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Quotes by Durkheim, Emile

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David Emile Durkheim (April 15, 1858 - November 15, 1917) is known as one of the originators of modern sociology. He founded the first European university department of sociology in 1895, and one of the first journals devoted to social science, *L'Anne Sociologique* in 1896.

The wise man, knowing how to enjoy achieved results without having constantly to replace them with others, finds in them an attachment to life in the hour of difficulty. But the man who has always pinned all his hopes on the future and lived with his eyes fixed upon it, has nothing in the past as a comfort against the present's afflictions, for the past was nothing to him but a series of hastily experienced stages. What blinded him to himself was his expectation always to find further on the happiness he had so far missed. Now he is stopped in his tracks; from now on nothing remains behind or ahead of him to fix his gaze upon.

- Durkheim, Emile

From top to bottom of the ladder, greed is aroused without knowing where to find ultimate foothold. Nothing can calm it, since its goal is far beyond all it can attain. Reality seems valueless by comparison with the dreams of fevered imaginations; reality is therefore abandoned.

- Durkheim, Emile

The man whose whole activity is diverted to inner meditation becomes insensible to all his surroundings. If he loves, it is not to give himself, to blend in fecund union with another being, but to meditate on his love. His passions are mere appearances, being sterile. They are dissipated in futile imaginings, producing nothing external to themselves.

- Durkheim, Emile

It is too great comfort which turns a man against himself. Life is most readily renounced at the time and among the classes where it is least harsh.

- Durkheim, Emile

Too cheerful a morality is a loose morality; it is appropriate only to decadent peoples and is found only among them.

- Durkheim, Emile

It is a quite remarkable fact that the great religions of the most civilized peoples are more deeply fraught with sadness than the simpler beliefs of earlier societies. This certainly does not mean that the current of pessimism is eventually to submerge the other, but it proves that it does not lose ground and that it does not seem destined to disappear.

- Durkheim, Emile

Man could not live if he were entirely impervious to sadness. Many sorrows can be endured only by being embraced, and the pleasure taken in them naturally has a somewhat melancholy character. So, melancholy is morbid only when it occupies too much place in life; but it is equally morbid for it to be wholly excluded from life.

- Durkheim, Emile

A mind that questions everything, unless strong enough to bear the weight of its ignorance, risks questioning itself and being engulfed in doubt. If it cannot discover the claims to existence of the objects of its questioning -- and it would be miraculous if it so soon succeeded in solving so many mysteries -- it will deny them all reality, the mere formulation of the problem already implying an inclination to negative solutions. But in so doing it will become void of all positive content and, finding nothing which offers it resistance, will launch itself perforce into the emptiness of inner reverse.

- Durkheim, Emile

Man's characteristic privilege is that the bond he accepts is not physical but moral; that is, social. He is governed not by a material environment brutally imposed on him, but by a conscience superior to his own, the superiority of which he feels. Because the greater, better part of his existence transcends the body, he escapes the body's yoke, but is subject to that of society.

- Durkheim, Emile

Sadness does not inhere in things; it does not reach us from the world and through mere contemplation of the world. It is a product of our own thought. We create it out of whole cloth.

- Durkheim, Emile

While the State becomes inflated and hypertrophied in order to obtain a firm enough grip

upon individuals, but without succeeding, the latter, without mutual relationships, tumble over one another like so many liquid molecules, encountering no central energy to retain, fix and organize them.

- Durkheim, Emile

Each victim of suicide gives his act a personal stamp which expresses his temperament, the special conditions in which he is involved, and which, consequently, cannot be explained by the social and general causes of the phenomenon.

- Durkheim, Emile

One cannot long remain so absorbed in contemplation of emptiness without being increasingly attracted to it. In vain one bestows on it the name of infinity; this does not change its nature. When one feels such pleasure in non-existence, one's inclination can be completely satisfied only by completely ceasing to exist.

- Durkheim, Emile

There is no society known where a more or less developed criminality is not found under different forms. No people exists whose morality is not daily infringed upon. We must therefore call crime necessary and declare that it cannot be non-existent, that the fundamental conditions of social organization, as they are understood, logically imply it.

- Durkheim, Emile



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