Sociological Theory I

Week 6. Durkheim: Division of Labor; Politics; Socialism

1. In *Rules of Sociological Method* Durkheim says, "The first and fundamental rule is to *consider social facts as things*" (Giddens, p. 89). Explain what Durkheim means by this methodological rule. In what sense does Durkheim argue that social facts are "external" to the individual? How does Durkheim purport to distinguish "normal" and "pathological" social facts? Critically evaluate Durkheim's views in *The Division of Labor in Society* on the normal and pathological forms taken by the division of labor. Contrast Durkheim's views on the potential pathologies of the division of labor in modern society with Marx's views on the contradictory nature of the social relations of production under capitalism.

2. Explain what Durkheim means by the "collective conscience" and discuss the role that this concept plays in Durkheim's analysis of crime and punishment in *The Division of Labor in Society*. Contrast Durkheim's concept of the "collective conscience" with Marx's concept of the dominant ideology. How might Durkheim and Marx agree or disagree over the nature and functions of law in capitalist society?

3. On what grounds does Durkheim reject historical materialism in his review of Antonio Labriola? What are the strengths and weaknesses of Durkheim's critique? What are the most pronounced differences between Durkheim's methodology and historical materialism? What are the similarities?

4. "Socialism," Durkheim argues, "is not a science, a sociology in miniature -- it is a cry of grief, sometimes of anger, uttered by men who feel most keenly our collective malaise. Socialism is to the facts which produce it what the groans of a sick man are to the illness with which he is afflicted" (Thompson, p. 161). How does Durkheim diagnose the underlying causes of socialism as a political movement? Contrast Durkheim's concept of the relationship between the state and civil society with that of the Marxists whom he criticizes? Which view do you find most persuasive and why?