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EMILE DURKHEIM AND THE SCIENCE OF CORPORATISM

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THE RECENT PROLIFERATION of studies which employ the concept of corporatism to inform analysis of the state in Western industrialized societies has coincided with a renewed interest in the theoretical foundations of this idea and, more specifically, in the political writings of its most renowned modern advocate, Emile Durkheim.[1] To date, however, this inquiry has generated little agreement about the precise significance of Durkheim's commitment to a rehabilitation of the occupational association. It is generally accepted that a reading of this particular element of Durkheim's project presupposes a broader judgment regarding the political bent of his work considered as a whole; but, because the question of whether his writings are best identified with the cause of conservativism, liberalism, or socialism has itself proven so highly contestable, the most adequate interpretation of his case for corporatism is still very much an unsettled issue.

For example, Robert Nisbet argues that Durkheim, appalled by the rationalistic hubris of the Enlightenment and enamored of the reactionary program advanced by Bonald, Maistre, and other Catholic counter revolutionaries, hoped to restore to the atomized masses of France an unquestioned, albeit secular, source of moral authority and thereby bring to the Republic the stability which had proven so elusive throughout the nineteenth century. This authority, Nisbet continues, secures its institutional embodiment within a tightly integrated occupational association whose revitalization is intended to inculcate the collective discipline that had been supplied by the aristocracy, the Church, and the guild prior to the Revolution. So read, Durkheim appears as a conservative whose corporatism evinces a deep yearning for the order and unity which allegedly characterized the medieval world.[2]

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The one-sidedness of this assessment has been ably exposed by Anthony Giddens. Giddens argues that Durkheim's aim was not to recapture a bygone era but rather to propose reforms which would enable France to adapt to the dislocations generated by the rapid growth of a market economy without suppressing the ideals of liberal individualism. Stressing his insistence that the institution of inheritance be abolished in order to guarantee genuine equality of opportunity, Giddens concludes that the corporation is designed to check what Durkheim calls the "forced division of labor" and so insure that each individual comes to occupy the position for which he or she is suited by nature; for this is the precondition of a "revitalized liberal republicanism which would fully realize the structural changes in society which had been promised but not achieved by the Revolution."[3]

Finally, to round out the ideological spectrum, others insist that Durkheim is best read as a socialist who rejects as unscientific the pretensions of Marxist dogma but preserves the moral insight contained within its critique of capitalism. For example, Alvin Gouldner, noting Durkheim's claim that the existence of a rigid class structure makes a mockery of the idea of justice, concludes that his advocacy of a "corporative reorganization of modern society" is best understood as a functional equivalent of "the Marxian nationalization of industry by the state."[4] Similarly, Steven Lukes argues that the occupational association, by encouraging the fraternal resolution of disputes over issues of wage remuneration, industrial health, employer/employee relations, etc., is the vehicle through which Durkheim champions the ideals of "centralized guild socialism."[5]

What are we to make of this debate and its inconclusive character?[6] A possible resolution suggests itself when it is noted that, in spite of their substantive differences, all three readings implicitly presuppose the tenability of separating Durkheim's commitments as a political thinker from his commitments as a social scientist. Once this distinction is embraced, one is naturally drawn to a strategy of interpretation whose aim is to elucidate their interconnection, i.e., to show how Durkheim's practical program, whose centerpiece is the corporation, is designed to remedy the ills revealed through his theoretical investigation into the character of industrial society.[7] And this, in turn, suggests that the problem posed by the relationship between science and politics in Durkheim's work is best resolved by linking each to the other through application of a conventional ideological designation which renders intelligible an element of his project which otherwise appears unfamiliar and even anachronistic.

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However, if one denies the legitimacy of this initial distinction, it then becomes apparent that the corporation, as the site upon which Durkheim's theory and practice merge, constitutes the institutional medium through which scientific rationality achieves its rightful standing as the creator of collective reality. The relationship between Durkheim's politics and his science is internal in the following two senses:[8] (1) negatively, the viability of the sociological project requires enfeeblement of public understandings which deny the autonomy of its inquiry; and (2) positively, the truth of social science presupposes the existence of a culture in which its authority is universally endorsed. To facilitate these ends, the corporation vitiates forms of collective life which foster rival conceptions of knowing and so contributes to the creation of a society of selves whose ratification of scientific rationality legitimates the conjunction of knowledge and power that is embodied within the modern state. Thus the novelty of Durkheim's project is disclosed not in his deployment of the occupational association to promote conservative, liberal, or socialist programs but rather in the radical transformation of the relationship between state and society which is mandated by his assimilation of political practice to the imperatives of scientific knowledge. Understood in these terms, Durkheim's corporatism may be read as an important chapter of the history through which more democratic representations of this relationship were reduced to largely rhetorical significance.

I

Durkheim's struggle to establish the science of sociology in France is appropriately construed as a political endeavor.[9] Like the founding of a new state, this quest carries with it two fundamental imperatives, one foreign and the other domestic. First, this science must secure sovereignty over its own territory by disposing of rival claimants and by winning general acceptance of the legitimacy of this victory. And second, it must secure its own disciplinary integrity by instituting internal rules of procedure which dictate how power is to be distributed within this community and how disputes between its members are to be resolved.

Each of these imperatives is addressed by Durkheim in his early work, *The Rules of Sociological Method.* Conquest of the independent

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ground which demarcates the peculiar province of sociological rationality is achieved through demonstration of the reality of *faits sociaux*; "indubitably for sociology to be possible, it must above all have an object of its own."[10] These facts cannot be discovered through the methods of any of the existing sciences and therefore constitute the subject matter of an autonomous realm of investigation. Their defining characteristics—externality, constraint, and generality—serve as "outward signs" which "mark out the field of research as clearly as possible"; and an appreciation of them enables the social scientist "to pick out their location and not to confuse them with other things."[11]

Moreover, mutual reference to these signs in the conduct of inquiry permits the members of the sociological community to apprehend "the links which bind them to one another and make them fellow-workers in the same task."[12] Out of this shared work arises certain collective representations which, when formalized as a sociological constitution, prescribe the rules of method to which each initiate must submit upon entrance to this community: "Methodological rules are for science what rules of law and custom are for conduct; they direct the thought of the scholar just as the others govern the actions of men."[13] Agreement to abide by these rules signifies recognition that "the spirit of discipline" is "the essential condition of all common life"[14] and that strict observance of their dictates is the condition of continued autonomy vis-à-vis other fields of investigation.

The role of method, however, extends well beyond its service as a principle of internal organization and regulation. For continuous subjection to method's rule engenders a new self. The prescientific ego possesses two attributes, each of which must be mortified as a condition of participation in the sociological enterprise. The character of the first is derivative upon Durkheim's contention that man is formed of "two radically heterogeneous beings, beings which "are not only distinct from one another but are opposed to one another."[15] As a creature of society, man employs the impersonal conceptual categories provided by his language and acts in accordance with the disinterested moral ends furnished by his community. That he is able to do so presupposes conquest of his aboriginal self since, as a creature of mere biological impulse, the psyche is restricted to the receipt of noncognitive impressions and the expression of antisocial desires. The former, our sense images, are inescapably idiosyncratic; "by virtue of the fact that we each have our own organic constitution and occupy different areas in space," appreciation of the same object must "vary from one individual to

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another and consequently cause a diversity of consciences."[16] The latter, our native appetites, are "necessarily egoistic;"[17] expressing desires which are "unlimited so far as they depend on the individual alone,"[18] they cannot help but pursue ends which subvert the integrity of collective existence.

Revealing our rootedness in "our individuality—and, more particularly, our body in which it is based"[19]—these properties of the presocialized self can neither elicit the commitments needed to cement together the various members of the scientific community nor engender the abstractive capacities that bring into being its shared knowledge. Hence the very possibility of science rests on the capacity of method to "prevent our consciousness from pursuing the dispersive movement that is its natural course";[20] and, in this regard, scientific procedure assumes a frankly coercive character. Because each particularistic image of the primitive ego resists the effort to shape it into a form that is susceptible to analysis, "we have to do some violence to it, we have to submit it to all sorts of laborious operations that alter it so that the mind can assimilate it."[21] And because each boundless desire of the private self opposes the effort to subordinate it to the demands of community, we have to discipline its refractory proclivities through imposition of a web of public directives. Each scientific self thus becomes the bearer of an "antagonism" which, of necessity, assumes a "painful character."[22]

Method confronts a more formidable opponent in its confrontation with the second element of the prescientific self. Prior to entry into the sociological community, the social scientist, immersed in the immediacy of everyday life like all other agents, finds his consciousness molded by the vernacular understandings of unrefined speech. Although Durkheim occasionally fails to distinguish clearly between these understandings, which he labels common sense, and the impulses of the biological ego, the former are quite distinct in virtue of their social constitution and pragmatic disposition; arising prereflectively out of regular intercourse among the members of a particular community in its interaction with the objects of ordinary experience, their function is to express and organize that society's appreciation of "what is useful or disadvantageous about the thing, and in what ways it can render us service or disservice."[23]

However, precisely because of their foundation in the imperatives of daily practice, the meanings of common sense possess only as much accuracy as is needed to facilitate the performance of a particular task: "For an idea to stimulate the reaction that the nature of a thing demands, it need not faithfully express that nature."[24] Moreover,

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because these meanings are rooted in the shared life out of which they evolve, they secure over time a "kind of ascendancy and authority, by dint of repetition and the habit which results from it."[25] And it is this authority which enables their deliverances to become confused with the actual data of experience, as this tissue of illusion comes to constitute the world for those who cannot penetrate its appearance of reality; "as a veil interposed between the things and ourselves," it deludes us "even more effectively because we believe" it "to be more transparent."[26]

The threat posed by such "ideological analysis"[27] to the integrity of a new science of society is insidious: "At the moment when a new order of phenomena becomes the object of a science, they are already represented in the mind not only through sense perceptions but also by some kind of crudely formed concepts."[28] Hence the sociologist "must free himself from those fallacious notions which hold sway over the mind of the ordinary person, shaking off, once and for all, the yoke of those empirical categories that long habit often makes tyrannical;" and this he can do only as a result of the "rigorous discipline" which is inculcated by "sustained and special practice"[29] within a community committed to the cathartic of "methodical doubt."[30] Apprehension of things as they are, not as we wish them to be, presupposes an act of radical divestment which unites the initiate to his new peers "in a common feeling of ignorance and reservation."[31] So disillusioned, the social scientist acquires not merely the technical skills of method, but also the virtue of "courage" which insures that he shall "not . . . be intimidated by the results to which his investigations . . . lead," as he "penetrates into the unknown," making "discoveries which . . . surprise and disconcert him."[32]

II

The autonomy of the sociological community and the purity of its rationality cannot be guaranteed by the prophylactic of method alone. Within the community of science, it is true, universal adherence to strict procedural rules can retard the reign of appetite and purge the factual of the commonsensical. However, this does not remedy the peril posed by the situation of this community within a larger society where unchecked desires and vernacular understandings are woven into the very fabric of collective life. That demands a specifically political solution.

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This peril has three dimensions. The first, whose Cartesian temper is "deeply rooted in our national thinking,"[33] is apparent in the popular conviction that society is constituted by the mechanical juxtaposition of its atomic parts, i.e., the disconnected individuals who compose it. Implicit within the grammatical structure of the French language[34] and manifest in the fondness of its speakers for the analytic dissociation of society into its primitive elements, this conviction postulates that only those entities which can be perceived clearly and distinctly are real. However, because the peculiarly social reality which is generated by the association of individuals cannot be so apprehended, sociology is publicly denied the subject matter it requires as the first condition of its existence. Furthermore, this "oversimplified rationalism"[35] tacitly disparages sociological truth by teaching that the nature of society can be readily comprehended by all; "when we believe that complexity is merely superficial, that at bottom things are simple, we tend to admit also that the systematic analysis of these phenomena is likewise simple."[36] The democratic but false rationality of common sense thereby dismisses the "need for any laborious and complicated methods to get at the secrets of nature"[37] and hence the utility of a discipline whose *raison d'etre* presupposes the recondite nature of its objects.

The second dimension of this peril consists in the "prejudice" which insinuates the duality of the human and natural worlds and, consequently, the impropriety of extending "the scope of scientific rationalism to cover human behavior."[38] Likening the sociologist who probes moral, political, and religious phenomena to a "vivisectionist" who is "devoid of normal feelings," the "sensitive souls" who adhere to this "mystical doctrine"[39] recoil from the representation of culture as a complex of naturalistic facts to be studied by the methods of the positive sciences and explained in terms of general causal laws. Their refusal to "leave the field clear for the scientist"[40] threatens to provoke a public "reaction";[41] and this, in turn, may compel the sociological community to expend its energies in fruitless controversies about the philosophical foundations of its project, controversies from which it can escape only when these questions are no longer found contestable.

The import of these first two challenges to the welfare of the scientific enterprise becomes much more complex, both theoretically and practically, when Durkheim, relatively late in his career, turns to sociological analysis of the rules of scientific method. In his early writings Durkheim maintains that once its epistemological autonomy vis-à-vis the society it studies is firmly established, science is able to secure unmediated access to social phenomena "considered in themselves,"[42] i.e., detached from

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the prereflective understandings which constitute the world for members of the nonscientific community. Scientific truth, on this realist view, consists of concepts which accurately correspond to or reflect the essential properties of its objects, and revelation of such truth entitles the sociological community to assert its cognitive authority over the illusions of common sense.

This conception of truth becomes increasingly problematic as Durkheim, embarking on the religious studies which were to preoccupy him after 1895, develops a genetic explanation of basic categorical concepts such as time, space, and causality. This account, first fully elaborated in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, holds that the structure and content of primitive man's logic is isomorphic with and indeed caused by the manner in which his collective life is "founded and organized":[43] "It was because men were grouped, and thought of themselves in the form of groups, that in their ideas they grouped other things, and in the beginning the two modes of grouping were merged to the point of being indistinct."[44] Accordingly, the intellectual constraint exerted by fundamental categories over the thought of each individual issues from and expresses the authority which society as a whole exercises over its members; and it is for this reason that the criteria of truth accepted within any given community bear a "special sort of moral necessity which is to the intellectual life what moral obligation is to the will."[45]

This analysis poses an obvious dilemma for Durkheim. On the one hand, if he is to salvage his earlier noncontextual conception of objectivity which suggests that the validity of scientific truth transcends cultural boundaries, then he must exclude modern science from his general account of the sociological determination of all knowledge. If, on the other hand, he grants that the "explanations of contemporary science . . . do not differ in nature from those which satisfy primitive thought"[46] insofar as substantive elements of social structure always mediate between reality and representation, then he must acknowledge that the logical forms and truth criteria of modern social science are relative to the peculiar culture out of which they have evolved and within which they are normatively maintained. This, in turn, presses Durkheim ever closer to a conception of truth which posits that a *fait sociaux* is true "when it is thought to express reality";[47] in other words, the truth-value of a concept is guaranteed not by its objective reference but by the authority it presupposes.

Durkheim seeks to evade the relativistic implications of this conclusion by arguing that the truth of scientific knowledge derives from its

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correspondence to reality whereas its authority is the fruit of collective belief:

> [I]t is not at all true that concepts, even when constructed according to the rules of science, get their authority uniquely from their objective value. It is not enough that they be true to be believed. If they are not in harmony with . . . other collective representations, they will be denied; minds will be closed to them; consequently it will be as though they did not exist. . . .In the last resort, the value which we attribute to science depends upon the idea which we collectively form of its nature and role in life; that is an much as to say that it expresses a state of public opinion.[48]

This distinction cannot be sustained, however, if Durkheim is to insist, as he does in his polemic against pragmatism, that authority, defined as a "quality" bestowed by the members of a group on "a being, whether real or imaginary," which invests that being "with powers superior to those they find in themselves,"[49] is an essential property of that which is truthful.[50] He must therefore conclude that "all authority," including that which sustains science, is "the daughter of opinion," and hence that knowledge can fulfill its practical mission as the "antagonist of opinion, whose errors it combats and rectifies,"[51] only through achievement of the obligatory character which defines any socially constituted moral reality. Its triumph, as well as its own cognitive value, can be assured only when its discoveries acquire the "collective character which confers on them the power that enables them to impose themselves on the mind":[52] "If a people did not have faith in science, all the scientific demonstrations in the world would be without any influence whatsoever over their minds."[53]

Science, whose initial determination entailed a radical repudiation of common sense, must win public legitimacy if it is to re-form the world in the image of its own rationality; its truth, as Durkheim says of society, "can exist only if it penetrates the consciousness of individuals and fashions it in its image and resemblance."[54] Accordingly, science must have created for it, out of a people whose common sense presently resists its intrusion into their daily lives, a social body whose members confirm its status as a suprasocial entity whose authority does not derive from the practice of those who concede its right to rule.

III

In the concluding pages of *Suicide*, the "Preface" to the second edition of *The Division of Labor in Society*, and the chapters of

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Professional Ethics and Civic Morals which consider the character of the contemporary state, Durkheim defends his corporatist convictions.[55] Durkheim's interpreters generally agree that his commitment to the corporation reflects his preoccupation with the apparent limitlessness of appetite in the modern world, a problem whose roots lie in the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity. Within primitive social orders, the privatistic cravings of the body are checked by the imperatives of small, isolated, and self-sufficient communities: "(T)his special structure allows society to enclose the individual more tightly, holding him strongly attached to his domestic environment and, consequently, to traditions, and finally contributing to the limitation of his social horizon."[56] Submerged in a social order whose essential features are unalterable because they are given in the nature of things, the individual ego has neither the opportunity nor the inclination to assert itself.

However, with expansion of the division of labor, the personality of the individual is delivered from the womb of the traditional community, and his appetites are released from its embrace. The result, given the pathological conditions of the present, is what Durkheim calls the "malady of infinite aspiration,"[57] an illness whose most dramatic symptom is revealed in statistics which demonstrate a linear relationship between the disintegration of cohesive communities and the frequency of suicide and whose more prosaic indicator consists in the mundane preoccupation of modern man with the pursuit of unlimited gain. Thus the supremacy of the utilitarian and the subordination of the moral conspire to create a society composed of individuals who, as perfect slaves of desires which "cannot be quenched," hope to live in a world of immediate gratification but find themselves doomed to perpetual frustration: "The more one has, the more one wants, since satisfactions received only stimulate instead of filling needs."[58]

No established institution now possesses sufficient authority to bring to a halt the state of war which attends this Hobbesian anarchy of appetite; "the stronger succeed in crushing the not so strong . . . only . . . until the longed-for day of revenge."[59] The liberal state, defining itself as merely a "guardian of individual contracts,"[60] is "too remote from individuals,"[61] while local communities—"provinces, communes, guilds—have been totally abolished or at least survive only in a very attenuated form."[62] The corporation, in contrast, enjoys the disciplinary capacity to regulate the desires of those who cannot contain themselves; "the occupational group has the threefold advantage over all others in that it is omnipresent, ubiquitous, and that its control extends to the greatest part of life."[63] Drawing its members into an integrated totality, it

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"force(s) the individual to act in view of ends which are not strictly his own, to make concessions, to consent to compromises, to take into account interests higher than his own."[64]

The harshness of this "real antagonism"[65] between ego and collectivity is tempered within each corporation by the unpremediated evolution of a distinctive ethos which equates moral autonomy with devotion to the professional code of imperatives that distinguishes each specialized occupation and which identifies psychic health with achievement of a harmonious relationship between desire and the capacity to gratify it. Through incorporation of the disciplinary relations whose external form constitutes the occupational association, each individual thus masters the native disposition to elude the imperatives of social order: "We must learn to cherish these social bonds that for the unsocial being are heavy chains."[66]

The role of the corporation, however, extends well beyond its service as a teacher of collective self-control. In its mediation between state and society, the occupational association performs for the political community the same function that method, in its mediation between the prereflective and rational selves of the sociologist, performs for the scientific community. Whereas the rules of sociological procedure suppress the private ego's appetites and displace the vernacular representations that obscure apprehension of *faits sociaux*, the corporation curtails the social body's excesses and purges the public ego of shared illusions that thwart application of scientific theory to its practical reconstruction. It thereby divests society of forms of life whose encouragement of "ideological" understandings hinders the autonomy of social scientific knowledge as well as universal ratification of its union with state power.

The ubiquity of instrumental action aimed at self-aggrandizement, understood as an expression of that portion of society whose instinctual composition is as yet unstraitened by morality, produces the "disarray in which men's consciences" now "find themselves."[67] Hence the truth of science, injected into a collective body whose private parts "tumble over one another like so many liquid molecules, encountering no central energy to retain, fix, and organize them,"[68] cannot effectively counter the frenzied tangle of competing visions which bears witness to nothing more than the error of those who insist on the truth of their special illusions. However, incorporation of its members saps the power of "organic causes"[69] to stimulate political debate whose distinguishing feature is its interminability. The ability of science to "unite individual

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judgments"[70] and so generate a shared apprehension of the social world requires that the individual prove "capable of raising himself above his own peculiar point of view and of living an impersonal life"; and this, in turn, entails the construction of a self whose suppression of the singularity of its "vital functions" enables it to incarnate the "soul" of society, i.e., to be shaped by collective ideals whose scientific formulation strips them of "all accidental elements."[71] By limiting "the range within which individual behavior normally occurs,"[72] the ethos of the corporation overcomes the flux of biological experience and so insures that "objective reality," which "must necessarily be the same for all men given its independence from the observing subject,"[73] manifests itself as such to all to whom it is revealed. Thus the disengagement from the body which defines corporate subjects mirrors the abstraction from particularity which identifies the collective representations they possess as one. Their "spiritualized"[74] communion is expressed as the mutual engagement of "fixed" concepts which are "universal, or at least capable of becoming so," precisely because those who give them voice no longer "pervert" or "falsify"[75] their superior reality.

Durkheim thereby moves toward a specifically political solution of the dilemma posed by his simultaneous insistence on the social determination of all thought and the transcontextual validity of sociological rationality. The truth of scientific knowledge is not "debas(ed)"[76] by acknowledgment of its isomorphic relationship to the structure of social life when that life is organized in a way such that the logical forms it naturally engenders are identical to those which Durkheim identifies as constitutive of scientific method: "If logical thought tends to rid itself more and more of the subjective and personal elements which it still retains from its origins, it is not because extrasocial factors have intervened; it is much rather because a social life of a new sort is developing."[77] In other words, the achievement of "stable, impersonal, and organized thought," i.e., science, is a historical accomplishment whose realization presupposes that the "idiosyncracies" caused by the "physiognomy" of the body social are "progressively rooted out."[78] Thus the power of the corporation forms a society from which public truth may be elicited, and it facilitates the reimposition of that truth as authoritative belief whose logical structure recapitulates and reinforces the order present within those it rules.

The other task set for the corporation consists in the delegitimation of common sense: "We live in a country" whose recognition of "no master other than that of opinion" insures its subjection to "an unintelligent

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despot."[79] Because common sense is so finely tuned to the exigencies of practice, it precipitates action as soon as apparent comprehension is achieved. As an idealism whose "ghostlike"[80] meanings have become detached from their ground in the objects of experience, it incites a people to dream that it may reform society to suit the desires of the moment: "It is because this imagined world offers no resistance that the mind, feeling completely unchecked, gives rein to limitless ambitions, believing it possible to construct—or rather reconstruct—the world through its own power and according to its wishes."[81] Hence a misguided belief in the plasticity of the social establishes the very real possibility of perpetual political turmoil which, in practice, denies to science the climate that encourages calm reflection and, in theory, denies to society the resistance to human will that it must possess if it is to constitute the subject matter of a discipline independent of psychology.

This danger bears witness to the authority of a popular conviction which, "deeply rooted in French minds,"[82] asserts that a democratic nation is one in which the will of those who rule ought to be identical to the will of those who are ruled. This "dogma,"[83] whose familiarity "evoke(s) in us an "amalgam of vague impressions, prejudices, and passions,"[84] receives its institutional embodiment in constitutional forms which presuppose universal and equal competence in political deliberation and, on that basis, invest society with supervisory power over the state through the direct election of representatives. Its error resides in its naive contention that "democracy is the political form of a society governing itself," a view which, if put into practice, "represents a return to the most primitive"[85] kind of collective life. Refusing to acknowledge the need for "an organ of government distinct from society," conventional wisdom insures that the state can do no more than reflect the "collective sentiments, diffused, vague, and obscure as they may be, that sway the people."[86] Institutions of rule are thereby suffused with a spirit of "individualistic particularism" which expresses only the "personal and egoistic"[87] desires of those who dictate its direction.

A scientifically defensible concept of democracy appreciates that the state in modern society must perform a function which it alone can discharge. Recognizing that deterioration of the guild, the municipality, and the Church entails a diminution of the sphere within which uncritically internalized custom regulates the tasks essential to societal well-being as well as a deterioration of the forms of virtue once cultivated within such traditional associations, Durkheim insists that

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inflation of the imperatives of centralized coordination requires a growing interventionist state: "The care of educating the young, of protecting the public health, of presiding over the ways of administering public aid, of administering the means of transport and communication, little by little moves over into the sphere of the central organ."[88] Accordingly, like the sociologist whose divestment of common sense enables him to "act with full knowledge of the facts," the state, as "the very organ of social thought," must become "a center of new and original representations which . . . put society in a position to conduct itself with greater intelligence than when it is swayed merely by vague sentiments working on it"; for there "exists the same contrast between the psychic life diffused throughout society and the parallel life worked out especially in governmental organs as exists between the diffused psychic life of the individual and his clear consciousness."[89]

As the vehicle through which society "achieve(s) a consciousness of itself in its purest form,"[90] the state engages in activity which is both instrumental and moral in character. Because it is the institutional site within which is concentrated the specialized knowledge and professional expertise made available by scientific disciplines, the state is able to formulate policies whose implementation by subordinate administrative agencies accomplishes the "planning of the social milieu";[91] just as "the natural sciences permit us to manipulate the material with which they deal, so the science of moral facts puts us in a position to order and direct the course of moral life."[92] Its performance of this directive function, though, is not merely technical; for the state achieves its ends not chiefly through external imposition of systematic regulation, but rather through reconstruction of the diffuse media of moral exchange generated by diverse groups whose unmethodical arrangement now elicits such contradictory understandings of matters political: "It is not a matter of coordinating changes outwardly and mechanically, but of bringing men's minds into mutual understanding."[93] Consequently, a state whose relationship to society is rightly termed "democratic" is one which sees to it that the scientific rationale for any given policy or program is disseminated among those who are subject to it: The "closer communication becomes between the government consciousness and the rest of society, . . . the more democratic the character of the society will be."[94] To "take(s) part" in democratic politics is thus to ask oneself "the questions those governing ask themselves," and to grant one's consent is to "share in"[95] the consciousness articulated by the state.

However, because it "undergo(es) a process of elaboration" of which

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most are "not capable," the scientific "information put at the disposal of government councils" is not immediately "available to the mass of the people."[96] It can only become a public possession through circulation of symbols which, because they are "simple, definite, and easily representable," render intelligible a truth which, "owing to its dimensions, the number of its parts, and the complexity of their arrangement, is difficult to hold in mind."[97] Like the totems of primitive societies, these symbols command a generative power which enables individual consciousnesses, "which would otherwise be closed to each other," to establish a "real communion, that is to say, a fusion of all particular sentiments into one common sentiment";[98] and their internalization within the social body invests structures of governance with life-giving and hence sacred import. For what Durkheim claims is true of all consciousness is true of that characteristic of the state as well; its purpose is "not to direct the behavior of a being with no need of knowledge: it is *to constitute a being who would not exist without it.*"[99]

Endorsement of this conception of democracy presupposes the existence of a societal consensus which denies the received wisdom that has guided elaboration of common goods in the past and which grants the state's right to engage in scientifically grounded reformation of the terms of collective existence. Yet no amount of moral exhortation or political education, in the absence of significant institutional transformation, can induce a people to accede to a sociological construction of reality and so part with the erroneous understanding of democracy which now discourages this conjunction of knowledge and power:

> If individuals affected by color-blindness make mistakes about colors it is because the organ of sight is formed in such a way as to cause this failure, and no matter how we may warn them, they will go on seeing things as they see them. Likewise, if a nation has a certain way of representing to itself the role of the State and the nature of its relations with the State, that is because there is something in the State and society that makes this false representation inevitable.[100]

Therefore the "organic constitution"[101] of the body social, composed of creatures who are incapable of either discrimination or pursuit of public ends, must be deliberately reconstructed such that its indisposition can no longer infect the reason of state. If the state is to enforce interventions which "may be valid for the whole community and yet do not square with the state of social opinion," then a misguided citizenry must be drawn into a form of association, the corporation, which induces its members to "relieve" themselves "of a role for which the individual is not

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cast"; "the only means of releasing the government is to devise intermediaries between it and the rest of society."[102] Abstraction of the state's consciousness from the particularity of ordinary opinion presupposes the fabrication of a collective consciousness whose bearers refuse to admit that "there is anything in public organization lying beyond the arm of the State" and then defend this view by citing its newly acquired conviction that "the only reason for which one can claim the right of intervention, and of rising above historical moral reality in order to reform it, is not my reason nor yours: it is the impersonal human reason, only truly realized in science."[103] The corporation's rule secures for the state the deferential citizenry which its autonomous initiatives demand and so frees it to govern on the basis of "morality itself,. . . not the deformation it undergoes in being incarnated in current practices which can express it only imperfectly" because they are "reduced to the level of human mediocrity."[104]

In order for the state to "become the instrument of the almost continuous reform that present-day conditions of collective existence demand,"[105] the "ties which bind the individual to his family, to his native soil, to traditions which the past has given him"[106] must be loosened such that society becomes "all the more malleable."[107] Because these lagging "resistances of collective particularism" threaten to mire the political organ in a web of custom from which it cannot escape, the incalculable "shadows" of the body social, which hinder the ability of "statistical services" to keep the state "informed of everything important that goes on in the organism,"[108] must be deprived of their ability to counter preparation of the individual psyche for penetration by "the sphere of clear consciousness."[109] By grounding political consciousness in an institution established on an occupational rather than a territorial foundation, Durkheim insures that the gains wrought by the decomposition of provincial bonds shall not be relinquished and that their memory shall not be preserved; "we can almost say that a people is as much more advanced as territorial divisions are more superficial."[110]

Its status established as the "elementary division of the State, the fundamental political unit,"[111] the corporation, effacing the distinction between public and private, dissects a democratic citizenry into discrete functional groupings which are no longer capable of joint political action. More important, by "shap(ing)" its members in its "own image,"[112] the corporation teaches that the coherence of society demands continuous acquiescence in the reason of science; individuals "desire science only to the extent that experience has taught them that

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they cannot do without it."[113] Leaving behind only an "impersonal and anonymous" cult of the abstracted human personality whose chief injunction is to disregard "all that concerns us personally, all that derives from our empirical individuality,"[114] it creates a clear and distinct citizenry whose emancipation from particularistic commitments and parochial knowledges enables science to complete the dispossession of common sense: "It is not a trifling matter . . . 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."[115] Reconstruction of the social body achieves its consummation when, because the conclusions of scientific investigation no longer "surprise and disconcert"[116] the disciplined members of its corporate ego, "the science of morality" proves "sufficiently advanced for theory to govern practice."[117]

IV

Beneath Durkheim's attribution of a political purpose to social theory rests his conviction that disorganization within society can best be remedied through rectification of the "anarchical state of science," this "spectacle of an aggregate of disjointed parts which do not concur."[118] The culture in which science may effect the re-formation of practice is one in which the particular, whether derived from the body or common sense, is governed by a knowledge whose abstraction is the condition of its universality. Incorporation of its animate vehicles fixes a disjunction between state and society whose justification in terms of the right of science to rule opinion conceals the political implications of Durkheim's admission that the former is generated and sustained by the latter. The regime of objectivity is purchased through a refusal to acknowledge its members as source of the authority which grants truth its power.

Durkheim's political science fashions a social world in which inquiry confirms its own creation: "Truth is the means by which a new order of things becomes possible, and that new order is nothing less than *civilization*."[119] The consequence is a political theory which is not decidedly liberal, socialist, or conservative. Rather, it is one which affirms that the existence of pluralistic points of view bears witness not to an irreducible social fact but to the tenacity of error; "if legal, moral,

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and political questions remain within the realm of the debatable, this is because the experimental method is only just beginning to be applied to them."[120] Argument between citizens through the medium of a vernacular language is thus displaced by agreement of subjects on the content and value of autonomous realities. Establishing rule by a form of truth whose "*de facto* necessitating power . . . silenc(es) the differences between individuals,"[121] Durkheim's science evacuates democratic politics of that which renders its practice necessary and meaningful.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Steven Seidman, *Liberalism and the Origins of European Social Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 145-200; Jeffrey Prager, "Moral Integration and Political Inclusion: A Comparison of Durkheim's and Weber's Theories of Democracy," *Social Forces* (June 1981), 918-950; Steven Fenton, *Durkheim and Modern Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 81-115; and Irving Horowitz, "Socialization Without Politicization: Emile Durkheim's Theory of the Modern State," *Political Theory* (August 1982), 353-377. For a helpful review of the recent literature on corporatism, see Leo Panitch, "Recent Theorizations of Corporatism: Reflections on a Growth Industry," *British Journal of Sociology* (1980), 159-187.

2. In his *Emile Durkheim* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1965), Nisbet tempers somewhat the conservative representation of Durkheim which he pressed without qualification in "Conservatism and Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology* (September 1952), 167-175, and "The French Revolution and the Rise of Sociology in France," *American Journal of Sociology* (September 1943), 156-164.

3. Anthony Giddens, "Durkheim's Political Sociology," *The Sociological Review* (November 1971), 513.

4. Alvin Gouldner, "Introduction" to Emile Durkheim, *Socialism* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 30-31.

5. Steven Lukes, *Emile Durkheim* (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 268. Lukes shares some common ground with Giddens insofar as he holds that Durkheim's socialism is properly understood as the culmination of his commitment to the ideals of liberalism.

6. A possible way to resolve this debate is suggested by Dominick LaCapra in his *Emile Durkheim: Sociologist and Philosopher* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972). La Capra argues that "Durkheim attempted a reconciliation of liberal, conservative, and radical traditions" (293); but this is merely to evade the question.

7. For other essays which claim to reveal the relationship between Durkheim's sociological vision and his liberal, socialist, or conservative political commitments, see the essays by Joseph Neyer, Melvin Richter, and Lewis Coser in Kurt Wolff, ed. *Essays on Sociology and Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 32-76, 170-210, 211-232.

8. By this I do not mean to suggest that Durkheim's sociology is ideological in character. To make that claim is to assume that the problem of interpreting Durkheim is posed by the implicit presence of political commitments which have insinuated their way

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into ostensibly scientific inquiry and which must now be unearthed. But if it is true that the very possibility of Durkheim's science entails explicit political imperatives, then no act of ideological debunking is necessary. For interpretations which do adopt a debunking strategy, see Steven Lukes's "Introduction" to W. D. Hall's recent translation of Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* [1895] (New York: Free Press, 1982); Paul Hirst, *Durkheim, Bernard, and Epistemology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975); and Irving Zeitlin, *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 234-280.

9. The application to social science of categories drawn from the political practice of founding was first suggested to me by a reading of Sheldon Wolin, "Max Weber: Legitimation, Method, and the Politics of Theory," *Political Theory* (August 1981), 401-424.

10. Emile Durkheim, *Suicide* [1897] (New York: Free Press, 1951), 38.

11. Durkheim, *Rules*, 43.

12. Ibid., 203.

13. Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* [1893] (New York: Free Press, 1933), 367. CF. Durkheim's "Preface" to the first volume of *L'Année Sociologique* [1898] in Yash Nandan, ed., *Emile Durkheim: Contributions to L'Année Sociologique* (New York: Free Press, 1980): "Such is our program. In order to carry it out, a certain number of workers have joined forces after having come to an understanding on the rules that have just been explicated. And perhaps this instinctive meeting of minds with a view to joint enterprise is a phenomenon that is not without importance. Until now, sociology has generally remained an eminently personal undertaking; doctrines depended closely on the personality of the scholar and could not be dissociated from it. Yet science, since it is objective, is essentially an impersonal matter and can develop only from collective effort" (51).

14. Durkheim, *Rules*, 144.

15. Emile Durkheim, "The Dualism of Human Nature and its Social Conditions" (1914) in Robert Bellah, ed. *Emile Durkheim: Morality and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 150.

16. Durkheim, *Rules*, 100.

17. Durkheim, "The Dualism of Human Nature," 151.

18. Durkheim, *Suicide*, 247.

19. Durkheim, "The Dualism of Human Nature," 152.

20. Emile Durkheim, *Moral Education* [1925] (New York: Free Press, 1961), 116.

21. Durkheim, "The Dualism of Human Nature," 153.

22. Ibid., 162.

23. Durkheim, *Rules*, 61.

24. Ibid., 61.

25. Ibid., 63.

26. Ibid., 60.

27. Ibid., 60.

28. Ibid., 60.

29. Ibid., 72, 31.

30. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, 33.

31. Emile Durkheim, *Socialism* [1895] (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 55.

32. Durkheim, *Rules*, 31, 37.

33. Durkheim, *Moral Education*, 253.

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34. See ibid., 253: "Our language itself is not suited to translate the obscure superstructure of things that we may glimpse but do not understand. Precisely because our language is analytical it expresses well only those things that are analyzed—in other words, reduced to their elements. . . . The ideal thing for it would be to have one single word for each indivisible part of reality, and to express the totality formed by everything through a simple mechanical combination of these elementary notions."

35. Ibid., 251.

36. Ibid., 261.

37. Ibid., 261.

38. Durkheim, *Rules*, 74, 33.

39. Ibid., 73.

40. Ibid., 74.

41. Emile Durkheim, "Sociology in France in the Nineteenth Century" [1900], in *Emile Durkheim: On Morality and Society*, 22.

42. Durkheim, *Rules*, 70.

43. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* [1912] (New York: Free Press, 1965), 28.

44. Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, *Primitive Classification* [1903] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 82-83.

45. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 30.

46. Ibid., 270.

47. Emile Durkheim, *Pragmatism and Sociology* [1955] (New York: Free Press, 1974), 84.

48. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 486-487.

49. Durkheim, *Moral Education*, 88.

50. See Durkheim, *Pragmatism and Sociology*, 73: "Truth cannot be separated from a certain moral obligation. In every age, men have felt they *were obliged* to seek truth. In truth, there is something which commands respect, and a moral power to which the mind feels properly *bound* to assent."

51. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 239.

52. Durkheim, *Pragmatism and Sociology*, 91.

53. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 239.

54. Durkheim, "The Dualism of Human Nature," 149.

55. This generalization is not meant to overlook the fact that the precise nature of Durkheim's commitment to corporatism shifts in subtle but important ways throughout his career. For example, the discussion contained within *Suicide*, which emphasizes the occupational association's suppression of appetite and imposition of coercive sanctions, corresponds to Durkheim's vision of society as a constellation of social facts whose central characteristics are externality and constraint. That presented in *The Division of Labor*, which stresses the corporation's ability to bring order to currently disorganized sectors of the economy, expresses Durkheim's growing preoccupation with the channeling of appetite into profit-oriented activity. Finally, the argument advanced in *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* at least partly incorporates Durkheim's awareness of the sociological constitution of all truth-claims through its focus on the corporation's inculcation of collective representations whose internalization weds the individual to this community through the medium of shared symbols.

56. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, 302.

57. Durkheim, *Moral Education*, 40.

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58. Durkheim, *Suicide*, 247-248.
59. Emile Durkheim, *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* [1950] (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1983), 11.
60. Durkheim, *Socialism*, 255.
61. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, 28.
62. Durkheim, *Moral Education*, 232.
63. Durkheim, *Suicide,* 379.
64. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, 227.
65. Durkheim, *Professional Ethics*, 14.
66. Durkheim, *Moral Education*, 233.
67. Durkheim, quoted in Lukes, *Emile Durkheim*, 353.
68. Durkheim, *Suicide*, 389.
69. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, 346.
70. Ibid., 88.
71. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 494, 427.
72. Durkheim, *Moral Education*, 31.
73. Durkheim, *Pragmatism and Sociology*, 89.
74. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, 346.
75. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 481, 484.
76. Ibid., 493.
77. Ibid., 493.
78. Ibid., 493.
79. Emile Durkheim, "Cours de science sociale: lecon d'ouverture," *Revue internationale de l'enseignement* (1888), 47-48. The translation is mine.
80. Durkheim, *Rules*, 62.
81. Ibid., 62.
82. Durkheim, *Professional Ethics*, 99.
83. Durkheim, *Pragmatism and Sociology*, 91.
84. Durkheim, *Rules*, 66.
85. Durkheim, *Professional Ethics*, 82, 99.
86. Ibid., 92, 83.
87. Ibid., 105.
88. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, 221.
89. Durkheim, *Professional Ethics*, 80, 51, 92.
90. Ibid., 80.
91. Ibid., 71.
92. Durkheim, *Sociology and Philosophy*, 65.
93. Durkheim, Professional Ethics, 29.
94. Ibid., 84.
95. Ibid., 81. For an essay whose analysis of Durkheim's interpretation of the role of the state is not unlike that developed here, see Pierre Birnbaum, "La conception durkheimienne de l'État: l'apolitisme des fonctionnaries," *Revue francaise de sociologie* (April-June 1976), 247-258.
96. Ibid., 92.
97. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 251.
98. Ibid., 262.
99. Durkheim, *Pragmatism and Sociology*, 82; emphasis in original.
100. Durkheim, *Professional Ethics*, 94-95.

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101. Ibid., 95.
102. Ibid., 49, 108, 101.
103. Durkheim, *Sociology and Philosophy*, 65.
104. Durkheim, quoted in Lukes, *Emile Durkheim*, 420-421.
105. Durkheim, *Professional Ethics*, 90, 88.
106. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, 400.
107. Durkheim, *Professional Ethics*, 84.
108. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, 222.
109. Durkheim, *Professional Ethics*, 66, 84.
110. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, 187.
111. Ibid., 27.
112. Durkheim, *Professional Ethics*, 63.
113. Emile Durkheim, *Education and Sociology*, [1922] (New York: Free Press, 1956), 74.
114. Emile Durkheim, "Individualism and the Intellectuals" [1898], in *Emile Durkheim: On Morality and Society*, 48, 45.
115. Durkheim, *Moral Education*, 20.
116. Durkheim, *Rules*, 37.
117. Durkheim, quoted in Lukes, *Emile Durkheim*, 79.
118. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, 368.
119. Durkheim, *Pragmatism and Sociology*, 92; emphasis in original.
120. Emile Durkheim, *The Evolution of Educational Thought* [1938] (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 155.
121. Durkheim, *Pragmatism and Sociology*, 73, 75.

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