

**THE INFLUENCE OF “CANONIC” ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF  
SOCIOLOGICAL THOUGHT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE DURKHEIMIAN METHOD**

**A INFLUÊNCIA DOS “CANÔNICOS” NO DESENVOLVIMENTO DO PENSAMENTO  
SOCIOLÓGICO: UMA ANÁLISE DO MÉTODO DURKHEIMIANO**

**LA INFLUENCIA DE LAS “CANÓNICAS” EN EL DESARROLLO DEL  
PENSAMIENTO SOCIOLÓGICO: UN ANÁLISIS DEL MÉTODO DURKHEIMIAN**



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**How to reference this paper:**

CASAGRANDE, D. J. The influence of “canonic” on the development of sociological thought: an analysis of the Durkheimian method. **Rev. Sem Aspás**, Araraquara, v. 14, n. 00, e025002, 2025. e-ISSN: 2358-4238. DOI: 10.29373/sas.v14i00.19622



| **Submitted:** 31/08/2024  
| **Revisions required:** 03/12/2024  
| **Approved:** 15/12/2025  
| **Published:** 29/12/2025

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**Editor:** Prof. Dr. Carlos Henrique Gileno

**Deputy Executive Editor:** Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

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**ABSTRACT:** Based on the great works produced and disseminated worldwide, the classics were responsible for analyzing and understanding the transformations of social life in the economic, political and cultural spheres. Among the main sociologists who fit into this “canonical” strand are Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber. To this day, the currents of these classics still have great power of reproducibility and applicability in the social scenario, establishing new perspectives and analytical levels on the relationships between individuals and their environment. Based on this context, the objective of this work is to specifically analyze Durkheim’s sociological method, as well as the main elements that support the links between individualism and socialization. It became possible to observe that Durkheimian assumptions, despite presenting themselves as “classical”, continue to demonstrate strong relevance for the process of discussing the aspects that support modern society, in view of their reflective power.

**KEYWORDS:** Classics. Social fact. Individualism. Socialization. Morality.

**RESUMO:** A partir das grandes obras produzidas e difundidas mundialmente, os clássicos responsabilizaram-se por analisar e compreender as transformações da vida social nas esferas econômica, política e cultural. Dentre os principais sociólogos que se enquadram nesta vertente “canônica” estão Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx e Max Weber. Até os dias de hoje, as correntes de tais clássicos ainda possuem grande poder de reprodutibilidade e aplicabilidade junto ao cenário social, estabelecendo novas perspectivas e níveis analíticos sobre as relações entre indivíduos e seu meio. Com base nesta conjuntura, o objetivo deste trabalho é efetuar, especificamente, uma análise do método sociológico de Durkheim, bem como dos principais elementos que sustentam os vínculos entre individualismo e socialização. Tornou-se possível observar que os pressupostos durkheimianos, apesar de se apresentarem como “clássicos”, continuam demonstrando forte relevância para o processo de discussão dos aspectos que sustentam a sociedade moderna, tendo em vista seu poder reflexivo.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Clássicos. Fato social. Individualismo. Socialização. Moralidade.

**RESUMEN:** A partir de las grandes obras producidas y difundidas a nivel mundial, los clásicos se encargaron de analizar y comprender las transformaciones de la vida social en los ámbitos económico, político y cultural. Entre los principales sociólogos que caen en este aspecto “canónico” se encuentran Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx y Max Weber. A día de hoy, las corrientes de tales clásicos siguen teniendo un gran poder de reproducibilidad y aplicabilidad en el escenario social, estableciendo nuevas perspectivas y niveles analíticos sobre las relaciones entre los individuos y su entorno. A partir de esta situación, el objetivo de este trabajo es realizar, específicamente, un análisis del método sociológico de Durkheim, así como de los principales elementos que sustentan los vínculos entre individualismo y socialización. Se pudo observar que los supuestos durkheimianos, a pesar de presentarse como “clásicos”, continúan demostrando gran relevancia para el proceso de discusión de los aspectos que sustentan la sociedad moderna, dado su poder reflexivo.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Clásicos. Hecho social. Individualismo. Socialización. Moralidad.

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## Introduction

According to Quintaneiro, Barbosa, and Oliveira (2002), reflection on the origins, nature, and development of social life is almost as old as humanity itself. At the global level, sociology emerged at the core of numerous economic, political, and cultural turbulences. Within this context, sociology came to be regarded as a field of knowledge that sought, among other aims, to rationally explain the chaos that society appeared to be experiencing as it was impacted by multiple transformations. As an academic discipline, sociology was consolidated during the final two decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, especially in countries such as France, England, Germany, and the United States (Connell, 2012). From this perspective, sociology arose from new scenarios that were emerging before individuals, with the purpose of reflecting on these changes (Sell, 2015; Connell, 2012).

A large part of these social transformations was almost imperceptible to those who were immersed in them at the time they occurred (Quintaneiro; Barbosa; Oliveira, 2012). Over time, however, they came to be assimilated, generating a demand for understanding them. It is thus understood that the impacts brought about by the transitional process from ancient society to modern society were effectively felt by the social milieu in a gradual manner. The emergence of sociology is therefore closely linked to a process encompassing profound changes in the structure of society, identifying and rationalizing distinct ways in which individuals approached and thought about their realities (Sell, 2015).

The creation of sociology, within this scenario, was a response to the historical changes intensely experienced by society (Connell, 2012). The rupture from the feudal world to the capitalist world, and the impacts caused by this transitional process, stimulated interest—particularly among classical authors—in developing studies on social facts and phenomena, with the aim of observing them from a reflective perspective. In this context, sociology emerged with the task of understanding and explaining modern society through the imposition of a scientific logic (Bezerra; Ribeiro, 2016). In this sense, sociology arose as part of an intellectual process that sought to impose a critical and rational way of viewing reality beyond beliefs and superstitions (Giddens, 2008).

From Sell's (2015) perspective, several historical events can be identified as decisive for the emergence of sociology, notably the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, and the Scientific Revolution. All of these directly affected the social foundations that structured human coexistence at the time. Historically, these profound events caused irreversible

transformations in the way of life that human beings had maintained for thousands of years (Giddens, 2008).

The advancement of the capitalist system of production, then predominant in Western Europe, was also responsible for rapidly and deeply destabilizing the foundations of material life upon which society had previously been sustained, such as moral, religious, legal, and philosophical beliefs and principles. The scenario of major social, economic, and political transformations that occurred from the second half of the eighteenth century onward resulted from the constitution of a society based on commodity production. Industrialization, in particular, established itself as a landmark of the transition to modern society (Quintaneiro; Barbosa; Oliveira, 2002; Bezerra; Ribeiro, 2016; Quintaneiro, 2002).

Historically, political, economic, and cultural transformations significantly affected social structures, triggering in individuals the need for a new way of viewing and understanding the world in which they were embedded. Sociology thus emerged as a science whose central purpose was to provide logical and rational explanations for these phenomena. Through the issues they formulated, classical sociologists such as Marx, Durkheim, and Weber sought to understand the functioning of social life (Quintaneiro; Barbosa; Oliveira, 2002; Bezerra; Ribeiro, 2016). The project of classical sociology, based on the strands of its canonical authors, is grounded in different ways of empirically observing social reality.

### **The Classics and the Construction of Sociological Thought**

Until the mid-eighteenth century, sociology had not yet been consolidated as an autonomous field of knowledge. The history of sociology, based on its central theories and ideas, begins at the end of the nineteenth century. Up to that point, there was no established corpus of classical sociological texts as exists in modernity. Thus, nineteenth-century sociology undeniably marks a moment of reflection by human beings on their lived realities, transforming the social into a thematized object. Through a form of self-awareness, societies began to conceive studies focused on the aspects inherent to collective life in its entirety (Connell, 2012; Aron, 1999).

Reflection on the authors considered classical was itself distinct from contemporary approaches. Today, however, a significant portion of introductory compendiums in the field presents discussions grounded in the approaches of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. This trio, as it is often referred to within the sociological domain, invested efforts with the purpose of

establishing a constructive process of social science in its global conception, consolidating it as a field of knowledge. These authors have the intellectual impact required to be recognized as classics (Giddens, 1998; Connell, 2012; Castro, 2022; Oliveira, 2023).

In Brazil, during the 1950s, the sociologist Florestan Fernandes was responsible for systematizing the social theories associated with each of the three major classical thinkers (Durkheim; Marx; Weber), highlighting their assumptions and analytical orientations (Shiota, 2019). Based on this contextualization, it can be stated that this triad of sociologists assumed a leading role, within a historical framework, by formulating arguments capable of explaining society through the examination of its structures.

The current context shows that academic training in the social sciences remains largely centered on theoretical debates produced primarily by white, bourgeois men of predominantly European or North American origin (Castro, 2022; Oliveira, 2023). This configuration, in turn, establishes the existence of a canon. The term refers to a set of authors who, over time, have become established as the central pillars of sociological studies. In the twenty-first century, these canonical or classical authors continue to serve as key references for interpreting the nuances inherent in the social sphere (Becker, 1996; Connell, 2012).

Due to the representativeness of their works, Marx, Durkheim, and Weber are still characterized as canonical authors and are frequently referred to as the fathers or founders of sociology. The designation of “classical” is attributed primarily to their pioneering role in exploring this field (Alexander, 1999). Through the classics, a substantial portion of sociological thought was constructed and remains established and debated to this day (Sell, 2015). Based largely on the works conceived by this canonical trio, sociology came to represent a complex field of knowledge composed of methods, levels of analysis, and objects of inquiry (Quintaneiro; Barbosa; Oliveira, 2002).

Grounded in their principles, Marx, Durkheim, and Weber became the main authors responsible for attempting to respond scientifically to the questions that troubled societies during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Each of these sociologists, based on their theoretical postulates, formulated a set of ideas aimed at explaining the major changes that society was experiencing and undergoing during that historical period. The classics of sociology thus sought to interpret the metamorphoses of the modern world. Within this transformative context, sociological investigations constituted one of the primary means through which modernity became conscious of itself (Sell, 2015).

On a global scale, classical authors occupy a privileged status in the literature. This is because, within their historical context, they were responsible for identifying social problems that persist in contemporary societies and for proposing ways to interpret them. The theoretical approaches of the classics, in general, are regarded as foundational and continue to be revisited in the twenty-first century. In this sense, the classics remain a benchmark for the studies conducted by contemporary sociological researchers (Shiota, 2019).

Within the universe in which the human sciences were conceived and continue to develop, it is more appropriate to interpret social reality than to explain it, given its inherent complexity (Alexander, 1999). Through the analysis of the works of the major classics, it becomes possible to observe that, in the social domain, modernity brought about a profound rupture with the past. Across different historical horizons, the economic, political, and cultural dimensions of society underwent significant changes (Shiota, 2019).

In order to make explicit the differences between the modern world and past societies, as well as to understand the factors that motivated such a scenario, the precursors of sociology carried out their empirical analyses (Sell, 2015). The classics therefore sought to simplify the complexity of social reality through the establishment of their assumptions (Shiota, 2019). According to Alexander (1999), the production of a social science is an activity marked by a level of complexity comparable to the creation of new art, as it is intrinsically linked to historical aspects arising from the social environment in its various spheres.

According to Sell (2015), within sociology, excessive reliance on canonical authors (Durkheim, Marx, and Weber) can be interpreted in different ways. From a hermeneutic perspective, for example, past works in the field of the social and human sciences hold significant value due to their authenticity and originality. Thus, their rereading and reinterpretation become essential for the advancement of sociology as a field of study. From a positivist standpoint, by contrast, sociology’s dependence on its founding authors reveals a form of scientific immaturity.

Over time, the set of transformations experienced by society as a result of the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, and, in particular, the Enlightenment needed to be understood and explained by human reason. It was precisely the classical authors of sociology who possessed the intellectual capacity to conduct empirical analyses and reflections on the scenarios then experienced. During that period, such events generated a sense of crisis, prompting the need to seek answers that could justify these transformations and the impacts they might have on society (Sell, 2015).

By abandoning the view of living conditions as entirely immutable, as was the case during the Middle Ages, individuals began to seek alternatives to understand the new configurations of the modern world and the implications they generated on a global scale (Giddens, 1998). Within this framework, sociology also came to operate as a field of study encompassing the analysis of aspects embedded in group relations and their elements, based on the interactions they establish.

### **Durkheim's Sociological Method and the Notion of Social Fact**

Over the more than one hundred years that separate us from Durkheim's death, the legacy of his work has followed diverse paths (Weiss; Benthien, 2017). Owing to his reflective approaches to the relationship between society and individuals—analyzing them as indirectly interconnected and subordinated objects—the French sociologist Émile Durkheim is still regarded as one of the classical thinkers who most strongly contributed to the consolidation of sociology as an empirical science. Prior to the publication of one of Durkheim's seminal works, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, few authors had developed systematic conceptions concerning the objects and methods of sociology (Steiner, 2016).

Unlike other classical sociologists, who showed little concern for methodological issues in their analyses of social phenomena, Durkheim developed empirical reasoning to structure his conceptions of society (Durkheim, 2007; Quintaneiro, 2002; Sell, 2015). Through the application of his analytical method, the Durkheimian tradition was able to establish social science within the academic sphere.

Durkheim's thought was largely shaped by two major global historical events: the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. Based on the worldwide impacts of both, Durkheimian scientific production sought to generate reflections on the social configurations that were emerging at the time (Quintaneiro, 2002). This context motivated Durkheim to propose methods that would ground an explanation of social reality in its totality (Sell, 2015), aiming to situate and delimit sociology as a specific field of knowledge (Rodrigues, 2000).

Originally published in 1895 in French, *The Rules of Sociological Method* constituted the first work of an exclusively methodological nature developed by a sociologist. In it, Durkheim sought to demonstrate that society, based on its morphological dimensions and as a central organizing category of humanity, operates in an imposing manner upon its elements. From this emerges the notion of the social fact, expressed through the coercive power exerted

by the collective over social actors (Rodrigues, 2000). With the publication of *The Rules*, Durkheim initiated the process of systematizing sociology, establishing its configuration as a scientific discipline (Serva, 2001).

Characterized as a disciple of Auguste Comte, Durkheim argued that social science should adopt methods and assumptions similar to those applied in the natural sciences. Following the model of other sciences, sociology could assume an objective and scientific character, grounded in social facts. In Durkheim’s interpretation, society is treated as a guiding element for the individuals embedded within it. At this analytical level, it becomes the role of individuals to submit to a set of previously imposed laws and norms, with the aim of ensuring the harmonious functioning of the collective. Thus, in Durkheim’s conception, by being inserted into a social structure with established patterns, individuals come to act passively in order to integrate into it (Quintaneiro, 2002; Aron, 1999).

Essentially, the concept of the social fact constitutes the foundation of the Durkheimian sociological model. A social fact is represented by phenomena external to individuals, marked by coercive and generalized characteristics. It represents a set of actions exercised in an imposing manner upon individuals within a given collectivity. Institutions in general—such as schools, churches, and families, among others—are responsible for shaping social beings through the imposition of norms and beliefs. In this sense, the notion of the social fact refers to the idea that individuals are born into an already constituted world, particularly in the moral sphere (Quintaneiro, 2002; Aron, 1999; Vares, 2016).

Based on this line of thought, Durkheim sustained the thesis that the explanation of social life is grounded in society rather than in individuals. This means that, once created by humans, social structures come to function independently of their social actors, thereby conditioning their actions. Thus, in Durkheim’s conception, society is more than the sum of the individuals who compose it (Sell, 2015). The notion of the social fact therefore symbolizes precisely the existence of external coercion exercised over the individual (Aron, 1999), that is, the primacy of the whole over its parts, as clarified below:

A social fact is any way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exercising an external constraint over the individual; or again, any way of acting that is general throughout a given society while at the same time existing independently of its individual manifestations (Durkheim, 2007, p. 13, our translation).

According to Durkheim (2007), a social fact is recognized by the power of external coercion it is capable of exercising over individuals. This power manifests either through the

existence of a predetermined sanction or through the resistance the fact offers to any individual attempt to violate it. It may also be defined by the degree of diffusion it presents within a group. In this sense, from Serva's (2001) perspective, exteriority and coercion are intrinsically intertwined in the essence of the social fact.

Based on the notion of the social fact, the external environment is understood to prevail over individuals, inducing them to engage in predetermined forms of conduct (Durkheim, 2007). Collective manifestations are thus among the most significant expressions of imperative power, characterized as independent of individual manifestations (Quintaneiro, 2002; Bezerra; Ribeiro, 2016; Rodrigues, 2000). This perspective implies that individual actions are, in many cases, determined by social conventions rather than by personal will or individual interests (Giddens, 2005).

By living in society, human beings create social institutions with their own dynamics (Sell, 2015). Based on the way he developed his conception of society and its interacting elements, Durkheim argued that sociology, in essence, represents the study of inherently social facts. Consequently, sociology seeks to explain how objects explain subjects (Aron, 1999; Sell, 2015), that is, how society acts upon the individuals who participate in it.

To the extent that a phenomenon is imposed upon the individual by the collectivity to which they are subjected, it comes to be recognized as social. From this perspective, aligned with Durkheim's position, it is appropriate to treat social facts as things (Aron, 1999). Based on this assumption, it is possible to establish an analogy, grounded in Durkheimian methodology, whereby individuals within a society resemble chemical elements that, when combined, form a specific substance. Social phenomena therefore tend to differ from those occurring at the individual level, since society constitutes a whole, whereas individuals represent its parts (Giddens, 2005).

In explaining the notion of the social fact through his sociological method, Durkheim pointed out that all human beings, anywhere in the world, are born into an already constituted society. Because it is endowed with a previously established structure or organization, such a society tends, by itself, to effectively condition and influence individual personalities. In this sense, the individual comes to be configured as an element of the totality of relations that constitute a given society. Considering these circumstances, the individual is understood as a product of their exteriority (Giddens, 2005).

Within Durkheim's sociological methodology, social facts are linked to everything that is considered compulsory for individuals, based on their social environment. Human beings are

therefore not entirely free or autonomous in their routine attitudes and decisions, due to the constraints exercised by the society to which they belong. In general, a significant portion of individuals’ ideas and predispositions in everyday actions does not stem directly from themselves, but rather emerges from external sources and penetrates them in a decisive manner (Durkheim, 2007).

Still according to Durkheim (2007), social facts, due to their generality and coercive nature, belong to the collectivity rather than to individuals. Overall, the individual’s state of dependence on their environment makes them an integral part of what is called the social whole. Such ties imply the establishment and observance of distinct moral norms. There is, therefore, the emergence of new forms of social relations and integration, which are explained through the application of the concepts of mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity.

### **Individualism and Socialization in the Durkheimian Perspective**

Within the framework of the assumptions emphasized in his sociological method, Durkheim made a systematic effort to establish explanations of the social environment based on the regularities and conventions it presents through its functional structure, as well as on its social actors (Rodrigues, 2000). Society, in this framework, is structured and conceived on the basis of the elements that compose it: human beings. Individuals, however, are oriented by society.

Reinforcing this view, Vares (2011, p. 436, our translation) emphasizes that “society constitutes a synthesis of the relations established among its members and, therefore, cannot be confused with its elementary parts.” Thus, an analogous approach is created in which individuals are conceived as organs of a biological system, from an integralist perspective in which the whole is composed of distinct parts.

From the conception of the nature of the socialization process, it is understood that, to qualify as collective, a phenomenon must be common to all members of society or to a significant portion of them. Social phenomena therefore represent a group state that is imposed upon individuals. Groups, although formed by individuals, lead them to lose particular autonomy. By assuming a collective character, social phenomena emerge from the whole toward the parts (individuals), and not the other way around (Durkheim, 2007). Individual actions are thus conceived on the basis of a set of social factors (Blumer; Reis, 2018),

demonstrating the prevalence of society over individuals, as noted by Vares (2011). Society is the result of agents operating in interdependence:

For Durkheim, society precedes individuals, and it is incumbent upon them to obey the norms and laws imposed so that the collective may function in harmony. In this sense, his view of society emphasizes the individual's passive action in the face of a given social structure, with a constant concern for the reestablishment of order and social integration so that the social organism may function properly (Bezerra; Ribeiro, 2016, our translation).

Grounded in Durkheim's perspective of society, the social environment is understood as the result of a set of elements and interactions generated through different phenomena and historical moments. Society presents itself as a reality distinct from individual realities. Social facts, therefore, are not caused by phenomena originating in individual psychology. Within his methodological framework, Durkheim considers the social fact, in essence, to arise from the association among individuals, often differing from what occurs at the level of individual consciousness (Aron, 1999). The notion of the social fact thus does not apply to individual manifestations (Bezerra; Ribeiro, 2016).

Durkheim emphasized that, historically, coercion became essential to the construction of social life. In his empirical analyses of social phenomena, he rejected individualism as an acceptable approach within social theory. From this perspective, a premise is upheld in which exteriority—stemming from collective constraints—almost always prevails over particularistic decisions and behaviors. For Durkheim, there is no possibility of granting individuals any form of preeminence over the society they inhabit. Along this line of reasoning, the individual is considered subordinate to the society in which they live (Giddens, 1998; Sell, 2015).

Over time, Durkheim identified individualism as one of the defining traits of modern society (Sell, 2015). Nevertheless, based on the application of his method, Durkheimian sociology does not ground its analysis in the individual, but rather in the social environment that incorporates them. In general, sociologists do not study society through its units, but through its structures. Durkheim argued that the bonds between individuals and society are formed through morality. Thus, individual actions are rarely developed spontaneously; instead, they are shaped by ties of collective consciousness established between individuals and their groups. This explains why, despite an increasing search for autonomy and the adoption of egoistic stances, individuals continue to depend on society and on the bonds formed within it. The phenomenon of morality therefore reveals its social character, as it refers to the relationship sustained with society (Giddens, 1998; Vares, 2011).

In its existential essence, morality is founded on the bonds maintained by individuals with society. Accordingly, it is not freedom that makes individuals an integral part of the social whole and characterizes them as moral beings, but rather their state of dependence on their social environment. From Durkheim’s perspective, the bond with society is the source of morality. Morality would not be necessary in the absence of society. In the process of socialization, individuals are aware that participation in social life implies acceptance of and obedience to the moral rules established by the group to which they belong (Paugam, 2017). Society thus becomes the locus of the evolution of individuals’ moral progress.

Essentially, moral norms constitute a set of obligations imposed by society upon individuals, which must be fulfilled by them. From this standpoint, members of society are encouraged to transcend their individual natures not merely due to commands, but predominantly out of a sense of duty and obligation toward an existing collectivity (Quintaneiro, 2002). Morality thus becomes a guiding thread of human action within the social environment, as a result of the reality shaped by external impositions. According to Paugam (2017), by living collectively, individuals seek to build social bonds; the strength of these bonds, however, depends on the degree to which individuals are integrated into their social systems.

Individual conduct is therefore prescribed by society to subjects under specific circumstances. Within the prevailing Durkheimian framework, human beings assume the status of an organism whose function is to respond—largely in a passive manner—to the forces imposed by their own social structure. It is assumed that the behavior of individuals, as members of a collectivity, is commonly expressed through the action of the social system upon them. Social factors are thus responsible for producing individual actions (Quintaneiro, 2002; Blumer; Reis, 2018). In this context, moral rules take on an impersonal character, since, by becoming universalized, they do not establish ties with individuals in particular (Giddens, 2005).

By acting upon individuals, the social environment seeks to shape their ways of acting, thinking, and feeling. As individuals expand their social bonds, the plurality of moral rules to which they are subject also increases. In this context, the aim is to socialize individuals so that their practices are consistent with the environment in which they were formed. Although produced through existing bonds of solidarity, social facts acquire consistency and autonomy in relation to individuals. Through this impositive dimension, society becomes the result of the

association among individuals, as subjects internalize the reality of their existential universe (Vares, 2011; Paugam, 2017).

In explaining his sociological method through the notions of social fact, individualism, and socialization, Durkheim emphasizes that, upon being born into a given social environment, individuals encounter values, customs, norms, traditions, and laws that they did not create. From this perspective, human beings must adapt to these generic and impositive elements in order to survive. Society, although resulting from the aggregation of individuals, cannot be explained by them in isolation, since its functional dynamics derive from the relationships established among multiple actors across different times and places (Vares, 2016).

Commonly, the representations and behaviors of social agents are largely shaped by the values and norms imposed by the social environment in which they are embedded. Within Durkheimian social theory, society is understood and analyzed as an aggregate of individuals bound together through a set of structured interactions, thereby constituting distinctive and characteristic collective forms. For Durkheim, society is the locus in which ideals and symbolic elements are created and through which representations are produced. From this perspective, the social whole produces and dominates the individual, even though individuals are endowed with rational capacity (Steiner, 2016).

### **Final Considerations**

Although the theoretical assumptions developed by classical sociologists have been subject to criticism, it is unlikely to deny the relevance of their reflections for understanding the causes of social phenomena and their impacts in historical terms. Sociology, as a scientific object, emerged with the purpose of observing and analyzing the economic, political, and cultural manifestations of modernity, which resulted especially from historical events such as the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution.

By seeking to break with common sense, social science emphasizes the need to undertake a rational interpretation of the factors that led to the decline of traditional society and the consequent emergence of modern society. Based on this perspective, sociology and its classical thinkers broadly argue that no truth is constituted or sustained so strongly as to be immune to contestation or to prevail entirely over others.

This implies that society itself, through its collective configurations, tends to be analyzed from different perspectives across distinct historical contexts and moments. In order

to better understand the emergence of modern sociology and its impacts on the social sphere over time, it is essential to examine the historical context in which the works of canonical authors were produced, as well as to consider their meanings, dimensions, and applications across different established temporal and geographical horizons.

Within the scope of the present research, whose initial aim was to elucidate the contributions of canonical authors to the formation of modern sociological thought, the intention was to highlight how Durkheim’s method and theoretical approaches—essentially grounded in the notions of social fact and the socialization of individuals—sought to investigate the social field based on its intrinsic elements. Within Durkheimian sociological theory, it is understood that the social can only be explained by itself, and not by individuals.

No human being, based on their own reason for existence, is entirely indifferent to the factors that condition the social environment in which they are embedded. Individuals, therefore, are born of society and are shaped by it, adhering to its values, principles, and norms in ways that are not always fully rational or voluntary. Based on its analytical dimensions, the Durkheimian sociological method understands that the individual is not the cause of society, but rather its effect. Thus, the primacy of the collective over the individual is made evident.

Durkheim’s sociological theory does not deny the existence of individuals, but regards them as a socially constructed category, since, for him, the individual does not exist without society. Human beings tend to establish bonds that condition them to act in solidarity, as the rupture of moral values established within the social environment may lead to the imposition of individual sanctions and affect the harmonious functioning of the collective. Accordingly, the greater the state of dependence among members of the same social group, the stronger the bonds established and the more solid the morality that surrounds them.

Within the framework encompassing Durkheim’s approaches to social facts and the process of socialization, an awareness is established within the individual that participation in collective life requires compliance with moral rules. Within society, morality guides human behavior and actions beyond egoistic or individualistic impulses. The coercive forces exerted upon individuals therefore originate from the social structure to which they are connected, producing and directing their behaviors.

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### *CRediT Author Statement*

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- Acknowledgements:** There are no acknowledgments.
  - Funding:** There was no funding or financial support for the preparation of this article.
  - Conflicts of interest:** The author declares no conflicts of interest.
  - Ethical approval:** Submission to an ethics committee was not required.
  - Data and material availability:** Yes, the data and materials used in the preparation of this work are available for access.
  - Authors' contributions:** The author Diego José Casagrande was solely responsible for all stages of the conceptualization and development of the article.
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**Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação**  
Proofreading, formatting, standardization and translation

