explanation will become impossible. All the limits within which people have tried to contain it have only served as challenges for science to surpass them. Whenever people thought that science had reached its ultimate limit, it resumed, after varying periods of time, its forward march and penetrated regions thought to be forbidden to it. Once physics and chemistry were established, it was thought that science had to stop there. The biological world seemed to depend upon mysterious principles, which escaped the grasp of scientific thought. Yet biological sciences presently came into their own. Next, the founding of psychology demonstrated the applicability of reason to mental phenomena. Nothing, then, authorizes us to suppose that it is different with moral phenomena. Such an exception, which would be unique, is contrary to all reasonable inferences. There is no ineluctable reason for supposing that this last barrier, which people still try to oppose to the progress of reason, is more insurmountable than the others. The fact is, we are witnessing the establishing of a science that is still in its beginnings, but that undertakes to treat the phenomena of moral life as natural phenomena—in other words, as rational phenomena. Now, if morality is rational, if it sets in motion only ideas and sentiments deriving from reason, why should it be necessary to implant it in minds and characters by recourse to methods beyond the scope of reason?

Not only does a purely rational education seem logically

possible; it seems to be determined by our entire historical development. If our education had suddenly taken on this character several years ago, one might well doubt whether so sudden a transformation were really implied in the nature of things. In reality, however, this transformation is the result of a gradual development, whose origins go back, so to speak, to the very beginnings of history. The secularizing of education has been in process for centuries.

It has been said that primitive peoples had no morality. That was an historical error. There is no people without its morality. However, the morality of undeveloped societies is not ours. What characterizes them is that they are essentially religious. By that, I mean that the most numerous and important duties are not the duties of man toward other men, but of man toward his gods. The principal obligations are not to respect one's neighbor, to help him, to assist him; but to accomplish meticulously prescribed rites, to give to the Gods what is their due, and even, if need be, to sacrifice one's self to their glory. Human morality in those circumstances is reduced to a small number of principles, whose violation is repressed less severely. These peoples are only on the threshold of morality. Even in Greece, murder occupied a much lower place in the scale of crimes than serious acts of impiety. Under these conditions, moral education could only be essentially religious, as was morality itself. Only religious notions could serve as the basis for an education that, before everything, had as its chief aim to teach man the manner in which he ought to behave toward religious beings.

But gradually things change. Gradually, human duties are multiplied, become more precise, and pass to the first rank of importance; while others, on the contrary, tend to become attenuated. One might say that Christianity itself has contributed most to the acceleration of this result. An essentially human religion since its God dies for the salvation of humanity, Christianity teaches that the principal duty of man

toward God is to love his neighbor. Although there are religious duties—rites addressed only to divinity—the place they occupy and the importance attributed to them continue to diminish.

Essential sin is no longer detached from its human context. True sin now tends to merge with moral transgression. No doubt God continues to play an important part in morality. It is He who assures respect for it and represses its violation. Offenses against it are offenses against Him. But He is now reduced to the role of guardian. Moral discipline wasn't instituted *for his benefit*, but *for the benefit of men*. He only intervenes to make it effective. Thenceforth our duties become independent, in large measure, of the religious notions that guarantee them but do not form their foundation.

With Protestantism, the autonomy of morality is still more accentuated by the fact that ritual itself diminishes. The moral functions of divinity become its sole *raison d'être*. It is the only argument brought forward to demonstrate its existence. Spiritualistic philosophy continues the work of Protestantism. But among the philosophers who believe today in the necessity of supernatural sanctions, there are none who do not admit that morality could be constructed quite independent of any theological conception. Thus, the bond that originally united and even merged the two systems has become looser and looser. It is, therefore, certain that when we broke that bond definitively we were following in the mainstream of history. If ever a revolution has been a long time in the making, this is it.

If the enterprise is possible and necessary, if sooner or later it had to be undertaken, and even if there were no reason to believe that it was long in the making, it still remains a difficult process. It is well to realize it, for only if we do not delude ourselves concerning these difficulties will it be possible to triumph over them. Gratified as we may be with what has been achieved, we ought to realize that ad-

vances would have been more pronounced and coherent had people not begun by believing that everything was going to be all too simple and easy. Above all, the task was conceived as a purely negative operation. It seemed that to secularize education all that was needed was to take out of it every supernatural element. A simple stripping operation was supposed to have the effect of disengaging rational morality from adventitious and parasitical elements that cloaked it and prevented it from realizing itself. It was enough, so they said, to teach the old morality of our fathers, while avoiding recourse to any religious notion. In reality, the task was much more complex. It was not enough to proceed by simple elimination to reach the proposed goal. On the contrary, a profound transformation was necessary.

Of course, if religious symbols were simply overlaid upon moral reality, there would indeed be nothing to do but lift them off, thus finding in a state of purity and isolation a self-sufficient rational morality. But the fact is that these two systems of beliefs and practices have been too inextricably bound together in history; for centuries they have been too interlaced for their connections possibly to be so external and superficial and for the separation to be so easily consummated. We must not forget that only yesterday they were supported on the same keystone: God, the center of religious life, was also the supreme guarantor of moral order. There is nothing surprising in this partial coalescence; the duties of religion and those of morality are both duties, in other words, morally obligatory practices. It is altogether natural that men were induced to see in one and the same being the source of all obligation. One can easily foresee, by reason of this relationship and partial fusion, that some elements of both systems approached each other to the point of merging and forming only one system. Certain moral ideas became united with certain religious ideas to such an extent as to become indistinct from them. The first ended by no longer

having or seeming to have any existence or any reality independent of the second. Consequently, if, in rationalizing morality in moral education, one confines himself to withdraw from moral discipline everything that is religious without replacing it, one almost inevitably runs the danger of withdrawing at the same time all elements that are properly moral. Under the name of rational morality, we would be left only with an impoverished and colorless morality. To ward off this danger, therefore, it is imperative not to be satisfied with a superficial separation. We must seek, in the very heart of religious conceptions, those moral realities that are, as it were, lost and dissimulated in it. We must disengage them, find out what they consist of, determine their proper nature, and express them in rational language. In a word, we must discover the rational substitutes for those religious notions that for a long time have served as the vehicle for the most essential moral ideas.

An example will illustrate precisely what I mean: Even without pushing the analysis, everybody readily perceives that in one sense, a very relative sense as a matter of fact, the moral order constitutes a sort of autonomous order in the world. There is something about prescriptions of morality that imposes particular respect for them. While all opinions relating to the material world—to the physical or mental organization of either animals or men—are today entitled to free discussion, people do not admit that moral beliefs should be as freely subjected to criticism. Anybody who questions in our presence that the child has duties toward his parents or that human life should be respected provokes us to immediate protest. The response is quite different from that which a scientific heresy might arouse. It resembles at every point the reprobation that the blasphemers arouses in the soul of the believer. There is even stronger reason for the feelings incited by infractions of moral rules being altogether different from those provoked by ordinary infractions

of the precepts of practical wisdom or of professional technique. The domain of morality is as if surrounded by a mysterious barrier which keeps violators at arm's length, just as the religious domain is protected from the reach of the profane. It is a sacred domain. All the things it comprises are as if invested with a particular dignity that raises them above our empirical individuality, and that confers upon them a sort of transcendent reality. Don't we say, casually, that the human person is sacred, that we must hold it in reverence? As long as religion and morals are intimately united, this sacred character can be explained without difficulty since, in that case, morality as well as religion is conceived as an attribute and emanation of divinity, the source of all that is sacred. Everything coming from it participates in its transcendence and finds itself by that very fact implicated in other things. But if we methodically reject the notion of the sacred without systematically replacing it by another, the quasi-religious character of morality is without foundation, (since we are rejecting the traditional conception that provided that foundation without providing another). One is, then, almost inevitably inclined to deny morality. It is even impossible to feel the reality of it, when, as a matter of fact, it could very well be that it is founded in the nature of things.

It may very well be that there is in moral rules something that deserves to be called by this name and that nevertheless could be justified and explained logically without implying the existence of a transcendent being or specifically religious notions. If the eminent dignity attributed to moral rules has, up to the present time, only been expressed in the form of religious conceptions, it does not follow that it cannot be otherwise expressed; consequently, one must be careful that this dignity does not sink with the ideas conventionally associated with it. From the fact that nations, to explain it to themselves, have made of it a radiation and a reflection of divinity, it does not follow that it cannot be attached to

another reality, to a purely empirical reality through which it is explained, and of which the idea of God is indeed perhaps only the symbolic expression. If, then, in rationalizing education, we do not retain this character and make it clear to the child in a rational manner, we will only transmit to him a morality fallen from its natural dignity. At the same time, we will risk drying up the source from which the schoolmaster himself drew a part of his authority and also a part of the warmth necessary to stir the heart and stimulate the mind. The schoolmaster, feeling that he was speaking in the name of a superior reality elevated himself, invested himself with an extra energy. If we do not succeed in preserving this sense of self and mission for him—while providing, meanwhile, a different foundation for it—we risk having nothing more than a moral education without prestige and without life.

Here is a first body of eminently complex and positive problems that compel our attention when we undertake to secularize moral education. It is not enough to cut out; we must replace. We must discover those moral forces that men, down to the present time, have conceived of only under the form of religious allegories. We must disengage them from their symbols, present them in their rational nakedness, so to speak, and find a way to make the child feel their reality without recourse to any mythological intermediary. This is the first order of business: we want moral education to become rational and at the same time to produce all the results that should be expected from it.

These questions are not the only ones we face here. Not only must we see to it that morality, as it becomes rationalized, loses none of its basic elements; but it must, through the very fact of secularization, become enriched with new elements. The first transformation of which I have just spoken bore only on the form of our moral ideas. The foundation itself cannot stand without profound modifications. The

causes requiring the institution of a secular morality in education are too closely related to the foundation of our social organization for the content of morality itself—indeed, for the content of our duties—to remain unaffected. Indeed, if we have felt with greater force than our fathers the need for an entirely rational moral education, it is evidently because we are becoming more rationalistic.

Rationalism is only one of the aspects of individualism: it is the intellectual aspect of it. We are not dealing here with two different states of mind; each is the converse of the other. When one feels the need of liberating individual thought, it is because in a general way one feels the need of liberating the individual. Intellectual servitude is only one of the servitudes that individualism combats. All development of individualism has the effect of opening moral consciousness to new ideas and rendering it more demanding. Since every advance that it makes results in a higher conception, a more delicate sense of the dignity of man, individualism cannot be developed without making apparent to us as contrary to human dignity, as unjust, social relations that at one time did not seem unjust at all. Conversely, as a matter of fact, rationalistic faith reacts on individualistic sentiment and stimulates it. For injustice is unreasonable and absurd, and, consequently, we are the more sensitive to it as we are more sensitive to the rights of reason. Consequently, a given advance in moral education in the direction of greater rationality cannot occur without also bringing to light new moral tendencies, without inducing a greater thirst for justice, without stirring the public conscience by latent aspirations.

The educator who would undertake to rationalize education without foreseeing the development of new sentiments, without preparing that development, and directing it, would fail in one aspect of his task. That is why he cannot confine himself to commenting upon the old morality of our fathers. He must, in addition, help the younger generations to become conscious of the new ideal toward which they tend

confusedly. To orient them in that direction it is not enough for him to conserve the past; he must prepare the future.

Furthermore, it is on that condition alone that moral education fulfills its entire function. If we are satisfied with inculcating in children the body of mediocre moral ideas upon which humanity has been living for centuries, we could, to a certain extent, assure the private morality of individuals. But this is only the minimum condition of morality, and a nation cannot remain satisfied with it. For a great nation like ours to be truly in a state of moral health it is not enough for most of its members to be sufficiently removed from the grossest transgressions—murder, theft, fraud of all kinds.

A society in which there is pacific commerce between its members, in which there is no conflict of any sort, but which has nothing more than that would have a rather mediocre quality. Society must, in addition, have before it an ideal toward which it reaches. It must have some good to achieve, an original contribution to bring to the moral patrimony of mankind. Idleness is a bad counselor for collectivities as well as individuals. When individual activity does not know where to take hold, it turns against itself. When the moral forces of a society remain unemployed, when they are not engaged in some work to accomplish, they deviate from their moral sense and are used up in a morbid and harmful manner. Just as work is the more necessary to man as he is more civilized, similarly, the more the intellectual and moral organization of societies becomes elevated and complex, the more it is necessary that they furnish new nourishment for their increased activity.

A society like ours cannot, therefore, content itself with a complacent possession of moral results that have been handed down to it. It must go on to new conquests; it is necessary that the teacher prepare the children who are in his trust for those necessary advances. He must be on his guard against transmitting the moral gospel of our elders as a sort of closed book. On the contrary, he must excite in them

a desire to add a few lines of their own, and give them the tools to satisfy this legitimate ambition.

You can understand better now why I have said that the educational problem poses itself for us in a particularly pressing fashion. In thus expressing myself, I was thinking especially of our system of moral education which is, as you see, to be rebuilt very largely from top to bottom. We can no longer use the traditional system which, as a matter of fact, endured only because of a miracle of equilibrium and the force of habit. For a long time it had been resting on an insecure foundation. It was no longer resting on beliefs strong enough to enable it to take care of its functions effectively. But to replace it usefully, it is not enough to cancel out the old. It is not enough to trifle with certain external features of the system at the risk of jeopardizing what lies beneath. A complete recasting of our educational technique must now engage our efforts. For the inspiration of yesteryear—which, as a matter of fact would awaken in the hearts of men only feebler and feebler echoes—we must substitute a new inspiration. We must discover, in the old system, moral forces hidden in it, hidden under forms that concealed their intrinsic nature. We must make their true reality appear; and we must find what comes of them under present conditions, where even they themselves could not remain immutable. We must, furthermore, take into account the changes that the existence of rational moral education both presupposes and time generates. The task is much more complex than it could possibly appear at first glance. But this should neither surprise nor discourage us. On the contrary, the relative imperfection of certain results is thus explained by reasons that authorize better hopes. The idea of the progress remaining to be made, far from depressing us, can only urge us to more strenuous endeavor. We must resolve to face these difficulties. They become dangerous only when we try to hide them from ourselves and to sidestep them arbitrarily.

PART I

The Elements of Morality

☞ THE FIRST ELEMENT OF MORALITY: THE SPIRIT OF DISCIPLINE

WE CANNOT USEFULLY TREAT ANY TEACHING PROBLEM, WHATEVER it may be, except by starting where we are in time and space, i.e., with the conditions confronting the children with whom we are concerned.

In fulfilling this methodological requirement, I tried to emphasize in the last chapter the terms in which the problem of moral education is posed for us.

One can distinguish two stages in childhood: the first, taking place almost entirely within the family or the nursery school—a substitute for the family, as its name suggests; the second, in elementary school, when the child, beginning to leave the family circle, is initiated into a larger environment. This we call the second period of childhood; we shall focus on it in discussing moral education. This is indeed the critical moment in the formation of moral character. Before that, the child is still very young; his intellectual development is quite rudimentary and his emotional life is too simple and underdeveloped. He lacks the intellectual foundation necessary

for the relatively complex ideas and sentiments that undergird our morality. The limited boundaries of his intellectual horizon at the same time limit his moral conceptions. The only possible training at this stage is a very general one, an elementary introduction to a few simple ideas and sentiments.

On the other hand, if, beyond this second period of childhood—i.e., beyond school age—the foundations of morality have not been laid, they never will be. From this point on, all one can do is to complete the job already begun, refining sensibilities and giving them some intellectual content, i.e., informing them increasingly with intelligence. But the groundwork must have been laid. So we can appropriately fix our attention above all on this stage of development. Moreover, precisely because it is an intermediate stage, what we shall say may be readily applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the preceding and following stages. On the one hand, in order to show clearly the nature of moral education at this period, we shall be led to indicate how it completes, and carries on from, familial education; on the other hand, to understand what it must later become, it will suffice to project our thinking into the future, taking account of differences in age and situation.

However, this first specification of the problem is not enough. Not only shall I discuss here, at least in principle, only moral education during the second stage of childhood; but I shall limit my subject even more narrowly. I shall deal above all with moral education in this second stage in our public schools because, normally, the public schools are and should be the flywheel of national education. Furthermore, contrary to the all too popular notion that moral education falls chiefly within the jurisdiction of the family, I judge that the task of the school in the moral development of the child can and should be of the greatest importance. There is a whole aspect of the culture, and a most important one, which would otherwise be lost. For if it is the family that can

distinctively and effectively evoke and organize those homely sentiments basic to morality and—even more generally—those germane to the simplest personal relationships, it is not the agency so constituted as to train the child in terms of the demands of society. Almost by definition, as it were, it is an inappropriate agency for such a task.

Therefore, focusing our study on the school, we find ourselves precisely at the point that should be regarded as the locus, par excellence, of moral development for children of this age. We have committed ourselves to provide in our schools a completely rational moral education, that is to say, excluding all principles derived from revealed religion. Thus, the problem of moral education is clearly posed for us at this point in history.

I have shown not only that the task to be undertaken is possible but that it is necessary—that it is dictated by all historical development. But at the same time, I have emphasized the complexity of the task. These complications should not discourage us in the least. It is altogether natural that an undertaking of such importance should be difficult; only the mediocre and insignificant tasks are easy. There is, then, nothing to be gained in minimizing the magnitude of the task on which we are working, under pretext of reassuring ourselves.

It is worthier and more profitable to face up to the difficulties, which inevitably accompany such a great change. I have pointed out what these difficulties seem to me to be. In the first place, due to the close bond established historically between morality and religion, we can anticipate—since these are essential elements of morality never expressed save in religious guise—that if we begin to eliminate everything religious from the traditional system without providing any substitute, we run the risk of also eliminating essential moral ideas and sentiments. In the second place, a rational morality cannot have the same content as one that depends upon some authority other than reason. For the development of

rationalism does not come about without a parallel development of individualism and, consequently, without a refinement in moral sensitivity that makes certain social relations—the allocation of rights and obligations, which up to the present has not bothered our consciences—appear unjust. Furthermore, there is not only a parallel development between individualism and rationalism, but the latter reacts upon the former and stimulates it. The characteristic of injustice is that it is not founded in the nature of things; it is not based upon reason. Thus, it is inevitable that we shall become more sensitive to injustice in the measure that we respond to the authority of reason. It is not a trifling matter to stimulate free inquiry, to accord a new authority to reason; for the power thus granted cannot but turn against those traditions that persist only insofar as they are divorced from its influence. In undertaking to organize a rational education, we find ourselves confronted with two kinds, two series of problems, the one as compelling as the other. We must take care lest we impoverish morality in the process of rationalizing it; and we must anticipate the complications that it entails and prepare for them.

To attack the first problem, we must rediscover the moral forces basic to all moral life, that of yesterday as well as that of today, without a priori derogation of the former, even if up to the present that morality has only existed in religious guise. We have to seek out the rational expression of such a morality, that is to say, apprehend such morality in itself, in its genuine nature, stripped of all symbols. Secondly, once these moral forces are known, we have to investigate how they should develop and be oriented under present social conditions. Of these two problems, it is the former that, from all evidence, should first concern us. We must first determine, in their essentials, the basic elements of morality before investigating the changes that may be indicated.

To ask what the elements of morality are is not to under-

take a complete listing of all the virtues, or even of the most important. It involves an inquiry into fundamental dispositions, into those mental states at the root of the moral life. To influence the child morally is not to nurture in him a particular virtue, followed by another and still another; it is to develop and even to constitute completely, by appropriate methods, those general dispositions that, once created, adapt themselves readily to the particular circumstances of human life. If we are able to push through to their discovery, we shall at once have overcome one of the major obstacles confronting us in the work of our schools. What sometimes creates doubt about the effectiveness of the school in matters pertaining to the moral elements of culture is that these latter apparently involve such a host of ideas, sentiments, and customs that the teacher seems to lack the necessary time, in the few and fleeting moments when the child is under his influence, to awaken and develop them. There is such a diversity of virtues, even if one seeks to fasten on the most important, that if each of them must be at least partially developed, the dissipation of effort over such a large area must necessarily vitiate the enterprise.

To operate effectively, especially since influence can only be exerted during a brief period of time, one must have a definite and clearly specified goal. One must have an *idée fixe*, or a small number of definite ideas that serve as lodestar. Thus, our efforts, pushing always in the same direction, following the same paths, can achieve some results. One must desire strongly whatever he wishes; and few rather than many things. To provide the necessary drive for our educational efforts, we must therefore try to ferret out those basic sentiments that are the foundation of our moral dispositions.

How do we go about it? You are familiar with the way the moralists ordinarily handle this question. They commence with the principle that each of us carries within himself all the elements of morality. Hence, we have only to look inside

ourselves with a little care to discover the meaning of morality. So the moralist engages in introspective inquiry and, from amongst the ideas that he has more or less clearly in mind, seizes upon this one or that as seeming to represent the central notions of morality. For some, it is the idea of utility; for others, the notion of perfection; and for still others, it is the conception of human dignity, etc.

I do not wish to discuss at this point whether morality in its entirety resides in each person—whether each individual mind contains in itself all those elements that, simply in their development, constitute morality. Everything that follows leads us to a different conclusion, but we must not anticipate it here. To dispose of this currently fashionable approach I need only point out how subjective and arbitrary it is. After his self-interrogation, all that the moralist can state is his own conception of morality, the conception he has personally contrived. Why is this more objective than the quite unobjective vulgar notions of heat, or light, or electricity? Let us acknowledge that morality may be completely implicit in each mind. Nonetheless, one must know how to get at it. One must still know how to distinguish, amongst all our ideas, those within the province of morality and those that are not. Now, according to what criteria can we make such a distinction? What enables us to say: this is a matter of morality and this is not? Shall we say that that is moral which accords with man's nature? Suppose, then, that we knew quite certainly what man's nature was. What proves that the end of morality is to realize human nature—why might it not have as its function the satisfaction of social needs? Shall we substitute this idea for the other? But first, what justifies us in doing so? And what are the social interests that morality must protect? For such interests are of all sorts—economic, military, scientific, etc. We cannot base practice on such subjective hypotheses as these. We

cannot regulate the education that we owe our children on the basis of such purely academic conceptions.

Moreover, this method, to whatever conclusions it may lead, rests throughout on a single premise: that to develop morality empirical analysis is unnecessary. To determine what morality should be, it is apparently thought unnecessary first to inquire what it is or what it has been. People expect to legislate immediately. But whence this privilege? One hears it said today that we can know something of economic, legal, religious, and linguistic matters *only* if we begin by observing facts, analyzing them, comparing them. There is no reason why it should be otherwise with moral facts. On the other hand, one can inquire what morality ought to be only if one has first determined the complex of things that goes under this rubric, what its nature is, what ends it serves. Let us begin, then, by looking at morality as a fact, and let us see what we are actually able to understand by it.

In the first place, there is an aspect common to all behavior that we ordinarily call moral. All such behavior conforms to pre-established rules. To conduct one's self morally is a matter of abiding by a norm, determining what conduct should obtain in a given instance even before one is required to act. This domain of morality is the domain of duty; duty is prescribed behavior. It is not that the moral conscience is free of uncertainties. We know, indeed, that it is often perplexed, hesitating between alternatives. But then the problem is what is the particular rule that applies to the given situation, and how should it be applied? Since each rule is a general prescription, it cannot be applied exactly and mechanically in identical ways in each particular circumstance. It is up to the person to see how it applies in a given situation. There is always considerable, if limited, leeway left for his initiative. The essentials of conduct are determined by the rule. Furthermore, to the extent that the rule leaves us free, to the extent

that it does not prescribe in detail what we ought to do, the action being left to our own judgment, to that extent there is no moral valuation. We are not accountable precisely because of the freedom left us. Just as an action is not a crime in the usual and actual sense of the word when it is not forbidden by an established law, so when it is not contrary to a pre-established norm, it is not immoral. Thus, we can say that morality consists of a system of rules of action that predetermine conduct. They state how one must act in given situations; and to behave properly is to obey conscientiously.

This first statement, which verges on a common-sense observation, suffices nonetheless to highlight an important fact too often misunderstood. Most moralists, indeed, consider morality as entirely contained in a very general, unique formula. It is precisely on this account that they so readily accept the view that morality resides entirely in the individual conscience, and that a simple glance inside ourselves will be enough to reveal it. This formula is expressed in different ways: that of the Kantians is not that of the utilitarians, and each utilitarian moralist has his own. However, in whatever manner it is conceived, everyone assigns it the central position. All the rest of morality consists merely in applying this fundamental principle. This conception expresses the classical distinction between so-called theoretical and applied morality. The aim of the former is to specify the general law of morality; the latter, to investigate how the law thus enunciated should be applied in the major situations and combinations encountered in life. Thus, specific rules deduced by this method would not in themselves have an independent reality. They would only be extensions or corollaries of the general formula as it was reflected throughout the range of life experiences. Apply the general law of morality to various domestic relations and you will have family morality. Apply it to different political relationships and you will have civic

morality, etc. These would not be divers duties but a single, unique duty running like a guiding thread throughout life. Given the great diversity of situations and relationships, one can see how, from this point of view, the realm of morality seems quite indeterminate.

However, such a conception of morality reverses the real situation. If we see morality as it is, we see that it consists in an infinity of special rules, fixed and specific, which order man's conduct in those different situations in which he finds himself most frequently. Some define the desirable relationships between man and wife; others, the way parents should behave with their children; and still others, the relationships between person and property. Certain of these maxims are stated in law and sanctioned in clear-cut fashion; others are etched in the public conscience, expressing themselves in the aphorisms of popular morality, and sanctioned simply by the stigma attaching to their violation rather than by some definite punishment. But whether the one or the other, they have their own existence, their own life. The proof lies in the fact that certain of these rules may be found in a weakened state, while others, on the contrary, are altogether viable. In one country, the rules of familial morality may provide all the necessary stability, while the rules of civic virtue are weak and ineffective.

Here, then, are phenomena not only real, but also comparatively autonomous, since they can be realized in different ways depending upon the conditions of social life. This is a far cry from seeing here simple aspects of one and the same general principle that would embrace all their meaning and reality. Quite to the contrary, the general rule, however it has been or is conceived, does not constitute the reality but is a simple abstraction. There is no rule, no social prescription that is recognized or gains its sanction from Kant's moral imperative or from the law of utility as formulated by Bentham, Mill, or Spencer. These are the generalizations of

philosophers, the hypotheses of theoreticians. What people refer to as the general law of morality is quite simply a more or less exact way of representing approximately and schematically the moral reality; but it is not that reality itself. It is a more or less satisfactory shorthand statement of characteristics common to all moral rules; it is not a real, established, effective rule. It is to moral reality what philosophers' hypotheses, aimed at expressing the unity of nature, are to that nature itself. It is of the order of science, not of the order of life.

Thus, in fact and in practice, it is not according to theoretical insights or general formulae that we guide our conduct, but according to specific rules applying uniquely to the special situation that they govern. In all significant life situations, we do not refer back to the so-called general principle of morality to discover how it applies in a particular case and thus learn what we should do. Instead there are clear-cut and specific ways of acting required of us. When we conform to the rule prescribing chastity and forbidding incest, is it only because we deduce it from some fundamental axiom of morality? Suppose, as fathers, we find ourselves widowers charged with the entire responsibility of our family. We do not have to hark back to the ultimate source of morality, nor even to some abstract notion of paternity to deduce what conduct is implied in these circumstances. Law and the mores prescribe our conduct.

Thus, it is not necessary to represent morality as something very general, made concrete only to the extent it becomes necessary. On the contrary, morality is a totality of definite rules; it is like so many molds with limiting boundaries, into which we must pour our behavior. We do not have to construct these rules at the moment of action by deducing them from some general principles; they already exist, they are already made, they live and operate around us.

Now, this first statement is of primary importance for us.

It demonstrates that the function of morality is, in the first place, to determine conduct, to fix it, to eliminate the element of individual arbitrariness. Doubtless the content of moral precepts—that is to say, the nature of the prescribed behavior—also has moral value, and we shall discuss this. However, since all such precepts promote regularity of conduct among men, there is a moral aspect in that these actions—not only in their specific content, but in a general way—are held to a certain regularity. This is why transients and people who cannot hold themselves to specific jobs are always suspect. It is because their moral temperament is fundamentally defective—because it is most uncertain and undependable. Indeed, in refusing to yield to the requirements of regularized conduct, they disdain all customary behavior, they resist limitations or restrictions, they feel some compulsion to remain “free.” This indeterminate situation also implies a state of endless instability. Such people are subject to momentary impulses, to the disposition of the moment, to whatever notion is in mind at the moment when they must act, since they lack habits sufficiently strong to prevent present inclinations from prevailing over the past. Doubtless it may happen that a fortunate impulse prompts them to a happy decision; but it is a situation by no means guaranteed to repeat itself. Morality is basically a constant thing, and so long as we are not considering an excessively long time span, it remains ever the same. A moral act ought to be the same tomorrow as today, whatever the personal predispositions of the actor. Morality thus presupposes a certain capacity for behaving similarly under like circumstances, and consequently it implies a certain ability to develop habits, a certain need for regularity. So close is the connection between custom and moral behavior that all social customs almost inevitably have a moral character. When a mode of behavior has become customary in a group, whatever deviates from it elicits a wave of disapproval very like that evoked by moral trans-

gressions. Customs share in some way the special respect accorded moral behavior. If all social customs are not moral, all moral behavior is customary behavior. Consequently, whoever resists the customary runs the risk of defying morality.

Regularity, however, is only one element of morality. This same conception of the rule when carefully analyzed will disclose another and no less important feature of morality.

To assure regularity, it is only necessary that customs be strongly founded. But customs, by definition, are forces internalized in the person. It is a kind of accumulated experience within us that unfolds itself, activated, as it were, spontaneously. Internalized, it expresses itself externally as an inclination or a preference. Quite to the contrary, a rule is essentially something that is outside the person. We cannot conceive of it save as an order—or at least as binding advice—which originates outside ourselves. Is it a matter of rules of hygiene? They come to us from the science that decrees them, or, more specifically, from the experts representing that science. Does it concern rules of professional practice? They come to us from the tradition of the profession and, more directly, from those among our elders who have passed them on to us and who best exemplify them in our eyes. It is for this reason that, through the centuries, people have seen in the rules of morality directives deriving from God.

A rule is not then a simple matter of habitual behavior; it is a way of acting that we do not feel free to alter according to taste. It is in some measure—and to the same extent that it is a rule—beyond personal preference. There is in it something that resists us, is beyond us. We do not determine its existence or its nature. It is independent of what we are. Rather than expressing us, it dominates us. If it were entirely an internal thing, like a sentiment or a habit, there would be no reason why it should not conform to all the variations and fluctuations of our internal states. Of course, we do set for ourselves a line of conduct, and we say, then, that we

have set up rules of conduct of such and such a sort. But the word so used generally lacks its full meaning. A plan of action that we ourselves outline, which depends only upon ourselves and that we can always modify is a project, not a rule. Or, if in fact it is to some extent truly independent of our will, it must rest in the same degree on something other than our will—on something external to us. For example, we adopt a given mode of life because it carries the authority of science; the authority of science legitimates it. It is to the science that we defer, in our behavior, and not to ourselves. It is to science that we bend our will.

Thus, we see in these examples what there is in the conception of rules beyond the notion of regularity: *the idea of authority*. By authority, we must understand that influence which imposes upon us all the moral power that we acknowledge as superior to us. Because of this influence, we act in prescribed ways, not because the required conduct is attractive to us, not because we are so inclined by some predisposition either innate or acquired, but because there is some compelling influence in the authority dictating it. Obedience consists in such acquiescence. What are the mental processes at the bottom of this notion of authority, which create this compelling force to which we submit? This we shall have to investigate presently. For the moment, the question is not germane; it is enough if we have the feeling of the thing and of its reality. There is in every moral force that we feel as above or beyond ourselves something that bends our wills. In one sense, one can say that there is no rule, properly speaking, which does not have this imperative character in some degree, because, once again, every rule commands. It is this that makes us feel that we are not free to do as we wish.

Morality, however, constitutes a category of rules where the idea of authority plays an absolutely preponderant role. Part of the esteem we accord to principles of hygiene or of professional practice or various precepts drawn from folk

wisdom doubtless stems from the authority accorded science and experimental research. Such a wealth of knowledge and human experience, by itself, imposes on us a respect that communicates itself to the bearers, just as the deference accorded by the devout to things religious is communicated to priests. But, in all these cases, if we abide by the rule it is not only out of deference to the authority that is its source; it is also because the prescribed behavior may very well have useful consequences, whereas contrary behavior would entail harmful results. If, when we are sick, we take care of ourselves, following the doctor's orders, it is not only out of deference to his authority, but also because we hope thus to recover. There is involved here, therefore, a feeling other than respect for authority. There enter quite utilitarian considerations, which are intrinsic to the nature of the act and to its outcomes, possible or probable.

It is quite otherwise with morality. Without doubt, if we violate rules of morality we risk unhappy consequences: we may be blamed, blacklisted, or materially hurt—either in person or our property. But it is a certain and incontestable fact that an act is not moral, even when it is in substantial agreement with moral rules, if the consideration of adverse consequences has determined it. Here, for the act to be everything it should be, for the rule to be obeyed as it ought to be, it is necessary for us to yield, not in order to avoid disagreeable results or some moral or material punishment, but very simply because we ought to, regardless of the consequences our conduct may have for us. One must obey a moral precept out of respect for it and for this reason alone. All the leverage that it exerts upon our wills derives exclusively from the authority with which it is invested. Thus, in the case of moral rules, authority operates alone; to the extent that any other element enters into conduct, to that extent it loses its moral character. We are saying, then, that while all rules command, the moral rule consists entirely in a com-

mandment and in nothing else. That is why the moral rule speaks to us with such authority—why, when it speaks, all other considerations must be subordinated. It permits no equivocation. When it is a matter of evaluating the ultimate consequences of an act, uncertainty is inevitable—there is always something indeterminate in the outcome. So many diverse combinations of circumstance can produce outcomes we are unable to foresee. But when it is a matter of duty, since all such calculation is forbidden, it is easier to be sure: all problems are simpler. It is not a matter of anticipating a future inevitably obscure and uncertain. It is a matter of knowing what is prescribed. If duty speaks there is nothing to do but obey. As to the source of this extraordinary authority, I shall not inquire for the time being. I shall content myself with pointing out its incontestable existence.

Morality is not, then, simply a system of customary conduct. It is a system of commandments. We were saying, first of all, that irregular behavior is morally incomplete. So it is with the anarchist. (I use the word in its etymological sense, referring to the man so constituted as not to feel the reality of moral imperatives, the man who is affected by a kind of color-blindness, by virtue of which all moral and intellectual forces seem to him of the same order.) Here we confront another aspect of morality: at the root of the moral life there is, besides the preference for regularity, the notion of moral authority. Furthermore, these two aspects of morality are closely linked, their unity deriving from a more complex idea that embraces both of them. This is the concept of discipline. Discipline in effect regularizes conduct. It implies repetitive behavior under determinate conditions. But discipline does not emerge without authority—a regulating authority. Therefore, to summarize this chapter, we can say that the fundamental element of morality is the spirit of discipline.

However, let us be clear about the meaning of this proposition. Ordinarily, discipline appears useful only because it

entails behavior that has useful outcomes. Discipline is only a means of specifying and imposing the required behavior, so it derives its *raison d'être* from the behavior. But if the preceding analysis is correct we must say that discipline derives its *raison d'être* from itself; it is good that man is disciplined, independent of the acts to which he thus finds himself constrained. Why? It is all the more necessary to consider this problem, since discipline and rules often appear as constraining—necessary, perhaps, but nonetheless deplorable evils that one must know how to bear while reducing them to a minimum. What, then, makes discipline good? We shall consider this in the next chapter.

☪ THE SPIRIT OF DISCIPLINE

(Continued)

IN THE LAST CHAPTER WE BEGAN TO INQUIRE INTO THE BASIC properties of the moral temperament, since they must provide the points of leverage for the teacher. We called these the essential elements of morality. In order to understand these essentials, we set ourselves to observe morality from the outside, the way it exists and functions, as we constantly see it about us in the behavior of men. This we have done in order to sort out the genuinely essential elements within the manifold forms in which morality presents itself. That is to say, we sought out those characteristics of moral behavior that, throughout the diversity of man's particular duties, are everywhere the same. Obviously, what is truly basic to morality are those dispositions that prompt us to act morally, not in such and such a particular instance, but generally in men's relationships with one another.

Considered from this point of view, morality may seem at first, in its formal and external aspects, to be of no great significance for us. But morality, not only the sort we practice daily but also what we see in history, consists in the sum of definite and special rules that imperatively determine conduct. Now, from this first proposition there immediately

flows as corollary a double consequence. First, since morality determines, fixes, regularizes man's conduct, it presupposes a certain disposition in the individual for a regular existence—a preference for regularity. Obligations are regular, they recur—always the same, uniformly, monotonously the same. Duties are not fulfilled intermittently in a blaze of glory. Genuine obligations are daily ones and the ordinary course of one's life entails their regular performance. Those, then, whose preference for change and diversity prompts a revulsion at all uniformity are certainly in danger of being morally incomplete. Regularity is the moral analogue of periodicity in the organism.

Secondly, since moral requirements are not merely another name for personal habits, since they determine conduct imperatively from sources outside ourselves, in order to fulfill one's obligations and to act morally one must have some appreciation of the authority *sui generis* that informs morality. In other words, it is necessary that the person be so constituted as to feel above him a force unqualified by his personal preferences and to which he yields. We have seen, furthermore, that if this sense of authority constitutes a part of that force with which all rules of conduct, whatever they may be, impose themselves upon us, then authority has an extremely significant function; for here it acts independently. No other feeling or consideration is involved in the moral act. It is in the nature of rules that they are to be obeyed, not because of the behavior they require or the probable consequences of such behavior, but simply because they command. Thus, it is only their authority that accounts for such efficacy as rules may have; consequently, any inability to feel and to recognize such authority wherever it exists—or to demur when it is recognized—is precisely a negation of genuine morality. Doubtless when, as we do, we cut off recourse to theological conceptions justifying the requirements of moral life, we may at first find it surprising that a strictly

human conception may exert such an extraordinary influence. But the fact, in itself, is indisputable. We have only to open our eyes to it, as we shall see later when we present an example that will clarify matters. Thus, we assert this second element of morality.

But you have seen that these two elements are basically only one. The meanings of regularity and of authority constitute but two aspects of a single complex state of being that may be described as the spirit of discipline. Here, then, is the first basic element of all moral temperament—the spirit of discipline.

Such a conclusion, however, affronts a widespread human sentiment. Moral discipline has just been presented as a sort of good-in-itself; it certainly seems as though it ought to be of some worth, in and of itself, since we must obey its dictates, not because of the deeds we are required to perform, or their importance, but simply because it commands us. But one tends, rather, to see here a constraint, perhaps necessary, but always troublesome; an evil to which one must resign one's self—since it is inevitable—but which one should also try to reduce to a minimum. Indeed, is not discipline—all discipline—essentially a restraint, a limitation imposed on man's behavior? But to limit, to restrain—this is to deny, to impede the process of living and thus partially to destroy; and all destruction is evil. If life is good, how can it be good to bridle it, to constrain it, to impose limits that it cannot overcome? If life is not good, what is there of worth in the world? To be is to act, to live, and any reduction of life is a diminution of being. He who says discipline says constraint, whether physical or spiritual makes no difference.

Does not all constraint, by definition, do violence to the nature of things? It was just such reasoning that led Bentham to see in law an evil scarcely tolerable, which could only be reasonably justified when it was clearly indispensable. However, because a person's continuing activities involve those

of others, and because in the encounter there is the danger of conflict, it becomes necessary to specify fair limits of conduct that must not be transgressed. But such limitation is in itself an abnormal thing. For Bentham, morality, like law, involved a kind of pathology. Most of the classical economists were of the same view. And doubtless the influence of the same viewpoint has led the major socialist theoreticians to deem a society without systematic regulation both possible and desirable. The notion of an authority dominating life and administering law seemed to them to be an archaic idea, a prejudice that could not persist. It is life itself that makes its own laws. There could be nothing above or beyond it.

Thus, one is led to enjoin man to develop, not a preference for balance and moderation, some feeling for moral limits—which is only another aspect of the sense of moral authority—but to an altogether contradictory view, that is, an impatience with all restraint and limitation, the desire to encourage unrestrained and infinite appetite. Man, it seems, is cribbed and confined when he has not a limitless horizon before him. Doubtless we know very well that we will never be in a position to achieve such a goal: but apparently such a perspective, at least, is essential, since it alone can provide us with a sense of the fullness of life. From such reasoning derives the veneration that so many nineteenth-century writers accorded the notion of the infinite. Here we have the lofty sentiment *par excellence*, since by means of it man elevates himself beyond all the limits imposed by nature and liberates himself, at least ideally, from all restrictions that might diminish him.

A given teaching method may become totally transformed depending on the way in which it is carried out; it is carried out quite differently depending on the way in which it is conceived. Thus, discipline will produce quite different outcomes according to one's conception of its nature and func-

tion for life in general and for education in particular. We must, therefore, try to specify its function and not leave unanswered the important question it poses. Must one view discipline simply as an external, palpable police force, whose single *raison d'être* is to prevent certain behaviors and which, beyond such preventive action, has no other function? Or, on the contrary, may it not be, as our analysis leads us to suppose, a means *sui generis* of moral education, having an intrinsic value which places its own special imprint upon moral character?

In the first place, it is easy to show that discipline has a social usefulness in and of itself, quite apart from the behaviors it prescribes. In effect, social life is only one of the forms of organized life; all living organization presupposes determinate rules, and to neglect them is to invite serious disturbance. To endure, social life must be so constituted at each moment in time as to be able to respond to the exigencies of the environment; for life cannot suspend itself without death or illness intervening. If it were necessary for a living being to grope *de novo* for an appropriate response to every stimulus from the environing situation, threats to its integrity from many sources would promptly effect its disorganization. This is why, with respect to that which is most vital, the reaction of an organ is predetermined; certain modes of behaving necessarily recur under similar circumstances. This is what one refers to as the function of the organ. Social life is subject to the same imperatives, and regularity is no less indispensable for it. At each point in time, it is necessary that the functioning of familial, vocational, and civic life be assured; to this end, it is altogether necessary that the person be free from an incessant search for appropriate conduct. Norms must be established which determine what proper relationships are, and to which people conform. Deference to established norms is the stuff of our daily duties.

However, such an analysis and justification of discipline is scarcely sufficient. For we cannot account for an institution simply by demonstrating its social utility. Beyond this, it must not encounter insuperable resistance in people. If it does violence to human nature, however socially useful it may be, it will never be born, much less persist since it cannot take root in the conscience. True, social institutions are directed toward society's interests and not those of individuals as such. But, on the other hand, if such institutions threaten or disorganize the individual life at its source, they also disorganize the foundation of their own existence.

We have observed that discipline has often been viewed as a violation of man's natural constitution, since it impedes his unrestricted development. Is this contention sound? Quite to the contrary, an inability to restrict one's self within determinate limits is a sign of disease—with respect to all forms of human conduct and, even more generally, for all kinds of biological behavior. With a certain amount of nourishment a normal man is no longer hungry: it is the bulimiac who cannot be satisfied. Healthy and normally active people enjoy walking; but a mentally deranged walker exhibits a need to go on indefinitely without surcease, without rest or the prospect of repose. Even more general sentiments, such as love of animals—even love of others—when they go beyond a certain point provide indubitable evidence of alienation. It is normal that man should love others and be fond of animals, but only on the condition that neither affection exceed certain limits. If such sentiments develop to the detriment of other feelings it is a sign of derangement, the pathological character of which is well known to clinicians. But one might object that if one satisfies his hunger with a limited quantity of food, it does not follow that one can satiate his intellect with a determinate quantity of knowledge. This is a mistake. At any moment in time the knowledge normally required is narrowly circumscribed by a complex of

conditions. First of all, we cannot lead a more vigorous intellectual life than that which is compatible with the condition and over-all development of our central nervous system at that point in time. If we try to go beyond this limit, the foundations of our mental life will be disrupted, and, as a result, the mental life itself. Furthermore, understanding is only one of our psychic functions. Along with purely symbolic faculties there are active ones. If the first are excessively developed, the others will inevitably be atrophied, resulting in an altogether unhealthy inability to take action. In order to get through life we have to accept many things without contriving a scientific rationale for them. If we insist on a reason for everything all our capacities for reasoning and responding are scarcely enough for the perpetual "why." This is what characterizes those abnormal subjects whom the doctors call *douteurs*. What we are saying about intellectual activity holds equally for aesthetic behavior. A nation insensitive to the joys of art is a nation of barbarians. On the other hand, when art comes to play an excessive part in the life of a people, subordinating in the same measure the serious things of life, then its days are numbered.

Thus, in order to live, we have to confront the multiple requirements of life with a limited reserve of vital energy. The amount of energy that we can and should devote to achieving each particular goal is necessarily limited. It is limited by the sum total of the strength at our disposal and the relative significance of the ends we pursue. All life is thus a complex equilibrium whose various elements limit one another; this balance cannot be disrupted without producing unhappiness or illness. Moreover, those activities in whose favor the equilibrium is disrupted become a source of pain for the person—and for the same reason: the disproportionate development accorded them. A need, a desire freed of all restraints, and all rules, no longer geared to some determinate objective and, through this same connection, limited and

contained, can be nothing but a source of constant anguish for the person experiencing it. What gratification, indeed, can such a desire yield, since by definition it is incapable of being satisfied? An insatiable thirst cannot be slaked. If certain actions are to give us pleasure, we must feel that they serve some purpose, that is to say, bring us progressively closer to the goal we seek. One cannot bring some objective nearer that, by definition, is infinitely far away. The remaining distance is always the same, whatever route we take. What could be more disillusioning than to proceed toward a terminal point that is nonexistent, since it recedes in the same measure that one advances? Such futile effort is simply marching in place; it cannot fail to leave behind frustration and discouragement. This is why historical periods like ours, which have known the malady of infinite aspiration, are necessarily touched with pessimism. Pessimism always accompanies unlimited aspirations. Goethe's Faust may be regarded as representing par excellence this view of the infinite. And it is not without reason that the poet has portrayed him as laboring in continual anguish.

In order to have a full sense of self-realization, man, far from needing to see limitless horizons unrolling before him, in reality finds nothing as unhappy as the indeterminate reach of such a prospect. Far from needing to feel that he confronts a career without any definite terminus, he can only be happy when involved in definite and specific tasks. This limitation by no means implies, however, that man must arrive at some fixed position where ultimately he finds tranquillity. In intermittent steps one can pass from one special task to others equally specific, without drowning in the dissolving sense of limitlessness. The important thing is that behavior have a clear-cut objective, which may be grasped and which limits and determines it.

Now, any force unopposed by some contrary one necessarily tends to lose itself in the infinite. Just as a body of gas, pro-

vided no other matter resists its expansion, fills the immensity of space, so all energy—whether physical or moral—tends to extend itself without limit so long as nothing intervenes to stop it. Hence the need for regulatory organs, which constrain the total complex of our vital forces within appropriate limits. The nervous system has this function for our physical being. This system actuates the organs and allocates whatever energy is required by each of them. But the moral life escapes the physical system. Neither our brain nor any ganglion can assign limits to our intellectual aspirations or to our wills. For mental life, especially in its more developed forms, transcends the organism. Of course, mental life presupposes man's organic make-up, but the link between the two is a rather tenuous one. Moreover, the connection between them becomes looser and more indirect the more developed the intellectual life. Sensations and physical appetites express only the condition of the body, not ideas and complex sentiments. Only a power that is equally spiritual is able to exert influence upon spiritual forces. This spiritual power resides in the authority inherent in moral rules.

Thanks to the authority vested in them, moral rules are genuine forces, which confront our desires and needs, our appetites of all sorts, when they promise to become immoderate. Clearly, such forces are not material things but if they do not influence the body directly, they do activate the spirit. They contain in themselves everything necessary to bend the will, to contain and constrain it, to incline it in such and such a direction. One can say literally that they are forces. We certainly feel them as such every time we undertake to act contrary to their dictates for they present resistance that we cannot always overcome. When a normally constituted man tries to behave in a way repugnant to morality, he feels something that stops him just as clearly as when he tries to lift a weight too heavy for him. What is the source of this remarkable quality? Once again, this is a problem that we

defer for the present, but will return to in due time. For the present, we restrict ourselves to the mere statement of the fact, which is indisputable.

On the other hand, since morality is a discipline, since it commands us, it is evident that the behavior required of us is not according to the bent of our individual natures. If morality merely bid us follow our individual natures, it need not speak to us in an imperative tone. Authority is necessary only to halt, to contain rebellious forces, not to encourage existing forces to develop in their own way. It has been said that the function of morality is to prevent the individual from encroaching on forbidden territory; in a sense, nothing is more accurate. Morality is a comprehensive system of prohibitions. That is to say, its objective is to limit the range within which individual behavior should and must normally occur.

We now see what end is served by this necessary limitation. The totality of moral regulations really forms about each person an imaginary wall, at the foot of which a multitude of human passions simply die 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, human forces—until now restrained—pour tumultuously through the open breach; once loosed, they find no limits where they can or must stop. Unfortunately, they can only devote themselves to the pursuit of an end that always eludes them. For example, should the rules of conjugal morality lose their authority, should husband-wife obligations be less respected, should passions and appetites ruled by this sector of morality unleash themselves, being even exacerbated by this same release, then, powerless to fulfill themselves because they have been emancipated from all limitations, such passions would entail a disillusionment which translates itself graphically into statistics of suicide. Again, should that morality governing economic life be shaken, and were the ambitions for gain to become excited and inflamed, knowing

no 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 an increment of strength to our desires, which 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 glimpse the nature and source of this malady of infiniteness which we suffer in our day. For man to imagine that he has before him boundless, free, and open space, he must no longer see this moral barrier, which under normal conditions would cut off his view. He must no longer feel 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 measure of authority, because they are weakened, because they are no longer what they ought to be. The notion of the infinite, then, appears only at those times when moral discipline has lost its ascendancy over man's will. It is the sign of the attrition that emerges during periods when the moral system, prevailing for several centuries, is shaken, failing to respond to new conditions of human life, and without any new system yet contrived to replace that which has disappeared.

Thus, we should not see in the discipline to which we subject children a means of constraint necessary only when it seems indispensable for preventing culpable conduct. Discipline is in itself a factor, *sui generis*, of education. There are certain essential elements of moral character that can be attributed only to discipline. Through it and by means of it alone are we able to teach the child to rein in his desires, to set limits to his appetites of all kinds, to limit and, through limitation, to define the goals of his activity. This limitation

is the condition of happiness and of moral health. Certainly the necessary limitation varies according to country and time; it is not the same at different stages in the life career. To the extent that man's mental life develops, in the degree that it becomes more strenuous and complex, in that same measure it becomes necessary that the realm of moral activity be extended. In matters of science, art, or welfare, we can no longer rest content as easily as our fathers did. The educator then will run counter to the aims of discipline if he attempts artificially to restrict its limits. But if discipline must vary, and if one must take account of such variations, it is nonetheless necessary that it exist; and this, for the moment, is all that I wish to establish.

One may perhaps inquire if such happiness is not dearly purchased. Is it not true that to impose any limits upon our faculties is, by the nature of things, a reduction of power? Does not all limitation imply subordination? It seems, then, that any circumscribed activity can only be less valuable, as well as less free and self-determining. Such a conclusion seems to impose itself as a truism. In fact, it is only an illusion of common sense, and on a little reflection it can easily be shown that, quite to the contrary, total and absolute power is only another name for extreme impotence.

Imagine a being liberated from all external restraint, a despot still more absolute than those of which history tells us, a despot that no external power can restrain or influence. By definition, the desires of such a being are irresistible. Shall we say, then, that he is all-powerful? Certainly not, since he himself cannot resist his desires. They are masters of him, as of everything else. He submits to them; he does not dominate them. In a word, when the inclinations are totally liberated, when nothing sets bounds to them, they themselves become tyrannical, and their first slave is precisely the person who experiences them. What a sad picture this presents. Following one upon the other, the most contradictory inclina-

tions, the most antithetical whims, involve the so-called absolute sovereign in the most incompatible feelings, until finally this apparent omnipotence dissolves into genuine impotence. A despot is like a child; he has a child's weaknesses because he is not master of himself. Self-mastery is the first condition of all true power, of all liberty worthy of the name. One cannot be master of himself when he has within him forces that, by definition, cannot be mastered. For the same reason, political parties that are too strong—those that do not have to take account of fairly strong minorities—cannot last long. It is not long to their downfall, simply because of their excess power. Since there is nothing to restrain them, they inevitably go to violent extremes, which are self destroying. A party that is too strong escapes itself and is no longer able to control itself because it is too powerful. The "*Chambres Introuvables*" kill the very doctrines whose triumph they seem at first to proclaim.*

But, you will say, is it not possible for us to control ourselves through our own individual efforts, without the constant leverage of some external pressure upon us? Certainly, and this capacity for self-control is itself one of the chief powers that education should develop. But in order to set limits ourselves, we must feel the reality of these limits. Someone who was, or believed himself to be, without limits, either in fact or by right, could not dream of limiting himself without being inconsistent; it would do violence to his nature. Internal restraint can only be a reflection, an internal expression of external restraint. The physical milieu that constrains us reminds us that we are only part of a totality surrounding and limiting us; similarly, concerning the moral life, there are only moral forces that can exert on us like influence and

* Translator's footnote: This is an ironical designation for the parliament elected after the return of the Bourbons in 1815. The parliament was so rigged that it offered no resistance to a reactionary administration; and the opposition kept asking: where is the Chamber? where is the parliament?

provide this same feeling. What these moral forces are we have indicated.

So we come to this important conclusion. Moral discipline not only buttresses the moral life, properly speaking; its influence extends further. In effect, it follows—as we have just seen—that it performs an important function in forming character and personality in general. In fact, the most essential element of character is this capacity for restraint or—as they say—of inhibition, which allows us to contain our passions, our desires, our habits, and subject them to law.

The individual human being is someone who can leave his imprint upon everything he does, a mark appropriate to himself, constant through time and by means of which he recognizes himself as distinct from all others. But insofar as our inclinations, instincts, and desires lack any counterbalance, insofar as our conduct hangs on the relative intensity of uncontrolled dispositions, these dispositions are gusts of wind, erratic stop-start affairs characteristic of children and primitives, which as they endlessly split the will against itself, dissipate it on the winds of caprice and preclude its gaining the unity and continuity that are the essential preconditions of personality. It is precisely in this development of self mastery that we build up moral discipline. It teaches us not to act in response to those transient whims, bringing our behavior willy-nilly to the level of its natural inclinations. It teaches us that conduct involves effort; that it is moral action only when we restrict some inclination, suppress some appetite, moderate some tendency. At the same time, just as any rule about anything that is relatively fixed or invariable stands above all individual caprice, and as moral rules are still more invariable than all the others, to learn to act morally is also to learn conduct that is orderly, conduct that follows enduring principles and transcends the fortuitous impulse and suggestion. Thus, will is generally formed in the school of duty.

☛ THE SPIRIT OF DISCIPLINE
 (*Concluded*); AND THE SECOND
 ELEMENT OF MORALITY:
 ATTACHMENT TO SOCIAL GROUPS

HAVING ASCERTAINED THE FIRST ELEMENT OF MORALITY, WE inquired into its function in order to specify its bearing on the training of the child. Morality, we have said, is basically a discipline. All discipline has a double objective: to promote a certain regularity in people's conduct, and to provide them with determinate goals that at the same time limit their horizons. Discipline promotes a preference for the customary, and it imposes restrictions. It regularizes and it constrains. It answers to whatever is recurrent and enduring in men's relationships with one another. Since social life has certain commonalities, since the same combination of circumstances recurs periodically, it is natural that certain modes of action—those found to be most in accord with the nature of things—also repeat themselves with the same regularity. It is the relative regularity of the various situations in which

we find ourselves that implies the relative regularity of our behavior.

The practical reason for the limitations imposed by discipline are not so immediately apparent. It seems to imply a violence against human nature. To limit man, to place obstacles in the path of his free development, is this not to prevent him from fulfilling himself? But we have seen that this limitation is a condition of our happiness and moral health. Man, in fact, is made for life in a determinate, limited environment, however extended it may be; the sum total of his life activities is aimed at adapting to this milieu or adapting it to his needs. Thus, the behavior required of us shares in this same determination. To live is to put ourselves in harmony with the physical world surrounding us and with the social world of which we are members; however extended their realms, they are nevertheless limited. The goals we normally seek are equally delimited, and we are not free to transcend the limits without placing ourselves at odds with nature. At each moment of time, our hopes, our feelings of all sorts must be within bounds. The function of discipline is to guarantee such restraint. If such necessary limits are lacking, if the moral forces surrounding us can no longer contain or moderate our passions, human conduct—being no longer constrained—loses itself in the void, the emptiness of which is disguised and adorned with the specious label of the infinite.

Discipline is thus useful, not only in the interests of society and as the indispensable means without which regular co-operation would be impossible, but for the welfare of the individual himself. By means of discipline we learn the control of desire without which man could not achieve happiness. Hence, it even contributes in large measure to the development of that which is of fundamental importance for each of us: our personality. The capacity for containing our inclinations, for restraining ourselves—the ability that

we acquire in the school of moral discipline—is the indispensable condition for the emergence of reflective, individual will. The rule, because it teaches us to restrain and master ourselves, is a means of emancipation and of freedom. Above all, in democratic societies like ours is it essential to teach the child this wholesome self-control. For, since in some measure the conventional restraints are no longer effective—barriers which in societies differently organized rigorously restrict people's desires and ambitions—there remains only moral discipline to provide the necessary regulatory influence. Because, in principle, all vocations are available to everybody, the drive to get ahead is more readily stimulated and inflamed beyond all measure to the point of knowing almost no limits.

Education must help the child understand at an early point that, beyond certain contrived boundaries that constitute the historical framework of justice, there are limits based on the nature of things, that is to say, in the nature of each of us. This has nothing to do with insidiously inculcating a spirit of resignation in the child; or curbing his legitimate ambitions; or preventing him from seeing the conditions existing around him. Such proposals would contradict the very principles of our social system. But he must be made to understand that the way to be happy is to set proximate and realizable goals, corresponding to the nature of each person and not to attempt to reach objectives by straining neurotically and unhappily toward infinitely distant and consequently inaccessible goals. Without trying to hide the injustices of the world—injustices that always exist—we must make the child appreciate that he cannot rely for happiness upon unlimited power, knowledge, or wealth; but that it can be found in very diverse situations, that each of us has his sorrows as well as his joys, that the important thing is to discover a goal compatible with one's abilities, one which allows him to realize his nature without seeking to surpass it in some manner, thrusting it violently and arti-

ficially beyond its natural limits. There is a whole cluster of mental attitudes that the school should help the child acquire, not because they are in the interests of this or that regime, but because they are sound and will have the most fortunate influence on the general welfare. Let us suggest, further, that moral forces guard against forces of brutality and ignorance. Finally, we must not see in the preference for control certain indescribable tendencies toward stagnation. To move toward clear-cut objectives, one after another, is to move ahead in uninterrupted fashion and not to be immobilized. It is not a matter of knowing whether one must move or not, but at what speed and in what fashion.

Thus, we come to the point of justifying discipline rationally, in terms of its utility, as well as the more obvious aspects of morality. However, we must note that our conception of its function is altogether different from that of certain recognized apologists. In fact, it often happens that, to demonstrate the beneficent results of morality, such apologists rely on a principle that I have criticized: they invoke the support of those who see in discipline only a regrettable, if necessary, evil. Like Bentham and the utilitarians, they take it as self-evident that discipline does violence to human nature; but, rather than concluding that such opposition to man's nature is evil, they consider that it is good because they judge man's nature to be evil. From this point of view, nature is the cause, the flesh is the source of sin and evil. It is not given to man, then, to develop his nature but, on the contrary, he must triumph over it, he must vanquish it, silence its demands. It only provides him the occasion for a beautiful struggle, an heroic effort against himself. Discipline is precisely the means of this victory. Such is the ascetic conception of discipline as it is preached by certain religions.

The idea I have proposed to you is quite otherwise. If we believe that discipline is useful, indeed necessary for the individual, it is because it seems to us demanded by nature

itself. It is the way in which nature realizes itself normally, not a way of minimizing or destroying nature. Like everything else, man is a limited being: he is part of a whole. Physically, he is part of the universe; morally, he is part of society. Hence, he cannot, without violating his nature, try to supersede the limits imposed on every hand. Indeed, everything that is most basic in him partakes of this quality of partialness or particularity. To say that one is a person is to say that he is distinct from all others; this distinction implies limitation. If, then, from our point of view, discipline is good, it is not that we regard the work of nature with a rebellious eye, or that we see here a diabolical scheme that must be foiled; but that man's nature cannot be itself except as it is disciplined. If we deem it essential that natural inclinations be held within certain bounds, it is not because that nature seems to us bad, or because we would deny the right to gratification; on the contrary, it is because otherwise such natural inclinations could have no hope of the satisfaction they merit. Thus, there follows this first practical consequence: asceticism is not good in and of itself.

From this first difference between the two conceptions, others may be derived that are no less significant. If discipline is a means through which man realizes his nature, it must change as that nature changes through time. To the extent of historical progress and as a result of civilization, human nature becomes stronger and more vigorous with greater need of expression; this is why it is normal for the range of human activity to expand for the boundaries of our intellectual, moral, and emotional horizons always to roll farther away. Hence, the arrogance of systems of thought—whether artistic, scientific, or in the realm of human welfare—which would prohibit us from going beyond the points reached by our fathers, or would wish us to return there. The normal boundary line is in a state of continual becoming, and any doctrine which, under the authority of absolute

principles, would undertake to fix it immutably, once and for all, must sooner or later run up against the force of the changing nature of things.

Not only does the content of discipline change, but also the way it is and should be inculcated. Not only does man's range of behavior change, but the forces that set limits are not absolutely the same at different historical periods. In the lower societies, since social organization is very simple, morality takes on the same character; consequently, it is neither necessary nor even possible that the nature of discipline be clearly elucidated. This same simplicity of moral behavior makes it easy to transform such behavior into habits, mechanically carried out; under these conditions, such automatism poses no difficulties. Since social life is quite self-consistent, differing but little from one place to another, or from one moment in time to another, custom and unreflective tradition are quite adequate. Indeed, custom and tradition have such power and prestige as to leave no place for reasoning and questioning.

On the other hand, the more societies become complex, the more difficult for morality to operate as a purely automatic mechanism. Circumstances are never the same, and as a result the rules of morality require intelligence in their application. Society is continually evolving; morality itself must be sufficiently flexible to change gradually as proves necessary. But this requires that morality not be internalized in such a way as to be beyond criticism or reflection, the agents par excellence of all change. Individuals, while conforming, must take account of what they are doing; and their conformity must not be pushed to the point where it completely captures intelligence. Thus, it does not follow from a belief in the need for discipline that discipline must involve blind and slavish submission. Moral rules must be invested with that authority without which they would be ineffective. However, since a certain point in history it has

not been necessary to remove authority from the realm of discussion, converting it into icons to which man dare not, so to speak, lift his eyes. We shall have to inquire later how it is possible to meet these two, apparently contradictory, requirements. For the moment it must suffice to point them out.

This matter leads us to examine an objection that may already have occurred to you. We have contended that the erratic, the undisciplined, are morally incomplete. Do they not, nevertheless, play a morally useful part in society? Was not Christ such a deviant, as well as Socrates? And is it not thus with all the historical figures whose names we associate with the great moral revolutions through which humanity has passed? Had their feeling of respect for the moral rules characteristic of their day been too lively, they would not have undertaken to alter them. To dare to shake off the yoke of traditional discipline, one should not feel authority too strongly. Nothing could be clearer.

However, if in critical and abnormal circumstances the feeling for the rule and for discipline must be weakened, it does not follow that such impairment is normal. Furthermore, we must take care not to confuse two very different feelings: the need to substitute a new regulation for an old one; and the impatience with all rules, the abhorrence of all discipline. Under orderly conditions, the former is natural, healthy, and fruitful; the latter is always abnormal since it prompts us to alienate ourselves from the basic conditions of life. Doubtless, with some of the great moral innovators, a legitimate need for change has degenerated into something like anarchy. Because the rules prevailing in their time offended them deeply, their sense of the evil led them to blame, not this or that particular and transient form of moral discipline, but the principle itself of all discipline. But it is precisely this that always vitiated their efforts; it is this that rendered so many revolutions fruitless, not yielding results

corresponding to the effort expended. At the point when one is rising against the rules, their necessity must be felt more keenly than ever. It is just at the moment when one challenges them that he should always bear in mind that he cannot dispense with rules. Thus the exception that seemed to contradict the principle serves only to confirm it.

In sum, the theories that celebrate the beneficence of unrestricted liberties are apologies for a diseased state. One may even say that, contrary to appearances, the words "liberty" and "lawlessness" clash in their coupling, since liberty is the fruit of regulation. Through the practice of moral rules we develop the capacity to govern and regulate ourselves, which is the whole reality of liberty. Again, it is these same rules that, thanks to the authority and force vested in them, protect us from those immoral and amoral forces besetting us on every hand. "Rules" and "liberty" are far from being exclusive or antithetical terms. The latter is only possible by virtue of the former. The idea of regulation should no longer be accepted with docile resignation; it deserves to be cherished. This is a truth important to remember these days, and one to which public attention can't be too often drawn. For we are living precisely in one of those critical, revolutionary periods when authority is usually weakened through the loss of traditional discipline—a time that may easily give rise to a spirit of anarchy. This is the source of the anarchic aspirations that, whether consciously or not, are emerging today, not only in the particular sects bearing the name, but in the very different doctrines that, although opposed on other points, join in a common aversion to anything smacking of regulation.

We have ascertained the first element of morality and have shown what its function is. But this first element only conveys an idea of the most formal aspect of moral life. We have said that morality consists in a body of rules that govern us; we have analyzed the concept of rule without concerning

ourselves with the content of the behavior required of us. We have studied it in a purely formal sense, as a justifiable abstraction. But as a matter of fact, morality has a content that, as one can foresee, itself has moral import. Moral precepts demand of us certain specific behavior; and because all such behavior is moral, since it belongs to the same category—since in other words it shares the same character—it should manifest certain common characteristics. This, or these, common qualities constitute other essential elements of morality, since they are found in all moral behavior, and, consequently, we must try to identify them. Once we understand them, we will have determined, at the same time, another basic element of moral character—that is to say, what it is that prompts man to behave in a way corresponding to this definition. And a new goal will be indicated for the educator.

In order to resolve this problem, we shall proceed as we have in determining the first element of morality. We shall not commence by asking what the content of morality ought to be any more than we asked what the a priori form of morality should be. We shall not inquire what a moral act should be to justify the adjective “moral,” commencing with some notion of morality fixed in advance of observation or anything else. On the contrary, we shall observe what kinds of acts they are to which we affix this label. What ways of behaving are approved as moral and what are the characteristics of these modes of behavior? Our task is not to shape the child in terms of a nonexistent morality but in the light of moral concepts as they exist or as they tend to be. In any case, this is our point of departure.

Human behavior can be distinguished in terms of the ends toward which it is directed. Now, all the objectives sought by men may be classified into the following two categories. First, there are those concerning only the individual himself who pursues them; we shall therefore call them *personal*.

