

DUKHEIM'S SOCIAL THEORY

With special reference to

THE POSITION OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN SOCIETY

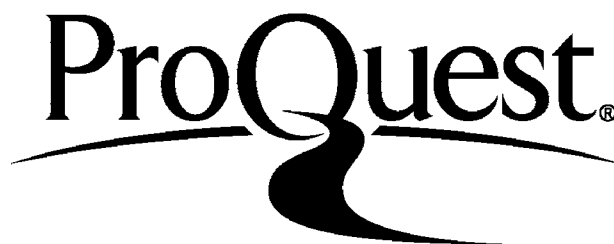
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SUMMARY.

Durkheim's Social Theory, with Special Reference to the Position of the Individual in Society

This thesis is concerned not so much with Durkheim's contributions to the methodology of the social sciences as with his discussions, scattered throughout a number of monographs and papers, on the position of the individual in complex societies.

Because of his moral outlook, Durkheim opposed Individualism, believing discipline essential to man's happiness, and security only possible under the supreme moral authority — society. Considering the individual therefore, Durkheim saw his malaise not as a result of increasing social restrictions, but as a symptom of insufficient contact with society. Throughout his study of social institutions this point is constantly reiterated. A man is insufficiently absorbed into his society, and is thus deprived of moral stability. The individual's maladjustment in advanced societies must be solved then by re-establishing his close contact with society. This cannot be done through institutions like religion and the family which are weakening, nor through the state since it is too remote from everyday activity — the economic group alone remains. Durkheim's analysis, then, points to the necessity for tightening social bonds, and to his proposal to revive professional groups, through which he hopes to re-establish for the individual the vital moral discipline of society.

But his proposals would meet with difficulty; to recover group-consciousness by returning to simpler organisation is impossible, to recover it under existing social conditions difficult. Attempted through education, it means the inculcation of "group-idealism" by teachers not feeling it themselves, nor would professional

groups in large-scale industries afford the individual member much individual contact. Moreover the problem is heightened by the sharp distinction felt between legal and social constraint.

On the whole, Durkheim's suggestions would be nullified by those difficulties they are designed to remove, in spite of the fact his consideration of the individual's position is interesting and valuable

[297 words]

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"The individual's consciousness of himself is inseparable from knowing himself as the organ of the whole for his nature now is not distinct from his 'artificial self'. He is related to the living moral system not as to a foreign body; his relation to it is "too inward even for faith, since faith implies a certain separation". It is no other-world that he cannot see but must trust to; he feels himself in it and it in him..... the belief in this real moral organism is the one solution of ethical problems. It breaks down the antithesis of despotism and individualism; it denies them while it preserves the truth of both. The truth of individualism is saved, because, unless we have intense life and self-consciousness in the members of the state, the whole state is ossified. The truth of despotism is saved, because, unless the member realises the whole by and in himself, he fails to reach his own individuality. Considered in the main, the best communities are those which have the best men for their members, and the best men are the members of the best communities..... The two problems of the best man and the best state are two sides, two distinguishable aspects of the one problem, how to realise in human nature the perfect unity of homogeneity and specification, and when we see that each of these without the other is unreal, then we see that (speaking in general) the welfare of the state and the welfare of its individuals are questions which it is mistaken and ruinous to separate. Personal morality and political and social

institutions cannot exist apart.... The community
is moral because it recognises personal morality;
personal morality is moral because and in so far as it
realises the moral whole."

F.H.BRADLEY - "My Station and its Duties"

PART I

DURKHEIM'S CENTRAL THEORY

INTRODUCTION

Emile Durkheim¹, teacher and sociologist is, to my mind, one of the most outstanding figures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, yet surprisingly enough little has been written about him here in England. Born in Epinal in 1858 (one year after the death of August Comte) he followed family tradition and prepared for the rabbinate, studying the Old Testament and Hebrew. Abandoning this ambition at an early age he passed on, in 1879, from a brilliant school record to a not so brilliant College career at the École Normale Supérieure (where Bergson and Jaures were scholars, and from which Lévy-Bruhl had just graduated) to train as a teacher. Even then, as a student he was, as Holleaux, a College friend wrote "absolutely simple - he hated all affectations. Profoundly serious - he hated all flightiness".

It was this gravity of disposition leading to an insistence on the value of solid thinking as opposed to dilettantism, combined with a strong social interest, that led him at the close of his College career to the study of sociology, which, put forward by Comte previously was viewed with some suspicion. His subsequent career was a justifiably outstanding one. Having lectured for some years,

1. For further account of Durkheim's life see Introduction to Alpert "Emile Durkheim and his sociology" (1939).

a chair in Social Science was created for him at the University of Bordeaux (1896) and from then onward he taught and wrote¹ with unflinching energy until his death in 1917.

As can be seen, he lived through an interesting period in the history of his own country and others. He was born against the background of nineteenth century France with its divisions and consequent weaknesses, he died during the upheaval of the Great War; and throughout his lifetime he was keenly concerned with the causes and effects of what he felt to be an unhealthy social state. It is because of this keen concern that Durkheim stands out. The following chapters are an attempt to assess his analysis of society, the value of his diagnosis of the increasing social unrest and the worth of his suggestions for remedying this.

From this it is obvious that it is in Durkheim's positive views in which we are interested rather than his views on scientific method - his undoubted contributions to sociological method have been dealt with elsewhere², and will be discussed only as they are connected with the main argument.

1. For list of Durkheim's works see App. A.

2. E.g. Charles Sehlke - "Durkheim's Contributions to Sociological Method".

Durkheim was born in an age of increasing stress on the doctrine of individualism. The material he dealt with was by no means fresh - on the contrary the normal moral relationship which should exist between an individual and the society in which he lives has been a perpetual watershed of political and philosophical thought. Thinkers like Rousseau¹ have fallen to the one side, seeing organised society as the corrupting factor of mans nature, others to the other, believing society to be the natural fulfilment of human nature - society exists before man², according to Aristotle. But the problem is increasingly being thrust on the ordinary member of society, leaving the sphere of purely academic discussion. With the development of industrialised societies such as our own an ironic situation has arisen; the very central (social) authority which arose in answer to the need for the protection of the individual against economic exploitation is, because of the necessary regulation of more and more everyday activities, becoming an obstacle to cultural freedom. It seems (and such a view is held by some) that collectivity may bring with it material advantages, but be the deathblow to individual development.

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1. Viz. throughout - Rousseau Prizewinning Essay for Academie de Dijon and "Le Contrat social" (1762).
 2. Not chronologically, of course, but logically.
 3. Viz. p.38 "The Three Spheres of Society" - Charles Waterman (1946) for further comment.

It is just because this view is increasingly held that Durkheim is interesting in that he is unable to view the relationship between the individual and society as being an antagonism or implying frustration; each exists for and through the other and cannot exist separately. He is certainly not alone in this denial of any antithesis of the individual and society; other sociologists¹ have pointed out the fallacy of any discussion based on such an antithesis. For example, Maclver says "There is no conflict between society and the individual, between the welfare of society and the welfare of the individual. The quality of a society is the quality of its members"². Or again Cooley - "Society and the individual do not denote separate phenomena, but are simply collective and distributive aspects of the same thing"³.

But Durkheim is alone in that this assumption is not only at the centre of his sociology but also of his conviction that the malaise of advanced societies can be removed and is not an inevitable outcome of material progress. It must be remembered, though, that like all intellectual theories, Durkheim's was not static - it developed and changed during his study of society.

1. E.g. Cooley, Orton, Todd, etc.

2. Maclver "Community" (1917) p.67.

3. G. H. Cooley "Human Nature and the Social Order" (1912) pp.1-2.

Parsons,¹ in fact, distinguishes four distinct stages in Durkheim's thought -

- (1) The formulative period during which the fundamental problems of sociology were distinguished. (Chief work of this period being "The Division of Labour in Society - 1893.)
- (2) A period during which a general theory, a synthesis, was arrived at. (Chief works being "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" (1895) and "Le Suicide" (1897).)
- (3) Its replacement by a different theory. (Chief work being "L'éducation morale" (pub. 1925.)
- (4) The arrival at a new synthesis, which was not embodied in writing owing to Durkheim's death.²

Although recognising that Durkheim's social theory develops along a definite path, I am not concerned here with describing it, but taking the conclusions of his study. In order to estimate the value of these conclusions and their parallel suggestions for social "reform" we shall first describe his central theory of social development, and his resulting outlook on the nature and development of various social institutions before considering the application of his theory to contemporary society.

1. T. Parsons - "Structure of Social Action" (1937) p.304.

2. Durkheim died before completing more than a few introductory remarks to a book on ethics and morality.

It has already been said that for Durkheim the problem of "Individual or society?" does not exist; since that is so, the question that takes its place is "Why is there no such antithesis? If the individual and his society are inseparable, what is it which binds the one to the other?"¹ The complete answer is formulated throughout his books, but the nucleus of it is most clearly stated in one of his earliest and most interesting books (his doctoral dissertation) - "The Division of Labour In Society".²

This work, as Durkheim says "had its origins in the question of the relation of the individual to social solidarity. Why does the individual, while becoming more autonomous, depend more on a society? How can he be at once more solidary and more individual?"³

His conclusion is that it is because of a change in the nature of social solidarity, resulting from the development of the division of labour. This social phenomenon has steadily increased in all fields - economic, political, administrative, judicial - it is, apparently, a law of nature, but can it be also called a moral rule?

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1. N.B. that he began his University lecture course with this same question, viz. "Cours de Science Sociale. Leçon d'ouverture." (Revue Interne d'Enseignement VI pp.23-48.)
 2. Published 1893.
 3. Preface to 1st Ed. of "The Division of Labour In Society" p.37 in Simpson edition.

Elsewhere Durkheim has formulated the distinguishing characteristics of the moral rule as being -

- (1) That it is sanctioned¹ - i.e. that it is obligatory.
- (2) That it increases social solidarity.²

In attempting to discover whether the division of labour is a moral fact, therefore, Durkheim has to apply the test of seeing if these two characteristics are to be found.

It is is sanctioned by the public, although uneasily; the question with which Durkheim is most concerned therefore is to determine the function (the word being used not in the sense of "rôle" but of "to what need does it correspond?") of the division of labour.

Is it to render civilisation possible? No, says Durkheim, for in the first place the division of labour was not deliberately called into being (it was not a conscious means to the attainment of some desired end, that is). In the second "there is nothing in civilisation which presents the moral criterion (sanctioned rules of action, that is), therefore civilisation is morally indifferent.

1. "every rule of conduct to which a repressive diffuse sanction is attached in the average society of this type considered at the same period of evolution" (is a moral rule). Introduction to "The Div. of Lab." p.41 Simpson Ed.
- Secondly the same qualification applies to every rule which, without precisely presenting this criterion is, however, analogous to certain of the preceding rules; that is to say, serves the same ends and depends upon the same causes". Ibid. Intro. to 1st Ed. printed as Appendix in Simpson Ed. vis. p.435.
2. "In general the characteristic of moral rules is that they enunciate the fundamental condition of social solidarity. Ibid. Conclusion p.398 Simpson Ed.

If then the division of labour had no other rule than to render civilisation possible it would participate in the same moral neutrality".¹

This suggestion dismissed, Durkheim goes on to examine the alternative idea suggested by Comte² that the division of labour may in some way be a source of social cohesion - "We are thus led to ask if the division of labour..... would not have as its function the integration of the social body to ensure unity"³. But before he can reach any conclusions as to the validity of this view of the division of labour he must just consider the nature of social cohesion. He is, in fact, led back to the previously formulated question - "What is it which binds the individual to society?".

This question is answered after a study of the nature and development of law ("since law reproduced the principal forms of solidarity"⁴); the answer is that there are two ways in which societies are held together, according to the level of development of the society. There are, that is to say, two types of social solidarity, each dependent on a distinct cause.

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1. Bk. I Chap. I "The Div. of Lab." p.53 Simpsons Ed.
 2. Comte "Cours de Philosophie Positive" 6 vols.(Paris 1830-42) Vol. IV. p.422 seq.
 3. Bk. I Chap. I "The Div. of Lab." p.62 Simpsons Ed.
 4. Ibid. Bk. I Chap. I. p.68 Simpson Ed.

These two distinct types, treated in the following chapters, are -

- (1) That solidarity which, found most markedly in primitive societies, in the absence of the marked division of labour, depends on the union of like natures, and connects the individual directly with his group.

This solidarity is called "mechanical solidarity"¹ by Durkheim; "The term does not signify that it is produced by mechanical and artificial means. We call it that only by analogy to the cohesion which unites the elements of a living body. What justifies the term is that the link which thus unites the individual to society is wholly analagous to that which attaches a thing to a person"¹.

- (2) That solidarity which, found most markedly in civilised societies depends, on the contrary, on the union of different nature, in the presence of a marked and organised division of labour, the individual not being directly connected with his group.

This solidarity is termed "organic solidarity"² - "it is quite otherwise with the solidarity which the division of labour produces Society becomes more capable of collective action, at the same time that each of its elements has more

1. Bk. I, Chap. III Sect. 4 "The Div. of Lab. in Society" p. 130 Simpson Ed.

2. Ibid. Bk. I, Chap. III Sect. 4 - p. 131 Simpson Ed.

freedom of movement. This solidarity resembles that which we observe among the higher animals. Each organ, in effect, has its special physiognomy, its autonomy. And, moreover, the unity of the organism is as great as the individuation of the parts is more marked. Because of this analogy we propose to call the solidarity which is due to the division of labour, "organic".¹

These two distinct types of solidarity, their causes and effects, are discussed at greater length in the following two chapters.

1. Ibid. Bk. I. Chap. III Sect. 4 - p.131 Simpson Ed.

CHAPTER ONECOHESION IN THE PRIMITIVE SOCIETY

In the introduction it was explained how Durkheim had set himself, during his examination of the function of the division of labour, the question - "What is the basis of social solidarity?" and had, in answer to that question, distinguished two types of social solidarity.

The first, existing among societies as yet undeveloped, he calls "mechanical solidarity", because in the absence of the division of labour, society depends on the union of individuals possessed of like opinions and customs; the resulting type of solidarity therefore is "born of resemblances"¹ and forms a direct link between society and the individual - his dealings, that is to say, directly concern the group, in just the same way that the group activities concern him.

But the union of members of which Durkheim speaks is more than an aggregation of individuals. Such individuals have certain common beliefs and opinions, which in primitive societies are so strong that they form a determinate system, "un conscience collectif", best defined in Durkheim's own words.

1. *Vis.* p.106 "The Div. of Lab. in Society" (Simpson Ed.)
 Also p.109 - "there exists a social solidarity which comes from a certain number of states of conscience which are common to all the members of the same society".

"The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average members of the same society forms a determinate system which has its own life; one may call it the collective or common conscience. No doubt it has not a specific organ as substratum; it is, by definition, diffuse in every reach of society. Nevertheless it has specific characteristics which make it a distinct reality. It is, in effect, independent of the particular conditions in which individuals are placed, they pass on and it remains. It is the same in the North and in the South, in great cities and in small, in different professions. Moreover, it does not change with each generation, but, on the contrary, it connects successive generations with one another. It is thus an entirely different thing from particular consciences, although it can only be realized through them. It is the physical type of society, a type which has its properties, its conditions of existence, its mode of development, just as individual types, though in a different way."¹

Such a definition seems to give only a dramatic suggestion of what Durkheim means by "un conscience collectif"².

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1. "The Div. of Lab. in Society" Bk. I Chap. II (pp. 79-80 Simpson Ed.).
 2. It is difficult to translate the phrase "conscience collectif" at all clearly. The translation of "conscience" according to Harrap may be 'conscience' or 'consciousness'; according to Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française it is "le sentiment intime par lequel l'homme se rend témoignage à lui-même de ce qu'il fait de bien et de mal. (The inner sense by means of which a man judges the rightness or wrongness of his actions). In translating I use the word "conscience" for clarity, but in reality I believe both meanings to be implied in "un conscience collectif" - consciousness in that Durkheim is considering a collective awareness, conscience in that group awareness is the source of individual moral judgments.

It is described more fully elsewhere,¹ its nature becoming clearer if we ask the following questions:-

- (1) How did the collective conscience arise?
- (2) What are its specific characteristics?
- (3) How does it influence or affect society? (And is this influence to be observed?)

The rise of the collective conscience necessitates a dip into psychology for Durkheim; he attempts to explain it by a consideration of the individual and collective "representations" (or 'ideas'). Commencing with the individual mind, he supposes that sensations, "the primary basis of individual consciousness"² are produced because of the interaction and combination of the brain-cells. This being so, the sensations, while arising from the combination of individual cells, are nevertheless something more than the sum of these cells, an additional element being produced by their combination. Moreover, although the sensations are dependent on brain cells, they are produced by the mutual actions of many cells, and hence cannot belong to one cell alone.

These sensations, says Durkheim, may combine to form images, images combine to form concepts, and the combination of many concepts produces a representation.

1. "Individual and Collective Representations" - *Revue de Metaphysique et Morale* VI (1898).

2. *Ibid.* p. 273.

Just as these individual representations are formed, so are produced collective or social representations. The cerebral cells combine to produce sensations - just so, says Durkheim, do the individuals who form the substratum of society, by means of their individual inter-relations or by the inter-relations of groups, produce social sensations which, when autonomously combined, produce a higher social representation equivalent to the collective conscience.

We may well illustrate this theory by a practical application - the growth of public opinion, for instance. Each individual, through reading of information or under the influence of propaganda, formulates an opinion on a certain topic - (it may be part of a code of behaviour such as eating with a knife and fork or sleeping at night and working during the day, or it may be some moral point of issue); whatever it is, his opinion is gradually developed during conversation and is confirmed and spread by the thousand casual contacts of everyday life, until it is no longer an opinion held by that individual alone. It becomes a public opinion or even a custom and is so strong that any contradiction of it is the cause of public indignation and shocked surprise. In this case Durkheim might argue, something over and above the individual has been born; something existing through the individual, but having power superior to him, some central authority so strong that an affront to it means affront to all members of the group.

The rise of the collective conscience thus accounted for certain of the characteristics Durkheim attributes to it become more obvious.

The first is that, just as the individual representations, being the result of a combination of cerebral cells, cannot properly be said to belong to any one cell, the collective conscience, although existing because of individual minds, is a product of many, and belonging in its entirety to no one mind.¹

Secondly, being produced by the combination of individuals, the collective conscience is more than the sum of individual feelings, and hence is exterior² to any one individual mind and extending beyond it as the whole is greater than its parts.³ It is different from individual feelings because, says Durkheim, the group feels, thinks and acts differently than would its members when isolated.

Thirdly, the social conscience is superior to the individual because -

- (1) It surpasses him in time and space, i.e. that it exists before and after his death.
- (2) Society is manifold, whereas the individual is single.

1. "The Div. of Lab. in Society" p.296 Simpson Ed.

2. Ibid. p.294 Simpson Ed.

3. "Individual and Collective Representations" p.295.

(3) ¹ The social representations of which the collective conscience is made up are the final product of the representation-making process, and hence superior to all that has gone before.

(4) Since the individual submits to the collective conscience, the collective conscience is obligatory and therefore moral.²

The collective conscience, therefore, is superior to the individual; it embodies his traditions, customs and habits, and is the source of all the morals to which he is expected to conform. It is his central authority.

Why then, does Durkheim not belong to the class of thinkers who ignore the individual as a personality and consider him only as a physical part of a greater unity - the nation or state? For surely if a collective conscience as strong and authoritative as that described by Durkheim actually exists, the individual member of the group cannot exist other than as an identical cog in a great machine?

But such an apparent inconsistency is removed when we realize that Durkheim visualised the relation between society and the individual in such a way as to allow for both the

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.294 Simpson Ed.

2. A moral rule, as said before (viz. Introduction) being one accompanied by social sanction.

dominance of the collective conscience and the purely individual thoughts and actions of any member of a group. He does this by distinguishing two natures in man. "There are in each of us", he says, "two consciences; one which is common to our group in its entirety, which consequently is not ourself, but society living and acting within us; the other, on the contrary, represents that in us which is personal and distinct, that which makes us individual. Solidarity which comes from likenesses is at its maximum when the collective conscience completely envelopes our whole conscience, and coincides in all points with it. But at the moment our individuality is nil. It can only be born if the community takes smaller toll of us."¹

By this conception of a dualism in human nature, Durkheim therefore allows for individual actions and the existence of personality. He sets up, as it were, a balance between individual and collective ideas, which is applicable to various societies. Elsewhere Durkheim states "the collective representations are exterior to the individual consciences, because they are not derived from the individuals taken in isolation, but from their convergences and union - as a result

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" Bk. I Chap. II Sect. 4. p. 105 Simpson Ed.

of these combinations they (the private sentiments) become something else. The resultant derived therefrom extends beyond the individual mind as the whole is greater than the parts. It is this that thinks, that feels, that wills."¹

Now as the strength of this thinking, feeling, willing resultant of combined private sentiments is greater, individuality will be less marked. The collective conscience is at its strongest, therefore, among primitive societies because they are not distinguished by outstanding personalities. The primitive group, often without government, is yet possessed of a remarkable cohesion - its members are influenced by group customs, traditions and practices. The most primitive group which has ever existed in the history of man (and we have no actual knowledge about such a group) would be possessed of a still greater cohesion and attachment to common traditions. In such a group "individuality is nil"² according to Durkheim.

His picture of earliest man is of a being not yet possessed of an individual outlook, but influenced, shaped and limited on all sides by the collective conscience. Thus there would be among primitive societies (as there are not in primitive societies studied today) none of the diverging moral

-
1. "Individual and Collective Representations" p.295.
 2. "The Division of Labour in Society" Bk.I Chap.II Sect.4. p.106, Simpson Ed.

opinions, none of the various religious beliefs we find in our own.¹ Society, in the first place, sets the moral code for its members; it is in itself the body and source of moral feeling.

The strength of such moral feeling is demonstrated in the strength and violence with which it resists any act which appears as a threat to its supremacy and authority. "Every strong state of conscience is a source of life; it is an essential factor of our general vitality. Consequently everything that tends to enfeeble it wastes and corrupts us. There results a troubled sense of illness analagous to that which we feel when an important function is suspended or lapses. It is then inevitable that we should react energetically against the cause that threatens us with such diminution, that we strain to do away with it in order to maintain the integrity of our conscience as for the social nature of this reaction, it comes from the social nature of the offended sentiments. Because they are found in all consciences, the infraction committed arouses in those who have evidence of it or learn of its existence the same indignation. Everybody is attacked; consequently everybody opposes the attack. Not only is the reaction general, but it is collective, which is not the same thing. It is not produced isolatedly in each one, but with a totality and a unity nevertheless variable according to the case²

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" Bk.I Chap.IV Sect.1

2. Ibid. Bk. I. Chap. II Sect.3 p.98 Simpson Ed.

The reaction of which Durkheim speaks is punishment; law, he says, is the reflection of the precise type of social solidarity which exists in society; according to its strength of violence the strength of the collective conscience may be assessed.¹ Among primitive peoples law is "repressive"² - i.e. a crime (and an act, says Durkheim, may only be defined as criminal "when it offends strong and refined states of the collective conscience"³) is punished by inflicting loss or suffering on the agent - sometimes out of all proportion to the crime - "Punishment consists of a passionate reaction - in effect primitive peoples punish for the sake of punishing ... the proof of this is that they neither seek to strike back justly nor to strike back usefully, but merely to strike back."⁴

1. Ibid. Bk. I Ch. I p.64 - "Social solidarity is a completely moral phenomenon which, taken by itself, does not lend itself to exact measurement.... we must substitute for this internal fact which escapes us an external index which symbolises it... This visible symbol is law.... the more solidary the members of society are, the more they sustain diverse relations one with another or with the group collectively..... Moreover the number of these relations is necessarily proportionate to that of the juridical rules which determine them. Indeed, social life, especially where it exists durably, tends to assume a definite form and organise itself; and law is nothing else than this very organisation.... We can thus be sure of finding reflected in law all the essential varieties of social solidarity."

2. Ibid. Bk. I. Chap. I p.69.

3. Ibid. Bk. I. Chap. II p.80

4. Ibid. Bk. I. Chap. II p.86

As examples we may take, says Durkheim, the punishment of an animal which has committed a wrong act,¹ of inanimate beings which have served merely as instruments,² or the punishment which extends beyond the individual criminal to his innocent relatives or neighbours.³

Now the very fact that the reaction to the crime is so severe and unreasonable is the proof of the strength and dominance of the collective conscience it has offended. It is because the group as a whole feels endangered when the collective sentiments are offended that it reacts as a whole.⁴ Often acts seemingly only slightly connected with what we call 'aines' - the breaking of a food taboo, for instance - constitute to a primitive people the greatest threat to tribal security because they might offend the spirits.⁵ And because such extreme

1. Durkheim's Examples and References to their source

1. Exodus xxi, 28 - "If an ox gore a man or woman that they die, then the ox shall be surely stoned."
2. Post - "Bausteine für eine allgemeine Rechtswissenschaft" I. pp. 230-231.
3. Exodus xx, 4-5. Deuteronomy xii, 12-18.
4. Div. of Lab. Sk. I. Chap. II pp. 102 and 103.
5. "It is their own offences the gods avenge by punishment and not those of particular persons. But offences against gods are offences against society. ... we need only look at the Bible; the laws of Manou, at the monuments which remain of the old Egyptian law, to see the relatively small place accorded to prescriptions for the protection of individuals, and contrariwise the luxuriant development of repressive legislation concerning different forms of sacrilege."

violence of punishment is observed among undeveloped peoples, Durkheim states that their solidarity¹ depends primarily on the commonness of their sentiments - the basis of social solidarity, what binds the individual directly to his group, is the collective conscience, in fact.

Now this conception of a collective conscience has been much discussed and criticised, not only with reference to Durkheim but those other sociologists who have postulated the evidence of such a mind. Objections against it certainly do occur - but they should only be applied to the exaggerated theory and not to the very real and observable social phenomena on which it is based. Before criticising any writer's entire theory for its inclusion of an unacceptable idea, it would be as well to distinguish clearly what is meant by the collective conscience and in what particular environment it is being discussed. Then we may go on to assess how necessary to the work as a whole the acceptance of the collective conscience is. If we do this we can see that there are two different conceptions of a collective mind, arising from the study of different environments. In the following quotation from Le Bon, for instance, there seems to be a very close approach to Durkheim's "collective conscience"² "The most striking peculiarity presented by a psychological group is the following. "However be the individuals who compose it, however like or unlike their

1. "Div. of Lab." Bk. I Chap. II Sect. 3 p.103.

2. Le Bon "The Crowd, A Study of the Popular Mind" p.29.

mode of life, their occupations, their character or intelligence, the fact that they have been transformed into a group puts them in possession of a sort of collective mind which makes them feel, think and act in a manner quite different from that in which each individual of them would feel, think and act were he in a state of isolation. There are certain ideas and feelings which do not come into being and do not transform themselves into acts except in the case of individuals forming a group. The psychological group is a provisional being formed of heterogeneous elements which for a moment are combined exactly as the cells which constitute a living body form by their reunion a new being which displays characteristics very different from those possessed by each of the cells singly."

But after reading the characteristics attributed to the group by Le Bon it becomes apparent that he is thinking only of the crowd and not of any more permanent group. A group, he says, is -

- 1 (a) Impulsive, changeable and irritable, its actions unpremeditated.
- (b) G credulous, easily influenced and incapable of criticism.
- (c) Possessed of simple and exaggerated feelings.

1. Viz. Le Bon's "The Crowd"

- (d) Capable of neither doubt nor uncertainty.
- (e) Only excited by excessive stimulus.
- (f) Very conservative, with strongly developed
submissive instinct.
- (g) Subject to the power of words.

In speaking of the collective conscience theory, therefore, it is necessary to distinguish clearly between those dealing with the crowd and those dealing with more permanent and organised groups. In either case there is justification for suspecting that something more than a collection of individual feelings is concerned; for the most part, surely, what is objected to at the outset is, as Durkheim realised,¹ the name and the implications one reads into it.

In a crowd, for example, we cannot help but observe behaviour which would never occur in any of its members were they isolated (in lynchings, for instance, where a collection of reasonable individuals can become excited to the pitch of breaking open gaols and taking the law into their own hands).

1. "The one (word) which we have just employed is not, it is true, without ambiguity. As the terms collective and social are often considered synonymous one is inclined to believe that the collective conscience is the total common conscience... to avoid the confusion into which some have fallen, the best way would be to create a technical expression especially to designate the totality of social similitudes." Div. of Lab. Bk. I. Chap. II. p.80.

The social psychologist would explain this¹ by reference to the increased suggestibility due to the spread of emotional excitement - what McDougall² terms "the primitive sympathetic response" (i.e. that the sight of others' emotion excites it or oneself, the sight of the emotion in oneself awakens it in others, and so on) together with the anonymity afforded by participation in a crowd. He would go on to cite lowered intelligence following heightened emotion, the feeling of power afforded by being one of a group, etc. etc. But such explanations take us very little further; they are not final. True they afford no evidence in favour of the "group-mind" theory; but taken together, the various characteristics of group behaviour and the altered individual member amount to an X which the disbeliever in a collective conscience would maintain as inexplicable, and which the exponents would point to as being the establishment of a collective mind.

But when we consider a theory such as that of Durkheim, which deals with a more widespread and permanent group - a group which, unlike a crowd, is not drawn together at one place and time by a passing identical interest, but is seldom completely collected together, and which is held together by indirect

1. McDougall "Social Psychology" (1908) Chap. IV.

2. Ibid. Chap. IV.

sustained relationships, we can see that the phenomena leading to the conclusion that a collective conscience exists are of a different type; it is precisely their durability which suggests extreme power. Tradition, custom, social habit - all these may certainly be said, in a way, to be "exterior" to the individual, in that their existence is not conditional upon his life alone.

But because a child is born in and influenced by a particular society, he is not necessarily ruled by a collective mind. Is it something more than the term and its implications to which we here object? In "The Division of Labour in Society" for example, the term "collective conscience" is used explicitly for convenience,¹ as equalling "simply the totality of social likenesses, without prejudging the category by which this system of phenomena ought to be defined".² In this case there would be little to say against the use of the term.

But in his later works³ Durkheim appears to accept far more meaning for the term than that quoted above.⁴ Ignoring the dangers of confusion he himself pointed out, he speaks of the collective conscience as a separate entity possessed of an

1. "The Division of Labour" Bk. I. Chap. II p.80 Simpson Ed.

2. Ibid. Footnote pp.80 & 81 - Simpson Ed.

3. Vis. "Individual and Collective Representations" (1898)

4. "Division of Labour in Society" p.80 Simpson Ed.

enormous power¹ - a more exaggerated view than that of Levy-Buhl, who says of collective representations - "their existence does not depend upon the individual. This is not because they imply a collective entity, apart from the individuals composing the social group"²; it is here that Durkheim begins to loose his conclusions open to doubt and causes his later views to appear unacceptable.

If we are taking him (and he is for the most part so regarded) as an exponent of the group-mind theory, then his theory may be queried on two points:-

- (1) Its philosophical foundations.
- (2) The illustration given of the collective conscience at its strongest, i.e. the primitive mentality.

With regard to the former of these, it can only be concluded that the collective conscience theory rests on questionable psychology. The analogy drawn between the individual and social mind, like the majority of analogies, is neither helpful nor conclusive. The fact that cells in the same brain may combine to form sensations (itself an unproven proposition) is no evidence that the sensations of separate individuals

1. "Individual and Collective Representations" p.295.
2. "Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures." (1910) p.1 Introduction. N.B. that Le Bon differs from Durkheim in that he claims that collective representations are specifically characteristic of primitive society.

combine to produce social representations. Moreover the cell in one brain is unable to transfer itself to another; it is a fixed point of the organism, whereas if we are to think of society in terms of an organism (and such a consideration is inevitably misleading) it may only be conceived of as an organism consisting of cells which are constantly breaking up and wandering off to other "organisms". As Gunsberg¹ points out, the fact that in society individuals may be strongly influenced by the opinions of others with whom they come into contact is not the same thing as a combination of minds in the production of one supreme psychological entity. It would be strange if human minds had nothing in common - the assumption that they have this common denominator is basic to psychology. Jung,² for instance, builds up a theory of archetypes - "In every individual", he says "in addition to the personal memories, there are also the great primordial images, the inherited potentialities of human imagination. They have always been potentially latent in the structure of the brain... The primordial images (archetypes) are quite the most ancient, universal and deep thoughts, and might therefore be termed original "thought-feelings"".

Or again - "The collective unconscious is the sediment of all the experience of the universe of all time and is also

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1. "The Psychology of Society" - Gunsberg (1921)
 2. "Psychology of the Unconscious" - Jung (1924)

an image of the universe that has been in process of formation for untold ages".¹

But to suppose from this and the existence of customs and traditions that a superior external mind exists is to distort. Customs, habits, public opinion may certainly be said to be external to the individual in that they are not entirely contained by one mind but are common to many. But this does not mean that they are external to all minds. Psychologically or philosophically there is then, no evidence that the processes on which Durkheim bases his theory of the rise of the collective conscience take place.

When we come to the second point - primitive mentality - we are immediately on very different (and unsafe) ground. In the absence of personal contacts with primitive communities we can only attempt to understand them from the works of those who have had contact with them; yet since such authors are far from united in their impressions and conclusions it is difficult to assess the true position of the individual in primitive society. On the one side we have these writers declaring that so strong is the dependence of the individual on his group that he has

1. For these quotations from the above work I am indebted to McDougall - "Outline of Abnormal Psychology" (1926) Chap. IX.

literally no consciousness of his own nature or thoughts. Lévy-Bruhl, one of the best known authors of this school, says of the member of a primitive community - ¹ "He undoubtedly has a lively "inner-sense" of his personal existence. He refers the sensations, pleasures, pains he experiences to himself, just as he does the act of which he knows himself to be the doer. But in the vague idea which the primitive has of himself, elements arising out of an individual self-reflection count, as we know, for very little. The primitive mind is very different from our own, so different that we cannot attempt to understand it". Or again - ² "If I were to express in one word this general property of the collective representations holding so important a place in the mental activity of undeveloped peoples, I should say that their mental activity was a mystic one - not a single being or object or natural phenomenon in their collective representations is what it appears to be to our minds. Almost everything we perceive in it escapes their attention or is a matter of indifference to them". Later writers have carried on the same anthropological tradition - the primitive mind is "different", "incomprehensible", "non-logical", etc. Kelsen, for example, in a recently published book ³ "Nature and Society" develops his theory as follows -

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1. Introduction to "The Soul of the Primitive".
 2. "Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures" 1910.
 3. Published in England 1946.

¹ in primitive man the rational element lags behind the emotional; his society is based on "subjective, non-cognitive interests", on the idea of retribution, nature being thought of as part of his society. The primitive man lacks "ego-consciousness", is unaware of the distinction existing between himself and animals, and because of this inherent lack of self-consciousness is primarily influenced and swayed by a strong "collectivist" conscience, allowing his life to be determined in every particular by society because of his fear of social disapproval.

How far then, is this conception of primitive man borne out by those anthropologists who have lived in primitive society? It is very difficult, as previously mentioned, to speak on the evidence of others when that evidence shows such internal disagreement, but in general it seems that the answer must be that such a conception of primitive man is a distorted if not entirely unfounded one, and that the member of a primitive society, although possessed of less individuality than the civilized, is not lacking in it completely.

The whole problem is, of course, complicated by the view of social development held by particular anthropologists.

1. Hans Kelsen "Nature & Society" (1946) Pt. I throughout.

So many writers speak of "primitive society" as if there were only one, or as if that phrase could describe a certain level of development rather than covering, as it does, societies of different customs, stages of progress, etc. Durkheim, speaking in this way of "primitive society" (and seeming to have in mind the early Hebrews and Romans)¹ instances in support of his theory the institutions of law and punishment -²"we can be sure," he says "of finding reflected in law all the essential varieties of social solidarity", and in primitive societies, one of the most outstanding differences is that it has no civil law but only retributive, (that is, as said before,³ than an act which offends the collective conscience is severely punished by the whole group, but no law determines the normal day to day relations of its members).

But Hogbin⁴ says this is not so -⁵"Primitive societies have their own civil law, although they are without the institutions to which we are accustomed for compelling the fulfilment of a contract. The forces which make these rules effective can be analysed into elements much more concrete and specific than the hypothetical collective conscience". So

1. "Division of Labour in Society" Bk. I Chap. II.

2. Ibid. Bk. I Chap. II p.64.

3. Viz. p.14 of this chapter.

4. Hogbin "Law and Order in Polynesia" pub. 1934.

5. Ibid. cf.

two points occur which argue against the Durkheim school of thought as to the nature of primitive mentality. The first already mentioned and to be discussed later is that civil law does exist, but under a different form;¹ the second is that Durkheim (and like writers) overstates the case for instant group punishment (which, as explained earlier, was supposed to illustrate the strength of the collective conscience). Undoubtedly the member of a primitive group is more immediately affected by the opinion of his group than is the member of a more advanced society. But this indicates a change in social organisation rather than in human character. The primitive is a member of a smaller, more intimate group - he knows everyone and is known by everyone. Family relations are much more extensive (for example,² all young men of his group are brothers, all young women sisters and ineligible as wives, all older men and women are as mothers and fathers) and family relationships bring with them sensitivity to praise and blame. The member of a civilised group is only largely unhurt by group disapproval insofar as it is impersonal; the disapproval of his own small sub-group (e.g. family, club, workshop) is still a matter of grave concern for him. Such sensitivity to public opinion never seems to be lost, however changed society - it is only diminished generally, as the area of personal relationships is diminished. Among primitives, it is said, social disapproval

1. Parsons in his "Structure of Social Action" argues against this view saying that those writers who claim the existence of constitutive law do so because they view primitive custom with civilised eyes.

2. p.79 "Crime & Custom in Primitive Society" - Malinowski.

is so shameful to an offending member as to be able to cause his suicide - Malinowski gives an example of this in his book "Crime and Custom in Primitive Society"¹ -

²"One day an outbreak of wailing and a great commotion told me that a death had occurred somewhere in the neighbourhood. I was informed that Kima'i, a young lad of my acquaintance, of sixteen or so, had fallen from a coconut palm and killed himself. I hastened to the next village where this had occurred, only to find the whole mortuary proceedings in progress. This was my first case of death, mourning and burial, so that in my concern for the ethnographical aspects of the ceremonial, I forgot the circumstances of the tragedy even though one or two singular facts occurred at the same time in the village which should have aroused my suspicions. I found that another youth had been severely wounded by some mysterious coincidence. And at the funeral there was obviously a general feeling of hostility between the village where the boy died and that into which his body was carried for burial. Only much later was I able to discover the real meaning of events; the boy had committed suicide. The truth was that he had broken the rules of exogamy, the partner in his crime being his maternal cousin, the daughter of his mother's sister. This had been known and generally disapproved of, but nothing was done

1. Published 1926.

2. Ibid. Pt. II Chap. I - p.77.

until the girl's discarded lover, who had wanted to marry her and who felt personally injured, took the initiative. The rival threatened to use black magic against the guilty youth, but this had not much effect. Then one evening he insulted the culprit in public - accusing him of incest in the hearing of the whole community, and hurling at him certain expressions intolerable to a native. For this there was only one remedy."

But the punishment (self-inflicted or otherwise) is not always as immediate and ruthless as Durkheim supposes - when the collective conscience¹ is threatened, he says, the group reacts violently as a whole. Yet against this there are cases of crimes unpunished by the group on the grounds that if necessary the spirits will inflict their own punishment. Hogbin² gives several instances of non-action on the part of the group even in the case of the worst of crimes. Among the natives of Ortong Java, no action was taken in a case of murder. ³"Hekeaka and Angoli were half-brothers. Nevertheless Angoli carried on an intrigue with Hekeaka's wife... before very long Hekeaka came to know of the whole affair. One evening after it was dark he pretended to go out fishing, but instead returned and hid himself near the house.

1. "Division of Labour in Society" Bk. I Chap. II.

2. In his book "Law and Order in Polynesia".

3. Hogbin - "Law and Order in Polynesia" (1934) p.152.

When he saw Angoli enter he took a knife and stabbed him in the back..... nothing was actually done, but within a short space of time he was taken ill and died. People said that kigua (spirits) had taken vengeance by killing him." Or again -

1 "Ontola and her husband and her brother Opoi were making a voyage across the lagoon. Night having come on before they had reached their destination, they landed on an island and spent the night in an empty house. In the morning Opoi confessed to the husband that he had gone over to where his sister lay and, with her consent, had lain with her. He was very angry and took a dagger in his hand to kill Opoi, but although the latter made no resistance, the attempt was abandoned."

Another case of incest is quoted also, in which the crime was known of by the group and yet went unpunished.

2 "One evening when most of the people in Luangius were partaking of their meal, a scream was heard and a moment or two later a woman ran out of the house from which it had come. Not perhaps realising what she was doing, she pushed at the door of a neighbouring house and went in. She told the occupants that, while she was stooping over the fire cooking some fish, her son had seized her from behind and, in spite of her resistance, had forced her to submit to him.

1. Hogbin "Law and Order in Polynesia" p.155

2. Ibid. p.156

No move was made to punish the man. This was left to the 'kigua'."

The case for violent group punishment seems then to be overstated. Even the acts regarded with most horror (e.g. incest) do not always, as Durkheim supposes, bring down immediate punishment, but are condoned, and only dealt with once publicly mentioned -¹ "If you were to inquire into the matter among the Trobrianders, you would find that all statements confirm the axiom that the natives show horror at the idea of violating the rules of exogamy, and that they believe that sores, disease and even death might follow clan incest. This is the ideal of native law, and in moral matters it is pleasant and easy strictly to adhere to the ideal - when judging the conduct of others or expressing an opinion about conduct in general.

When it comes to the application of morality and ideals to real life, however, things take on a different complexion. In the case² described it was obvious that the facts would not tally with the ideal of conduct. Public opinion was neither outraged by the knowledge of the crime to any extent, nor did it react directly - it had to be mobilised by a public statement of the crime and by insults being hurled at the culprit by an

1. Malinowski "Crime & Custom in Primitive Society" Pt.II. Chap. I. pp.79 & 80.

2. Vix. p. 34 of this chapter.

interested party. Even then he had to carry out the punishment himself. The 'group-reaction' and the 'supernatural sanction' were not therefore the active principles. Probing further into the matter and collecting concrete information, I found that the breach of exogamy - as regards intercourse and not marriage - is by no means a rare occurrence and public opinion is lenient, though decidedly hypocritical. If the affair is carried on sub rosa with a certain amount of decorum, and if no one in particular stirs up trouble 'public opinion' will gossip but not demand any harsh punishment."

Also overstated, says Malinowski, is the case for the lack of individuality in the native in a primitive tribe.¹ Far from being the slave of tradition and showing unthinking obedience to the community, the native is as keen to dodge

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1. To be fair to Durkheim, he does not leave himself completely open to criticism in this point. Viz. p.69 Catlin Ed. "Rules of Sociological Method" - "It is impossible for all to be alike, if only because each one has his own organism and that these organisms occupy different areas in space. That is why, even among lower peoples, where individual originality is very little developed, it nevertheless does exist."

laws¹, if he can do so with impunity, as is the member of a civilised community.

The other point against the idea that the primitive mind is completely under the influence of the group has been mentioned before, that being that there is not, as Durkheim argues, a lack of civil law among primitive tribes. We have already quoted from Hogbin's book "Law and Order in Polynesia" a passage maintaining that primitive societies have their own primitive law although not in the form to which we are accustomed. Malinowski attempts to discover the form in which primitive law manifests itself - "builders of anthropological theory have always maintained that criminal law is the only law of savages. But that his observances of the rules of law under the normal conditions, when it is followed and not defied, is at best partial, conditional and subject to evasions; that it is not enforced by any wholesale motive like fear of punishment, or a

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1. "There is no further need to argue that no man, however 'savage' or 'primitive' will instinctively act against his instincts, or unwittingly obey a rule which he feels inclined cunningly to evade or wilfully to defy; or that he will not spontaneously act in a manner contrary to all his appetites and inclinations.... The force of custom, the glamour of tradition, it if stood alone, would not be enough to counteract the temptations of appetite or lust or the dictates of self-interest." - pp.64 & 65 Malinowski - "Crime and Custom in Primitive Society".

Vis. also p.81 Ibid.

"In a community where laws are not only occasionally broken, but systematically circumvented by well established methods, there can be no question of 'spontaneous' obedience to laws, of slavish adherence to tradition."

general submission to tradition, but by very complex psychological and social inducements.... has so far been completely overlooked."¹

These "complex psychological and social inducements" are reduced by Malinowski to the binding force of economic² obligations, by means of which trading takes place between the coastal and inland villages of the Melanesian community.

³"Two communities rely upon each other in forms of trading and other mutual services as well. Thus every chain of reciprocity is made the more binding by being part and parcel of a whole system of mutualities." Such reciprocities are very carefully organised -⁴"each man has his permanent partner in the exchange and the two have to deal with each other... the free and easy way in which all transactions are done, the good manners which pervade all make it difficult for the superficial observer to see the keen self-interest and watchful reckoning which runs right through". According to Malinowski's conclusions "civil law" among the primitive society consists of "a body⁵ of binding obligations,⁶ regarded as a right by one

1. "Crime & Custom in Primitive Society" Pt. I Ch. I pp.14 & 15.

2. Ibid. Pt. I. Chaps. II and III.

3. Ibid. Pt. I. Chap. III p.23

4. Ibid. Pt. I. Chap. IV pp. 26 & 27.

5. Ibid. Pt. I. Chap. XI pp. 58 & 59.

6. As an example of such obligations, one might take the obligations of marriage. A Trobriard woman, being under the guardianship of her brother, it is his duty to provide her and her children with food, the best of his produce being sorted out and sent to her (since at marriage she goes to live with her husband's people). Chap. VII Pt. I Ibid.

party and acknowledged as a duty by the other, kept in force by a specific mechanism of reciprocity and publicity inherent in the structure of their society. These rules of civil law are elastic and possess a certain latitude. They offer not only penalties for failure, but also premiums for an overdose of fulfillment. Their stringency is ensured through rational appreciation of cause and effect by natives, combined with a number of social and personal sentiments such as ambition, vanity pride, desire of self-enhancement by display, and also attachment, friendship, devotion and loyalty to kin.... law is the specific result of the configuration of obligations, which makes it impossible for the native to shirk his responsibility without suffering for it in future.

In general, therefore, the conclusion seems to be that although the native shows a great reverence for his tribal traditions and customs, he is by no means fettered or deprived of individuality¹ by them, and cannot be said to be completely

1. Viz. "Crime & Custom" Chp. II Pt. I p. 55 - "We may therefore dismiss the view that "group sentiment" or "collective responsibility" is the only or even the main force which ensures allegiance to custom and makes it binding or legal. Esprit de corps, solidarity, pride in one's community and clan undoubtedly exist among the Melanesians - no social order could be maintained without them in any culture, high or low. I only want to enter a caution against exaggerated views.... which would make this unselfish, impersonal, unlimited group-loyalty the corner-stone of all social order in primitive cultures. The savage is neither an extreme "collectivist" nor an intransigent "individualist" he is, like man in general, a mixture of both."

under the rule of any collective conscience,¹ even if we suppose one to exist. Differences between the native and civilised man obviously exist, but they are for the most part differences in degree rather than kind. The primitive man lives a much more intimate life - his relationships are personal, his group known to him person by person. His feeling for his group can, then, be stronger than that of a member of a civilised country whose only connection with it is through a series of sub-groups, which act as intermediaries.

We may conclude from this that there does not exist a collective conscience, if we mean by that term a separate entity possessed of supreme power and denying any individuality to the members of the society in which it exists. There do exist, the extent varying according to the development of the society under consideration, strong naturally developed sentiments, customs, habits and traditions which form part of the environment into which a child is born. In this way it is true that they may persist longer than an individual.

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1. To be fair to Durkheim, he does himself admit that mechanical solidarity is nowhere found in its entirety, but would exist in a horde (viz. pp. 74 & 76). In the non-existence of such a society we can only refer to animal herds, only to find there is still no direct evidence in support of the theory of mechanical solidarity through a collective conscience. For one thing (viz. Kohler "The Mentality of Apes" and Alverdes "Social Life in the Animal World" p. 112) herds seem to submit to leadership by one of their number, whereas Durkheim states in criticising Spencer (p. 195) that the emergence of leaders from the mass means the breaking up of social solidarity depending on the collective conscience.
(References in above note are to "The Division of Labour Society" - Simpson Ed.)

but such customs are capable of change¹ through the influence of individuals, contact with other groups, etc., and only exist through and because of the members of a group, being only endowed with "coercive power" insofar as their influence is accepted and unobserved.²

The point arises though, as to whether all this criticism does apply to Durkheim. If he conceives of the collective conscience as a psychical entity (as he appears to do)³ then it would apply. His opponents would be correct in considering him as viewing society in a metaphysical manner. Unfortunately, it was just this conception of society which Durkheim disliked and condemned. In 1885, for example, reviewing Gumplowicz's "Outlines of Sociology" he explicitly declared "Society has nothing metaphysical about it. It is not a more or less transcendental substance..... Since there are only individuals in society it is they and they alone who are the factors of social life".

Nor can it be argued that this was typical of Durkheim's early outlook on the collective conscience and society and that his more mature views are more exaggerated. For much later explicit protests⁴ are made against the metaphysical

1. Viz. F.C. Bartlett "Psychology and Primitive Culture" (1922)

2. Viz. Part III for future remarks.

3. Viz. previous quotation p.13.

4. Viz. "Les Regles de la Methode Sociologique" p.127
Footnote 1. "Le Suicide" pp.361-2.

conception of society - for example in "Elementary Forms of Religious Life"¹ he says "since it is in spiritual ways that social pressure exercises itself, it could not fail to give men the idea that outside themselves there exist one or several powers - but society cannot exist except in and through individual consciousnesses".²

We might ask then "What exactly does Durkheim mean by the "collective conscience"?" It would be an attractive solution to say that in any group a certain amount of common feeling is produced which may take various forms according to the transitoriness of the group. Such feeling forms an emotional substratum to society, its strength varying according to circumstances; we may, for example, attribute the heightened patriotism of wartime or the sudden success of a political doctrine to either a swelling of such emotion by the threat to the group, or a successful appeal to it by a doctrine possessed of great emotional attraction, or to a combination of the two. In either case the heightened emotion in individuals is accompanied by increased awareness of their participation in a group.

1. Published 1912.

2. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.299.

But this is a solution contrary to the Durkheimian view. He is speaking strictly of a "representation" and a representation is "some new factor; although certain brain forms can combine to produce it, they are not sufficient to constitute it since it is possessed of a greater duration and manifests different properties"¹. A representation is, that is, of the brain; Durkheim is not discussing collective sentiments, so that we are not justified in explaining his theory in terms of them.

The trouble is, I believe, that Durkheim is considered to hold a metaphysical view of society because his language suggests it, and is interpreted in that light. He says that the collective conscience is "independent" and we immediately think of the normal meaning of the word, whereas Durkheim uses it, I think, as meaning "different in quality". He describes the collective conscience as "external" and we think he means that it is a separate body, whereas he means "having external manifestations" (e.g. laws).

So that, in considering this conception of Durkheim's it seems we have to make a continual choice between the letter and the spirit of his writings. I prefer to take the spirit and say that Durkheim was not a typical exponent of the true

1. "Individual and Collective Representations".

group mind theory, but was endeavouring to describe the close and complex network of thoughts and opinions that make up society. "It is a self-evident truth that there is nothing in social life which is not in individual consciences. Everything that is found in the latter, however, comes from society. The major part of our states of conscience would not have been produced among isolated beings and would have been produced quite otherwise among beings grouped in some other manner..... Products of group life, it is the nature of the group which alone can explain them.... Society does not find the bases on which it rests fully laid out in consciences; it puts them there itself."¹ Obviously such inter-relationship is difficult material to express, and leads to language open to misinterpretation; moreover Durkheim has not guarded sufficiently against such misinterpretation of his theory as "group-mind"; and has thus left himself and his theory open to the reproach of being unscientific and metaphysical.

How far a true understanding of the conception of the collective conscience is fundamental to his conclusions will be seen later.

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" Bk. II Chap. V
p. 350 Simpson Ed.

CHAPTER TWOCOHESION IN THE ADVANCED SOCIETY

If the solidarity of primitive peoples depends solely upon the collective conscience and is "born of resemblances",¹ the alternative type of solidarity distinguished by Durkheim, "the organic" depends on just the opposite, and necessarily so since it is the type of solidarity which develops when the factors on which the collective conscience depends are disappearing.

For a collective conscience as strong as that described in the preceding chapter to develop, it must be in a small closely-knit community of limited locality where these environmental conditions disappear, the possibility of intimate relationships lessens, social ties become more diffuse, and common ideas lose strength. A primitive society, for example, in which there is a strong sense of kinship, and where social and economic organisation is built upon such personal relations is largely centripetal. It is a complete self-sufficing unit, whose members, being in constant contact, are acquainted only with their own unconflicting traditions and hence may accept them and build up a strong common feeling.

1. P. 106 Simpson Ed. "Division of Labour in Society".

But if, for some reason¹ (favourable climatic conditions or conquests in war, for example) the population increases and the territory occupied by the community expands, such a strong common feeling is weakened because of the increasing number of people in active but casual communication with each other.

Other possibilities can be considered, - different classes may arise, contacts with other groups bring to light new and different, even opposing traditions and customs. All these can only mean that interests (whether purely economic, or strictly personal) affecting individuals or sub-group, but not concerning the group as a whole, are replacing the old group interests and widening the field of consciousness of the individual members. "So long as divers segments, keeping their individuality, remain closed to one another, each of them narrowly limits the social horizon of individuals. Separated from the rest of society by barriers more or less difficult to clear, nothing turns us from local life, and therefore all our action is concentrated there. But as the fusion of segments becomes more complete, the vistas enlarge, and the more so as society itself becomes more generally extended at the same time. From then on, even the inhabitant of a small city lives the life of the little group surrounding

1. Vis. G. & M. Wilson - "Analysis of Social change" (1946) p.83.

him less exclusively. He joins in relations with distant localities.... his more frequent journeys, the more active correspondence he exchanges, the affairs occupying him outside, etc. turn his attention from what is passing around him. He no longer finds the centre of his life and preoccupations so completely in the place where he lives.... the collective surveillance is irretrievably loosened, the common conscience loses its authority."¹ And so mechanical solidarity breaks down; there is a decrease in the intimacy of social relationships even though such relationships are more numerous than they were previously.

It is here that the division of labour starts its development; without the preceding breakdown of mechanical solidarity, it cannot develop at all.² It is the widening social contacts which necessitate it - as Durkheim says - "The more individuals there are who are sufficiently in contact to be able to act and react on one another, the more the division of labour develops".³ He says 'develops' and not 'begins' because Durkheim is not guilty of assuming that the division of labour is non-existent among primitive societies;

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" Bk. II Chap. V. p.300 Simpson Ed.

2. An alternative view would be, of course, that mechanical solidarity breaks down because of the division of labour's development, but this suggestion is dismissed by Durkheim. Ibid. Introductory Remarks to Chapters on 'Causes'.

3. c.f. Comte viz. footnote p.262 (Simpson Ed.) "The Division of Labour in Society".

it indeed must exist in any level of society for the reason that a family is founded upon it, and the family is a universal institution - "There are, to be sure, so many things common to members of the familial group that the special characters of tasks which devolve upon each of them easily escapes us.... But the history of the family, from its very origins, is only an uninterrupted movement of dissociation in the course of which diverse functions, at first individual and confounded one with another, have been little by little separated.... Far from being only an accessory and secondary phenomenon, this division of familial labour, on the contrary, dominates the entire development of the family."¹

Durkheim's theory of the general development of societies can then be formulated as follows. A primitive society is, because of some environmental changes, possessed of a greatly increased population, so that its solidarity begins to decrease; this decreasing solidarity (of the collective conscience type) necessitates the development of the division of labour (N.B. that it does not permit)² because an increased population leads to a keener struggle for existence. All members having the same needs and the same aims they are not drawn into rivalry only so long as they have more resources than they need. "But if their number increases

1. "Division of Labour in Society" p.123 Simpson Ed.

2. Ibid. p.266

to such proportions that all appetites can no longer be sufficiently satisfied, war breaks out, and it is as violent as this insufficiency is more marked; that is to say, as the numbers in the struggle increase."¹ The division of labour is the necessary remedy for this - it is an alternative to suicide, emigration, civil war, etc. Specialisation means that members of a highly populated society can live together amicably because, having different professions and consequently aims, they are not in such intense rivalry.²

Durkheim's explanation of the causes of the development of the division of labour in society, put in the form of a proposition, is therefore - "The division of labour varies in direct ratio with the volume and density of societies, and, if it progresses in a continuous manner in the course of social development, it is because societies become regularly denser and generally more voluminous."³

But in addition to the causes of the division of labour, Durkheim also establishes the conditions of its advance -

- (1) Greater individuality;
- (2) Organico-physical bases of behaviour.

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.266 Simpson Ed.

2. Ibid. p.268 Simpson Ed.

3. Ibid. p.262 Simpson Ed. viz. also p.114 Catlin edition of "The Rules of Sociological Method" for further comments on dynamic density and volume.

The first of these conditions, greater individuality, is necessary so that the group may be more agreeable to variations and changes. As long as the individual is more subject to group traditions, these changes are hindered. "Individual variations.... cannot be produced when they are opposed to some strong and defined state of the collective conscience, for the stronger the state, the greater the resistance to all that may weaken it; the more defined, the less place it leaves for changes. It can thus be seen that the progress of the division of labour will be as much more difficult and slow as the collective conscience is vital and precise. Inversely it will be as much more rapid as the individual is enabled to put himself in harmony with his personal environment. But for that the existence of the environment is not sufficient; each must be free to adapt himself to it, that is to say, be capable of independent movement, even when the whole group does not move with him."¹

The second condition concerns purely physiological behaviour; if the division of labour needs for its development greater individuality, so that society may be more receptive to change, it needs the second so that such changes may be physically possible. "As long as we follow in the path of our ancestors, we tend to live as they have lived, and remain-

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.268 Simpson Ed.

adamant to all innovation. A human being who would receive from heredity an important and heavy legacy would be almost incapable of change. Such is the case with animals who can progress only very slowly."¹

For the division of labour to be afforded a clear field for development, therefore, it is necessary that heredity shall not be so strong a force as to constitute an insuperable obstacle. Actually the force of heredity does weaken progressively, says Durkheim, firstly because new activities arise which do not depend on or result from the influence of heredity.² The proofs of this can be seen in -

- (1) The fact that new races are not evolved.³
- (2) The fact that only simple aptitudes are transmitted by heredity, since aptitudes tend to become less simple as they become more specialised, they are becoming too complex to transmit.⁴
- (3) The lessening instinctive behaviour of man argues that the contribution of heredity diminishes as men progress, in its absolute as well as its relative value (i.e. that it not only

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.268 Simpson Ed.

2. Ibid. p.309 Simpson Ed.

3. Ibid. p.309 Simpson Ed.

4. Ibid. p.310 Simpson Ed.

fails to transmit aptitudes because they are becoming too complex, but also transmits more weakly those aptitudes still simple enough for transmission).¹

Granted the necessary causes and conditions the division of labour develops, then, the type of social environment which finally results is familiar to us. We experience the loosening of social life resulting from a widened field of consciousness, the breaking up of close family relations, the liberation of human inventiveness, increased transport - in short the new type of society which develops parallel to the division of labour is centrifugal.

In such a developed society, covering a wider area and comprising a constantly shifting population, the "collective conscience" can no longer exist with anything approaching its former strength (except, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, in the case of the 'cult' of the individual). It may, it can be argued, exist within the smaller specialised occupational group - "It is certain that organised societies are not possible without a developed system of rules which predetermine the functions of each organ. Insofar as labour is divided there arises a multitude of occupational moralities and laws. But this regulation, none the less, does not contract the sphere of action of the individual.

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.321 Simpson Ed.

In the first place, the occupational mind can only have influence on occupational life. Beyond that sphere, the individual enjoys a greater liberty..... Common practices of the educational group become more general and more abstract, as those which are common to society, and accordingly they leave more free space for individual divergences. Indeed, the greater independence enjoyed by new generations in comparison with the older cannot fail to weaken traditionalism in the occupation. This leaves the individual even more free to make innovations."¹

The collective conscience, however, does not disappear entirely; "that is not to say that the collective conscience is threatened with total disappearance. Only it more and more comes to consist of very general and very indeterminate ways of thinking and feeling which leave an open place for a growing multitude of individual differences."² But, in general, it becomes progressively weaker - "Wherever the density of agglomeration is related to the volume," says Durkheim "personal bonds are rare and weak. One more easily loses sight of others; in the same way one loses interest even in those close by. As this mutual indifference results in loosing collective surveillance, the sphere of free action of each individual is extended in fact, and little by little

1. "The Division of Labour In Society" p.303 Simpson Ed.

2. Ibid. p.172.

the fact becomes a right. We know, indeed that the common conscience keeps its strength only on condition of not tolerating contradictions. But, by reason of this diminution of social control, acts are committed daily which confute it, without, however, any reaction. If then there are some repeated with frequency and uniformity, they end by enervating the collective conscience they shock."¹ "Viewed in large, the common conscience consists less and less of sharp determined sentiments. Thus it comes about that the average intensity and mean degree of determination of collective states are always diminishing."²

Civilised societies, therefore, in the comparative absence of the collective conscience, are held together by the division of labour. They do not show a purely organic unity, but "if this social type is nowhere observable in its absolute purity, if indeed organic unity is nowhere come upon wholly alone, at least it disengages itself more and more from all mixture, just as it becomes more and more preponderant."³

But the division of labour, itself a result of certain phenomena, must become itself the cause of other changes in the social structure. Three of the most important, I think, are the following:-

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1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.299 Simpson Ed.
 2. Ibid. p.167
 3. Ibid. p.190

- (1) More individual freedom (already considered as a condition of the development of the division of labour).
- (2) Greater social mobility.
- (3) The spiritual and emotional results of the combination of these.

To take the second of these results of the division of labour, the human being is never completely chained to one particular task; he may move freely within the sphere of life to which he belongs (for example, says Durkheim, in Rome the plebeian could freely undertake all the functions not exclusively reserved to the patricians).¹

But as the division of labour progresses, this suppleness becomes greater in that there is more movement between different classes. But into Mannheim's² words, whereas before a certain amount of horizontal mobility (i.e. that the individual can move about within his own class or rank) existed, following upon the division of labour comes the development of vertical mobility (inter-class movement, that is).

"The same individual is seen to raise himself from the most humble to the most important occupations. The principle according to which all employments are equally accessible to

1. "The Division of Labour In Society" p.329 Simpson Ed.
 2. Carl Mannheim "Ideology and Utopia" (1936)

all citizens would not be generalised to this extent if it did not receive constant applications. What is still more frequent is that a worker leaves his career for a neighbouring one. When scientific activity was not specialised, the scholar encompassed all science and could scarcely change his function, for it would have been necessary to renounce science itself. Today, it often happens that he devotes himself to different sciences, passing from chemistry to biology, from physiology to psychology, from psychology to sociology. This aptitude for successively taking very diverse forms is nowhere so discernible as in the economic world. As nothing is more variable than the tastes and needs these functions answer to, commerce and industry must be held in a perpetual state of unstable equilibrium to be able to yield to all the changes produced in the demand. Whereas formerly immobility was the almost natural state of capital, even the law forbidding too easy mobilisation, today it can scarcely be followed in all its transformations, so great is the rapidity with which it is engaged in enterprise, withdrawing from one to rest elsewhere where it remains only for some moments. Thus workers must be ready to follow it and consequently, to serve in different employments."¹

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.329 Simpson Ed.

It is this greater social mobility which intensifies the development of individuality rising parallel to the division of labour. It is important here to realise precisely what Durkheim is thinking of when he speaks of increased individuality, or rather what he is not thinking. He is not dealing with "individuation", that is to say of the removal from all spheres of social influence, nor is he thinking of the development of individuality which places personal welfare at the root of all actions. The development of individuality being, as he sees it, a completely social process, it cannot ideally result in the separation of the individual from his group.

But it is, in itself, the result of loosening group ties of the class found in mechanical solidarity. As the division of labour develops, local and family ties tend to become loosened (because of the greater social mobility, which, as we have seen, is one effect of the increased division of labour). The power of the collective conscience diminishing with this loosening, the individual is less dependent on social thinking and more able to provide his own philosophy of life. "It is because we depend so much more closely on common opinion the more it watches over conduct. When the attention of all is constantly fixed on what each does, the least mis-step is perceived and immediately condemned. Inversely each has as many more facilities to

follow his own path as he is better able to escape this control¹! Not only this but the power of the collective conscience arises from the past as well as the present - and this power too is loosened with mens' escape from the bonds of tradition.

"The greater mobility of social units.... causes a weakening of all traditions. In fact what especially gives force to tradition is the character of the persons who transmit it and inculcate it, the old people. They are its living expression. They alone have been witnesses of the acts of their ancestors. They are the unique intermediary between the present and the past ... Thus it is the authority of age which gives tradition its authority... but it is the reverse that is produced in man when..... he is transplanted into a new environment. To be sure, he finds there men older than himself as well, but they are not the same as those he obeyed in his infancy.... As a result of this, the ancestral customs lose their predominance, for they no longer have authorised representatives among adults. In other words the authority of custom diminishes in a continuous manner."²

It is these two results of the division of labour - increased individuality and greater social mobility - which, combined, lead to the development of what can only be called

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.298. *Viz.* also p.287
 "Because conditions of life are no longer the same everywhere, these common objects, whatever they may be, can no longer determine perfectly identical sentiments everywhere."

2. *Ibid.* pp.293, 296 and 297 Simpson Ed.

scepticism. The loosening of family ties means less stress on the teaching of parents, loosening of the collective conscience leads to the springing up of many opinions and doctrines whereas before there was only one. "Above all" as Mannheim says, "the multiplicity of ways of thinking cannot become a problem in periods when social stability underlies and guarantees the internal unity of world views. As long as the same meanings of words, the same ways of deducing ideas, are inculcated from childhood on into every member of the group divergent thought-processes cannot exist in that society. Only when horizontal mobility is accompanied by intense vertical mobility, i.e. rapid movement between strata in the sense of social ascent and descent - is the belief in the general and eternal validity of one's own thought-forms shaken.¹" To some this multiplicity of opinions may be a source of stimulation, but to many it is a cause of confusion.

Moreover, as Mannheim points out, to continue with his argument, it is social mobility which intensifying this division of opinion creates more confusion - "Vertical mobility is the decisive factor in making persons uncertain and sceptical of their traditional view of the world."²

1. Carl Mannheim - "Ideology and Utopia" (1936) p.6.

2. Ibid. pp. 6 & 7.

Since this confusion of thought is one of the sources of unrest in contemporary societies, Durkheim's whole theory of the function of the division of labour seems to be called into question. The division of labour, he says, is a source of solidarity and therefore moral. But is this so? In view of the social unrest it appears to cause in its advanced state can it justifiably be considered as a source of solidarity at all?

Even Durkheim admits that there are cases where it does not produce social solidarity - "though normally the division of labour produces social solidarity, it sometimes happens that it has different, even contrary, results."¹ But he considers these occurrences as the exceptions which prove the rule, as it were. "The division of labour, like all social facts and more generally all biological facts, presents pathological forms";² his study of the cases in which the development of the division of labour does not lead to social solidarity is, therefore, in the nature of a pathological analysis which reduces the exceptional forms produced by the division of labour to three.

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.353 Simpson Ed.

2. Ibid. p.353.

The first of these is the partial break¹ in social solidarity - for example, industrial crises, bankruptcies, etc. (all demonstrating a certain maladjustment of social functions), most noticeably the conflict between employer and employees. As functions become more differentiated solidarity should increase, yet where once employer and employed lived and worked together, forming part of the same corporation, a line has been drawn, separating the employer and worker and assigning to each some particular function. The division of labour develops - but so do quarrels between two previously concordant parties - in this case "division", as Espinas says "is dispersion". But it is not a normal result of the division of labour, says Durkheim; it exists only because the rules of economic specialisation have not been clearly formulated.

But it is not² sufficient that there be rules, for rules in themselves can have evil results (as when the division of labour becomes regulated by the institution of classes or castes which leads to civil war). In this case, it is still an untrue development of the division of labour. "Man finds happiness in realizing his nature, and his needs are in relation to his means",³ so that is when classes and castes have

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.364 Simson Ed.

2. Ibid. p.374

3. Ibid. p.376

arisen they cause unhappiness and strife instead of contentment and cohesion, then it is because the class system no longer corresponds to the natural distribution of talent. Therefore "for the division of labour to produce solidarity, it is not sufficient that each have his task; it is still necessary that this task be fitting to him."¹ Hence it happens that class warfare does not arise naturally from the division of labour but only when the division of labour is forced. Force does not, however, mean every kind of regulation, since some regulation is necessary to the division of labour. "Constraint only begins when a regulation no longer corresponding to the true nature of things and accordingly no longer having any basis in customs, can only be validated through force."²

In other words, the division of labour can produce solidarity only if it is spontaneous (understanding by 'spontaneous' not only the absence of violence, but of all indirect ties). And such perfect spontaneity only results from equality in the conditions of conflict; more than anything else, then, to promote a healthy development of the division of labour we need justice. "The harmony of functions and accordingly of existence is at stake. Just as ancient peoples needed, above all, a common faith to live by, so we need justice, and we can be sure that this need will become ever more exacting if, as every fact presages, the conditions

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.375 Simpson Ed.

2. Ibid. p.375 Simpson Ed.

dominating social evolution remain the same."¹

The last abnormal form of the division of labour to be distinguished is the state of society in which there is insufficient material for individual activity - cases, in fact, where the advance of the division of labour is accompanied by imperfect combination. It is important that every individual should have enough work to occupy his attention and energy, for if he has not, the solidarity produced by the division of labour will be lower because the different functions being too discontinued for exact adjustment, they will not move in harmony.

Yet it is difficult to see how this state of affairs could arise, according to Durkheim, since normally the same causes that oblige us to specialise more, also oblige us to work more. When the number of competitors becomes greater in society, it also becomes greater in each particular profession. The struggle becomes more lively, and, consequently, more efforts are necessary to sustain it."²

So Durkheim says these three cases of social disunity cannot and should not be attributed to the division of labour;

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.388 Simpson Ed.

2. Ibid. p.389

3. p.393 Ibid.

they are only abnormal cases resulting from a complex situation in which the division of labour is developing amid unsuitable environmental conditions.

But are these cases abnormal? There is certainly room for doubt on several scores. One of the most outstanding of these, I think, is the necessary spontaneity of the development of the division of labour and the conformance of economic regulations to individual needs. Durkheim himself says that "this perfect spontaneity is never met with anywhere as a realised fact. There is no society where it is unadulterated. If the institution of cases corresponds to the natural apportionment of capacities, it is, however, only in very proximate and rough and ready manner."¹ In this case is it possible to have -

(a) spontaneity of the division of labour;

(b) unconstraining (in the Durkheimian sense) regulations,

since if the division of labour is not going according to individual aptitudes, the use of force is necessary from the point of view of the community? In the Industrial Revolution, for example, the threat of starvation forced many workers to industrial occupations which, putting aside the question of working conditions, were repulsive to them because unsuited to their needs.

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.378 Simpson Ed.

Obviously, too, unless the division of labour we have is spontaneous, specialisation may be a bad thing. Many arguments are waged about the evils or advantages of specialisation. Durkheim himself cites several objections usually made against it, dealing with various possible evil results, which may result in several spheres -

- (1) On the individual.
- (2) On science and learning.
- (3) On the progress of the human race.

It is obviously at the individual that the first threat of specialisation is directed. In the first place, deprived of the ability and opportunity to do everything he pleases and given, in its place, a limited field of work, he may well feel isolated and cut off from fellow workers. "In this case, it is said, the individual, hemmed in by his task becomes isolated in a special activity. He no longer feels the idea of a common work being done by those who work side by side with him."¹

In the second, a worse catastrophe than a feeling of isolation may befall; perhaps the worker will be denied the nature of man and "degraded into a machine" to quote the usual exaggeration, or reduced to a completely monotonous existence. "And truly, if he does not know whither the operations he performs are tending, if he relates them to no end, he can only continue to work through routine. Every day he repeats the same movements with monotonous regularity, but without being

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.357 Simpson Ed.

interested in them, and without understanding them. He is no longer a living cell of a living organism which increasingly vibrates with neighbouring cells, which acts upon them, and to whose action it responds and with whose needs and circumstances it changed. He is no longer anything but an inert piece of machinery, only an external force set going which moves in the same direction and in the same way. Surely, no matter how one may represent the moral ideal, one cannot remain indifferent to such debasement of human nature."¹

The same processes may affect the progress of learning, since the scholar "cannot rouse his powers of analysis and reflection to a high pitch without enfeebling the energy of his will and the vivacity of his sentiments, nor make a habit of observation without losing his ability at dialectic."²

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1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.371 Simpson Ed.
 2. Ibid. p.331. Viz. also p.356 Ibid. - "As specialisation is introduced into scientific work, each scholar becomes more and more enclosed, not only in a particular science but in a special order of problems.... But then, science parcelled out into a multitude of detailed studies which are not joined together, no longer forms a solidary whole. What best manifests, perhaps, this absence of concert and unity is the theory that each particular science has an absolute value and that the scholar ought to devote himself to his particular researches without bothering to inquire whether they serve some purpose and lead anywhere."

If such processes are to continue to limit man's disposition, then, according to some the progress if not actual existence of the whole of humanity is threatened. "One is thus led to ask whether society may not some day arrive at a point where it will assume an arrested form, where each organ, each individual will have a definitive function and will no longer change."¹

But such dangers must be considered against a background before their likelihood can be estimated. If the division of labour is going according to what Durkheim considers its normal, natural development, then there is little fear of their occurrence. For example, the dangers of specialisation do not appear serious if the division of labour has developed normally, since the fundamental rule of the division of labour is not only to specialise, but also to co-operate and realise the work of others is complementary to one's own.

But the difficulty is that the 'pathological' symptoms recounted by Durkheim are such familiar ones in industrialised communities that we begin to wonder why they should occur so frequently. According to Durkheim, every one of these societies (all equally exhibiting pathological symptoms) is in an 'anomic' state. That is that there has been no healthy and true development of the division of labour. But it is difficult

1. The Division of Labour in Society" p.330 Simpson Ed.

to believe that cases of wrong development should be so numerous. Indeed, it is difficult to see how Durkheim could have regarded our incohesive state as "abnormal" taking it according to his own standard. Elsewhere he emphatically states that "a social fact is normal for a given social type considered at a given phase of its development when it appears in the average of societies of that species considered at the corresponding phase of their evolution."¹ Considering therefore that the so-called abnormal forms of the division of labour are to be found in every highly industrialised country at the present day (and within Durkheim's own lifetime) they assume, by his own definition, the nature of social facts and cannot be considered as abnormal.

There is obviously something demanding explanation here. There is the general possibility that the difficulty does not arise during Durkheim's analysis, but that his entire approach to the subject of social solidarity is at fault and that he is attempting to describe a development which does not universally take place.

It must be remembered that he was not impervious to external influences even though he set out to be a scientific sociologist. His predecessor in sociology, Comte,² was a

1. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" (1895) p.80.

2. Comte put the positivist age at the end of man's evolution; viz. "Cours de Philosophie Positive" (1830).

positivist thinker; he believed in the progress of humanity and the practical use of knowledge, and went further than the earlier positivist thinkers in that he sought to raise the idea of progress to a scientific level.

This current of thought, combined with Darwin's¹ famous theory of evolution, proved a fruitful union.² It produced a particular outlook on society and mankind which survived the nineteenth century and persists today. It is not a far cry, for example, from Spencer's conclusions on evolution - "Always towards perfection is the mighty movement - towards a complete development and a more unmixed goal, subordinating in its universality all petty irregularities and fallings-back, as the curvature of the earth subordinates mountains and valleys. Ever in evils, the student learns to recognise only a struggling beneficence. But above all he is struck with the inherent sufficingness of things" - to Julian Huxley's: "Biological evolution has been appallingly slow and appallingly wasteful. It has been cruel; it has generated the parasites and the pests as well as the more agreeable types. It has led life up innumerable blind alleys. But in spite of this it has achieved progress. In a few lines, whose number has steadily diminished with time, it has

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1. "Darwin - "The Origin of Species" (1859)
 2. Viz. J. B. Bury - "The Idea of Progress" (1920) for a fuller account.

avoided the cul-de-sac of mere specialisation and arrived at a new level of organisation, more harmonious and more efficient, from which it could again launch out toward greater control, greater knowledge and greater independence... Seen in this perspective, human history represents but the tiniest portion of the time man has before him; it is only the first ignorant and clumsy gropings of the new type, born heir to so much biological history.... The potentialities of progress which are revealed once his eyes have been opened to the evolutionary vista, are unlimited."¹

Thinking of this type, with its basic belief that evolution means an inevitably ascending scale of values, is by no means alien to Durkheim, who also seems to suppose throughout his works that a process of universal evolution can be traced in any societies and that this evolution is necessarily towards something better. But such suppositions may well lead to the wrong valuation of late social developments; 'they are late, therefore they are improvements' is not necessarily a correct view. Even the devotee of evolution must consider the possibility that a development may be a "blind alley" rather than a step forward.

But putting this general possibility of a wrong approach in Durkheim aside, I think the trouble lies in the

1. Julian Huxley - "The Uniqueness of Man" (1941) p.297.

actual distinction and analysis of firstly the division of labour and secondly the type of solidarity to which its development leads.

In the first case, as Simpson¹ suggests, Durkheim did not distinguish, as did Marx, the division of labour in society from the division of labour in the workshop.² Marx differentiates the two, according to the principle of authority - "Under the patriarchal system, under the caste system, under the feudal and corporative system, there was division of labour in the whole of society according to fixed rules. Were these rules established by a legislator? No. Originally born of the conditions of material production, they were raised to the status of laws only much later. In this way these different forms of the division of labour became so many bases of social organisation."³ The division of labour within the workshop, on the other hand, is one where rules are established by the employer (or state) and is a completely different, even opposed, state of affairs. "It can even be laid down as a general rule that the less authority presides over the division of labour inside society, the more the division of labour develops inside the workshop and the more it is subjected there to the authority

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1. P. XLI Introduction to his translation of "The Division of Labour in Society".
 2. Vis. Chap. II Pt. II "The Poverty of Philosophy" (1846-7) also "Capital" p. 366. (Everyman Ed.)
 3. Chap. II part II "The Poverty of Philosophy".

of a single person. Thus authority in the workshop and authority in society, in relation to the division of labour are in inverse ratio to each other."¹

Durkheim makes no such explicit distinction (although he does say "The conflict between capital and labour is another example, more striking, of the same phenomenon (i.e. commercial crises). In so far as industrial functions become more specialised, the conflict becomes more lively, instead of solidarity increasing"²) but merely considers the division of labour as a social fact. But if, as Marx stated, the distinguishing feature of the two types of division of labour he enumerated is the non-spontaneous authority of the workshop, it is possible that the 'anomic' results of the division of labour in society are in reality the normal results of the division of labour in the workshop which Durkheim did not realise as being of a different type and significance. Hence the degradation and mechanisation of the individual, the lack of co-ordinated functions, unfulfilment of natural needs and constraint not corresponding to natural organisation - all considered abnormal results of the division of labour - are normal results after all, and it is precisely because of this unrecognised development of a different kind of division of

1. Pt. II Chap. II "The Poverty of Philosophy".

2. Ibid. Pt. II Chap. II.

labour that contemporary societies are not as solidary as they would have been in its absence.

A similar confusion arises in the case of Durkheim's analysis of social solidarity. In his distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity and his description of the transition from the one to the other, he is concerned with their relative strength. But such a consideration is purely quantitative. "What truly measures the relative force of two social ties is the unequal facility with which they break down. The less resistant is evidently that one which breaks down under less strain. But it happens that in lower societies whose solidarity rests solely, or nearly so, on resemblances, breaks are more frequent and easier to bring about. It is quite otherwise as the division of labour advances."¹ This is undoubtedly true - a man in an advanced society is more dependent than ever on his fellow-men, dependent for his livelihood and for his existence (for example as the factory worker is dependent on the coal-miner for continuous employment). But surely this type of solidarity, although, as Durkheim claims, stronger than mechanical solidarity, is possessed of a completely different type of strength.

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.148 Simpson Ed.

In short, is it not true to say that Durkheim has distinguished between the two solidarities quantitatively but not qualitatively?¹ Organic solidarity, we might say, means material dependence on his society, mechanical solidarity means complete moral dependence. Hence it may well happen that material solidarity in no way hinders spiritual "a- solidarity" as a natural and not anomic development.

In conclusion, therefore, it can be said that what Durkheim has done in "The Division of Labour in Society" is to prove that the advanced division of labour is, at its best, a social link, holding together a complex and cumbrous social structure, but that he has not demonstrated that it is the only social link,² nor has he distinguished alternative forms of the division of labour leading to other results.

What he has done is to suggest and support the necessity for the re-establishment of a morality controlling social relationships; it is this point which affords interesting material for further speculation.

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1. I am not suggesting that Durkheim has not realised this lack of spiritual solidarity - he obviously has - but merely that he refuses to see it as a normal development.
 2. Indeed, during the course of his studies, the collective conscience gains more precedence as a source of strength in advanced societies than it possesses in "The Division of Labour in Society".

CHAPTER THREEDURKHEIM'S COMPLEMENTARY MORAL OUTLOOK

One question we must ask ourselves after such a survey of the central point of Durkheim's social theory is "Is its absolute validity necessary to his conclusions?" And I think we must, to be honest, say that it is not. If we were concerned solely with Durkheim as a sociologist we would be involved in criticisms and questions; he is not being "scientific", he is untrue to his own methodological premises, is led into unscientific exaggerations in his description of the collective conscience, etc. So much would his critics¹ say (whether rightly or wrongly and, I am inclined to think, the latter). But in so doing, they indulge in a particular kind of arid intellectualism; what they criticise is a particular point in a vital theory of far-reaching consequences, treating that theory as if it were a complete and final opinion. But with Durkheim, as with every writer of worth, theories are not static but dynamic, subject to constant change as the mind in which they evolve develops.

With Durkheim it is always his theory of the group conscience that is unduly criticised. I say 'unduly' because of the two considerations rendering such criticism futile if it stops there and goes no further -

1. *Viz.* for e.g. Gehlke "Durkheim's Contributions to Sociological Theory"; Simpson in his introductory estimate to the translation of "The Division of Labour in Society".

- (1) That Durkheim's own theory of the collective conscience, although seeming to become increasingly exaggerated, did not necessarily do so. It is impossible to come to any final conclusion on this point since Durkheim died before formulating his more mature theory. In the absence of such a formulation we can only take as evidence his constant strong criticisms against the exaggerated view of society.
- (2) That in any case to isolate this theory for criticism and inspection if, in so doing, we overlook the value and importance of the conclusions to which it leads him, is something we cannot afford to do if it is in Durkheim "médecin" in whom we are most interested.

With regard to the first of these two points, I think it is important to remind ourselves that we are dealing with a human mind when we study Durkheim and not with an impersonal apparatus of thought. Coming to sociology, as he did, from a training in law and philosophy, he was open to the influence of certain nineteenth century trends of thought. As it happened he brought to his study of sociology an undeniable affinity for Comtism with its stress on the value of humanity and progress; he also brought that determination to treat every field of investigation scientifically which is the basis of "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" - "The first and most fundamental rule is to consider social facts as things."¹

1. *Vin. Chap. II. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" (1895)*

Yet he also brought an intense concern for the good of society and a strong sense of ethical values. It is useless to criticise the outcome of one of these tendencies with reference to the outcome of the other.

As previously stated, it was in social order and cohesion that Durkheim was primarily interested; yet, during the course of his lifetime he was increasingly opposed to any doctrine or philosophy which put at the root of solidarity in social relationships, individual wants and needs.¹ "The Division of Labour in Society" for example, is throughout a denial of the utilitarian view of the foundations upon which society rests. "Why do men unite in society?" - "Because it benefits them"; this solution is unacceptable to Durkheim because it is ignoring the fundamental existence of society and its influence on the individual. It does not take everything into account, says Durkheim, and because of this criticises it when put forward by Spencer.² Society is based on contractual relations, says Spencer - the implication being that it is the advantage an individual derives from social relationships that keeps society together. But Durkheim points out that the matter is not so simple - transactions are entered into by both parties, but they are supervised by a body of binding rules which are not part of the ad hoc agreement of the interested parties.

1. Vis. p. 316 Talcott Parsons "Structure of Social Action".

2. "The Division of Labour in Society" Bk. I Chap. VII.

"Everything in the contract is not contractual. The only engagements which deserve this name are those which have been desired by the individuals and which have no other origin except in this manifestation of free will.... But wherever a contract exists, it is submitted to regulation which is the work of society and not that of individuals."¹

And these binding rules are necessary to society. "In order for them (men) to co-operate harmoniously, it is not enough that they enter into a relationship, nor even that they feel the state of mutual dependence in which they find themselves. It is still necessary that the conditions of this co-operation be fixed for the duration of their relations. Otherwise at every instant there would be conflicts and endless difficulties."²

The conception of regulation introduced in opposition to the utilitarianist view of society is hereafter fundamental to Durkheim's moral outlook. From it develops a formulated idea of morality, valuable in two ways:-

- (1) Its effect on the study of ethics.
- (2) Its contribution to the study of difficulties of contemporary social organisation.

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.211 Simpson Ed.

2. Ibid. p.212.

its effect on the study of ethics, for the sake of convenience, is treated elsewhere.¹ The two effects are not, in any case, as different as they might seem; we cannot treat them as effects on

1. Academic)
 2. Practical)
- ethics, for instance. This is because

Durkheim's moral outlook is essentially creative; using the term to cover that branch of ethical study which is concerned with advocating action.

But here it is his moral outlook on the source of contemporary difficulties, running alongside the development of his social theory which is concerned and which is of importance. The collective conscience, the function of the division of labour may not be satisfactorily demonstrated. The whole conception of a uniform universal progress of society from one state to another is, as said in the previous chapter, a result of an evolutionary outlook and open to question. But if we are concerned with the increasing frequency of cases of individual maladjustment, then, taking the outline of Durkheim's theory of the change in the nature of social solidarity, we find a relevant contribution on the problem.

1. Viz. Part Two of Thesis.

Society tends, as it becomes more civilised, to lose its closeness of structure, relationships to become less intimate and personal; "roads" Lao-Tse said "destroy primitive innocence" - they certainly destroy the "innocence" of feeling one's group is paramount. In other words the feeling of belonging to a group lessens or is lost. The result? That any member of the community attains more individuality, but not without cost. Even the most passionate individualist would admit that the state of being completely responsible for one's decisions, actions and opinions, with no expectancy of superior guidance, is one accompanied by great mental strain.¹

It is at this point that the resulting opinions of Durkheim's central theory of social development are of interest and value. He described a change from one type of solidarity (mechanical) to another (organic) both types being strong from the point of view of society. But they depend on different causes, and therefore their effect on the individual is likely to be different. In a primitive society men are closely linked and under the rule of a collective conscience - or more immediately affected by membership in a group, if the phraseology is preferable. This provides a secure background which is not only effective as a means of binding a man to his

1. It is interesting to note that no cases of neuroses are reported among primitive peoples.

society, but also as something which will fit him into the social framework, and, in so doing, satisfy a certain need to feel part of some greatness. The division of labour, on the other hand, in an advanced society may bind the individual to society even more closely because it makes him literally dependent on other individuals for his material existence, but it has no power to fit him into his group or afford emotional satisfaction. Here arises the vital point about present-day advanced societies. Man is more independent; his opinions are his own. Society itself is none the less solidary, but its members are more restless. Why should this be? Surely, we can say, they are allowed more freedom? But it is precisely because men are forced into independence that they are restless.

This is because, according to Durkheim, they are deprived of two closely connected necessities, both fundamental to the idea of morality.

(1) A moral authority which they can recognise.

(2) The consciousness of belonging to a group.

Man is so constituted as to be incomplete and unsatisfied without a belief in some morality external to himself and his own thoughts. A member of a society still adhering to a strong religious faith, for example, already has a moral code preached for him, and endowed with authority by the god or gods he worships; he is therefore secure in the participation in the religious group and strengthened by the belief that his god approves of his conduct. A member of a closely-knit society can act according to an accepted and revered group

tradition - and can therefore feel that h's actions are sanctioned. But the members of groups such as our civilised Western communities live in an environment where collective feeling is minimised and religion no longer a strong universal belief. They are therefore deprived of external moral authority - the only rules they are provided with are related to their economic existence and occupation.

Yet this deprivation strikes at the most vital part of man's nature, according to Durkheim. The idea of rules imposed¹ on him by some external authority and arousing a sense of duty is one fundamental to the notion of morality. Without this external discipline man, contrary to developing his personality and delighting in his freedom, would be miserable, for it is only by means of rules that he is enabled to lead a life of regularity, and to gain the satisfaction of attaining desires kept within the bounds of possibility. "A need, a desire freed from all restraint or regulation, which is not attached to a definite object, and, by this very attachment limited and kept in check, can only be, for the man who feels it, the cause of perpetual agony of mind."² Imagine a being liberated from all external restraint, a despot more absolute than the ones history

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1. We must remember that when Durkheim talks of imposing rules he is keeping in mind his distinction between constraint (rules forced upon us which do not accord with our needs) and rules which arise spontaneously. Viz. previous chapter
 2. P.45 "L'education morale" (Given as lectures 1902-3. Published 1925.)

tells us about, a despot whom no external power can control and rule. By definition, the desires of such a being are irresistible. Shall we not say, therefore, that he is omnipotent? Certainly not, for he himself cannot resist them. They are masters over him as over all other things. He is subject to them; he does not dominate them. In a word, when our desires are freed from all moderating influence, when nothing limits them, they become themselves tyrannical, and their first slave is the very subject who experiences them. Moreover, you know the sad spectacle he presents. The most contrary impulses, the most antithetical caprices follow upon one another, leading this self-entitled absolute sovereign in the most divergent directions, so that their apparent omnipotence resolves itself, in the end, into veritable impotence. A despot is like a child; he has the latter's weaknesses and for the same reason. He is not master of himself. Self-mastery, then, is the first condition of all true power, of all liberty worthy of the name."¹

The fundamental need of men, then, is discipline; yet such discipline as Durkheim is considering is no denial of the dignity of man - "on the contrary, inability to keep within determined limits is, in all forms of human activity.... a sign of unhealthiness."²

1. "L'education morale" Part I pp.19-20.

2. Ibid. p.43.

Durkheim's first comment on the member of an advanced society is that he is suffering from a lack of moral authority - there are, in fact, no moral rules for him to follow other than those he may formulate for himself.

But even here he is at a disadvantage; it is difficult to formulate such rules for ourselves if we are not constantly required to do so, and in his work (and hence everyday environment) a man living in one of the developed industrialist societies is completely out of touch with morality - work and moral rules have been separated. "From this, it follows" says Durkheim "that as the world is only feebly ruled by morality, the greater part of their (the workers) existence takes place outside the moral sphere. Now for the sentiment of duty to be fixed strongly in us, the circumstances in which we live must keep it awake. Naturally we are not inclined to thwart and restrain ourselves; if we are not invited, at each moment, to exercise this restraint without which there is no ethic, how can we learn the habit? If, in the task that occupies all our time, we follow no rule other than that of our well-understood interest, how can we learn to depend on disinterestedness or self-forgetfulness or sacrifice? In this way, the absence of all moral economic discipline cannot fail to extend its effects beyond the economic world and consequently weaken the public morality."¹

1. Preface to second edition of "The Division of Labour in Society" - p.4 Simpson Ed.

The other need of which man is increasingly denied satisfaction is that of belonging to a group. The society which was originally a small closed group has become more widespread and complex, more 'intangible'. And yet, the increasing centralisation which has led to the development of the state has offered no solution to the problem. "Where the state is the only environment in which men live communal lives, they inevitably lose contact, become detached, and thus society disintegrates. A nation can be maintained only if between the state and the individual there is intercalated a whole series of secondary groups near enough to the individuals to attract them strongly in their sphere of action and to drag them, in this way, into the general torrent of social life."¹

And so we see that Durkheim's opinion on the unrest of advanced societies is that the individual suffers because he is in need of the moral authority and comradeship afforded by strong group activity and influence.

But he is not saying that he suffers solely because he possesses more individuality; he may, as Petersen² suggests, have been influenced in his opinions by the anti-individualism which marked the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but he was not so influenced to the extent of blaming

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" Pref. to 2nd Ed. p.28 Simpson Ed.

2. Petersen "Émile Durkheim. En Historisk. Critisk Studie" (Copenhagen 1944).

individualism for the evils of civilised society. He even saw it as a social product and a way of strengthening the collective conscience. "There is even a place where it (the collective conscience) is strengthened and made precise; that is the way in which it regards the individual. As all other beliefs and all the other practices take on a character less and less religious, the individual becomes the object of a sort of religion. We erect a cult in behalf of personal dignity which, as every strong cult, already has its superstitions."¹ Or again - "Far from there being any antagonism between the individual and society, as has so often been maintained, in reality moral individualism, the cult of the human individual, is the handiwork of society."² But he did see this 'cult' as an untrue social link³, because it attached men to themselves and not to society.⁴

What he is saying, in short, is not that morality is social, but that society is primarily moral, although, during the change in the cause and nature of social solidarity, this primary characteristic has been obscured and individuality of the wrong sort (individuation, as he would say) stressed.

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1. "The Division of Labour in Society" Bk. I Chap. V Sect. V p.172 Simpson Ed.
 2. "Sociologie et Philosophie" - p.84
 3. Viz. reference 1.
 4. For further views viz. "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.272 Swain Ed. "Whatever we receive from society we hold in common with our companions. So it is not at all true that we are the more personal as we are more individualised. The two terms are in no way synonymous; in one sense, they oppose more than they imply one another. Passion individualises yet it also enslaves. Our sensations are essentially individual, yet we are more personal the more we are freed from our senses and able to think and act with concepts. So those who insist on all the social elements of the individual do not mean by that to debase or deny the personality. They merely refuse to confuse it with the fact of individuation."

Durkheim does not therefore recommend a return to the state of mechanical solidarity. He is too much a sociologist to indulge in retrospective utopianism; society has evolved from that state into a different state and will have to continue along its own lines of development. But what has not accompanied the change in social solidarity has been a parallel development in social institutions. The type of social solidarity has changed, but the actual structure of society has not. Therefore the individual does not suffer, because his individual personality is more developed than that of a member of a primitive society, but because he is deprived of moral authority. It is social structure adapted to a changed social solidarity which is needed if the individual is to be re-connected with morality.

In the next section, therefore, Durkheim's views on various social institutions will be considered in the light of his belief in this necessity for a moral authority.

PART TWO

DURKHEIM'S RESULTANT VIEW OF VARIOUS SOCIAL

INSTITUTIONS

"Sociology can, then, be defined as the science
of institutions, of their genesis, and of their
functioning."

p.xxiii Preface to the Second Edition

"Les Regles de la Méthode Sociologique."

CHAPTER ONEDURKHEIM'S EXPLANATION OF RELIGIOUS PHENOMENA

The study of religion forms an appropriate introduction to a description of Durkheim's views on various social institutions, because to him, it is of vital importance as the cradle of all others, for "nearly all the great social institutions have been born in religion",¹ and the source of all art and science. "The physical world as well as the moral one, the forces that move bodies as well as those that move minds have been conceived in a religious form. That is how the most diverse methods and practices, both those that make possible the continuation of the moral life (law, morals, beaux arts) and those serving the material life (the natural, technical and practical sciences) are either directly or indirectly derived from religion."²

But although his concern with it was great, his study of its nature, carried out according to his usual rule of method (i.e. to treat social facts as things) results in a materialistic explanation. But we must distinguish clearly which type of materialistic view, since such explanations usually take one of two forms. The first sees religion as a

1. p. 418 Swain translation of "Les Formes Élémentaires de la Vie Religieuse" (1912).

2. Ibid, p.223.

vast illusion, a superstition which is a hindrance to human progress and hence is to be scorned and destroyed.¹ Durkheim is certainly not of this way of thought; indeed, he is opposed to it because it fails to explain why an "illusion" should possess such strength and endure for so long. "It is inadmissible" he declares "that systems of ideas like religions that have held so considerable a place in history, and to which, in all times, men have come to receive the energy which they must have to live, should be made up of a tissue of illusions. Today we are beginning to realise that law, morals, and even scientific thought itself were born of religion, were for a long time confounded with it, and have remained penetrated with its spirit. How could a vain fantasy have been able to fashion the human consciousness so strongly and so durably?"² Rather, he belongs to the second type of thought which explains religion rationally and believes that although such an explanation is possible, religion is none the less valuable and important. For thinkers of the first class, religion is false, but to Durkheim no religion appears false. "It is an

1. Freud holds this view, for example viz. "The Future of an Illusion" (Pub. 1928).

2. Pp.69-70 "Elementary Forms of Religious Life". For further point, viz. also p.146 "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" (Swain trans.). "The theists who have undertaken to explain religion in rational terms have generally seen in it before all else a system of ideas, corresponding to some determined object. But the believer who has communicated with his god is not merely a man who sees new truths of which the unbeliever is ignorant; he is a man who is stronger. He feels within him more force, either to endure the trials of existence, or to conquer them. But it is hard to see how a mere idea could have this efficacy. An idea is, in reality only a part of ourselves; then how could it confer upon us powers superior to those we have of our own nature?"

essential postulate of sociology that a human institution cannot rest upon an error and a lie, without which it could not exist. If it were not founded in the nature of things, it would have encountered in the facts a resistance over which it never could have triumphed.... One must know how to go underneath the symbol to the reality which it represents and which gives it its meaning. In reality, then, there are no religions which are false. All are true in their own fashion, all answer, though in different ways, to the given conditions of human existence."¹

Admittedly, religious beliefs are not in themselves true in the way in which their holders think them to be; their truth and value, according to Durkheim, lies in their symbolic quality. Seeing it in this light, his task becomes to reveal what it is which is symbolised by religion, so that he must deal with religious phenomena at their simplest rather than with advanced religions which have been elaborated and sophisticated away from their original bases. The definition of religion he proposes is that "a religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one simple moral community called a church all those who adhere to them."² Durkheim prefers this

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" (Swain Ed.) pp. 2 & 3.

2. Ibid. Bk. I Chap. I p.47.

definition to that of Tylor who defines religion as "belief in spiritual beings"¹ and Jevons and Müller's definitions which take the belief in supernatural beings or things as characteristic of all religions.² He does so on the grounds that a belief in spiritual beings is not present in all religions (Buddhism, for example, in its pure state, owes nothing to the conception of supernatural beings, being concerned chiefly with the escape from the world by individual efforts) and that a feeling of the supernatural cannot be a characteristic of all religions since it is not until the late development of the conception of natural laws that one can believe anything outside these laws to be supernatural. "We know for certain that a religion without God exists" he says. "This alone should show that we no longer have the right to define religion in terms of the idea of God..... it remains to be explained how men have been led to attribute such an authority to a being, who, in the opinion of the world is, in many cases, if not always, a product of this imagination. Nothing comes from nothing, this force must have come to him from somewhere, and consequently this formula does not get to the heart of the matter."³

1. Tylor "Primitive Culture" I, p.424.

2. Max Müller "Introduction to the Science of Religion" p.18.

3. "The Division of Labour in Society" Part I, Chap. V.

It is an attempt to "get to the heart of the matter" that is found in "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life". The setting in which he studies religion is in the Australian tribes who seem to be the most suitable object of study in that they possess an organisation of unparalleled simplicity, and a religion which can be explained without reference to previous religions.¹ With such tribes the ideal of the sacred and profane which Durkheim considers an essential of a religious belief are centred around the totem and totemistic ritual peculiar to their group, so that the essence of totemism, once discovered, will be also the essence of religion in its simplest form. The question formulated at the outset of the analysis of religion therefore becomes "What is the essence of totemism?"

At first sight it might appear that totemism means the consideration as sacred, and consequent worship of a certain species of animal or plant. But as Durkheim points out, animals or plants figuring as totems are seldom impressive (being such small objects as lizards, ants, vegetables), nor are those natural phenomena which are more impressive - the sky, the wind, stars, etc. often selected as totems.

Narrowing down the problem still further, Durkheim says that it is not even the actual animal or plant itself which is worshipped and feared; a man of the Emu group, for instance,

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.1 (Swain Ed.)

may be under certain taboos with regard to its slaughter or consumption, but his feelings towards it are those of one equal to another, both owing their existence to a common source. The feelings of awe and respect directed towards an object considered sacred are felt for the symbol of the totem, the 'churinga' of the tribe (objects peculiar to the totem) - carved representations, stones supposed to be the transformed spirit of some mythical founder of the tribe. Totemism, therefore, whatever its source, is an impersonal force;

"The similar sentiments inspired by these different sorts of things (totems) in the mind of the believer, which give them their sacred character, can evidently come only from some common principle partaken of alike by the totemic emblems, the men of the clan and the individuals of the species serving as totem. In reality, it is to this common principle that the cult is addressed. In other words, totemism is the religion not of such and such animals or men or images, but of an anonymous and impersonal force found in each of these beings but not to be confounded with any of them."¹ It is here that we begin to find the first clue to Durkheim's final explanation of religion. He has reformulated his initial question until he is now concerned with the problem of the nature of the impersonal force which totemism signifies. The force for which we are looking is one independent of individuals,

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.198 Swain Ed.

infinitely enduring, external and morally greater than man that it may inspire him with the awe he feels before his religion. It is obvious that for Durkheim there is only one object which fulfils all these requirements and is therefore the answer to the problem - society itself. It is morally ascendant - "commands generally take a short peremptory form, leaving no place for hesitation; it is because, in so far as it is a command and goes by its own force it excludes all idea of deliberation or calculation; it gets its efficacy from the intensity of the mental state in which it is placed. It is that intensity that creates what is called a moral ascendancy. How the ways of action to which a society is strongly enough attached to impose them upon its members are, by that very fact, marked with a distinctive sign provocative of respect.. Since it is in spiritual ways that social pressure exercises itself, it could not fail to give men the idea that outside themselves there exist one or several powers, both moral, and at the same time efficacious, on which they depend."¹

What is more, it is possessed of great force, so that Durkheim concludes that the totem is of a two-fold significance.

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" pp.207 & 208. *Viz.* also p.211 c.f. Bergson's view of religion. "The Two Sources of Morality and Religion" - Henri Bergson (1932). "Whether religion be social in essence or by accident, one thing is certain, that it has always played a social role". (Chap. I.)

(1) In symbolising the totemic principle or god;

(2) That is, in symbolising the group itself.

So that, in reality, what is worshipped in primitive and advanced religions alike, unknown to the worshipper, is the group itself. "But why is the symbolism necessary?" we might ask. "Why the totem pole and totem animal, why not worship the clan directly?" Because, says Durkheim, symbolism is necessary to the human mind to focus attention on something otherwise seldom entirely grasped by it. The flag of a country, for instance, symbolises for the soldier in battle his country, home and relatives; it becomes the object of as fierce a protection as would that home. "Now the totem is the flag of the clan. It is therefore natural that the impressions aroused by the clan in individual minds - impressions of dependence and of increased vitality - should fix themselves to the idea of the totem rather than that of the clan; for the clan is too complex a reality to be represented clearly in all its complex unity."¹

Or again, how is society capable of providing the idea of divinity, how is it capable, in its imperfect state, of providing such lofty selfless ideals as have developed in the world of religion?

In answering this question, Durkheim points out that religious beliefs faithfully reproduce the conditions, even the imperfections of human society, in that they inevitably

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.220 Swain Ed.

present wicked gods, spirits or forces as well as good. (We may cite, for instance, the attributing of human vices and virtues to the Greek and Roman deities); in answering the first part of the question and accounting for the rise of the idea of divinity, he returns to the fundamental theory of collective representations. Levy-Bruhl says of such representations - "They can be recognised by the following marks; they are common to the members of a given social group within which they are transmitted from generation to generation, they are imposed upon individuals and awaken in them, as the case may be, feelings of respect, fear and adoration towards their objects." ¹ Against this background theory of collective representations, held by Durkheim as by Levy-Bruhl, it becomes easier to understand how society is capable of providing the idea of superhuman forces. Since society, because it consists of collective representations common to all its members but peculiar to none, is superior to the individual, it is capable of inspiring feelings of inferiority and dependence in the individual, who is born into an environment not of his making, is expected to comply with customs and habits already formed, is made heir to a tradition and collected body of beliefs and knowledge gathered together through the preceding generations - all these things tend to make him think of society as external and powerful.

1. - P. 1. "Primitive Mentality" - Levy-Bruhl (1910)

"We say that an object, whether individual or collective, inspires respect when the representation expressing it in the mind is gifted with such force that it automatically causes or inhibits actions without regard for any consideration relative to their useful or injurious effects,"¹ says Durkheim.

And the ways of action to which a society is so attached as to impose them on its members are such as to evoke respect; since the consequent pressure they exercise is in spiritual things, it gives men the idea of moral and efficacious powers outside themselves. This power of society is apparent in the increased self-confidence of the man who feels moral unity with his group. So that, taking together the feeling that society is superior and external to the individual, and the undoubted strength that any man derives from participation in group activity, society is able to provide the man attributes of the sacred -

- (1) Remoteness and superiority
- (2) Power and authority
- (3) The ability to strengthen the worshipper.

Moreover, it is society alone which is capable of so doing; nature, although we might think the sight of natural phenomena equally calculated to inspire awe and respect in the mind of the primitive, cannot in reality do so. In the first place, as Durkheim points out - "What characterises the life of nature is a regularity which approaches monotony."

1. Chap. VII Bk. II - "Elementary Forms of Religious Life".

The savage is much too accustomed to it to be surprised by it. It requires culture and reflection to shake off this yoke of habit and to discover how marvellous this regularity itself is."¹ In the second, nature can hardly be expected to awaken a feeling of awe in the mind of the member of a primitive community, when it is unknown to him as "nature" (as an objective connection between facts, that is) but is thought of as part of his own society.²

The first function of religion, then, arises in its close connection with the group - "If religion has given birth to all that is essential in society, it is because the idea of society is the soul of religion."³ For collective sentiments become conscious when fixed upon an external object - "it is only by regarding religion from this angle that it is possible to see its real significance. If we stick closely to appearances rites often give the effect of purely manual operations; they are anointings, washings, meals... But these material manoeuvres are only the external envelope under which the mental operations are hidden."⁴ Religion, with its various collective beliefs and practices provides the symbolic object by means of which group unity is strengthened and emphasised. Seen from this point of view, religious beliefs and practices are no longer mystical or illusory;

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.84 Swain Ed.

2. Viz. Pt. I Kelsen "Nature and Society" (Pub. England 1946).

3. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.419 Swain Ed.

4. Ibid. p.419.

on the contrary they all make evident their role as intensifying the consciousness of belonging to a complete group.

The belief in the existence of the individual soul, for example, has this role. A soul is "a religious principle, a particular aspect of the collective force. In fine, a man feels he has a soul, and consequently a force, because he is a social being."¹ But the soul is truly the totemic principle incarnate in each individual. According to some primitive religions (those studied by Durkheim among them), there is only a limited number of souls in existence, these originally being the semi-divine ancestors of the clan. These souls are reincarnated in succeeding generations; this is not to say that men conceive of their souls as being only borrowed, for "in penetrating into these individuals, it must inevitably individualise itself. Because the consciousness of which it becomes thus an integral part differ from each other, it differentiates itself according to their image; since each has its own physiognomy, it takes a distinct physiognomy in each."² But it does mean that the belief in one's soul, itself a reincarnation of an ancestor, and destined for still further reincarnations, results in a parallel belief in the continuity and consequently power of the group.

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.366 Swain Ed.

2. Ibid. p.349.

Similarly with the rite - its function is to establish group unity, the form it takes (washings, feasts, etc.) being only a symbolic cloak to its real meaning. In the first place, it is in effervescence that religious life is born (we may cite, for example, the increased religious convictions which result from enthusiastic mass hymn-singing in our own society); but for the primitive, ritual observances, rather than occurring regularly throughout ordinary working days, occupy a period set apart for that purpose. The wild excitement of the primitive rite, therefore, the decorations, the masks, the power to act in a manner normally forbidden (breaking the rules of exogamy, for example) may understandably make the participator feel literally a different being and motivated by some external power, so that he seems to be a member of two different worlds, the sacred and the profane. "By concentrating itself almost entirely in certain determined moments, the collective life has been able to attain its greatest intensity and efficacy, and consequently to give men a more active sentiment of the double existence they lead, and of the double nature in which they participate."¹

Such sentiments of the difference between the everyday world and the world of sacred things into which men periodically enter are themselves intensified by the rite, since all emotions become more intense when expressed collectively.

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.219 Swain Ed.

The funeral rite, for instance, with its exaggerated wailings and self-inflicted tortures, serves to intensify the feeling of loss, but it also serves to emphasise the sentiment of unity of the remaining family group.. Collective mournings "by the mere fact that they are collective, raise the vital tone."¹

The rite, then, has just the same function and efficacy as the conception of a reincarnated soul; it strengthens the group whether it is occasioned by a joyful or a sad occurrence. In the first case, common rejoicing is obviously a means whereby the sentiment of collective unity is affirmed and introduced into every individual who takes part in it. In the second, if a misfortune to the group seems imminent "then the group unites, as in the case of mourning, and it is naturally an impression of uneasiness and perplexity which dominates the assembled body. Now, as always, the pooling of these sentiments results in intensifying them. By affirming themselves, they exalt and impassion themselves and attain a degree of violence which is translated by the corresponding violence of the gestures which express them. When emotions have this vivacity they may well be painful, but they are not depressing; on the contrary they denote a state of effervescence which implies a mobilisation of all our active forces and even a supply of external energies.

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.408 Swain Ed.

In a word, even when religious ceremonies have a disquieting or saddening event as their point of departure, they retain their stimulating power over the affective state of the group and individuals."¹

But apart from its most fundamental function of promoting group unity, religion serves other purposes of great social importance. In the first place, it promotes moral values and is the source of what we might call truly social life, in that it opposes selfishness by its stress on the existence of a divine and eternal judge, and on the value of asceticism. If they do not always do so, religions frequently involve the idea of an eternal judge. In Australian tribes about Melbourne, their god plays this role; it is not, as might be thought, only in advanced religions that it occurs. And the idea of such a divine judge who considers every human life, every action however small, is one of the greatest counteractions to purely utilitarian views of life. 'Do as you like, see to your own interests' is only a sensible rule of conduct if we are concerned with the present and not with the judgment of our lives in some future state. It can be argued, of course, that action on consideration of happiness in the next world is as purely utilitarian as action on consideration of happiness in this, but for the purpose of a study of society, the one leads to unselfish behaviour in society now, the other to unsocial behaviour. Hence the belief in judgement hereafter provides

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.408 Swain Ed.

a valuable incentive to just and selfless living now.

This incentive towards leading an unselfish life is heightened by the stress religion puts on asceticism. For the religious devotee, asceticism is a necessary means of self-preparation; in order to serve his gods he must discipline and subdue himself by accepting gladly the worst rather than the best of human life. "So the suffering which they impose is not arbitrary and sterile cruelty; it is a necessary school where men form and temper themselves and acquire the qualities of disinterestedness and endurance, without which there would be no religion."¹ Asceticism is an integral part of fervent religion; but it does not stop there - it overflows into other social activities. For the ascetic, by his example, influences others. "It is necessary that some exaggerate if the average is to remain at a fitting level."² But religious beliefs demand from the average follower as well as from the saint a consideration of others rather than himself. "He that loseth his life shall save it" is typical of religious teachings; and it is the value of this religious teaching that it preaches the need for readiness to self-sacrifice when such a readiness is demanded by society in order that the group may survive and prosper. Religion, therefore, the symbol of

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.316 Swain Ed.

2. Ibid. p.316.

society, finds one of its functions in justifying self-sacrifice

In the second, religion promotes intellectual values in that it provides a basis for all the most precious developments of humanity, for philosophy and science. These cannot exist until objects have been connected and essentially related, and no such connection can be made while the mind only sees things from the outside, only deals with visible appearances, that is. "The essential thing was not to leave the mind enslaved to visible appearances, but to teach it to dominate them and to connect what the senses separated; for from the moment when men have an idea that there are internal connections between things, science and philosophy become possible. Religion opened up a way for them."¹ "But how?" we might ask. The answer Durkheim gives is that religion opens up the way for connection between things by its primitive grouping of rocks, plants, animals, and men under the totem;² that it also frees man from his purely physical world, and gives him greater mobility of thought by creating new type of thought - collective thought, which is the basis of that impersonal thought without which philosophy cannot exist. "The world of representations in which social life passes is superimposed upon its material substratum, far from arising from it; the determination which reigns there is much more supple than the

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.237 Swain Ed.

2. *Vis. Ibid.* p.235.

one whose roots are in the constitution of our tissues and it leaves with the actor a justified impression of the greatest liberty. The medium in which we thus move is less opaque and less resistant; we feel ourselves to be, and we are more at ease there. In a word, the only way we have of freeing ourselves from physical forces is to oppose them with collective forces."¹

And if religion, in releasing impersonal thought, opens up the way for philosophy and science, in forming a 'recreation' it also initiates art. The world of religion, accentuating the distance between itself and the everyday world, is partially an imaginative world, and therefore lends itself to creative impulses. It is a world in which immense excitement and energy leads to exuberant movements, to games, to dancing, to singing. In short, religion leads to self-expression - "it would not be itself if it did not give some place to the free combinations of thought and activity, to play, to art, to all that recreates the spirit that has been fatigued by the too great slavishness of daily work."²

Durkheim's final conclusion on religion is therefore that it is "nothing more than a form of custom like law and morals"³, but that, like law and morals, it arises directly from society.

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.272 Swain Ed.

2. Ibid. p.392.

3. "Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale" Vol. 22.

"However complex the outward manifestations of the religious life may be, at bottom it is one and simple. It responds everywhere to one and the same need, and is everywhere derived from one and the same state. In all its forms, its object is to raise man above himself and to make him lead a life superior to that which he would need if he followed only his own individual whims; beliefs express this life in representations, rites organise it and regulate its working." ¹

Religion, viewed in this way, is no less vital than it appears to its believers. Arising from society and answering social needs it will endure as long as they exist, and "there can be no society which does not feel the need for upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and its personality."² In answering to an eternal need, therefore, religion is itself eternal. But a certain natural doubt arises at Durkheim's equation of society and religion; would it not be possible to hold that religion corresponds to some social need, without acceding to the view that the object worshipped under the symbol of religion is society itself? It could be held to be social, for instance, in being the result of the herd instinct as Trotter supposes.

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.214 Swain Ed.

2. Ibid. p.427.

3. Trotter "Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War".

Or, equally interesting, could we not explain it by reference to an individual rather than a social need, as some psychologists do. Freud¹ for instance gives a nationalistic explanation of religion with reference to individual psychology. The child, for various reasons, has a desire for adult power, a power he thinks of as being typified in his father; on gaining adult status, however, he is disillusioned about the power and wisdom of adults and realises that his ability to protect himself is no greater than it was before. Consciously accepting this position, but unconssciously longing for the security enjoyed during his childhood, his conscious ideas gradually give way before the insistent unconscious, so that he invests the consoling figure of a god in heaven, having the characteristics of his earthly father (which explains the changing qualities attributed to God - stern and cruel in a society where the father is omnipotent and to be feared, just where the father is the dispenser of justice, loving and merciful where the father is thought such, etc.). Religion, from this view, becomes an individual mental adjustment to an unhappy situation, but so explained appears to be no less enduring than a religion worshipping the group, being equally dependent upon external needs. But I think Durkheim would justly comment that whatever we may think of Freud's analysis of the setting for the need, the need itself (taken by Freud to be the individual need for love and security) is almost exactly what he is thinking of

1. Sigmund Freud "The Future of an Illusion" (Trans. 1928)

himself when he postulates the need for awe and worship of the group. The two needs are, at bottom, needs for -

- (1) The recognition of some morally superior being;
- (2) from whom we may expect help;
- (3) and hence gain security and affection.

So that, in reality, both are atheistic explanations of religion with reference to social needs. The difference is that Durkheim believed religion to be important and valuable; whereas Freud would eliminate it as a neurosis, and throw man into a feeling of utter helplessness, so that he may learn to overcome it, and to stand alone, unconsoled by a lingering "child-father" relationship.¹

Another query arises if we accept Durkheim's theory. If religion in reality symbolises society, which society does it symbolise? The real, the actual social organisation which regulates, controls and forbids in an imperfect manner? Or an ideal society? Durkheim anticipates this question;² he answers it by saying that religion does not ignore society as it is, but on the contrary, mirrors all its imperfections - "religion, far from ignoring the real society and making abstraction of it is in its image."³ But it also lifts it up to the ideal; among the Arunta, for example, a mythical society is placed at the

1. Freud "The Future of an Illusion" Chap. IX.

2. *Vis.* "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.420. Swain Ed.

3. *Ibid.* p.421.

beginning of time, the organisation of which is precisely that of the tribe today, but the personages who compose it are of a higher nature, gifted with mystic powers. They are different, being half human, half animal; they are, that is, idealised. But, says Durkheim, the belief in the ideal world so characteristic of religions is not inexplicable - it arises naturally out of social life. "A society can neither create itself nor recreate itself without at the same time creating an ideal. Therefore when some oppose the ideal society to the real society like two antagonists which would lead us in separate directions, they materialise and oppose abstractions. The ideal society is not outside of the real society; it is a part of it. For a society is not made up merely of the mass of individuals who compose it, the ground which they occupy, the things which they use, and the movements which they perform, but above all it is the idea that it forms of itself."¹

It remains, having described Durkheim's explanation of religion, to estimate its relevance to the present day. Rationalistic explanations of religion are still rather shocking in the true sense of the word. We may see such an instinctive horror in some regulations of group theories of religion. G.C.J. Webb, for example, in his book on the subject² takes affront at Durkheim's explanation of the nature and function of

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.422 Swain Ed.

2. G.C.J. Webb - "Group Theories of Religion and the Individual" (1916)

religion because it affords no explanation of individual or personal religion. "They (group theories, that is) do not do justice to what we usually mean by individual or personal religion, and must inevitably end in a view of it as something illusory or destined to perish in proportion as genuine knowledge of the world increases."¹

But this criticism is hardly fair or valid; had Professor Webb viewed Durkheim's conception of religion against the background of his general social theory he would have realised that Durkheim viewed society as constantly evolving, and that he considered it at various stages of its development. According to the theory of the two types of social solidarity put forward in "The Division of Labour in Society", primitive society owes its cohesion chiefly to the strength of the collective conscience which allows for little or no individualism. Therefore, there could not exist there, individual religion in the sense of individual religious beliefs, although each individual had a certain amount of personal belief derived from collective practice. But having concluded from a study of religion at its simplest that it is social in origin, Durkheim himself would not apply the adjective 'collective' to religions of other stages of social organisation, at the expense of the individual. He actually considers the more individual religion at the conclusion of "Elementary Forms of Religious Life"

1. "Group Theories of Religion and the Individual" p.175.

and states that where personalities were little differentiated the belief in the existence of the soul made little difference to the nature and form of religion itself, but that as the mechanical solidarity of society broke up and individualism increased, individual religions and the stress on the individual soul and its value increased correspondingly. In this case, although religion is still social in origin and aim, it is moulded in individual moulds. As he says in a footnote in his preface to "The Rules of Sociological Method" - "Because beliefs and collective practices thus come to us from without, it does not follow that we receive them passively or without modification. In reflecting on collective institutions and assimilating them for ourselves, we individualise them and impart to them more or less personal characteristics."¹

If Webb means that Durkheim does not devote time to a consideration of individual religious beliefs then he is making a correct observation, but hardly a criticism since Durkheim, in seeking the origin of religion, is taking it in its simplest form in the simplest of societies and not attempting to deal with its later complications; if however, he means to imply that Durkheim's explanation of religion as being the cult of society leaves no place for individual religion, he appears to do so without justification.

1. P.xxiii Preface to 2nd Ed. of "Rules of Sociological Method".

Again, criticisms directed against the anthropological element in Durkheim's study, although justifiable, do little to invalidate his conclusions. Durkheim believed that in the Australian tribes he studied are to be found the simplest social organisations in existence. Goldenweiser,¹ however, states that these Australian tribes have only a very moderate claim to be reckoned as the simplest in organisation, the Andamanese showing an even simpler one; he raises, moreover, the vital point² that in taking the structure of Australian tribes to be typical of earliest society, Durkheim is led to assume that the simplest societies all possess sibs and totems. In actual fact, there are many non-totemic people ranking among those of the least social organisation (e.g. the Andamanese of the Bengal, the Chuckohi of Siberia, the Congolese pygmies). Ruth Benedict³ in examining Durkheim's theory with reference to North American tribes has also stated that contrary to Durkheim's statement that the belief in guardian spirits is consequent to and dependent on totemic beliefs, there are developments of it where totemism has never existed. Therefore one is led to ask from where religion emanates when it exists in non-totemic peoples who are nevertheless at the lowest stage of development.

1. Goldenweiser "Religion and Society" (1917).

2. "Journal of Phil. Psych. & Scientific Method" Vol. XIV. p. 121 sq.

3. Ruth Benedict "The Concept of the Guardian Spirit in North America". American Anthropological Mem. No. 29 (1923).

But it is highly possible that Durkheim would provide an answer to the criticism; and the real question of the value of rationalistic explanations of religion still remains. Whatever one's personal feelings on the matter it should not be evaded. In advanced societies there is a distinct decline in religion, a growing indifference to spiritual values. For one thing, as wider fields of study come under the light of man's knowledge "faith no longer exercises the same hegemony as formerly over the system of ideas that we may continue to call religion".¹ The advance of science seems to undermine the foundations of religion with its explanation of the creation and evolution of the world, its consideration of man as a higher type of animal rather than as a special creation of the divine being. "Science tends to substitute itself for the latter (religion) in all that which concerns the cognitive and intellectual functions. Christianity has already definitely consecrated this substitution in the order of material things. Seeing in matter that which is profane before all, it readily left the knowledge of this to another discipline, 'tradidit mundum hominum disputationi' - 'He gave the world over to the disputes of men'; it is thus that the natural sciences have been able to establish themselves and make their authority recognised without great difficulty."²

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.431.

2. Ibid. p.429.

But there occurs an increasingly violent clash between religion and science when the latter proceeds to study and analyse the most personal concepts of the former, i.e. the world of souls. "For it is above all over souls that the god of the Christian aspires to reign. That is why the idea of submitting the psychic life to science produced the effect of a sort of profanation for a long time; even today it is repugnant to many minds. However, experimental and comparative psychology is founded, and today we must reckon with it. But the world of the religious and moral life is still forbidden...."¹

But by now science has established itself even in this region - psychology, sociology, each study every aspect of the behaviour of man, and together break down the barriers of his spiritual life and subject it to scientific observation. It appears that science deals the deathblow to religion.

Durkheim's view is interesting and important in that it eliminates this apparent clash. If religion is, in reality, an affirmation and reverence of the group, of society itself, then there is no further need of antagonism between it and science, since in the first place both arose from the social organisation of man, both meaning that the individual is provided with a means of raising himself above his own narrow existence and of participating in impersonal (collective) life.

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.429 & p.430
Swain Ed.

"If logical thought tends to rid itself more and more of the subjective and personal elements which it still retains from its origin, it is... because a social life of a new sort is developing. Thus it is not at all true that between science on the one hand and morals and religion on the other there exists a sort of antimony which has so frequently been admitted, for the two forms of activity really come from one and the same ^{new} source. In other words science and morals imply that the individual is capable of raising himself above his own peculiar point of view, and of living an impersonal life."¹

It is worthwhile noting that this view of Durkheim's finds an interesting parallel in the work of a present-day scientist who has the same keen interest in man's development as had Durkheim - Julian Huxley. Being a biologist, he finds he has no belief in the existence of God - "The concept of God has reached the limits of its usefulness; it cannot evolve further. The advance of natural science, logic and psychology have brought us to a stage at which God is no longer a useful hypothesis. With the substitution of knowledge for ignorance in this field, and the growth of control, both actually achieved and realised by thought as possible, God is simply fading away as the devil has done."²

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.445 Swain Ed.

2. "The Uniqueness of Man" - Julian Huxley (1941) Chap.XIV pp.280-282.

But the fading away of the idea of God brings with it many responsibilities, because it leaves man completely responsible for his destiny. This is where Huxley and Durkheim come very close to each other. Both agree that there is no eternal God, Durkheim believing it to be symbolic of society, Huxley seeing it as a superstition due to ignorance; but each sees that the disappearance of the idea of God leads to a feeling of loss and bewilderment; "the fear of the uncomprehended, banished elsewhere, has once more entered human life."¹ And for both, the importance and power of society are paramount as a solution to what they feel is only temporary bewilderment, for Durkheim because society is the fulfilment of man's nature, for Huxley because future development lies in the conscious control of man's environment, not merely physical, but social.

Where the spiritual indifference of advanced societies is concerned, such rationalistic explanations of religion which feature society largely do certainly possess an advantage in that although they admit a form of religion to be outworn, they preserve and value the religious impulse. For Durkheim, since according to his analysis of the function of religion it is a symbolisation of society, concludes that religious indifference can only mean social indifference - a loosening of social ties.

1. "The Uniqueness of Man" - p.285.

But in this case, the religious impulse is not dead, merely awaiting a new outlet. "The great things of the past which filled our fathers with enthusiasm do not excite the same ardour in us, either because they have come into common usage, to such an extent that we are unconscious of them, or else because they no longer answer to our actual aspirations; but as yet there is nothing to replace them. In a word, the old gods are growing old or already dead."¹ But he does not suggest that there should be a deliberate effort to resuscitate the religious impulse with reference to the group. It would be futile to bolster up a fading belief in one metaphysical conception by substituting the worship of another. The conclusion to which Durkheim's explanation of religion leads is that we are only waiting for a new object to which we can attach this religious feeling.

Therefore his explanation is not one which, reducing the ideal to the real, takes away all hopes of a spirit for the future. "It is life itself, and not a dead past which can produce a living cult" he says. "But this state of incertitude and confused agitation cannot last for ever. A day will come when all societies will know again those hours of creative effervescence in the course of which new ideas arise and new formulae are found which serve for a while as a guide to humanity;

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.427 Swain Ed.

and when those hours shall have been lived through once, men will spontaneously feel the need of reliving them from time to time in thought, that is to say, of keeping alive their memory by means of celebrations which regularly reproduce their fruits. There are no gospels which are immortal, but neither is there any reason for believing that humanity is incapable of inventing new ones. As to the question of what symbols this new faith will express itself with.... that is something which surpasses the human faculty of foresight and which does not appertain to the principal question."¹

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life " p.428 Swain Ed.

CHAPTER TWOHIS VIEWS ON EDUCATION

As a child develops and is educated, he is really the object of a two-fold process. He is obviously educated in the sense that he is schooled - that is taught a knowledge of various subjects, coached through certain examinations, trained to specialise in one sphere and so on. But he is also subject to a more continuous education which teaches him how to eat, talk and walk, how to dress, when to sleep, what to hold right or wrong - an education which, in short, adapts him to the environment into which he is born. The former education is academic and deliberate; the latter is social and unconscious.

Now since Durkheim is considering education as a social institution, and therefore viewing it largely in the light of its effects within society, it is in the unconscious social education of the child that he is primarily interested. He is, that is, treating education sociologically, as he explicitly states - "Sociologist, it is above all as a sociologist, that I would speak of education. Moreover, in proceeding thus, far from demonstrating and revealing the facts with a bias which distorts them, I am convinced that on the contrary there is no method so apt to show the facts in their true nature."¹

1. Viz. "Education et Sociologie". Pub. in "Revue de Meta-physique et Morale" 1905. Also 1922 by Fauconnet. pp.105-6 this Edition.

Taking therefore as the most important social role of education the process which introduces the child to moral precepts and inculcates within him a code of morality, Durkheim defines education as being "the action exercised on children by parents and teachers. This action is at all times, and it is general".¹

His definition of education is, in fact, that it is basically a social process - hence it follows that, like the majority of educationalists of our own time, his primary concern is not with making the child knowledgeable but with teaching him to live as a member of society, a society which will to some extent complicate his spontaneous behaviour by the demands on him resulting from his being a member of a group.

In discussing the aims of education, therefore, first and foremost on Durkheim's list is to socialise the child, to transmit to him all the collective ideals on which the stability of the group rests; ideas, habits, customs, sentiments - "together they form the social body. To inculcate this body in each of us, that is the aim of education."² Seen in this light, then, education consists in the transmission of social ideas and habits; it is "the action" exercised by the generation of adults over those who are not yet used to social life. It has for its object the arousing and developing in the child of a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are

1. "Education et Sociologie" pp.49-50. Fauconnet Ed.

2. Ibid. p.50.

demanded of him by the political society in its entirety, and the particular environment to which he is specially destined."

But to say that a child must be socialised by education is not precise enough - it opens the way to all sorts of generalisations about the ideal nature of education which Durkheim would be among the first to criticise. Education must not only adapt a child to society, but adapt it to a society, the particular society into which he is born. Every society, has its own conception of what constitutes a good member of the group, and every society differs as to the virtues such a member should possess - the Spartan must be capable of endurance, therefore the child must be trained to it or die in the attempt; the Greek must develop aesthetic refinement, and so on; every society, in fact, has its ideal man and it is according to this ideal that the child is developed. "The man which education should realise in us is not a man such as nature has made, but such as society wishes him to be."¹ This is the important difference between man and animals - an animal teaches its children rudimentary actions necessary for its survival (flying, walking, nest-building, etc.) but it cannot transmit complex social ways of behaviour and thought as can man. For social education teaches more than techniques necessary to existence - it teaches the child to reach beyond his own nature and to participate in a wider existence than his own. "It is

1. "Education et Sociologie" p.117 Faucennet Ed.

society, in effect, which draws us out of ourselves, which obliges us to reckon with interests other than our own, it is society which teaches us to master our passions and instincts and submit them to the law, to restrain, to deny, to sacrifice ourselves, to subordinate our personal aims to ends of a higher nature."¹ But in this process of being drawn out of himself, the child is shaped according to the particular ideals of his own group.

The corollary of such a statement on the aims of education is that there can be no general and universal education which is ideal. If a child is to be fitted into its society, its education will be according to the characteristics peculiar to the life of that society. Hence there are many variations of education; "systems of education are so evidently based on determined social system that they are inseparable from them. Each type of people has its education which is peculiar to it and serves to define it in the same way as its moral, political or religious organisation. It is one of the elements of its physiognomy."²

Education of the child must, therefore, vary according to the type of people in which he is born. Not only that, but it must vary within that people also, for he is born not only into a society but into a particular group of it.

1. "Education et Sociologie" pp.55 -6 Faucannet Ed.

2. Ibid. pp.113-4. Vix. also p.39 - "Education has varied infinitely according to the time and according to the country."

It may be a professional group or a class, but it will make a difference to his education, since he will absorb its particular influences. There may be many kinds of education, but even within the sphere of one particular kind, the result of its application is diversity.¹ And finally since this necessary variety of education is an observable fact, all abstract discussions as to the "ideal" education are useless from the point of view of education. Educational thinkers such as Rousseau who have tried to found a new and better education may be interesting in the light they throw on the spirit of their time; they may stimulate by their over-simplicity, but they all try to find a general and ideal education which should exist universally.

"Their objective is not to describe or explain what is or what has been, but to determine what should be. They are not directed to the present or to the past, but to the future."²

What is needed, therefore, if education is to be effective is not a study of what should be in general, but of what has been and must be particularly, of what form education should take in particular societies if it is to fit in with the social milieu.

To this end, Durkheim proposes a new type of study of education - a study in the light of sociology, which will treat education as a social fact and attempt to balance it against its particular background - the science of education.

1. "Education et Sociologie" pp.45-6 Faussonet Ed.

2. Ibid. p.85.

Such a science might well be started, he argues, - the field for it is demarcated, the facts already lie there, for "in effect, education in practice in a determined society, considered at a determined moment of its evolution is a collection of practices, ways of acting, and customs which constitute perfectly defined facts, and which have the same reality as other social facts."¹ Such a study is then possible, nor is there any lack of fields of research for it; it could undertake a scientific study of the rise and development of the institutions of education, "for to know what a thing is, is not simply to know its external superficial form, but to understand its significance, the place it fills, the part it plays in the corporate national life.... it is in the past that we must observe its action."²

Secondly it would deal with the multiplicity of educational systems already distinguished, and would try to analyse the characteristics of a group, and relate them to the type of education practised there. And apart from general studies of such magnitude, the science of education would investigate the functioning of education within limited areas. Throughout all such research, the aim of the science would be to understand the relation between the social and educational system in society (or societies) sufficiently well to be able to preserve and regulate their harmony.

1. "Education et Sociologie" p.78 Faucounet Ed.

2. Ibid. pp.150-1.

"But why this new study?" we might ask. "Why not look for such information to these sciences of society already in existence, to psychology, to sociology?" Such a question is more difficult to answer today than at the time when Durkheim wrote. For at that time psychology and sociology were in a more indeterminate state. Psychology was thought of as a study dealing with the individual mind only, sociology viewed with some doubt, the lines along which both would develop unpredictable.¹ And as Durkheim saw it, there was no longer time to wait for their development, because there was an educational crisis, a problem of vital urgency.² Indecision and uncertainty had crept into the life of civilised groups, as Durkheim repeatedly states - "It is unfortunately incontestable that with us, moral unity is not what it should be"³....."intellectual and moral security is not for our century; this is at once its misery and grandeur."⁴ Such uncertainty has permeated the educational field also - there is a disunity of aim in the system which has thrown secondary school education in particular into a grave crisis.⁵ And although some maladjustment is perceived, no one sees how it should be put right. Everyone agrees that it(education) cannot rest upon the same basis⁶ as in the past, but one cannot see with the same clarity what it will be in the future. One fact which

1. "Education et Sociologie" p.85 Faussonnet Ed.

2. Ibid. pp.91-101.

3. Ibid. p.62.

4. Ibid. p.132.

5. It must be remembered that Durkheim is considering schools in late 19th century France, and not schools in general, although I think there is some parallel.

6. Viz. last half of chapter for explanation of this.

makes us particularly aware of the confusion of our ideas on the point is that in all preceding periods of our history, one could put in a word the ideal which educationalists proposed to realise in the children - today there is no expressive feature to characterise the objective which should be pursued in the teaching of our high schools."¹

The science of education, then, is needed so that this objective might be discovered from an analysis of the social environments. Psychology cannot perform the task; it can "well indicate what is the best way of presenting and applying to the child principles once propounded, but it can hardly discover them."² Durkheim is not proposing to substitute such a science for teaching - its role will be solely to guide and help. But it is very necessary, for the institutions of the past which now seem so futile did not exist without reason - they once corresponded to needs.³ They must not therefore be swept away too vigorously before a careful study of the needs to which they correspond has been made, and a decision has been reached as to whether those needs have now completely vanished. The science of education, for Durkheim, offers hope for the future.

1. "Education et Sociologie" pp.142-3 Faucennet Ed.

2. *Ibid.* p.131.

3. *Ibid.* p.160.

But although he is so concerned with the unconscious social education which a child undergoes, that does not mean that the deliberate education which is applied to him goes unregarded. The study of the latter follows naturally from that of the former, since although unconscious education is a continuous process in which parents and friends as well as teachers are the educators, the school is the place where the child spends most of his waking day, and is therefore invested with great influence and authority.

Durkheim, himself a lecturer to intending teachers, was much concerned with problems of schooling, but interpreted them in the light of his sociological outlook on education; again, therefore, he does not deal with the problems of teaching a child particular subjects, but of developing his character and above all his social nature. He is therefore concerned with the moral education of the child, who must be morally developed so as to be a useful member of society - he must be "socialised". The question of actual school education is then how best to develop the fundamental elements of morality - duty and attachment to the group¹ - in the child. For self-sacrifice - duty to others, etc. is precisely what he cannot understand. Not in touch with the world in the same way as a responsible adult, a child is disinclined to moral conduct of the sort considered

1. *Viz.* Part I, Chapter Three of this thesis.

by Durkheim - "a man is not spontaneously inclined to submit to a political authority, to a moral discipline, to devote himself and to sacrifice himself" } nor can he understand the need for dutiful behaviour - "the sentiment of duty is, in effect, for the child as well as for the adult the stimulant 'par excellence' to effort. But the child cannot understand duty except through its teachers or parents." ²

What is it in the child then that leaves him open to discipline, to the idea of duty? Is it, as with adults, a love of regularity? Durkheim answers that it is not so, since the child is very irregular in his interests and habits - "the outstanding feature of infantile curiosity is that it is unstable and fleeting".³ But although restless, the child is a lover of routine - any change in his mealtimes, his cutlery, the position of his bed, for instance, leads to vociferous anger. Two traits of child nature, therefore, leave him open to our influence.

(1) Infantile traditionalism (e.g. the way in which parents embrace is reproduced in the child embracing its doll.)

(2) Extreme suggestibility.

1. "Education et Sociologie" p.120 Faucennet Ed.

2. Ibid. p.71.

3. "L'education morale" (Given as lectures 1902-3. Published 1925). p.149.

As proof of the latter, Durkheim cites Binet's experiments with children, in which, having chosen a line of a certain length and repeatedly shown it to the child, he shows many lines of different lengths and asks the child to pick out the line equal to the first one shown. Having chosen, the child is asked "Are you sure you are right?". Of the children taking part in the experiments, 89% changed their minds after being so questioned. With this high degree of suggestibility the child obviously is open to influence; he may be 'suggested' into accepting certain ideas provided that the suggestions are made to him in an authoritative manner. Authority becomes of great importance - it is through the authority of the teacher that the child can be brought to an acceptance of moral standards. For this reason "education must be essentially a thing of authority"¹ - although by such authority no artificial restraint or limitation of fundamental liberty is implied; "authority - has nothing violent or repressive about it. It consists entirely in a certain moral ascendancy. It supposes realised in the master two principal conditions. Firstly he must have will-power - secondly he must really feel authority within himself."²

Now the fulfilment of this latter condition is just one of those problems of education which are so urgent. In everyday life men are becoming aware of a lack of necessary

1. "Education et Sociologie" p.69.

2. Ibid. pp.71 and 73.

moral authority; and this lack is common to education. Whereas teaching and religious instruction were once inseparable, the aim of modern education is to provide a rational education and a "lay morality".¹ This difference in aim brings with it a considerable difficulty; the conception of a supreme law-giving God gave authority both to the rules taught and to the teacher, just as the strong traditionalism of primitive peoples lends authority to some custom. This authority being removed together with the conception of God upon which it depended, the problem arises as to how the moral code may be given authority. As we have seen in a preceding chapter, Durkheim can only see that the conception of God which gave authority to moral rules must be replaced by the conception of society which lay behind religion. Society is the thing which is capable of acting as a source of moral authority for teacher and for moral rules, and as an ideal and instigator of morality in the child.

Once this difficulty is removed, and the child is influenced by external authority into moderating his demands, the first element of morality - i.e. discipline by external rules - is introduced to the child's mind. But since these rules are consequently conceived to be inviolable by him, any breach of them destroys at once this conception and his belief in their virtue. Punishment, therefore, far from being

¹ Again here Durkheim is speaking of French educational system.

undesirable, is highly necessary to preserve the belief of the group in the rules they obey. (We may compare this view of punishment with that of the Utilitarian school - punishment is necessary, not as personal expiation, but for the sake of others in the group, that they might be deterred from similar crimes; the difference is that for the utilitarian the person who is punished need not be the guilty party, whereas for Durkheim it is essential that the guilty person should be punished, and if undetected, that the group as a whole be made to suffer until they point out the culprit or he confesses, since only thus may their belief in the essential justice of the rules be maintained.)

Punishment, therefore, should be used, provided that it does not lead to megalomania in the teacher or is not carried out in a fit of temper. To introduce a system of rewards is not, however, a good idea, as it may mean that on leaving school and entering into adult society, the child abandons some of his moral behaviour when he sees that it is unrewarded. Punishment is to Durkheim necessary "to reassure those spirits whose faith may - indeed must - have been shaken by the violation of the law, even though they were not aware of it, to show them that this faith is as justified as it was before, and, in the case of schools, that it is still held by the person who first gave it to the children."¹ The punishment should not, however, be corporal; "the true punishment, like the true natural consequence, is censure."²

1. "L'education morale" p.191.

2. Ibid. p.205.

Thus having dealt with the development of the first element of morality - discipline - Durkheim is concerned with the means for forming in the child, a normal attachment to his group. Originally such attachment springs from man's natural faculty for sympathy - the child will therefore be best attached to a group by extending his social circle. Knowing his family and his early friends, he already acquires a faculty for spontaneous sympathy, but this is heightened by intimacy; once a member of a vast political society in which such personal relationships are less possible, he may lose the consciousness of being a member of a group. School, where he can be introduced to a system of impersonal rules, may feel the attraction of group life, and learn of the history and civics of his own country and town, is the obvious intermediary which can prepare him for adult social life.

From this outline of Durkheim's views, it can be seen that, although starting with much the same interest in education as many other modern educationalists, and while recognising, with them, the importance of the development of the child rather than its acquisition of knowledge, he realises different aspects of the problem, and reaches conclusions about the ideal nature of education which are far different from theirs. He does not propose, for instance, an absolute and common system of education to be given to every child whatever its position and circumstances. This is not because he is unfair, or because he does not believe in social justice, but

because, viewing education as the socialising of the child, he puts as its highest aim the fitting in of the child to its environment. Now if the child is to receive a certain education whatever its sphere of life, it may well be made unhappy and be made a social misfit, simply because its education and its consequent adult life are out of harmony. Diversity is necessary to society; if education by means of inducing similarities (of habit, custom, etc.) preserves homogeneity within a society, it also, by furthering specialisation, ensures a necessary amount of diversity.¹ An objection may be raised here, since Durkheim gives some appearance of wishing to preserve unjustifiable social distinctions and to debar the children born in one environment from entering into another. But this injustice is only apparent. What Durkheim is saying, in effect, is that society needs diversity, that there are many occupations into which a certain number of children must go in order to preserve the stability and economic well-being of the group, and that the children going into one occupation need a different type of education from those entering another. What he is not saying is that these occupations should be fixed for a certain section of the population; in supposing complete social mobility to exist, he is not open to the criticism of harsh insistence on "caste" in the interests of a society as a whole.

1. Viz. "Education et Sociologie" pp.45-6.

Nor does he preach the responsibility of the State for education - "From the moment that education is seen to be an essentially social process, the State cannot remain disinterested¹ but that is not to say that it should monopolise educational administration.

Moreover he does not attribute limitless power to education - for some modern thinkers, education is a sort of "open sesame" to all kinds of social reforms, but Durkheim would oppose such optimism as being not based on reality. Robert Owen, for instance, speaking as one of the earlier exponents of the power of education, said "Any general character from the best to the worst, from the most ignorant to the most enlightened, may be given to any community, even to the world at large, by the application of proper means (i.e. education), which means are, to a great extent at the command and under the control of those who have influence in the affairs of men."² Such a view would be condemned as illogical by Durkheim, for since education is a social institution, its roots deep in social structure, its aim the impression of social conventions from one generation to another, it cannot impose any 'general character'. It has no power in itself to do so, for being dependent on one type of social structure it is powerless to impose another.³

1. "Education et Sociologie" p.60.

2. Robert Owen - "NewView of Society" (1836)

3. *Viz.* p.427 "Le Suicide" (Pub.1897) "It (education) is only the image and reflection of society. It imitates and reproduces it briefly, it does not create it."

Again, whereas the modern trend is to stress the need for individuality and reference to the particular needs of each child, so that it may reach spiritual independence, Durkheim is concerned with fitting the child into the already existing framework of a defined group. He must not be misunderstood here in being 'socialised', a child is not being stereotyped. Although the aim of education is the same for every child, they must be applied to each child with reference to his particular dispositions.¹ Not only this, but in being adapted to fit into a social group, the child's individuality does not seem, to Durkheim, to be destroyed, but enhanced for "far from the two terms (individual and social) opposing each other and not being able to develop except in inverse proportion, they involve each other. The individual, in desiring society, desires himself. The actions it exercises over him, particularly in the case of education, have not as their objective to repress, narrow or distort him, but, on the contrary, to make him greater and a being truly human."²

The contrast between this view and those other more individualistic views of education can readily be appreciated. Madame Montessori, for example, one of the first to advocate the 'free school' or 'activity schools' says "From a biological point of view the concept of liberty in the education of the

1. "Education et Sociologie" p.63.

2. Ibid. p.58.

child... must be understood as demanding those conditions adapted to the most favourable development of his entire individuality.....child life is not an abstraction, it is the life of individual children. There exists only one real biological manifestation, the living individual, and towards single individuals, one by one observed, education must direct itself. By education must be understood the active help given to the normal expansion of the life of the child."¹ She is obviously concerned with the purely individual spontaneous life of the child, the role of the teacher being to help only when help is required; that is a different attitude from the one expressed by Durkheim when he says "All education consists in a continual effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling and acting to which he would not have come spontaneously."² In this case the role of the teacher is to mould the child, certainly with some regard to his own characteristics, for "the child has a nature of his own and, since it is this nature that must be informed, we must, if we are to work effectively upon it, begin by trying to know it."³ but finally with regard to the needs of the society in which he lives. Any attempt to work along an educative system based on free initiative, as do the activity schools, is bad. "Life is not all play; the child must prepare himself for pain and effort, and it would be a disaster if he were allowed to think that everything can be done as a game."⁴

1. "The Montessori Method" p.104 by Montessori (Trans. 1912)

2. Viz. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologie" (1895)

3. "L'éducation Morale" p.174.

4. Ibid. p.183.

The difference between Durkheim and Montessori and other similar thinkers resolves itself eventually therefore into a difference of conception of means. All aim at producing, through education, happy healthy adults, but the thinkers advocating free schools place that as their sole aim, and adopt means of encouraging individuality accordingly, whereas Durkheim is aiming at a solution of the problem of the development of the child plus that of his part in social activity. As he says "Far from having as its sole aim the individual and his interests, education is before all the means by which society perpetually renews the conditions of its own existence." ¹

We may finally ask "What are the values of Durkheim's views on the moral education of the child?". In answering this question we may assess them with reference to the actual educational system, and with reference to society as a whole.

In the first case, he is obviously right in stressing the importance of the school - as he says, although being one of a family develops a child's social instincts, it allows for no more than spontaneous movements of affection and leaves no room for the acquirement of abstract sentiments. But I think Durkheim has made a mistake which lessens the importance of his suggestions for a rational education, in that he has overlooked the fact that children do not dwell exclusively in adult society, but form groups of their own. Children must be taught to feel

1. "Education et Sociologie" p.119.

the power of and obey rules, he says. But he thinks only of adult rules, whereas in reality, as psychological investigations¹ into the nature of children's activity have shown, among groups of children the strictest rules of behaviour arise which not only show all the characteristics of adult rules, but are adhered to with a similar constancy and determination, and, when broken, lead to a feeling of moral guilt. Piaget,² during some remarkably interesting work on children, found the same thing. Investigating children's rules by means of studying an international game - marbles - he discovered very similar rules in all countries, and more important still, the same respect for those rules and feelings of their external and binding nature which characterises adult moral rules. The child feels that it must obey the rules of the game because of respect for the older players when he is young, but as he grows older, obeys the rules in a spirit of co-operation "so that everything will be fair" as the children themselves say. If, as is proved by such psychological observation, rules of this sort arise spontaneously during the playing of games, Durkheim, although correct in his diagnosis of what first inclines a child to the observation of rules (the respect for the authority of older children and people) seems to have exaggerated the need for the authority

1. Carried out before the date when Durkheim gave his lectures on the primary education of the child, although admittedly little known.

2. Piaget - "The Moral Judgement of the Child" (1932).

of the school. Ways of thinking, feeling and acting conforming to the requirements of a society will not be imposed on the child solely through his education if they develop through natural social processes of play and co-operation with play-fellows. The school will be valuable because it widens the social horizon of the pupils, but it will only deepen the impression of rules already formed by the children themselves, and will give new implications to those rules of fairness, honesty, etc.

The new study of education proposed by Durkheim could prove of great value to the child, even if its contribution were made indirectly. For although, in our own country, for instance, the educational crisis is not as grave as that of the French high schools, it is true that there is a certain confusion and indistinctness of aim which does little to help the education of the child. The study of the nature of the social environment in which the child, when adult, would spend its life would help towards providing an aim for teaching. And, as Durkheim suggests,¹ the inculcation of a more 'sociological' attitude to teaching in students of training colleges, the discussion of a common aim, and reflections which they would continue to practise during their working lives, would do much to promote unity of thought in our educational system.

1. Viz. "Education et Sociologie" pp.144-145 Faucennet Ed.

For finally, whatever the thinkers who favour the promotion of individual development in the child say in justification of their position, a child has, one day, to become an adult member of a particular society; the extent to which he has become adapted and fitted to that society, its customs, habits, ways of thought, will also be the extent of his contentment. It may be that education which is designed to foster individuality produces spirited and healthy minds. On the other hand, it may be that it produces adults so out of tune with their surroundings that they spend a lifetime of maladjusted frustration. For this reason, although Durkheim's stress on the social nature of education may seem to point to some harsh conclusions, in reality it is better calculated to establish the happiness of the child than is an apparently more 'considerate' system of education. Eventually the contentment of man is greatly dependent on the harmony of his social relations; if he appears to exaggerate the "child for society" aspect of education, he does at least provide an interesting and valuable corrective to the "society for the child" argument which offers so much in theory and so little in practice.

CHAPTER THREESOCIALISM - DURKHEIM'S POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Like many thinkers of his time, Durkheim was greatly interested in socialistic doctrines; even before he made his first formulation of the problem of social relationships as it appeared to him (i.e. in "The Division of Labour in Society") he was interested in socialism, since it proposed a plan of dealing with current social unrest and claimed to manifest just that social justice in which Durkheim believed. But although attracted by them, he was convinced that socialist economics failed to meet the case raised by the theory of laissez-faire individualism, simply because it failed to consider basic social factors. Hence his study of socialism - to discover these factors.

In studying socialism, therefore, he is concerned with its peculiar nature, and the precise solution of the problems of social organisation which it proposes. He sets himself the questions with which he normally commences an objective study, and attempts to determine -

- (1) The nature of socialism.
- (2) Its origin.
- (3) Internal changes which have occurred during the development of the doctrine, and their cause.

As a result "Le Socialisme"¹ is divided into two sections, the first an analysis of the nature of socialism and its development, the second a critical exposition of the doctrines of Saint-Simon, in which, he believes, exists the first germ of socialism proper. Examining the definitions of socialism commonly given, he first criticises the view that socialism consists in a denial of private property, on the grounds that socialism is the very doctrine that would abolish some of the most collectively owned property of all (i.e. inherited family property) and maintain the most private form of property possible - that earned by the individual. Equally unsatisfactory he finds the definitions of socialism as the doctrine stressing the the complete subordination of the individual to the community, and socialism as the economic philosophy of a suffering class.

Dissatisfied with these current definitions, Durkheim analyses several social doctrines, narrowing down the probable field of socialist views to those doctrines aiming at a modification of the existing economic organisations; realising that economic activity, although of social importance does not fall under the rule of any 'social conscience', he arrives at his definition of socialism. "One may call socialist any doctrine which demands the linking of all economic functions, or of certain of them which are actually diffuse, to direct and conscious social centres."² "Secondly one may also call

1. "Le Socialisme" written 1893(?) and published posthumously.

2. Ibid. p.25

socialist theories which, without directly appertaining to the economic order are nevertheless connected with the preceding doctrine."¹

Socialism thus defined is distinguished from communist theories (Durkheim meaning by 'communist' the older theories such as those expressed by Plato, More and Campanella) since the former, once founded, shows a continuous development leading to some definite political result, the latter being only spasmodic bursts of utopian writing; socialism dealing with economic conditions, communism condemning property on moral grounds. Socialism therefore can only arise in a highly industrialised state, hence the origin of it can only be traced in a period when two conditions have been fulfilled -

- (1) Industry has become centralised to a certain extent;
- (2) The state has become sufficiently marked and influential to appear as a possible regulator of economic functions and activities.

All political doctrines of the pre-nineteenth century are, according to Durkheim, communist in that they are based on pity and utopian in outlook, with the sole exception of the work of Sismondi who, in condemning riches, not on the grounds of their immorality, but because at a certain point they cease to bring happiness to any section of the people, made a new departure from the previous tradition.

1. "Le Socialisme" p.57.

Sismondi's views forming the link between the first and second divisions of the book, Durkheim then devoted the greater part of the work to a consideration of Saint-Simon and his school the founders, in his opinion, not only of socialism, but of the positive study of society commonly attributed to Saint-Simon's one-time secretary Auguste Comte.

The chief interest of the work on socialism, however, lies not so much in the objective consideration of its doctrines or in the exposition and criticism of Saint-Simon's views, as in the connections it affords between various branches of political theory, and the revelation of their common origins in the positivist tradition characteristic of the nineteenth century, together with the light it throws on Durkheim's own political position.

Positivism shows two main tendencies when applied to social studies:-

- (1) The determination to treat the study of society as a natural science, a corresponding attempt to formulate laws of society and a resultant view of society as a continually developing and evolving body.
- (2) A belief in the fundamental unity of nature and society, and a corresponding view of society as a self-adjusting organism, social institutions being interdependent and closely related.

The first tendency and its result - the evolutionary view of society - is common to sociologists, socialists, anarchists and economists alike. Saint-Simon, for example (and for the sake of clarity Durkheim's classification of him as a socialist is preserved) conceives of a law of progress as the dominating factor in human society. "La loi supérieure du progrès de l'esprit humain entraîne et domine tout" he says "les hommes ne sont pour elle que les instruments. Quoique cette force derive de nous il n'est pas plus en notre pouvoir de nous soustraire à son influence as de maîtriser son action que de changer à notre gré l'impulsion primitive qui fait circuler notre planète autour du soleil."¹ Marx, too, according to Engel's address at his grave-side "discovered the law of evolution in human society", his interpretation of it being that the forces and modes of production determine the structure of society, changes in the latter resulting from changes in the former - "social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, in changing the way they earn their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord, the steam mill with the industrial capitalist."²

1. "L'organisateur" - Saint-Simon (1819) Pt. IV, p.119.

2. "The Poverty of Philosophy" - Karl Marx (1847) p.92.

Even the anarchists, despite their insistence on the need for revolution against the tyranny of the State, think of a natural progress towards and development of anarchist society, the sole exception being Berdyaev, who perhaps not considered anarchist is in reality a personalist - agreeing with anarchism but thinking it not enough; "There is no such thing in history" he says "as progress from good to perfect on a single plane of development. Each generation has its own goal, its own justification, its own meaning, its own values, its own spiritual impulses whereby it approximates the divine life. It cannot be merely an instrument and means of future generations."¹

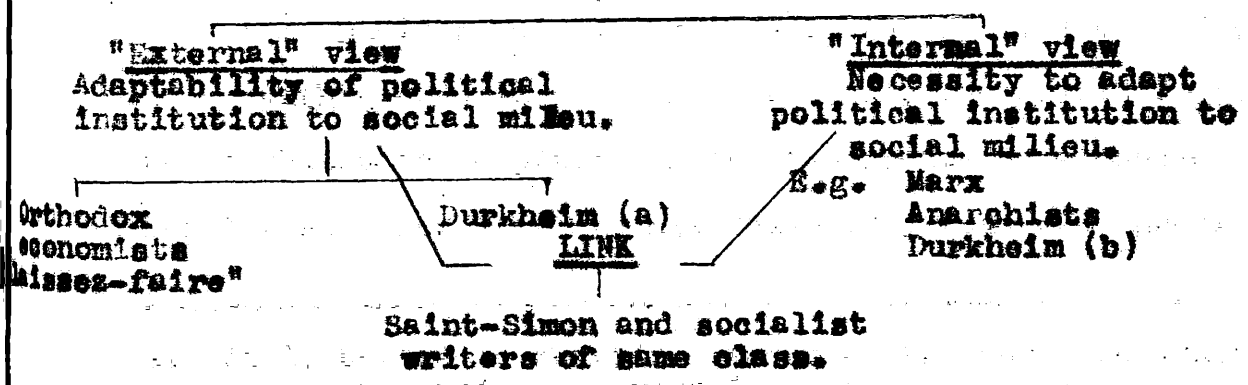
The second characteristic can lead to differing conclusions - we may believe that social institutions are interdependent and closely related; and conclude from that that any one social institution, being so closely related to every other, will naturally change as they change, and so become spontaneously adapted to a changing society. But we may, accepting the same fundamental view of the inter-relation of social institutions, conclude that in any abnormal state of society, one social institution may have been left in a state which is not adapted, and which is incongruous with the other social institutions in which case that social institution must be deliberately altered to achieve social harmony and well-being.

1. "The Meaning of History" - N. Berdyaev (trans. 1936) Chap. I.

Thus, although deriving their views from the same positivist tradition, the various political doctrines differ with regard to their conclusions on the organisation of social institutions. Marx and the anarchist school believe that the social milieu must be reorganised to ensure harmony between the various social institutions; the socialists believe that modifications must be made, but that these modifications do not imply the destruction or creation of any new institution, while the economists, and to some extent the sociologists, who share Durkheim's conception of the moral power of society, believe that society in an ideal state would preserve a natural and spontaneous equilibrium, and that any social institution which, for some reason, became temporarily out of harmony with the rest should adapt itself without interference from outside. These connections between the various schools of thought and their origin can most easily be seen diagrammatically:-

19th Century Positivism

1. Evolutionary view of society.
2. Interdependence of social institutions.



Durkheim, according to this diagram, is given under both the "external" (by which is meant the view of society uninfluenced by actual proposals for reform) and the "internal" (that view of society influenced or based on proposals for reform) because during his treatment of socialism both attitudes are manifested. The former, that of the sociologist, is obviously contained in his objective definitions and treatment of socialism, the other, that of a social commentator with his own suggestions for reform, is implicit in his criticism of Saint-Simon and his followers.

A comparison of his own views with those of the main political schools of thought shows a certain similarity, but many differences. The common ground is, as previously stated, the evolutionary views of society and its role as a synthesis of all social institutions (political, economic, domestic, etc.). But Durkheim may, with interesting results, be contrasted with the Marxists, the socialists (à la Saint-Simon) and the anarchists with regard to -

- (a) His conception of the basis of society;
- (b) His attitude to authority;
- (c) Opinions and suggestions on the control of industry.

With regard to the first of these, the critical point is the emphasis to be placed on the importance of economic functions. For Marx and his followers,¹ economic functions are

1. It is better to refrain from using the word 'communist' since, according to Durkheim, Marx is socialist.

the corner-stone of society - "In the social production of their means of existence men enter into definite necessary relations with each other which are independent of their will, productive relationships which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The aggregate of these productive relationships constitutes the economic structure of society, the real basis on which a juridical and political super-structure arises, and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of the material means of existence conditions the whole process of social political and intellectual life."¹ Saint-Simon and his school also, while not adopting the view that centralised and organised economic activity (activity which concerns the whole of a society, that is, rather than the members, as does food-seeking) has always been the basis of society, hold that it is rapidly coming to be so in that whilst two contrary elements remain together in contemporary society - the traces of the old feudal organisation and a rapidly increasing industrialism - which cause social unrest and misery, one must be removed; the first obviously must be removed, since it is already decadent and in process of being replaced by a state of industrialism. It is impossible to reverse the law of progress and return to feudal society, therefore future society must be based solely on industrialism, controlled by industrialists, aim at the

1. Preface to "Critique of Political Economy" (1859)

greatest productivity possible and participate in international industrial organisation.

Without considering all Durkheim's minor criticisms of this doctrine, it is possible from his main criticism to extricate his own particular views on the basis of society. It is true, he says, that the old feudal powers are decadent and cannot be revived, and that the new regulative organs must be of a different nature. Thus he agrees with the two main primary arguments of Saint-Simon -

(a) that up to now industry has been subordinate to certain powers;

(b) that those powers are hopelessly decadent.

(The conclusion being that this is the cause of social crises.)

What he does not agree with is Saint-Simon's conclusion that the crisis can only be settled by a removal of all control, i.e. making industry subordinate to nothing and to no one. He reformulates the problem thus - under the old powers the members of the group recognised their authority, they were recognised by "collective force" and hence by implication moral (a moral fact, defined by Durkheim being one "accompanied by strong social sanctions")¹. Hence the problem correctly viewed is 'what regulative organs can be found showing the same characteristic as the old authorities - i.e. 'recognised moral powers'?'". As might be anticipated Durkheim arrives at the

1. Introduction to "Division of Labour in Society" (1893)

conclusion that it is society itself which is above all moral in its base and safeguards. "In sum, society, by the moral regulation which it institutes and applies, in all that concerns the super-organic life the same role as instinct plays with regard to the physical life. It determines and rules what is left indeterminate. The system of instinct is the discipline of the organism; moral discipline is like the system of instincts of social life."¹

This belief in the moral ascendancy of society is strongly linked with Durkheim's attitude towards authority. The anarchists owe their entire political doctrine to a violent hatred of authority in any form whatsoever. "Whoever lays his hands on me to govern me is a usurper and a tyrant. I hate him" says Proudhon, with characteristic fury. Being so directly opposed to authority, the anarchists are therefore against:-

(1) The Church

(2) The State

The State in particular, being founded on coercion, is inevitably an instrument of evil. "L'état c'est autorité, c'est la force, c'est l'ostentation et l'infatuation de la force. Il ne s'insinue pas, il ne cherche pas à convertir; et toutes les fois qu'il en mêle, il le fait de très mauvais grâce; car sa nature ce n'est pas point de persuader, mais de

1. "Le Socialisme" pp.293-4.

s'imposer, de forcer.... Alors même qu'il commande le bien, il le dessert et le gâte, précisément parce qu'il le commande, et que tout commandement provoque et suscite les révoltes légitimes de la liberté, et parce que le bien, du moment qu'il est commandé,..... devient le mal"¹; and "the state is a society of mutual insurance between the landlord, the military commander, the judge, the priest and later on the capitalist, in order to support each other's authority over the people."² are typical anarchist statements. In their opinion, therefore, this hateful object, the state, must go. The method of its dismissal depends upon the relative fierceness of the writer. For Kropotkin (and later Bertrand Russell) it will be unnecessary and fade away when men are sufficiently enlightened to embrace mutual aid and the love of work - in short, anarchism for Proudhon and Bakunin is the state ruthlessly destroyed (one suspects as bloodily as possible). Although the dislike of government and authority as seen in the state is nowhere else so strong, it is, surprisingly enough, a common factor to all the schools discussed. Marx most nearly approaches the anarchists in his dislike of the state, but it is not because it is 'authority' and therefore evil, but because it has become a class weapon.

1. Bakunin's Works Vol. I p.238 "Dieu et l'Etat".

2. "Modern Science and Anarchism" - Kropotkin (1923 Philadelphia p.81.

For the Marxist school, the state appears -

- (a) Economically as a combination of capitalists.
- (b) Politically as an organ suppressing the suffering workers.

It is hence objectionable in that it is unjust. But since it is a direct development of the class system, it will disappear with the destruction of the class system. Engels says "When organising production anew on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers, society will banish the whole state machine to a place which will then be the most proper for it - the museum of antiquities, side by side with the spinning-wheel and the bronze axe". In other words, the capitalist state must be destroyed; the proletarian state replacing it will 'wither away'.

Saint-Simon and his particular socialist thought is unconcerned with the state. Increasingly separating 'government' from 'industrial organisation', Saint-Simon believes "un gouvernement n'est autre chose que l'entreprise de ce travail. Le matière de gouvernement c'est l'oïsveté."¹ The function of government being thus limited, and the real social (i.e. economic) organisation being the duty of the industrialists, a belief also that "dans l'ancien régime la société est essentiellement gouvernée par des hommes, dans le nouveau, elle n'est plus gouvernée que par des principes"² led

1. "L'Industrie" - Saint-Simon (1816-17) Part II, pp.129-130.

2. "L'Organisateur" - Saint-Simon (1819) Part IV, p.197.

Saint-Simon to believe that the precise form of government was immaterial.

Durkheim shows no approach to any of these views, being so convinced of the fundamental importance of morality that he holds a different outlook on society and its function. The only link at all, if it can be definite enough to constitute a link, is between him and the anarchist Bakunin, who goes as far as to say that the coercion of the state will to some extent be replaced by the social pressure of tradition and custom. This seems to point towards Durkheim's theory of the collective conscience, explained in a previous chapter, which postulates the collective conscience as being a superior, authoritative and moral force. Durkheim believes that social control is necessary, because the appetites of men are insatiable and if uncontrolled lead not to economic stability but to confusion and misery. Some moral force is therefore necessary - Durkheim therefore, not dealing with the state specifically is of the schools considered the most in favour of authority, but this authority he thinks of as being moral; he affirms "the necessity of a restraint which limits from above the desires of individual consciences, and thus puts a check to the state of intemperance, agitation, maniacal excitement which do not spring from social activity, and which are harmful to it. In other words, the social problem thus set is not a question of money or force. The dominating factor is not the state of our economy, but the state of our morality."¹

1. "Le Socialisme" p.297.

This search for a moral authority leads us to a consideration of the views held by Durkheim on the organisation of industry, and the relation in which these stand towards the other theories discussed. The Marxists are against large-scale industry as it exists at the moment, because:-

- (a) It is in the hands of the capitalists;
- (b) It leads to the exploitation and misery of the workers.

The only remedy for this, therefore, is to destroy the power of the capitalists and concentrate on a state of society where goods are individually produced and commonly consumed.

"In communist society where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow."¹ The socialist, on the other hand, as seen through Saint-Simon's doctrines, believe that industrialism having developed, large-scale industry is not only here to stay, but should be made the aim of social organisation. For them, therefore, industrial organisation offers no problem once it has been removed from the sphere of government control. It should be controlled by those who have a special knowledge of industrial affairs (for Saint-Simon, industrialists helped by wise theoreticians).

1. "German Ideology" - Marx (1845-46) p.22. (Ed. Pascal)

It can be seen that these two views differ not only as to their like or dislike of large-scale industry, and the importance they attribute to it, but in their attitude towards the division of labour. The Marxists oppose the division of labour; the quotation from "German Ideology" cited above reveals this opposition, but elsewhere Marx specifically says that in the ideal society the division of labour must disappear and productive labour become the force "giving each individual the opportunity to develop and exercise all his faculties, physical and mental, in all directions; in which, therefore, productive labour will become a pleasure instead of a burden". Whereas Marx objects to the division of labour on the grounds that it produces the class system, as well as destroys the pleasure of work, the anarchists condemn it on the latter grounds alone. Men are essentially anarchistic in that they are 'creative', 'artistic'; to subject them therefore to specialised tasks is to deny them the fundamental happiness and dignity of complete work.

Contrasted with such theories and with the socialist acceptance of the division of labour, as being one means to increased production, Durkheim is in a startlingly different position. He is convinced that the division of labour is in itself good and that in modern societies it is the only chief social link. Social solidarity depends upon it; it is a "moral fact". Hence it must be preserved; but the development

of the division of labour has meant the escape of the individual from the collective conscience formerly the source of social cohesion, without a development of a different kind of morality for him. Hence Durkheim's problem in looking at industry is not merely one of organisation for greater production. He must keep the division of labour in as prominent a position as it is now, make possible a harmonious industrial life and provide a stable and effective moral code for the individual. The solution Durkheim offers, is, as shown in the concluding chapter of this section, the development of the professional group.

So much for Durkheim's views on the control of industry; it is interesting to note that although starting from such a different attitude towards the division of labour from the anarchists, he nevertheless reaches a conclusion such in accordance with Kropotkin's stress on the need for more closely organised economic groups.

From such a comparison, Durkheim's views on all points are seen to be rendered distinct by his own basic social theory and its influence on his outlook. For the Marxists and still more the anarchists, the division of labour and individuality vary in inverse proportion; but for Durkheim, viewed against his theory of the development of society from a state where the social conscience forms the chief link to one where that role is filled by the division of labour, individuality and the division of labour increase together.

since it is only as the individual is freed from the bonds of the collective conscience that he becomes autonomous. The result of this difference of opinion is that whereas Marx and the anarchists lay stress on the importance of the individual and the harm done to him by increasing specialisation, and the socialists look mainly to a society equivalent to a better organised economic activity, Durkheim regards society from a moral point of view, thus linking the distress of the individual, bereft of his moral code, and the future organisation of industry as one and the same fundamental problem. It may be seen therefore that what makes Durkheim's position unique is that he sees social problems as being fundamentally moral without, however, basing his judgments solely on emotional ethics as did those earlier writers (Plato, More, etc.) classified by Durkheim as communists.

It remains to assess the value of Durkheim's work on socialism. Having previously distinguished Durkheim's sociological and personal views (the 'external' and 'internal' views of page 149) we can now assess their value, observing the same distinctions.

Regarding his outlook on socialism as purely sociological and objective, the most valuable contributions of his work are those concerned with the analysis of the nature of socialism; the conditions of its rise and development once it has originated have been frequently dealt with, but its precise nature seldom defined with any degree of clarity. We may

disagree with Durkheim's definition of socialism as being concerned solely with economic organisation, but we cannot refuse to credit him with arriving at a definition of what he understands by socialism as opposed to communism. In the majority of arguments concerning socialism, confusion arises mainly from the lack of a working definition on each side, and the resulting tendency to discuss different political theories, each party calling them "socialist" and believing that they have a common ground for discussion, whereas in reality no such ground exists; with Durkheim's arguments about socialism, the confusion, if any, arises mostly from the fact that his definitions cut across our preconceived notions of socialism and communism. It is confusing, for example, to find the "communists" regarded by Durkheim as being socialists, and to reserve the term 'communist' for older writers whom we would consider as being representative of no school in particular. But once Durkheim's definitions have been clearly fixed in mind, the limits Durkheim sets to his study are obvious.

Closely linked with the value of giving a clear initial definition of the subject he considers, is Durkheim's distinction between those doctrines based on emotion (communist) and those based on the desire to organise economic activity (socialist). The one, says Durkheim, being based on pity or sympathy results in heated arguments about the relative position of the rich and the poor; the other, being based on the will to reorganise, thinks in terms of the employee and his relations with the employer rather than in terms of 'rich' and 'poor'.

The distinction is interesting. Speaking of the practical results of each doctrine, Durkheim says that the former, being based on pity, can consider its aim achieved by works of charity (e.g. assistance schemes) the latter being satisfied with complete reorganisation only. Applied to contemporary governments, for example, the distinction affords an answer to the question 'Why is there such dissatisfaction with socialism if it is the will of the electorate?'. It seems more than likely that the mixed feelings about the trial of socialism in England arise from a confusion between the two types of socialist belief - emotional and organising.¹ If we accept Durkheim's definition of socialism it is easy to see that three causes of maladjustment in the political sphere are opened by the access to power of a socialist government. In the first, the public, swinging to socialistic doctrines in the heat of emotion, may fail to realise that the government has to be concerned primarily with organisation of economic activities. In the second, a government which is socialist because its members find socialism emotionally satisfying, may fail to realise that the electorate demand and expect fundamental economic reorganisation. Thirdly, the mixture of the two elements in electorate and government alike may lead to general misunderstanding. In any of these cases the result is the disappointment of people and government alike.

1. Probably another cause of confusion has been the parallel use of socialism and the democratic ideal, the latter being incorporated and confused with the former.

But although Durkheim's distinction is a valid and significant one, it should not be made too rigidly or it loses its value as a clarifying distinction. In the Marxists, for example, classed by Durkheim as being socialist because of their insistence on economic reorganisations, the emotional quality is outstanding, and the very insistence on industrial reorganisation which Durkheim takes as being conclusive evidence of their belonging to the socialist school arises from the emotions aroused in viewing the injustice of class relationships. I think it best to modify Durkheim's views before applying them practically and say that, just as he said that the two elements could exist side by side within the state since communism provides the necessary emotive force to socialist planning,¹ so they almost always occur simultaneously in the individual.

Taking separately Durkheim's own personal suggestions on economic reorganisation involves a consideration of the organisation of the professional group, which is discussed at greater length in the concluding chapter of the section. But it is noteworthy that, for Durkheim, the chief advantage of such groups lies, not in any increased economic output, but in the bracing moral effect of their closeness.

In considering Durkheim as a socialist, therefore, we are driven back, as when we consider his sociological theories, to his stress on the need for morality, that stress being at once

1. Viz. Book I Chap. III - "Le Socialisme, sa définition, ses débuts, et la doctrine Saint-Simonienne".

at the root of his social theory, and of his criticisms of the socialist doctrines of the Saint-Simonienne school, and of his own suggestions for the economic reorganisation of society.

CHAPTER FOURS U I C I D E

Coming to "Le Suicide"¹ after reading Durkheim's other works, one's first impression is probably that it is a completely different type of study, both in method, matter and aim. It is a statistical approach to a problem which, although occurring in and affecting society is nevertheless not of the social significance of those other social phenomena treated by Durkheim. In reality, the appearance of being different is only a surface one; "Le Suicide" is not, in reality, concerned with a different problem from Durkheim's other studies, but is a new approach to the same question of social organisation.

Taking as suicide "all cases of death which result directly or indirectly from a positive act, carried out by the victim himself and calculated to produce that result"², his aim is not to make an inventory of all those causes of suicide which have been noted, but to discover on what factor the general, the social rate of suicide depends. For although suicide would seem to be a purely individual action, more suited to psychological than sociological study, there must be some hitherto unexplained underlying factor which reflects the social impulse to suicide. For the individuals numbered in a society change from year to year - yet the suicide rate remains constant

1. "Le Suicide" (1897)

2. Ibid. p.5.

It is this constancy which leads Durkheim to his investigation since it offers a possibility of sociological interpretation. "The suicide rate constitutes then an order of isolated and determined facts. Its permanence and yet variability reveal this."

At the outset of the study of the causes of suicide then, the cause sought is apparently not a purely individual one - "What given statistics demonstrate is that the tendency to suicide in each society is suffered collectively. We have not actually stated in what the tendency consists, whether it is a sui generis state of the collective conscience, having its own reality, or whether it is only represented as a sum of individual states. Each society is predisposed to yield a determined quota of voluntary deaths. This predisposition can thus be the object of a special study, and one which falls to sociology."¹

There are two sorts of extra-social causes to which suicide might be attributed - organico-physical dispositions and physical environment. In the first case, one might, for example, say that suicide is the result of an actual mental disease, that is, madness. But can one say that there is a suicide mania, says Durkheim. If such a mania exists, it must be a monomania - that is, the victim must be mad in this one point alone. Yet the study of mental diseases throws the

1. "Le Suicide" p.14.

existence of monomania into doubt,¹ and maniacs in general are so emotionally unstable that once the suicidal resolve were taken, their changing emotions would make it difficult for them to hold to it. Melancholic obsessions are just as unlikely to be the cause of suicide; "one cannot in fact without misusing the words see all suicides as madness".² Alternatively, it is suggested that alcoholism leads to suicide - here again Durkheim finds the explanation unsatisfactory, since it has no statistical proof. "It does not happen that because a society has more or less neuropaths or drunkards, it has more or less suicides."³

In the second, could suicide rates be attributed to environmental influences, to race and heredity? Two facts argue against this. For one thing there is the inevitable difficulty of deciding what race is, and how the very mixed peoples of Europe can be accurately divided into distinct races and blood groups. Not only this, but it is difficult to see how suicide can be said to be hereditary. Children may inherit a certain neurotic disposition from their parents which, exaggerated by the conditions of their family life leaves them more susceptible to the impulse of suicide in certain adverse circumstances, but this is a far different thing from saying that parents transmit to their children a propensity to suicide.

1. "Le Suicide" p.214.

2. Viz. Ibid. p.31.

3. Ibid. p.53.

There is no evidence that they do.

Nor is suicide connected with the cosmic factors(e.g. temperature) as statistics of suicide afford no correlation between the number of suicides and the changes in temperature. In short, "it is not the physical environment which directly stimulates suicide - it depends on social conditions."¹

Durkheim then deals with a social phenomena which, in the light of evidence of mass-suicides has been thought to afford an explanation of suicide - imitation. True it is a social fact, yet it cannot be said to lead to suicide. If we copy, we copy not because the action copies is useful, but solely for the sake of copying. On the other hand, "to act out of fear of or respect for opinion is not to act through imitation"², and it is respect or fear which is usually at the root of collective suicides. A captured town, for instance, fears the complete annihilation of its ways of thinking, feeling and acting, that a body of traditions or collective ideas is about to be lost or degraded. Without this, life seems not worth living, and rather than be deprived of its spiritual values, the group as a whole commits suicide. Collective suicides, therefore, since they result from strong collective feeling, owe little to imitative action.

1. "Le Suicide " p.107.

2. Ibid. p.43.

All these possible causes of suicide rejected, what remains? It is obviously some social phenomena not easily observable, and which can only be analysed from the facts as a whole. Durkheim therefore proceeds to distinguish the different types of suicide in order to trace their common factors. In general, he says, suicide, whatever its immediate provocation, is one of three types. It is egoist, altruist, or anomic.

What Durkheim calls the altruistic suicide is the type of suicide that occurs in primitive society; when it is said, therefore, that suicide does not occur among primitive peoples, the observation is false. But there is an element of truth in it, in that the suicide resulting from hatred of life and love of death is unknown to them. Old men, widows, slaves kill themselves, either because they realise they are no longer of any use to the tribe, or because they must make a show of loyalty - in other words, "it is in view of social ends that they impose upon themselves the sacrifice."¹

This type of suicide is only possible in a society where social cohesion is such that there is no individuation. "For a society to be able to constrain certain of its members to kill themselves, the individual personality must count for little."² Moreover, where the individual counts his own life for so

1. "Le Suicide" p.236.

2. Ibid. p.237.

little, he will also disdain others. Hence it arises that in more advanced societies, for the most part, altruistic suicides take place in the army, where social cohesion and the force of tradition is still paramountly strong, and where the members come to respect human life to a lesser degree than the average man.

If this type of suicide arises from too little individuation the egoist suicide¹ arises from too much, and is more common to advanced societies, for the suicide of the egoistic type is, as might be anticipated, that of a man too detached from his group and its activities. But this detachment may arise from various causes; at the extreme, the man who undergoes it is the man who deliberately retires from social life, a man who, like Lamartine, cuts himself off from public affairs, work, domesticity, and experiencing a repugnance for all these things, secludes himself that he may further commune with the infinite.

But the divorce from social affairs need not be so deliberate - more often it arises in a certain degree from the conditions of a man's life. Celibates are more likely to commit suicide than married people with children, because they have

1. Viz. "Le Suicide" p.223. "If therefore one calls egoist the state where the individual's interests put themselves too much before the social and those things on which the latter depends, we can give the name of egoist to the particular type of suicide which results from a disproportionate individualisation."

not the incentive for life which is afforded in the case of a family.¹ Also religion has an effect on his tendency to suicide, the suicide rate being higher among Protestants than among Catholics, which in turn is higher than among Jews. This difference is sometimes explained by the fact that Catholics possess the emotional outlet and relief of confession, and also the stricter tie to a moral code which results from the forgiveness shown to them for their sins, but the real cause of the difference must lie in the nature of the doctrines themselves. Both Protestantism and Catholicism, for instance, condemn suicide, and in that respect are similar, both direct men's thoughts and aspirations towards a supreme God; but the most outstanding difference is that protestantism admits more freedom of thought than does catholicism - "Everything in the way of change is an abhorrence to Catholic thought."² Similarly, with the Jewish sect - the devout Jew is strictly circumscribed, he must observe many rules of conduct which are traditionally laid down for him, whereas the Protestant is free to act as he wills; moreover the Jews possess the high degree of solidarity resulting from long persecution at the hands of their antagonists. "We arrive thus at the conclusion that the leading position of protestantism from the point of view of suicide springs from the fact that it is less strongly

1. "Le Suicide" p.197.

2. Ibid. p.157.

integrated than the Catholic Church."¹ If therefore a man is protestant he is more likely to commit suicide because he is not a member of such a closely-knit group as the Catholic or Jew.²

Now discussing the difference between Catholicism and Protestantism, Durkheim is really probing towards a fundamental aspect of civilized society; as he says, strong religion is a protection against suicide, but if it protests man against the desire for self-destruction, "it is not because it preaches to him with sui generis arguments, respect for his person, it is because it is a society."³ It is the absence of such a strong social credo, the division of thought, that is connected with suicide. Other factors relevant to suicide manifest the same basic significance - women, Durkheim says, are less liable to suicide than men, also artisans commit suicide less often than those in liberal professions. The difference is not solely due to sex in the first case and occupation in the second; it is that both women and artisans, possessing a lesser degree of education, their lives are therefore less complicated by the conflicting thoughts that worry the intellectual minds, for "when it (liberty of thought) makes its appearance, when men, after long having accepted every fact presented by tradition, demand the right to resolve them for themselves it is not

1. "Le Suicide" p.159.

2. N.B. that Durkheim makes an exception of England, a protestant country with a low suicide rate. He refers to the English temperament as a possible explanation.

3. "Le Suicide" p.173.

because of the intrinsic attractions of free thought, for that brings with it as many sorrows as joys." Suicide then grows with the development of free thought, of science, because science depends on division of thought and cannot offer a common credo to men. Yet, it is not that science must be blamed for increasing suicides, for "far from science being the source of the trouble, it is the remedy, and the only remedy which is at our disposal. Once established beliefs have been destroyed by the course of events, one cannot re-establish them artificially; but there is nothing apart from scientific reflection which can help us to lead our lives."¹

Throughout all these facts relevant to the suicide rate, then, it is evident that the strongest element acting as a deterrent from suicide is a strong collective life. Durkheim has shown that the tendency to suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of religious, social and political life: the member of a strong religious body, the member of a closely-knit family is less open to suicidal despair; even great national crises far from increasing the suicide rate decrease it - "it is not to the crises that any salutary influence is due.... but to the perils of which that crisis is the cause. For they force men to come closer to each other, to face the common danger, and the individual thinks less of himself and more of the common good."²

1. "Le Suicide" p.171.

2. Ibid. p.223.

It is as social ties become looser that the individual personality becomes so important that its aims can overshadow those of society - "But society cannot thus disintegrate without the individual becoming detached from social life to the same extent, without his own ends becoming more weighty than common ends, in a word, without his personality tending to be put before the collective personality. All the groups to which he belongs are weakened, and he depends on them to a lesser degree, he considers only himself, recognizes no other rules of conduct than those based on his private interests."¹

It is this excess individuation, which may seem a spiritual blessing, that is the source of unhappiness, according to Durkheim. "Life is only tolerable if one can see some *raison d'être*, if it has an aim which is worth the trouble. For the individual by himself is not a sufficient aim for activity. In a word, the state of egoism is a contradiction of human nature, and, as a result, too perilous to have a chance of survival."²

Durkheim is not, of course, saying that man's whole life is lived outside himself - obviously there are matters of purely personal concern in which a man can act reasonably without finding an aim greater than his own interests. But as far as the purpose of life is concerned, social activities are of the

1. "Le Suicide" p.223.

2. Ibid. pp.224-5.

utmost importance. Society is the giver, the only giver, of morals and habits, man's spiritual heritage is derived from it, and it is therefore the natural end of life. Once we detach ourselves from it this end is lost, life seems purposeless, and man, stifled by his own empty existence is drawn increasingly strongly towards his self-destruction.

Of the two preceding types of suicide "each is therefore nothing but an exaggerated form or perversion of a certain virtue";¹ the altruist's suicide arises in a society of too rigid social cohesion, the egoist's in a society of too little.

But since society is not only an object which draws man out of himself, raises the level of his conduct, and gives him an aim higher than his own interests,² it has other influences. It is also a regulating body, which arranges the conditions of individual life. And the way in which this regulation proceeds naturally rebounds on individual lives. Economic crises, for example, lead to more suicides. The explanation seems obvious - numbers of people thrown suddenly into poverty and financial disgrace, their families adversely affected - in such cases men might well be driven to the pitch of despair and worry in which they take their own lives. But the number of suicides does not decrease in times of sudden prosperity,³ therefore the relation between poverty and suicide is not a direct one.

1. "Le Suicide" p.263.

2. Viz. Ibid. p.264.

3. Viz. Ibid. p.266.

Beneath the actual impoverishment or enriching of a man lies another common factor; both are sudden disturbances of the collective and individual life, both lead to sudden changes in the way of living and, as already stated during the comment on collective suicides, the loss of a way of life leads to a lowered valuation of life. For the man whose standard of life is suddenly lowered the necessary adjustment seems impossible, and life may well seem no longer desirable; but the man whose standard of living is suddenly raised undergoes as great a mental strain.¹ For the limits which before checked his desires are suddenly removed, he realises aims he thought impossible and therefore, the discipline of life is gone, nothing seems impossible - life holds no interest.

It is not only economic disturbances but spiritual ones - the loss of strong beliefs (for example, religion, the increasing instability of marriage) that disturbs collective life. A certain number of suicides therefore result from disharmony in social organisation, faulty social legislation. They arise in anomalous domestic, economic and spiritual circumstances - in short, in the pathological state of society described by Durkheim in "The Division of Labour in Society",² and may be classified under the same name - 'anomie'.

1. Viz. "Le Suicide" p.335 seq.

2. Viz. Book III.

These three types of suicide, therefore, although they are capable of many variations (for example, the altruistic suicide may be committed with energy and passion or with a calm sense of duty) and combinations, all depend upon two factors, the first, the particular crisis in which the agent finds himself, this differing greatly from individual to individual; the second and more important, the social condition of his environment. "It results, that the social suicide rate can only be explained sociologically. It is the moral constitution of a society which at each moment determines the quota of voluntary deaths. There exists therefore for each people a collective force of determined energy, which drives men to kill themselves. The actions which the victim carries out, and which in the first place only seem to manifest the individual temperament are in reality the consequence and prolongation of a social state to which they give an external form."¹

It can be seen how tremendously Durkheim has expanded his study, and also how complementary it becomes to his other sociological work. Suicide, usually treated under psychopathology, under the treatment of sociology has yielded different results. For there is a difference of approach between the psychopathologist and the sociologist, "the former only ever finds himself faced with particular cases,

1. "Le Suicide" pp.336-7.

separate from each other; very often he notes that the patient was neurotic or an habitual drinker, and explains the action taken by one or other of these psychophysical states,"¹ whereas the latter sees some more general factor underlying these immediate causes of suicide, some more complex factor which should be investigated.

The conditions of man's existence are, ideally, balanced and combined - "There is no people where three currents of opinion do not exist side by side (i.e. individuality, self-sacrifice and receptivity to new ideas) which drive men in three divergent and even contradictory directions. Where they temper each other, the moral agent is in a state of equilibrium which shelters him from all ideas of suicide. But let one of them exceed a certain degree of intensity at the cost of the others, and it becomes fraught with suicidal encouragements, as it becomes more distinct."²

We might ask, then, in view of the increased number of suicides in the civilised community - "Is the rate normal?" (i.e. what might be expected). Obviously a society has been and still is undergoing rapid changes when it becomes advanced, so that flexible laws are necessary if it is to progress; but flexible laws lead to a tumultuous state of affairs, for "all morality of progress and improvement is

1. "Le Suicide" p.366

2. Ibid. p.363.

inseparable from a certain degree of anomy."¹ It is therefore inavoidable, Durkheim says, that there should be some maladjustment in a civilised society, for "hyper-civilisation which gives birth to tendencies of anomy and egoism has also the effect of refining the nervous system, of making it excessively delicate; for this reason men are less capable of attaching themselves to a defined object with any constancy, more impatient of all discipline, more prone to violent irritation and exaggerated depression."²

But the suicide rate of the majority of developed groups is increasing more than can be reasonably expected;³ the high rate of suicides can only be viewed as a pathological symptom therefore. One might ask the reasons for this pathological state, and for the answer we must turn again to those characteristics of the civilised state already noted.

- (1) The advance of science.
- (2) The breakdown of religious ideas.
- (3) Instability of family life.

Because of all these things there is too much collective sadness and despair and too little enthusiasm for social activities. Collective sadness, like collective joy, has its uses, but in civilised societies it has become disproportionate; not only is the suicide rate increasing and

1. "Le Suicide" p.416

2. Ibid. pp.365-6.

3. Here again, Durkheim notes that England is an exception.

social apathy apparent, but our philosophies are for the most part built on despair. Anarchism, revolutionary socialism have in common with suicide a disgust and despair of the present, suicide is tolerated, whereas before it was strictly forbidden by law and church alike not only as an obvious denial of social duty, but as an act "immoral in itself, for itself, as were those who committed it"¹. This apathy is unnatural - As Durkheim says "Such collective melancholy would not have evaded the collective conscience so far had there not taken place a morbid development."²

The problem is, how best to deal with this anomic state and how to endue human life with the purpose without which it is undesirable.

The obvious remedy that springs to mind is the stricter condemnation of suicide - but how should this be effected? Originally the law enforced severe penalties - the disfigurement of the corpse, disinheritance and public disgrace of the victim's family, etc. But these penalties cannot be re-enforced; their original efficacy came not merely from their legal enforcement, but because suicide was held abhorrent by public opinion, and laws not based on such strong public opinion would be ineffectual. Our increased tolerance of suicide arises from our enfeebled morality, therefore the

1. "Le Suicide" p.377.

2. Ibid. p.422

only way to make us more strict is to act directly against the wave of pessimistic feeling, to put it back in its normal place and keep it there, to remove the generality of consciences from its influence, and to strengthen them.¹ Once the collective conscience is back on its moral basis, it will react against suicide as before.

But the further question arises as to how the collective conscience may be put back on its moral basis. It is not, says Durkheim, by means of education, for whatever the power attributed to it, education is in itself merely the instrument of society and therefore has no power to change it.²

Nor is it political society, for that is already so far removed from the individual that an economic crisis must occur before the gulf is bridged.³

Even religion, so often put forward as the salvation of society, affords no solution to the problem. Given the necessary conditions religion is, it is true, a salutary influence on society simply because it offers participation in an intimate social life to any member. But these conditions are not present in civilised society - science has destroyed various religious tenets of belief and in so doing has opened a wider field of thought to the individual from which he

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1. "Le Suicide" p.423.
 2. Viz. Ibid. p.427.
 3. Viz. Ibid. p.429.

cannot be taken and replaced under narrow limitations. Moreover religion itself being the symbol of respect for one's group is itself dependent on that respect, and, weakening correspondingly, cannot itself remedy the weakness. Again "we are only preserved from egoistic suicide to the degree that we are socialised; but religions can only socialise us to the extent where they withdraw our right to freedom of thought."¹

The only suggestion for a remedy is the reversion to a strong family life. The family has had a noticeably diminishing effect on suicide; in view of its intimacy of relationship. But here again the family of today is different from that of yesterday - divorce is becoming increasingly easier, and a consequent loss of belief in the permanency of marriage is taking place, increased knowledge about birth control means that childless marriages are more frequent, such marriages providing no safeguard against the suicidal tendency; even where there are children they tend to spend more time outside the home, and to leave it earlier. A tightening up of divorce regulations would be, unquestionably, a step for the better, but "no artifice could put an obstacle in the way of the necessary social concentration, and give back to the family the indivisibility which was its strength."²

1. "Le Suicide" p.432.

2. Ibid. p.434.

The inevitable conclusion seems to be that there is no remedy for the increasing number of suicides, which arises from the increasing number of maladjusted individuals.

But one clue remains - it is the egoistic suicides which increase as society becomes more developed; since this is so, the state on which they depend is also increasing - "society, troubled and weakened, lets too many subjects escape from its influence - the only way of remedying the evil is to give social groups sufficient consistency to hold the individual more firmly and bind him to them".¹

In other words, since man is only more prone to commit suicide because he has lost his feeling of belonging to a group, he must be led to live for social aims at all times, so that his life may assume some purpose. In the absence of the possibility of redeveloping those spiritual groups such as the family and the church constituted, the sole group which remains open to further development is the economic group, the professional group dealt with in the following chapter; the return to such a corporation would give the worker a particular social milieu, would restore to him the intimacy of environment so long lacking, and would above all afford him the moral code whose absence leaves him with a feeling of isolation and despair.

1. "Le Suicide" p.428.

It is no use claiming that Durkheim's work on suicide is unsurpassed - the faults in his statistical method have been sufficiently pointed out by critics ¹ to show that the validity of his conclusions is by no means certain. Moreover, at the time of his writing, psychopathology was little developed, so that by now the psychopathological explanation of suicide which he rejected, is based on much stronger evidence.

But the increased strength of the psychopathological case does not necessarily mean a corresponding weakening of Durkheim's position in general. One of his most famous followers, Maurice Halbwachs,² in a further investigation into the nature of suicide reaffirms Durkheim's conclusions. "Suicides are always explicable by social causes"³ he says, "and furthermore we will travel further than Durkheim along the path taken by him, because we will explain by social causes not only the great forces which are connected with suicide, but also the particular events which are not its pretexts, but its motives."⁴

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1. Viz. Charles Gehlke - "Durkheim's Contributions to Sociological Method" - Chap. VI.
Achille Delmas - "Psychologie Pathologique du Suicide" (1932) - Chap. I.
 2. Maurice Halbwachs - "Les Causes du Suicide" (Ed. Alcan 1930)
 3. Ibid. p.13 Alcan Ed.
 4. Ibid. Conclusion.

The social element in suicide is not by now the subject of a heated argument, except for the debate as to its strength and importance. The real question we must ask ourselves is whether or not it is possible that the social and psychopathological explanations of suicide are not in reality complementary. The psychopathological analysis and treatment is enormously developed; yet it tends to show more and more that behind the various unhealthy conditions of the mind which lead a man even to his own destruction lie vast social factors. It seems probable therefore that the social component plays a decisive part in the development of the psychopathological states. In this case there is no impassable gulf between sociology and psychopathology. Psychopathology traces the mechanisms by which social situations of an anomic nature affect the individual, and as Professor Halbwachs points out,¹ it and a sociological approach to suicide afford no antithesis. In any case, statistics, one might say, are always of doubtful value - the conclusions one draws from them can be widely different and should be used with some caution.

But it is indisputable that Durkheim is justly credited for his book. In the first place, it opens up an interesting approach to suicide which has led the way to more

1. "Les Causes du Suicide" Chap. VI.

exhaustive studies. In the second, it is more than a statistical exercise. Motivated by a genuine concern in the problem it has as its aim, as have most of Durkheim's works, practical remedial action. As he says - "Once one has established the existence of the trouble, in what it consists and on what it depends, when one knows, as a result, the general nature of the remedy and at what point it should be applied, the essential thing is not to stop to preconceive a plan which allows for everything; it is to put oneself resolutely to work."¹

1. "Le Suicide" p.451.

CHAPTER FIVETHE PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL ORGANISATION

Throughout his treatment of these various social phenomena, it is apparent that Durkheim is concerned not only with explaining the nature and function of social institutions but with so understanding them that they might be made to perform that function with the best results. His aim, that is, is a practical one. His study of social organisation leads him to the unavoidable conclusion that in each of the spheres into which it might be divided - domestic, 'spiritual' and economic there is a weakening resulting in the lack of a central collective system which, as we have seen, he believed necessary to man's moral stability and happiness. The absence of such a system is naturally having a detrimental effect on individual lives - it is leading to more maladjustment, to more suicides, and is therefore just as maleficent to the society in which a man lives as to the man himself.

The final problem with which Durkheim is faced, therefore, is that of an over-loose social organisation and the counteraction of the bad effect this has upon the individual; "there is," he says "a whole system of organs necessary for the normal functioning of the common life which is wanting."¹

1. Viz. p.29 Preface to the 2nd Edition of "The Division of Labour in Society" (Simpson Ed.)

How then can this want be filled?

In the domestic sphere, for instance, marriage and the family no longer fill the social role which they did formerly, for their salutary effects are becoming less marked as changes occur in the nature of the family itself. For Durkheim, marriage is of a great and two-fold value, since it offers -

- (1) Discipline, and therefore
- (2) Stability.

In the first place, the married man, instead of continually seeking the satisfaction of uncontrolled desires, pursuing them to unattainable lengths, as does the bachelor, limits them to what is permitted, and in doing so, far from living in a state of miserable repression, finds contentment and mental ease. "The healthy discipline to which he submits himself makes it imperative that he should find happiness in his condition..... if his pleasures are limited, they are assured, and that strengthens his mental state."¹ From a man's point of view, therefore, marriage, far from being a sacrifice which he makes of his polygamous instincts to ameliorate woman's condition, is an immense advantage to him since the "liberty" he forfeits is only a source of perpetual torment to him.²

1. Viz. p.304 "Le Suicide".

2. Ibid. pp.310-311.

Apart from the discipline and stability afforded by marriage, its normal corollary, the family, cannot be over-estimated. As Durkheim stated in "Le Suicide" the rearing of children provides parents with a purpose in life, and makes them feel that they are useful and necessary; the family then, by its intimate relationships, keeps man and wife out of the state of aimlessness which is so full of suicidal encouragement. For, at the birth of children, a couple cease to serve their own ends "in view of an end that is superior to them - that end, the family which they have founded and for which they have accepted the responsibility",¹

Marriage and the family, then, in their normal state, are the source of contentment that comes from a disciplined and purposeful life led in an intimate social group.

But such are the changes in the nature of marriage resulting from a changing social environment, that it can no longer offer this stability; its influence is being lessened by three trends of civilised societies.

- (1) The institution and facilitation of divorce.
- (2) The prevalence of childless marriages.
- (3) The scattering of the family.

Where divorce is concerned, the institution is obviously a threat to the dignity of marriage, and in a good many cases

1. *Vis.* "Le Divorce par Consentement Mutuel" (Article pub. in *Revue Bleue*, 1906.)

leads to unhappiness. But its effect is usually considered from the point of view of its harmful influence on the children or on the divorced partner; considered from another point of view, it is more dangerous still in its effect on matrimonial custom. For, says Durkheim "it implies a weakening of matrimonial rule. Where it is established, above all, where law and morality have facilitated the practice too greatly, marriage is only a feeble form of itself; it is marriage at its minimum. It cannot then produce useful results to the same extent."¹ Divorce is, in fact, a direct frustration and prevention of the two chief values of married life, for with the possibility of divorce ever present, marriage can no longer set the limit to desires which before was its greatest contribution to happiness, since man's happiness depends on the control of his desires. Marriage can no longer offer stability, security, and peace of mind to the same extent, for its permanence is no longer recognised. If the practice of divorce goes on, therefore, "marriage will be, even more so than today, prevented from playing its role as a restraining factor, from exercising the moderating and salutary action which is the chief reason for its existence; and thus a measure whose aim is to alleviate the unhappiness of a husband will result in demoralising him and cutting him off from the advantages of life".²

1. "Le Suicide" p.505.

2. Sect. III to article "Le Divorce par Consentement Mutuel"

But apart from the changing attitude towards the permanence of marriage, the change in its nature is also lessening its stabilising influence. For as Durkheim has shown, whereas the family preserves parents from melancholy and despair, childless marriages have no such effect - "Conjugal society is no more than a feeble fraction in the immunity of married people¹(from suicide). The immunity which they present is in general due entirely for one sex and a greater part of the other to the action not of the association of husband and wife but of the family."²

But today families are smaller - in many cases, a couple who either do not desire or feel they cannot support a family, decide against having children, and because of the increasing knowledge of birth control can remain childless. Even where there are children the beneficial effect of the family is less pronounced than formerly. For one thing, parents tend to have smaller families, and "where the family is less in number the common sentiments and memories cannot be as intense - moreover small families are necessarily short-lived and without duration, they are not societies capable of consistency."³

In the civilised community also, such is the mobility of labour, the advance of the educational system and development of places of recreation outside the home that the family,

1. "Le Suicide" p.193.

2. Ibid. p.197.

3. Ibid. p.214.

large or small, tends to scatter - children are at school all day and, it may be, at youth-groups or cinema in the evening; they may later leave home to go to college or to work in an occupation which demands their residence in a locality miles away from that of their parents, daughters may marry into a family living in a different town - all these moves leave the home empty and devoid, for the most part, of the close enduring family relationships of the family of a century or so ago.

Moreover, they make a break between young and old, whereas formerly grandparents had intimate relations with grandchildren, the two generations now might meet only infrequently, and thus one way of preserving a continuity in society is lost.

We might also mention in this context, although Durkheim does not do so, another factor affecting the stability of marriage and the family - the changing position of women. With the new privileges and opportunities offered her, partly as a result of her own agitation and partly because of the efforts demanded of her by war, woman no longer looks to marriage and children as the sole career open to her. She may decide against marriage if it means forfeiting her economic independence and outside interests; she may, even if married, attempt to keep economic independence by continuing her work. But in so doing she naturally has not the same time to devote

to home-making; this has many results - she may no longer feel her home interests her exclusively, she may decide she prefers a career to children, or if she has children may see them and deal with them far less than the mother who is at home all day (she may, for example, leave young children at a creche, or send older ones to a boarding school).

The social trend towards the equality of the sexes therefore is another factor contributing to the changing status and nature of marriage and the family.

In short, the sentiments which, providing an aim in life, preserve men from despair, suppose a degree of domesticity: "they cannot be powerful if the family is disintegrated - in effect, the density of a group cannot decrease without a diminishment in its vitality".¹ For all these reasons, then, family life no longer provides that stable body of sentiments and beliefs which linked the individual to social life, and thus gave him security of purpose and position.

The same deficiency is noticeable in the 'spiritual' sphere, for education and religion, closely connected as they have been, are now separated, and neither, as Durkheim has shown, draws the individual so closely to his group and relieves him of the burden of spiritual isolation and a too-great self-consciousness. Religion, arising from the reverence

1. "Le Suicide" p.213.

and now of the strength of the group is, for the time being at any rate, very weak; and since its efficacy lies in its being a social group, is consequently unable to afford the security of which it once was the source. Correspondingly, since the religious aim of education was removed, the educational system has no precise end - there is no "social ideal" to which a child may be approximated.

Advanced societies then seem to leave their members without a spiritual aim, without the purpose and close links with society which counteract egoism and morbidity. Yet, we may say, if religion has ceased to symbolise the group, there is still an outward manifestation of the society in which we live; for, as our society has become more complex, the state has developed, and, being the supreme regulative organ, has come to personify society. Why then, is man suffering from a feeling of isolation from social life when his society is still represented to him by one central body?

The answer lies in the nature of the state itself, and in the contrast it affords with the nature of the social activity it is required to express, for "collective activity is always too complex to be able to be expressed through the single and unique organ of the state"¹. In modern societies, the state is an administrative body - the individual has

1. p.28 Preface to 2nd Ed. of "The Division of Labour in Society" (Simpson Ed.)

little or no personal contact with it and cannot feel in close touch with his government unless it is in exceptional circumstances. "It is only when serious interests are at stake that we strongly feel our state of dependence towards the political body. Without doubt among the members constituting the moral elite of the population it is rare that the idea of their country is completely absent; but in ordinary times, it remains in obscurity, only faintly represented, and may be eclipsed entirely."¹

Since this is so, although the individual certainly is aware of the action of the state upon him (its laws, for example, affect almost every field of everyday activities), the government itself appears to be far removed from him, and can therefore influence him little. In Durkheim's own words "as the state is so far removed from them, it can only have a distant and interrupted action over them, because this sentiment (of being a member of a society) is not presented to them with the perseverance or energy necessary. During the greater part of their existence there is nothing in their surroundings which can draw men out of themselves and impose any restraint upon them. In these conditions, it is inevitable that they fall into egoism and lawlessness."²

This apparent distance between the state and the individual is bad, therefore; because of it he loses the

1. p.429 "Le Suicide", viz. also p.28 Pref. to 2nd Ed. "The Division of Labour in Society".

2. Ibid. p.448.

consciousness of belonging to a group, only to recover it when the group is threatened with annihilation. It is necessary that man should be constantly aware of his membership of a group - only thus will he be protected against egoism, only in group activity will he find at once a discipline and a purpose - "It is necessary that, not only from time to time but at each instant of his life, the individual should take account of the fact that whatever he does is towards an end. In order that his existence may not seem vain to him, he must constantly serve a purpose which affects him immediately. But this is only possible in a simpler and less extensive environment which will contain him more closely and offer a more immediate aim for his activity."¹

It is this other social milieu then for which Durkheim seeks - the family, once just such a milieu, cannot be reinstated as such since its disintegration depends on social trends not open to alteration (industrialisation, changing conceptions of the standard of living, etc.); religion, as Durkheim sees it, being a spontaneous symbolisation of the group may or may not occur again; the state is too removed from the individual; in either the domestic or the spiritual sphere then, there is no such intimate group as Durkheim is seeking - he therefore goes on to consider the economic sphere.

1. "Le Suicide" p.489.

Here again there is a lack of any moral authority - indeed, as Durkheim says, economic activity is completely outside the influence of moral ideas. "All economic life" he says "such as is conceived and explained by economists, above all, those of the orthodox school, is by definition dependent on the purely individual factor, desire for wealth. Is it concerned with morality? It makes the duty of the individual towards himself the basis of ethics."¹ He deplures the fact that men spend the greater part of their lives outside the sphere of any moral authority, as they do, for there is no occupational ethic, and conceptions of right or wrong found in the economic sphere are very arbitrary. "An ethic so unprecise and inconsistent cannot constitute a discipline. The result is that all this sphere of collective life is, in large part, freed from the moderating action of regulation."² Believing as he does that man needs moral authority, that it is essential to his happiness and well-being, Durkheim can only see this separation of economic activity and morality as the source of a grave ill. "Human passions stop only before a moral power they respect," he says "if all authority of this kind is wanting, the law of the strongest prevails and, latent or active, the state of war is necessarily chronic."³

1. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique". Chapt. V.

2. p. 2. Preface to 2nd Ed. of "The Division of Labour in Society".

3. Ibid. p.3.

What makes the problem greater is that the importance of economic functions is increasing steadily - even science is unable to diminish that importance, for science itself is increasingly practised to some practical economic end.

Some authority then is lacking - the state cannot take over the function of economic life, for "economic life, because it is specialised and grows more specialised every day, escapes its competence and action".¹ Above all then, in the economic as in the other spheres of man's activity, some group capable of affording at once a means of social integration and moral authority is needed. And, at last, in the economic sphere, Durkheim finds the possibility of developing such a group. For the virtues of the family, he says, are not intrinsic - they are found in other forms, particularly in the corporation - "another group can have the same action provided it has the same cohesion. For, apart from religions, family and political associations, there is another into which we have not yet inquired; it is that which all the workers of the same class, all the members in the same trade form by their association - the professional group or corporation".² Such a group, he says, has many advantages.

1. p.5. Preface to 2nd Ed. of "The Division of Labour in Society".

2. "Le Suicide" p.434.

First and foremost, it has the tremendous advantage of being concerned with a great part of man's existence - a man is involved in political organisation, we might say, from the time when he is old enough to receive a vote, but he is not always in contact with this political organisation, nor does he have much to do with his government (except of course in the comparatively rare cases where he makes politics his career); his work, on the other hand, is something which concerns him daily, and his economic position an influence which he never wholly escapes.

Not only this, but the occupational group can offer, within the structure of the division of labour, a basis for precisely those sentiments lacking in advanced societies - common sentiments. As we have seen it is common sentiments which, to Durkheim, preserve the strength and stability of a society - yet it is precisely those sentiments which weaken as the division of labour in society advances - "Functional diversity induces a moral diversity that nothing can prevent, and it is inevitable that one should grow as the other does - collective sentiments become more and more impotent in holding together the centrifugal tendencies that the division of labour is said to engender."¹ It becomes of vital importance, then if we are concerned with improving our social organisation, that these common sentiments should be increased somewhere, even

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.361 (Simpson Ed.)

though it is realised that that increase cannot take place at the expense of economic patterns of organisation which have developed spontaneously. The division of labour is apparently the enemy of collective sentiments in society as a whole, yet it cannot and should not be discouraged. Very well then, says Durkheim, let us stop thinking of increasing common sentiments as a whole, and concentrate on their increase in smaller spheres. Since within an occupational group all members are engaged in similar work, presumably with the same liking for it, and furthermore bound together by having the same interest at heart, this group at least is capable of fostering common sentiments and of providing a basis for them.

Because of these two advantages therefore, the occupational group can fulfil the important qualification of being moral - it can be solidary, that is, and "there is no reason why the corporative interest should not assume in the eyes of the workers the commanding nature and the supremacy which social interests have always had in comparison with private interest in a well organised society".¹

The cooperation or occupational group then offers a great opportunity, particularly in highly industrialised societies; it can supply much that is lacking for a happy and full social life, for "it has the necessary ability to fit the

1. "Le Suicide" p.435.

individual into his environment, to draw him out of his state of moral isolation - and, granting the actual insufficiency of other groups, it is the sole group capable of performing this necessary function"¹.

The professional group then is the economic organisation in which Durkheim puts his faith - it is the only group, considering the weakening influence of religion and of the family, which can give the individual a place in society, a basis for common thought with his fellow-men, and a moral support. The question is - "How to set about promoting such professional groups?".

Here I think it imperative to decide precisely what Durkheim means by a professional group, since his suggestions appear to offer more than one interpretation. Are we to understand him to suggest:-

- (a) The development of Trade Unions to a much greater extent, making them the basis of industrial organisation?
- (b) The organisation of political representation along functional lines?
- (c) The setting up of professional groups of a much smaller nature. (Perhaps the sort of group advocated by the anarchist when he stresses the need for smaller groups as being necessary to the happiness of the individual.)

1. "Le Suicide" pp.435-6.

Durkheim seems to hint at all these, but from the various comments and suggestions made throughout the course of his writings it seems that it is the first suggestion he has in mind - the development of what we call Trade Unions. The old unions (or corporations) fell into misuse, he says, because they were so closely linked with the communes, whereas new industries, at the start of their development, could not be so tied down. Yet this is no objection to the re-formation of such groups, for the modern professional group "does not necessarily have its centre in the city - it looks for territory where it can best maintain itself and thrive".¹ Nor can it be objected that an attempt to revive the corporation would be an attempt to put the clock back. This argument would obviously carry weight if the professional group should be revived just as it originally existed in medieval times - but to say that the need now is identical with the need then is not to say that the answer to this need has not changed its form.

Durkheim's plan, then, for the relief of the somewhat uncomfortable state of advanced societies is to bring back the professional group - the union of all men (employer and employee alike) working at one trade. Since the eighteenth century suppression of such unions, says Durkheim, there has been no attempt at revival; relations between workmen have depended on casual contacts. There have, it is true, been

1. p.22 Pref. to 2nd Ed. of "The Division of Labour in Society".

attempts to form permanent syndicates, but these have been deprived of legal authority, have been limitless in number because occupations have become so minutely divided, and have separated employers and employees, all these being grave disadvantages.

A new organisation is required for the new professional groups - and what is this to be? Durkheim, in spite of his enthusiasm for the idea of reforming professional groups, does not supply much detail; he does not conceive it to be his duty to do so, for "the work of a sociologist" he says "is not that of a statesman"¹. he should not deal with details but with general principles.

But, dealing with the general principles, Durkheim sets out various requirements of the new professional organisations together with some of the advantages they will be likely to yield. First and foremost, the professional group must become a recognised and defined body - that is not to say that it should be made obligatory, but that it should be granted sufficient power to play a part in social organisation. Following upon this legal recognition, determined functions should be attributed to it, these functions and the group itself remaining outside state activity.²

1. p.23 Pref. to 2nd Ed. of "The Division of Labour in Society".

2. Ibid.

Granting these preliminary requirements the professional groups could lead to many advantages - remaining distinct from the state, they could deal with that diversity of functions which the state cannot satisfactorily regulate - "economic life would be therefore regulated and determined without losing any of its diversity".¹

Moreover, apart from actual economic regulation, the professional group, being non-territorial, would be protected from immobility and lack of flexibility; it could include within its organisation many technical colleges, schools, and colleges connected with the trade on which it was based; further still, it could become "the elementary division of state, the fundamental political unity"², electing assemblies being formed according to occupational groupings and not territorial divisions.

Finally, and we must remember that to Durkheim this is the most necessary advantage to be gained by the re-formation of occupational groups - the groups would inculcate community spirit for "the professional group presents a two-fold character. Because it is a group, it rules at a sufficient distance from individuals to set limits to their desires, but it is too close to their life not to sympathise with their needs".³

1. p.25 Pref. to 2nd Ed. of "The Division of Labour in Society"

2. p.27 Ibid.

3. "Le Suicide" p.441.

Because of this two-fold character of the group, its members would possess the two necessary attributes constantly stressed by Durkheim - discipline and companionship. For the occupational group "is a source of life sui generis. From it comes a warmth which animates its members, making them intensely human, destroying their egotisms"¹. Men could feel, under this new organisation, more reassured, more stable, because they would have something to which they could address the needs they hesitate to place before the state. And consequently there would spring from this rejuvenation of subsidiary spheres of activity, the much needed moral strengthening of society as a whole. "The social tissue whose links have become so dangerously loosened would tighten again and consolidate themselves through the whole sphere of their influence."²

When we come to attempt an estimate of the value of these suggestions we are in a favourable position in that we can judge from actual experience the effect of the development of professional groups. It must be remembered, of course, that Durkheim considered his own country where Trade Unions were not recognised at a time when legal status was afforded them in England. For the last forty years or so³ Trade Unions

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1. p.26 Pref. to 2nd Ed. of "The Division of Labour in Society"
 2. "Le Suicide" p.433.
 3. It is not suggested that there have not been setbacks to the development of the Trade Unions in England and changes in their position, of course.

have been recognised here in this country and have played an integral part in the economic life of the nation. The conditions required by Durkheim have been for the most part fulfilled - Trade Unions have been recognised, kept separate from State activity and awarded their own particular functions and spheres of action - yet can we say that their existence has had the desired effect? It is perhaps a thing not to be judged without deep inside experience of the Trade Union movement, but it is certainly difficult to see the advantages anticipated by Durkheim. Admittedly he did not claim infallibility for the professional group; because it would probably lead to certain advantages "that does not mean that the corporation is a sort of panacea for everything. The crisis through which we are passing is not rooted in a single and unique cause. To put an end to it, it is not sufficient to regulate where necessary. Justice must prevail"¹ Nevertheless, the professional group, given its chance, seems to have failed in just that respect where Durkheim thought it must help - the moral stability of the individual and consequently of the society in which he lived. The Trade Union may have provided a basis for economic regulation, but from Durkheim's point of view the paramount function of such a Union should be to promote solidarity and to give back to the individual some of the contentment of being a part of a moral body. This the Trade Union has not done to

1. "Le Suicide" pp.448-9.

any great extent - a member may have more material security (e.g. fixed wages, protection against unjust conditions of labour, etc.) but it has not given to him any of the security or moral stability which Durkheim considers as being lost with the fading of the collective conscience.

Nor has society as a whole become more stable as a result - at the moment it seems that Trade Union activity can be a cause of constant interruption of social activity rather than a cohesive factor. Yet, says Durkheim, "for anxiety to end there must exist or be formed a group which can constitute the system of rules actually needed"¹.

Are we to conclude then that the professional group is not, after all, the necessary social group? This may be so, but on the other hand the apparent failure of the Trade Union to create the unity envisaged by Durkheim may rest on the mistaken organisation of the professional group itself. For one thing, we might say, it does not include, as Durkheim demanded, employer and employees, for another membership is rapidly becoming obligatory, whereas Durkheim expressly stated that it should not be so. These two factors alone can certainly account for a great deal of disunity; to separate employers and employees allows much of the "blackmailing" with which we are familiar today in strike procedure, and certainly does not conduce to the

1. p.5 Pref. to 2nd Ed. of "The Division of Labour in Society".

harmony of the country as a whole. Within the Trade Union itself even obligatory membership can do much to diminish its strength and unity since the unwilling and coerced member of a group seldom contributes to unity as much as he hinders by half-heartedness or real opposition.

But the real difficulty appears to be precisely that the non-territorial nature of Trade Unions which to Durkheim was a point in their favour has proved a hindrance if we are to take as the goal of Trade Union activity not successful industrial regulation, but the increasing solidarity of society and moral stability of the individual. With an occupation such as mining, it is true that there is an amazing sympathy and unity between members of the Union, but this sympathy existed before unions were recognised - simply because miners are, for the most part, gathered in definite communities and thus preserve more than most occupations a local community spirit. It is difficult to see how this spirit can be hoped for in the case of widespread large industries - difficult to see, for instance, how it can lead to moral stability or greater contentment if all the members of a great industry such as the American car industry are included in the same union.

It seems that Durkheim could have more consistently advocated, as do some anarchists, smaller occupational groups - some decentralisation that is. Yet Durkheim discusses the formation of larger groups and even of international

professional groups, which would seem to evidence a refusal to consider the smaller group as an answer to his problem. Similarly with the suggested reform of decentralisation of industry - "The only truly useful decentralisation" he says "is that which produces at the same time a greater concentration of social forces - the only decentralisation which, without shattering national unity, would allow the increase of centres of communal life is that which we call 'professional decentralisation'. For as each of these centres would only be the seat of a special activity and would be limited, they would be inseparable from each other, and an individual would consequently, in attaching himself to one, be none the less at one with all. Social life cannot divide itself, all sections resting in one, unless each of the divisions represents an occupation."¹ So that, here again, he refuses to see decentralisation except along lines of division into large complete occupational groups.

Durkheim's idea had in it a great deal of virility - as Gehlke says,² at a time and in a country where professional groups were little practised and unrecognised, he advocated its formation and development; and it speaks much for the timeliness of Durkheim's suggestion that most of the subsequent labour movements agreed with it in basic principles.

1. "Le Suicide" pp.448-9.

2. Viz. Gehlke - "Emile Durkheim's Contributions to Sociological Theory".

The Trade Union has indeed been of use - it has facilitated industrial organisation and assured the worker of material security, both great contributions to the well-being of society. But unfortunately it has not accomplished the task which Durkheim hoped it would - either because of some fault of organisation or because it was not the correct body to attempt the task, it has not been strong enough to "draw the individual out of his moral isolation" as Durkheim puts it. For he saw that power to release the individual as the chief of the advantages of the professional group. "What we see in the occupational group" he said "is a moral power capable of containing individual egos, of maintaining a spirited sentiment of common solidarity."¹

But if it is just this power that is lacking, how is the problem of individual and social morality elucidated by Durkheim to be answered? And how far has he been right in attempting to solve it?

¹ p.10 Pref. to 2nd Ed. of "The Division of Labour in Society"

PART THREE

"It is natural to expect that our formulas will be revised in future. A product of individual and necessarily limited experience, we expect them to develop in proportion as we acquire a more extended and profound knowledge of social reality."

Preface to 2nd Edition of
"Rules of Sociological Method"

CHAPTER ONETHE PURPOSE OF LIFE

We have seen that for Durkheim the problem of the increasingly difficult position of the individual in modern societies seems soluble if the two are identified, if it is realized more fully that the individuals making up society are nevertheless moulded by it. To render the individual's position less uncomfortable, therefore, what is necessary is not that the individual's rights should be even more clearly defined, but that he should be linked more closely to general social activity.

Before we can embark on any sort of estimate of the value of Durkheim's suggestions to this end, there are three points on which we must first reach some conclusion. In the first place we must ask what Durkheim thinks to be the purpose of life, since on this a good deal of our appreciation of Durkheim's ideas depends. In the second place we must be equally clear as to the role we expect sociology to play in social affairs - whether we demand from it more or less passive observations on the constitution of societies together with perhaps a few predictions as to future social changes, or whether we hope for concrete and definite suggestions aimed at the improvement of social organisation. Lastly we must ask ourselves how far the situation today is identical with the situation during Durkheim's lifetime, and furthermore whether there are not found certain factors which

complicate Durkheim's conception of the type of morality necessary to society.

In dealing with the aim of life, it is important that we realise our own opinions as well as those of Durkheim, or it may happen that we criticise his social theory to some extent because we are setting out with different ideas on what the aim of life should be. The majority of sociologists, however unprejudiced they attempt to be in their study of society, assume some driving force for humanity; with Comte¹ it is the desire for human betterment, with Spencer² the desire for greater happiness that is supposed to cause progress and change in human societies.

Durkheim seems to dislike these finalistic interpretations,³ and so it is difficult to gather what he himself would assume to be the aim of human life and the impetus to progress and change. Above all, he is opposed to utilitarian philosophies of life - man is not solely actuated by motives of seeking happiness, nor is the desire for happiness the driving force behind human efforts at improvement.⁴ As he says in the work most directly based on an effort to discredit utilitarianism, "The Division of

1. "Cours de Philosophie Positive" IV p.262.

2. "Principles of Sociology" II p.247.

3. Viz. "Rules of Sociological Method" Chap. V.

4. Furthermore, the dual nature of man as conceived by Durkheim means that morality cannot be reduced to utilitarian motives. Viz. "Elementary forms of Religious Life" p.27.

Labour in Society" - "if it (happiness, that is) increased proportionally as agreeable stimuli became more numerous and intense, it would be quite natural for man always to seek to produce more to enjoy still more. But as a matter of fact, our capacity for happiness is very limited".¹ To Durkheim therefore the assumption that man progresses because he desires more happiness is an unwarrantable one.

We might ask why it is that Durkheim is so avowedly hostile towards utilitarian philosophies of life, and two reasons are immediately apparent. In the first place any doctrine or philosophy which stresses the individual and his importance rather than society is unacceptable to him - social life is what matters. It has been explained before that Durkheim does not, in stressing the importance of society, intend to imply that the individual is to count for nothing and society for all, but that he believes individual personality only developed through contact with other men, and any individualism supposed to increase as the individual withdraws further from social claims basically false. "Whatever we receive from society we hold in common with our companions. So it is not at all true that we are more personal as we are more individualised. The two terms are in no way synonymous; in one sense they oppose more than they imply one another. Passion individualises, yet it also enslaves.

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.235.

Our sensations are essentially individual; yet we are more personal the more we are freed from our senses and able to think and act with concepts. So those who insist upon all the social elements of the individual do not mean by that to debase or deny the personality. They merely refuse to confuse it with the fact of individuation."¹

Thus, for Durkheim, any philosophy stressing the right of the individual to consider his own happiness as a chief end in life would be confusing personality "with the fact of individuation".

But a second reason why Durkheim is opposed to utilitarianism is that his own moral outlook inevitably leads him to view utilitarianism as based on a fallacious view of human nature. The individual himself he thinks of as being amoral by nature, only becoming capable of morality by participation in society. That is why he considers the education of the child of such fundamental importance, because it is through education that the child is brought to the acceptance and practice of morality. As we have already seen, it is essential, according to Durkheim, that men's desires are disciplined, and that the individual is not allowed merely to follow his own whims. But when we come to inquire more closely into this we become puzzled as to precisely what Durkheim does think to be the purpose of life. Happiness is not a purposive force, he says, man must not be allowed to pursue his own selfish ends. But why? Because society suffers?

1. "Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.272.

Actually, in spite of his constant stress on the importance of society, Durkheim does not merely concern himself with the repercussions of conduct based on purely individual interest on society. He is also concerned, as stated previously, with the relation of the individual to society, and with the state of the individual. It is not merely because selfish conduct is bad for society that Durkheim says man's desires must be disciplined, but because, far from being happier when unrestrained and left to pursue his own desires, man is very unhappy. In the first place he is unhappy because, as Durkheim pointed out in "Le Suicide" and "L'éducation morale", uncontrolled desires lead a man to instability. "A need, a desire freed from all restraint and regulation, which is not attached to a determined object, and by that same determination limited and kept within bounds, can only be for the subject who feels it a source of perpetual torment".¹ In the second he is unhappy because by nature a man must be able to attach himself to something higher than himself. "Life is only tolerable if one sees some reason for existence, if it has an aim which is worth suffering for, for the individual himself does not provide a sufficient aim for his own activity."² In fact if he attempts to regard himself as a "sufficient aim" he becomes so isolated from the reality of social life that his life tends to become pointless and at the extreme, may appear so undesirable that he commits

1. "L'éducation morale" p.45.

2. "Le Suicide" p.224.

suicide. True happiness for Durkheim, then, comes through life in a society and is in no way diminished or denied the individual because life in that society brings with it certain restrictions. "Liberty.... is itself the product of regulation. I am only free to the extent that others are forbidden to profit from their physical, economic, or other superiority to the detriment of my liberty. But only social rules can prevent the abuses of power¹.

But at this point can we honestly say that Durkheim is adopting a very different attitude from that of many of the utilitarians? His views certainly seem irreconcilable with those of the psychological hedonist who would say that man cannot do any other than pursue his own pleasure (although even on this point he would agree that the child can do no other until taught to behave according to social standards of morality). Nor would he ever agree with Bentham that the well-being of societies is built upon the pursuit of purely selfish and individual ends. More fundamentally still he would inevitably be opposed to any utilitarian school which regarded society as a structure bound together by legal sanctions² rather than as the complex structure of relationships it appears to the sociologist.

But if we consider utilitarianism as propounded by John Stuart Mill these differences are no longer outstanding. Mill based his utilitarianism on social motives - "The firm

1. Pref. to 2nd Ed. of "The Division of Labour in Society".

2. For further reference viz. Leslie Stephen "The English Utilitarians" Vol. II.

foundation of the Utilitarianism morality is the social feelings of mankind; the desire to be in unity with our fellow creatures" he says¹ Or again "The social state is at once so natural, so necessary and so habitual to man that except in some unusual circumstances, or by an effort of voluntary abstraction, he never conceives himself otherwise than as a member of a body".²

Mill, that is to say, is not an individualistic utilitarian, and so there is no ground for disagreement between himself and Durkheim here. "The utilitarian standard is the happiness not of the agent but of all concerned" Mill claims. "To do as one would be done by and to love one's neighbour as oneself constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality. Utility enjoins that laws and social arrangements should reconcile the interest of every individual with that of the whole, and that education and opinion should establish an association in each man's mind between his own happiness and such conduct as regard for the general happiness prescribes, so that an impulse to promote the general good may be a habitual motive to action".³

So, to Mill, virtue and disinterested action, although not originally desired by man, can become desired, become an acquired good and even essential to the happiness of man.

1. "Utilitarianism" Chap. III (Pub. 1959)

2. Ibid.

3. "Utilitarianism" Chap. II.

Here again there is little grounds for antagonism between Mill's utilitarianism and Durkheim's views. Both say that in his earliest stages the child is amoral, incapable of thinking of interests other than its own, but both insist that the child can be brought up to feel absolutely at one with his society and to identify his own interests with its interests. For Durkheim, as we have seen in the chapter on education "all education consists of a continual effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling and acting to which he would not have come spontaneously¹ that is to say to fit him into the society into which he is born, and to make him feel at one with it in his opinions, modes of behaviour, and everything else. In turn John Stuart Mill insists that it is by inculcating in the child this feeling of unity that the individual and society will best be served. "If now we suppose this feeling of unity to be taught as a religion,² and the whole force of education, of institutions and of opinions, directed as it once was in the case of religion, to make every person grow up from infancy surrounded on all sides both by the profession and the practice of it, I think that no one who can realise this conception will feel any misgivings about the sufficiency of the ultimate sanction for the happiness morality."³

1. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" Chap. I.

2. c.f. Durkheim's ideas of replacing outworn religious doctrines with an allegiance to society.

3. "Utilitarianism" Chap. III.

The question resolves itself, considering that collective utilitarianism and Durkheim's own expressed opinions do not afford the clash one might suppose, into "How important to Durkheim is happiness". "The utilitarian doctrine" according to Mills and Bentham before him "is that happiness is desirable and the only thing desirable as an end, all other things being only desirable as a means to that end"¹. But is Durkheim taking happiness as an end or as a means to another end?

In speaking of happiness he says "Happiness is an index to the state of health".² If this is his real opinion, the logical conclusion is that he puts the health of society first and judges this health by happiness, in which case society becomes the end, happiness a sort of means - an "index". This attitude is manifest in "Le Suicide" - if a man is happy, then he prefers life to death, says Durkheim, but in civilised society there are too many suicides, too much unhappiness, showing that society is unhealthy. In attempting to remedy the case, then, Durkheim is considering making the individual happier in order to ensure the health of society.

In this way we may conclude that Durkheim's aim and the thing he thinks of as being the purpose of life, was to ensure and maintain a healthy society. Indeed he says in "Les

1. "Utilitarianism" Chap. XI.

2. p.244 "The Division of Labour in Society" (Simpson Ed.)

Règles de la Méthode Sociologique", "The object of our efforts is no longer a matter of pursuing desperately an objective that retreats as one advances, but of working with steady perseverance to maintain the normal state".¹ What Durkheim means by normal is a question concerning his views on sociology rather than the purpose he assumes in life, and is discussed in the next chapter.

But having arrived at the conclusion that Durkheim is aiming at the health, the normality of society, it is puzzling to decide what place the happiness of the individual holds in his estimation. Durkheim's final aim, according to himself, is the maintenance of a healthy society - this is so great an ambition that it becomes a moral end to him. But, as Catlin remarks "Fundamentally for Durkheim morality reposes upon one value - success. This success or utility, however, has no satisfactory, concrete test, since it is not that of the mortal and limited individual, but of the immortal and unlimited entity called society".² But the success or healthiness of a society seems to be, in itself, of negative value - it is only good or appreciable in that it benefits the individuals who live in the society. Why should a society be healthy except in order that its members may be benefitted? As unhealthiness cannot cause in itself any misery, since a society is not endowed with its own feelings, the only being for whom unhealthiness in

1. p.15 "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" Ed. Catlin

2. Viz. p.xxx Catlin's introductory remarks to the above book.

society can have any unpleasant effects is the individual who is living in it. So that eventually it seems that Durkheim must have been unconsciously concerned with ensuring the stability and security - in other words, happiness, of the beings who make up a society.

The conclusion we can draw is that Durkheim is in reality far from anti-utilitarian. He insists on the authority and importance of society, it is true, and avows his aim to be the promotion of a healthy society, which seems to be the antithesis of a doctrine which considers individual happiness of paramount importance. But he states explicitly that an authoritative society is essential to man's happiness, that discipline is a fundamental necessity of human nature. In other words, Durkheim is what might generally be termed utilitarian, if not a Utilitarian, the importance the happiness of the individual assumes for him being obscured by his close identification of the individual and society.

One solution to the difficulty would be to isolate sociology from the other social studies. Simmel and the German School of "formal" sociologists attempted to do this, distinguishing the form from the content of social relationships, and stating that sociology should consist of "the identification, systematic arrangement, psychological explanation and historical development of the pure forms of socialisation", thereby differentiating sociology from the social sciences by saying that it deals with the same subjects, but from a different angle, i.e. that of the different modes of social relationships; but even the formalists themselves found it impossible to adhere to their own strict definition, as Durkheim himself remarked in his article "Sociologie et les Sciences Sociales" ¹.

Another way of separating sociology from the social sciences is to make it their general synthesis, co-ordinating their problems and comparing their results; in other words, put into this position sociology would become a general study having "as its raison d'être" as Mannheim argues "the construction of a consistent general theory of society".¹ By other writers, however, it is felt that sociology should take its among the sciences studying society rather than outside them; indeed, one cannot help feeling that sociology should not be a specialised and removed study, but one of the social studies

1. K. Mannheim - article on "The Place of Sociology" p.164. "The Social Sciences, Their relations in Theory and Teaching" (Pub.1936).

which together cover the field of human behaviour. It is important, as Ginsberg says, "to resist the tendency of the social sciences to become isolated from one another and from general sociology which can surely only flourish by their systematisation".

In this case, if we agree that sociology should take its place as one of the social sciences with a distinct field of study rather than a synthesis, we are following the conclusion of Durkheim who himself could see a sociology separated from the other social sciences as nothing but "a formal and vague philosophy".² For him sociology is the "science of social institutions" and therein has its own sphere of study - namely the consideration of social facts. But, we might say, social conduct, social facts might be anything that concerns the life of man - eating, drinking or sleeping - yet if sociology dealt with all these things it would still have no field peculiar to it. Durkheim's answer is that there is a certain range of social facts that is distinguishable from the rest, these in whose shaping we have no power, "ways of acting, thinking and feeling external to the individual and endowed with a power of coercion by reason of which they control him",³ although this constraint is not noticeable as long as we conform

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1. Ginsberg - "article "The Place of Sociology" P.190. "The Social Sciences, Their relations in Theory and in Teaching".
 2. Article "Sociologie et Sciences Sociales" pp.465-497 Revue Philosophique LV.
 3. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" Chap. I.

to them. It is these ways, their genesis and nature which constitute the proper study of sociology, not the synthesising or evolving of any "general theory of society", such as Mannheim suggests. On the contrary, these general theories are the very opposite of sociological - they are something that must be escaped, since "because sociology had its birth in the great philosophical doctrines, it has retained the habit of relying on some philosophical system and thus has been continually overburdened with it. It has been successively positivistic, evolutionary, idealistic, when it should have been content to be simply sociology."¹

This naturally leads us to ask what is "simply sociology" if it is not to be idealistic. Having selected its field of study, how is that study to be conducted if we renounce its philosophical tendencies. It is possible that sociology can be a science? Opinions vary. For one thing the obvious differences between the natural and social sciences certainly put the proposition in doubt, and moreover there is the added problem regarding the possibility of establishing sociological laws.

In the first case, the differences between these fields of study in which the scientific method is used and

1. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" Conclusion.

sociology.¹ The very material is different - natural sciences study external observable facts, finding their evidence in the study of physical things and processes, sociology studies facts which are only partly external, and to some extent must find evidence in the study of expressions and objectifications of the mind. The corollary to this is that social studies are immensely handicapped in method; sociologists unlike the natural scientists cannot use controlled experiments to verify their conclusions, nor can they make such exact use of the technique of measurement in verifying hypotheses.

Because of this difference, it seems impossible to some writers that the study of society should ever become a true science; human studies cannot, as Comte would have them, be a continuation of natural sciences, because they rest on a completely different basis. "This sociology is not scientific knowledge defined by reference to a particular field" said William Dilthey, voicing a by no means uncommon opinion, "it is the name for a number of works which have handled the facts of society according to a great principle of explanation, or for a tendency in explanatory procedure. It is not the name of a science."²

1. Viz. p.35 sq. "The Uniqueness of Mankind" - J.S.Huxley for comparison of the two scientists.

2. Note prepared by Dilthey for inclusion in new edition of "Introduction to Human Studies" published posthumously.

The difficulty of establishing sociological laws leads K.D.Har to much the same conclusions. "A scientific social law is a description of an invariant pattern of social phenomena, if there be any such invariant patterns, explicable by means of a generally accepted theory of social causation which in turn must be explicable by means of a plausible hypothesis concerning human nature and social relations, thus making the conceptual unification of social phenomena complete."¹

But taking the data of sociology as:-

- (1) "All consciously reciprocal human relations"
- (2) "All impersonal and unreciprocated human relations" (e.g. living in same town)
- (3) Extra-human events (e.g. climate)

he finds such laws have never been established, the majority of so called laws (e.g. Comte's law of the three stages, economic laws, etc.) being near causal laws, and for the most part pre-suppositions and generalisations. Sociology cannot therefore be considered as a science. "The name sociology, at present, is a mere symbol of standing for such an Herculean achievement. As a science it still remains in the stage of definitive concepts and artistic discussion without either an adequate technique for study or a sufficient accumulation of data."²

1. K.D.Har - "Social Laws" (pub.1930) viz. p.20 Chap. II.

2. pp.51-2 Chap. II "Social Laws".

Against this view we have Ginsberg's view that the establishment of sociological laws is possible but that they are very different from scientific laws and do not pretend otherwise, being "empirically established probabilities or statistical generalisations of the course of social behaviour of which an interpretation can be given, that is which can be understood"¹. Again we may say that there is in reality no great difference, as hitherto supposed, between the world of things and animals and the world of men, the latter, as Julian Huxley would say, being but a development of the former, and subject to the same detached study. In this case a natural law and a sociological law might neither be statements of "necessary relations". For instance Kelsen expresses the view in his book "Nature and Society" - "the dualism of nature and society is by no means the last step in the evolution of science; it is replaced by that of reality and ideology. For modern sociology a social event appears as part of a reality determined by the same laws as a natural event. No essential difference between natural and social laws, i.e. between the laws determining nature and the laws determining society, exists, as soon as the natural law itself relinquishes its claim to absolute necessity and satisfies itself with being an assertion of a statistical probability. There is no fundamental hindrance to prevent sociology's arriving at this kind of law

1. Ginsberg - "Sociology" (pub. 1934) Chap. I.

in its own domain. In religious speculation nature was part of society ruled according to the law of retribution. After the complete emancipation of causality from retribution in the modern notion of law, society is - from the point of view of science - a part of nature".¹

These views mean that sociology can be considered as a science and therefore become quite a legitimate branch of knowledge, although for K.D.Har, sociology need not be a science in order to be valuable; indeed by its very nature it should be a social art,² the body of observations under discussion being sufficient for this purpose.

With Durkheim such a conclusion would be unacceptable - sociology cannot remain a "social art"; too long based on general observations it must, if it is to be useful, become a distinct science, and the doubts held about the possibility of its becoming so must be recognised as a natural reaction and not final objections, to a newly founded study. "At all times when science has just revealed to men the existence of an unknown force" he says "it has met with incredulity". As it would modify the system of recognised ideas to make room for a new order of things and construct it from new concepts, minds accordingly resist it. However it must be heard. If sociology

1. Kelsen - "Nature and Society" (pub. 1943) Chap. VII Sect. 62.

2. Har defines this as "skill or wisdom which is useful to the appreciation of human values, to the improvement of human relations and the accompanying conditions of living".
Vis. Chap. IX "Social Laws".

exists it can only be as the study of a world as yet unknown, and different from those explored by other sciences. But this world is nothing if not a system of realities."¹ There is truth in this observation of the reaction to any new study - Julian Huxley, speaking as a scientist himself, says much the same thing, stating that they do not think criticism of social studies on the grounds that they are not "quite scientifically respectable" can be taken as of final significance. "All young sciences are attacked by their elders on the ground of irregularity in their canons of scientific behaviour", he says "but they cannot expect to establish rigorous canons until they are no longer young, any more than an untried adolescent can be expected to possess the assurance and practical skill of a man in the prime of life."²

But if these natural initial doubts are carried so far as to ignore entirely the tremendous possibilities of sociology, they are more than worthless - "Nothing is so vain and sterile as the scientific puritanism which, on the pretext that a science has not been founded, advises non-participation, and recommends men to contemplate with indifference, almost resignation, the march of events. Besides the sophistry of ignorance, there is the sophistry of science which is no less dangerous."³

1. "Le Suicide" p.249.

2. J. Huxley - "The Uniqueness of Mankind" p.35.

3. Viz. "Le Suicide".

This is not to say, however, that the newness of sociology does not make an appreciable difference to the approach the sociologist adopts; "When he penetrates the social world he must be aware that he is penetrating the unknown; he must feel himself in the presence of facts whose laws are as unsuspected as were those of life before the era of biology".¹ This unknown world must be explored with a method peculiar to it and not one adopted from some other sphere of study, and it is for the outline of such a method that Durkheim is famous.

Starting from the postulate already noted (i.e. that sociology should study those social facts distinguished by their constraining qualities) he assures that the proper study of sociology is "every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint, or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right, independent of its individual manifestations"². Taking facts of this sort as the subject-matter of sociology, it is clear that Durkheim avoids the objections to a social science arising from the difficulty of dealing with the human mind. Some of the objections Dilthey raised to the establishment of sociology as a science, for instance, arise from his conviction that sociology is the study of individuals in society rather than social organization sui

1. P.xiv Preface to 2nd Ed. "The Division of Labour in Society" (Simpson Ed.).

2. Chap. I - "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique".

generis. Social studies deal with the individual, he says, but human minds are not quantities and cannot be measured; moreover, dealing with the individual, social studies must select and formulate questions from the point of view of value. None of these objections arises in connection with Durkheim's proposed field of study. He would have sociology as the science of social institutions, social facts which are undoubtedly dependent on the individual in that they cannot arise except through him, as Durkheim never attempts to deny, but which can nevertheless be observed in themselves. For an example Durkheim puts forward the statistics it is possible to collect about suicide or the birth-rate. Here are facts and figures by means of which a trend otherwise unobserved can be studied in a tangible form, and about which conclusions can be reached which are not based on philosophic generalities.

Starting thus with a definition of the facts to be studied, Durkheim evolves the rules of his methodology. The task of the sociologist is to analyse the causes of social processes, and these causes must be sought in the internal constitution of the group; "this conception of the social milieu as the determining factor of collective evolution is of the highest importance. For if we reject it, sociology cannot establish any relations of causality"¹. The aim of sociology is

1. Chap. V "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique".

therefore "to discover the different aspects of this milieu which can exert some influence on the course of social phenomena¹

In this attempt to trace the cause of social processes, the sociologist should observe certain rules - "The first and most fundamental rule is 'consider social facts as things'², for up to the time when Durkheim was writing, sociology had dealt with concepts more than with things. One might think such concepts as much the concern of sociology as the social facts Durkheim distinguishes, but in his opinion they are to be guarded against. For a "thing" is characterised by the impossibility of its modification by a sheer act of will - "We have already seen" he says "that social facts have this characteristic. Far from being a product of the will, they determine it from without; they are like moulds in which our actions are inevitably shaped".³ Sociology is essentially, then, objective and not subjective in approach. That is why Durkheim's second rule for sociologists undertaking the study of some social phenomenon is to eradicate all preconceptions, and thirdly to define the things he treats in order that his subject-matter may be clearly known. For men in studying their environment deal with illusions rather than facts, "therefore

1. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" Chap. V.

2. Ibid. Chap. II.

3. Ibid. Chap. II.

the mind, encountering no resistance in this imaginary world, and conscious of no restraint, gives itself up to boundless ambitions and comes to believe in the possibility of constructing or rather reconstructing the world by virtue of its own resources, exclusively and at the whim of its desires. If such was the case with the natural sciences it would be much more so in the history of sociology. Man already had ideas on law, morality, the family, the state and society itself before the advent of social science, for these ideas were necessary conditions of his life. In sociology, especially, these prejudices or 'idols', to use Bacon's expression, are likely to exercise undue ascendancy over the mind and to be substituted for the study of facts."¹ Hence also the last of the rules - the characteristics used to define the subjects must be as external and objective as possible, for the sociologist must endeavour to consider social facts from an aspect that is independent of their individual manifestations.

Such a method, such rules of discipline are obviously of use, even though they set a hard standard to maintain. It is of great value to be objective - as long as objectivity is not attained at the expense of facts. Social affairs may not always be exhaustively studied if we keep to "facts" that are easily observable, and occasionally with Durkheim one cannot

1. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" Chap. II.
Viz. also p.148 Ibid.

help feeling that he does deliberately overlook considerations because he is so strongly opposed to dealing with anything that looks like a "concept". For instance, when considering suicide and its definition, Durkheim admits that while seeking a definition of suicide, intention could pertinently be considered, but that it is too personal a factor to be considered objectively - "It would be defining suicide by a character which, however strong in interest and importance, would have the drawback of not being easily recognisable because it is not easy to observe".¹ Here one cannot help wondering if the insistence on the observable characteristics used to define a phenomenon has not overcome the need for the exactness of a definition.

But once these observations, these explanations are collected, how shall we use them? Here we come to the point which concerns our evaluation of Durkheim's suggestions - how far is sociology to be practically concerned with the problems it studies. As I think H.^{G.} Wells remarked "There is no such thing as dispassionately considering what is without considering what is intended to be". How far does this apply to sociology? Is its aim merely to collect valid observations or to use these observations?

1. "Le Suicide" p.5.

Take, for instance, the functions Ginsberg sets out as belonging to sociology. Sociology, he says -

- "(1) Seeks to provide what may be called a morphology or classification of types and forms of social relationships, especially of those which have come to be defined in institutions and associations.
- (2) Tries to determine the relation between different parts or factors of social life; for example, the economic and political, the moral and religious, the moral and the legal, the intellectual and the social elements.
- (3) It endeavours to disentangle the fundamental conditions of social change and persistence. Since social relationships depend presumably on the nature of individuals and their relations (a) to one another, (b) to the community and (c) to the outer environment, sociology seeks to pass from its preliminary empirical generalisations to the more ultimate laws of biology and psychology and possibly also to distinctively sociological laws, that is, laws sui generis, not reducible to the laws which govern life and mind in individual organisms.... Its object throughout is to determine the relation of social facts to civilisation as a whole."

This list of functions is, as Ginsberg himself admits, more or less identical with the functions assigned to sociology by Durkheim in "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique".

- (1) Social morphology.
- (2) Social psychology.
- (3) General sociology.

But Ginsberg does not distinctly state if these functions are to serve some further practical aim, as does MacIver when he says of the role of sociology - "Sociology seeks to discover the principles of cohesion and of order within the social framework, the ways in which it roots and grows within an environment, the moving equilibrium of changing structure and changing environment the main trends of this incessant change and the forces which determine its direction at any time, the harmonies and conflicts, the adjustments and maladjustments within the structure as they are revealed in the light of human desires, and thus the practical application of means to ends in the creative activities of social man".¹ (Italics mine) We can ask then "If the function of a science is to observe and correlate certain facts and trends should it attempt to alter these trends, to interfere in a natural process of development, that is?"

It is true to say that Durkheim thought it should, and that sociology was only justified in existing if it attempted to

1. MacIver "Society" (pub. 1931) p.3.

do so. Sociology could not merely observe - "We need to know where we are going or at least to know that we are going somewhere" he says. To him sociology was not solely a study, but a promise, opening up a new way of life - "Sociology seems destined to open up a new way to the science of man".¹ True, it cannot give man a perfected plan for future social application, but "it can give something more and better. It can give us something for which there is an immediate need, I mean a body of directing ideas which will be the soul and support of our practice and which will keep us to it".² In fact, if the study is not to be practically applied it is useless to dabble in it. His chapter³ in "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" on the distinction between the normal and pathological reveals this attitude quite as clearly as his explicit statements. The question as to whether science can distinguish between the two is of the greatest importance, for on its solution depends the role assigned to science, and especially to the science of man, because for societies as for individuals health is good and desirable; if one can make a scientific distinction between health and morbidity in various orders of social phenomena, then social science will be able to throw light on practical problems, and will be justified.

1. "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life" p.447.

2. "Education et Sociologie" p.133. Vix. also pp.304-5
 "L'éducation Morale" for close relationship between moral and material worlds.

3. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" Chap. III.

For Durkheim then it is only if sociology is concerned eventually with practical problems that it is justified, and only if properly applied can it be held to be useful at all. "Although we set out primarily to study reality, it does not follow that we do not wish to improve it; we should judge our researches to have no worth at all if they were to have only speculative interest. If we separate carefully the theoretical from the the practical problems it is not to the neglect of the latter, but, on the contrary, to be in a better position to solve them."¹

In conclusion we might say that Durkheim's interest in developing sociology into a legitimate science is mostly in order to be able to apply it to practical problems. "Our principal effort is to extend scientific rationalism to human behaviour. It can be shown that behaviour of the past, when analysed, can be reduced to relationships of cause and effect. These relationships can then be transformed, by an equally logical operation, into the rules of action for the future"² he says. Or again - "It has been evident that our constant pre-occupation has been to orient it so it might have practical results. It necessarily meets these problems at the end of its researches"³. The work of the sociologist therefore is practical in aim; we must realise that this is Durkheim's

1. Preface to 1st Ed. "The Division of Labour in Society"

2. Preface to 1st Ed. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique".

3. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" p.143.

belief when we read his works, but also bear in mind in considering his suggestions that he also states that the work of the sociologist is not that of the statesman.¹ It is not with details but with general plans, so that to a critic such as Vialatoux Durkheim may seem impractical in aim.² His position may best be stated in the words with which he sums up his article "The Sociology of the Family" - "We do not concern ourselves exclusively with the details of organisation which the future will resolve for itself; let us press on further and since in fact we have the same end, unite our efforts to work in common".³

1. Pref. to 1st Ed. "The Division of Labour in Society".

2. Vis. J. Vialatoux "De Durkheim à Bergson" (Pub. 1939).

3. Article published in "Les Annales de la Faculte des lettres Bordeaux" 1888.

Part II - Sociology and its relation
to other Studies ¹

The chief point Durkheim is making about sociology is that "sociology is then not an auxiliary of any other science; it is itself a distinct and autonomous science".² But although its distinction and separation from the other social sciences is designed partly to give it authority, it is for the most part designed to do so in order to enable it to be of practical use.

As has been mentioned previously in this chapter, it is chiefly from philosophy that Durkheim wishes to divorce sociology. It has too long been rooted in philosophy, he declares, and both its scope and conclusions are hampered by the vagueness of method and the tendency to generalise that result. Sociology should not be too hardly judged because of this protracted dependence on philosophy, for young sciences do make mistakes and cannot be finally scorned for their tendency to do so if they show themselves willing to profit by their experience.

1. Articles on this subject:-

- "The Study of Social Science" Revue Philosophique XXII (1886)
- "Sociology in France in the 19th Cent." Revue Bleue (1900)
- "Sociology and the Social Sciences" Revue Philosophique (1903)
- "The Relation of Sociology to the Social Sciences and to Philosophy" - Sociological Papers Vol. I (1905)

2. Viz. p.145 "Rules of Sociological Method" (Catlin Edition)

"A science born yesterday has the right to err and make mistakes, provided that it makes a note of its mistakes in such a way as to prevent their recurrence. Sociology should not announce one of its ambitions, but, on the other hand, if it would justify the hopes put in it, it should aim at becoming something other than a new form of philosophical literature. On that sociology, instead of thriving on metaphysical meditations about social matters would take as the objects of its study groups of clearly demarcated facts which one could, in a way, put one's finger on, saying where they began and ended, and that it would strictly confine itself to their study."¹

But it is not solely of the reputation of sociology that Durkheim is thinking when he insists on the necessity for divorcing it from philosophy; on the contrary, he expects as great a benefit to result for philosophy as for sociology. "This emancipation of sociology is decidedly to the advantage of philosophy. For insofar as the sociologist has not sufficiently eliminated philosophy from the social sciences, he considers social facts only from their most general aspect, the aspect from which they most resemble the other things in the

1. Preface to "Le Suicide" (pp. vi) Alcan Ed.)

It is not meant to imply that because Durkheim insisted on the separation of sociology and philosophy he did not realize the debt of the former to the latter. In his article "Sociology and the Social Sciences" (written in collaboration with Faussonnet) he says that sociology could not have risen except through philosophy; his complaint is that the dependence of sociology on philosophy has continued too long.

universe. Now, if sociology thus conceived serves to illustrate philosophy with curious facts, it does not enrich it with new views, since it points out nothing new in the objects which it studies. But if the fundamental facts of the other fields of knowledge actually recur in the social fields they do so under special forms which clarify the nature of these facts since they are their highest expression. However, in order to treat them from this aspect, we must leave generalities behind and enter into the detail of facts. Thus, as sociology becomes more specialised it will furnish more original materials for philosophical reflection.¹

Here, Durkheim is making it quite clear that it is in method chiefly that sociology must separate itself from philosophy and that it cannot help but study some of the same material and attempt to solve some of the same problems. "For the sociologist must posit as axiomatic that questions which have had an important place in history can never be superannuated; they can be transformed, they cannot perish. Therefore it is inadmissible that metaphysical questions - even the most audacious of them - which have disturbed philosophers can ever fall into neglect. But it is equally certain that they require to be cast anew. Now, precisely, we believe that sociology more than any other science can contribute to this

1. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" p.148 Catlin Ed.

reconstituting... because it is a science which, while being sufficiently restricted to be able to be grasped by one and the same mind, occupies, nevertheless, a position central enough to be able to furnish the bases for a unitary and hence philosophical speculation."¹ These new materials sociology is to provide for philosophy can be seen in the suggestions for a sociological approach to the study of religion and morality and to philosophical questions such as the theory of knowledge which Durkheim puts forward for the most part in "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life", and have been developed more recently in studies which have, I think, justified Durkheim's prophecy of the benefits to philosophy of a sociological approach to certain problems.²

But when we turn to a consideration of the relations Durkheim thinks should exist between sociology and another closely associated social study - psychology - we do not find quite the same expectations. In this case, Durkheim thinks the two should be distinguished because they are completely different, not only in method as are philosophy and sociology, but in material. The sociologist deals, or should deal, with social facts, treating them as things and applying to them a scientific method, but the psychology of which Durkheim thinks deals with the individual,³ and hence becomes an unsafe foundation for

1. From article "Religious Sociology and the Theory of Knowledge" pp.733-758 *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* XVII (1909)

2. e.g. The sociological study of the theory of knowledge in Mannheim "Ideology and Utopia".

3. *Viz.* Footnote p.47 "Sociology & Philosophy" (Ed. Bougelet) - "When we say psychology we mean, in short, individual psychology and it is better for the sake of clarity to thus limit"

scientific sociology. It is true that there exists another type of psychology, one dealing with social phenomena (and here we must remember that collective psychology is more developed now than at the time of Durkheim's writing) but this had not developed quite as Durkheim would like. Little was known about collective thinking, and although Durkheim felt there was room for a purely formal psychology, dealing with the formation and attraction of collective ideas, he felt the task had been avoided. In the absence of such a psychology, therefore, he felt it necessary to affirm that "in no case can sociology simply borrow from psychology any one of its principles in order to apply it, as such, to social facts;"¹ not only because the methods used in individual psychology are necessarily mostly subjective, but because, holding the attitude that social facts should be treated as things, he could not believe in the efficacy of tracing their origins in the thought processes of the individual. Adopting the desirable objective approach to the study of social phenomena, "the determining cause of a social fact should be sought among the social facts preceding it, and not among states

1. Preface to 2nd Ed. "Les Regles de la Methode Sociologique" (Catlin Edition).

of individual consciousness".¹ It is because this rule is not observed by social investigators that sociology is responsible for so many vaguely founded theories, according to Durkheim.

But this insistence on the impossibility of basing a study of social facts on individual psychology does not mean that the two are not realised by Durkheim to be closely related studies. We have already mentioned his plea for a psychological study of collective thinking; such a psychology would obviously have the closest interest for and connection with sociology. And, after all, since to Durkheim society is a system of mental processes² he could not help but admit that "it is still natural to search for analogies which can exist between sociological and psychological laws, because the two are immediate neighbours. Collective life, like the mental life of the individual, is made up of representations, thus presumably individual and collective representations are in some ways comparable".³

1. Pref. to 2nd Ed. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" p.111. It must be noted, however, that Durkheim did not exclude psychological factors from sociological explanations - the point is that he did not accept them as direct causes. *Vis.* p.129 "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" (Catlin Ed.) "Every time that a social phenomena is directly explained by a psychological phenomenon, one can be assured that the explanation is false."
2. *Vis.* Part I of Chap. I of this thesis.
3. Introduction to article on "Individual and Collective Representations" *Revue Métaphysique* VI (1898).

Because of this rapprochement Durkheim makes it quite clear that some psychological knowledge is necessary to the sociologist - "We do not mean to say, of course, that the study of psychological facts is not indispensable to the sociologist. If collective life is not derived from individual life, the two are nevertheless closely related; if the latter cannot explain the former it can at least facilitate its explanation. Psychological training, more than biological training, constitutes then, a valuable lesson for the sociologist."¹

Moreover, in some applications of sociology, psychology is of the highest value and importance, particularly with regard to education. "There is a special form of psychology" he says "which is of particular importance to the educationalist - that is collective psychology."² A class is, in effect, a small society, and should not be treated as if it were only a simple agglomeration of subjects independent of each other. Certainly this science is still, so to speak, in its infancy. Yet there are a certain number of its propositions which should not be ignored."³

1. pp.111-2 "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" (Catlin Ed.)

2. Yet according to Durkheim collective psychology is sociology, so his distinction here is rather puzzling.
Viz. Footnote to p.47 "Sociologie et Philosophie" -
"Collective psychology is sociology".

3. Chap. III "Education et Sociologie"

Nevertheless, in spite of this closeness between the fields of study, it is on the need for their separation that Durkheim puts his final stress. "This closeness, far from justifying the conception which reduces sociology to non-existence except as a corollary of individual psychology, on the contrary throws into relief the relative independence of the two worlds and of the two sciences"¹ he says. Psychological training undoubtedly is valuable to the sociologist, "but it will not be useful to him except on condition that he emancipates himself from it after having received profit from its lessons, and then goes beyond it by special sociological training. He must abandon psychology as the centre of his operations".²

The dislike for conclusions gained by subjective rather than objective methods which leads him to condemn the basing of sociological decisions on individual psychology leads him also to a stress on the need for the removal of ethics from the sphere of philosophical speculation and its foundation as a science to be undertaken by sociology. It is one branch of study in which ideological and subjective elements are still strong, and where their effects are markedly detrimental to the practical effectiveness. "According to a theory whose partisans belong to most diverse schools, science can teach us

1. Introduction to article on "Individual and Collective Representations".

2. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" p.122 (Catlin Ed.)

nothing about what we ought to desire. 'Science' says a writer already quoted 'can indeed illuminate the world, but it leaves darkness in our hearts; the heart must find its own light'. Science thus loses all or almost all practical effectiveness and consequently its principle justification for existence. Why strive for reality if this knowledge cannot serve us in life?"¹ It is because of the prevalence of views of the type Durkheim quotes that the scientific contribution to ethics is nil; ethics tends to deal with concepts rather than with ethical systems, as they are found in existence - "the actual contributions of scientific investigations to economics and ethics is very limited, while that of art is preponderant. Ethical theory is limited merely to a few discussions on the idea of duty, the good and the right."² It is precisely discussions of this sort that Durkheim wishes to avoid as being completely fruitless; their place should be taken by a science of ethics which would approach ethical questions from a different angle. Yet, as Lévy-Bruhl said "A large number of philosophers are attracted to sociology and accept its essential position, but they continue teaching theoretical ethics according to traditional methods. They seem unaware that they must make a choice between the two."³

1. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" Chap. III (Catlin Ed.)

2. Ibid. Chap. II.

3. Lévy-Bruhl - "La Morale et la Science des Mœurs" (Pub. 1905)

Durkheim has definitely made that choice. Despite his strong moral sense, or perhaps because of the combination of it with his sociological interests, for him, as we have seen, morality springs from society. As he argued in "L'éducation morale", man is mediocre in morality and is only elevated by society. Man does not exist in a void and is not a being reducible to a single stereotype. "This general man everywhere and always identical with himself is only a logical concept without objective value. The real man evolves as does the environment in which he lives."¹ In short, "A society is not a system of organs and functions - it is the source of moral life".² But since morality is social in origin and there is not one universal form of society, but many diverse societies, it follows that every separate society has its own separate system of morality and moreover this system of morality peculiar to one society undergoes constant changes. "For each people at a determined moment of its history, there exists a system of morality, and it is in the name of this

1. "La science de la morale positive en Allemagne" - Article in Revue de l'intérieur de l'enseignement XIII (1887) p.43
2. "Sociologie et Philosophie" pp.132-3.

reigning morality that assemblies condemn and opinion judges"¹ or again "At each moment of history and in the conscience there is a determined place for clear ideas, reflected opinions, in short for intuitive knowledge, beyond which it cannot normally extend. It is the same with morality. Each people has its own morality which is determined by the conditions in which it lives. Another, therefore, cannot be inculcated be it ever so elevated without disorganisation as a consequence."²

In short the conclusion is that "the positive science of morality is a branch of sociology" for "the moral rules are moral only in relation to certain experimental conditions; and consequently, the nature of moral phenomena cannot be understood if the conditions on which they are dependent are not determined".³ At this point, having classed morality as a social fact we are back at the conception which links all Durkheim's ideas on sociological method and the relation of sociology to the social sciences, i.e. that the causes of social phenomena must be sought among social facts.

1. Section I "Determination du fait moral" (article) pub. in "Sociologie et Philosophie" finally. It must be noted though that although Durkheim affirms the existence of this common social morality this view does not entirely preclude individual morality. Vis. p.56 "Sociologie et Philosophie" - "Moral reality presents two different aspects it is necessary to distinguish clearly. For each people at a determined moment of their history there exists a morality. But outside this moral system there exist a multitude of others, an innumerable multitude. Each individual, in effect, each moral conscience interprets the common morality in its own way; each individual understands it, view it from a different angle". Vis. also pp.56-7 Ibid.

2. "The Division of Labour in Society" pp.238-9.

3. Ibid. Original Introduction (printed as Appendix in Simpson Edition).

"No less than any other social phenomena the moral law is formed, transformed, and maintained in accordance with changing demands; these are the only conditions the science of ethics tries to determine."¹

It is the attempt to view the individual as the product of the social environment which leads him to deplore the ethical concept of "general man" which is at the root of his other suggestions for corollaries of the science of sociology, and for the practical application of its conclusions. Where the science of ethics is concerned the organisation on a scientific basis gives the advantages of prudence "While the science of ethics does not make us indifferent or resigned spectators of reality, at the same time it does teach us to treat it with extreme caution".² This prudence, far from being a disadvantage, gives the would-be reformer a much clearer insight into the close connections existing between every aspect of social life and hence leave him better able to deal with the problems he undoubtedly faces. "For instance" he says "today the problem consists of seeking what the morality of a society such as ours should be, characterised by an increasing concentration and unification by means of the ever-growing multitude of means of communication which link different parts of the community, by the absorption of local

1. Preface to 1st Ed. of "The Division of Labour in Society"

2. Ibid.

into general life, by means of the slope of large-scale industry, by the development of the spirit of individualism which accompanies the concentration of all the social forces."¹ This is one practical problem for the science of ethics; closely connected with it, in fact almost identical, is the problem to be faced in attempting to replace the loss of community spirit caused by the weakening of religion and the family - in fact, the reaffirmation of man's spiritual (for Durkheim, that is 'social') values. We have already seen that there are others which Durkheim poses for sociology and its subsidiary studies. For example since to him education is "the socialisation of the child"² it should be made the subject of a science. Here again there is no more the "general child" than there is "the general man", but a young person who must eventually take his place as a fully-developed member of society, and hence should be fitted into it as well as he might, by means of careful studies of the nature and needs of a particular society, and a close co-ordination of the educational system to them.

It can be seen therefore that in general in advocating the separation of sociology from the other social sciences, Durkheim is attempting to benefit the latter as well as the former both in the variety of materials for their studies and the use to which they put them.

1. "Sociologie et Philosophie" pp.91-2.

2. *Vis.* Chapter on Education in Part II of this thesis.

Our final conclusion to the chapter must be, then, that Durkheim is limiting the scope of sociology, and insisting on the use of scientific method, because only in this way can it be ensured that sociology will be sufficiently autonomous and sufficiently well-regarded to be able to be of practical use. The independence he demands for sociology in the academic world is necessary for sociology in practice. "With reference to practical social doctrines" he says "our method permits and commands the same independence. Sociology, thus understood will be neither individualistic, communistic, nor socialistic, in the sense commonly given these words. On principle, it will ignore these theories in which it could not recognise any scientific value, since they tend, not to describe or interpret, but to reform social organisation. At least, if it takes an interest in them, it is in proportion as it sees in them social facts which can aid it in both understanding the social reality and in disclosing the needs that are the motivating power in society."¹ It is precisely the independence of sociology, then, that is to aid it to view practical problems without prejudice.

In short, his answer to the question "What should be the aim of sociology?" is that it should be the gaining of a sufficiently accepted body of knowledge to be of use in the treatment and solution of social problems. In his own words "Why strive for reality if this knowledge cannot concern us in life?"²

1. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" p.142 (Gatlin Ed.)

2. Ibid. Chap. III.

CHAPTER THREETHE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY

In asking ourselves the last of the three questions preliminary to an estimate of Durkheim's practical suggestions - i.e. "how far are there any factors to complicate the application of the type of morality Durkheim is advocating for the well-being of society?", we necessarily enter into some consideration of the nature of constraint and the problem of authority

The authority of society stressed by Durkheim is a moral one which "opposes itself to that of material authority, of physical supremacy".¹ But although Durkheim realized this opposition he did not deal with the confusion and difficulty to which it could lead, either because he did not realize its extent, or because, more probably, events had not focussed his attention on it. For him moral constraint is normal and desirable, material constraint abnormal and undesirable, yet as Laski says, although it may be abnormal, and obedience and unity produced by force artificial, they nevertheless do exist, and cannot be ignored;² particularly so, one might add, since they tend increasingly to disturb the acceptance of the social constraint Durkheim elaborates.

1. "Sociologie et Philosophie" p.107. (Fourth objection to article "Determination du fait moral" answered).

2. Chapter One - Laski - "Authority in the Modern State" (Pub. 1919).

It is interesting to note how all the ideas Durkheim holds on the nature of man, morals and society, lead him to the same stress on the necessity for social discipline. The notion of morality itself, for him, is analysable into two parts - duty and good, the former being "morality inasmuch as it commands", the latter "morality conceived of a desirable thing". These two elements are inseparable in whatever context morality is placed. A moral discipline therefore can only seem to Durkheim to be a spirit of stable attachment subject to the attraction of the good (i.e. the desirable) - it is therefore a blend of duty and desirability.

Let us take with this Durkheim's conception of the nature of man. Man is, in the first place, amoral, Durkheim holds, drawn to neither good nor duty - we have seen that it is because of this that primary education is so important in that it is man's introduction to those social duties and goods which he must observe through life. Yet, in spite of this initial amorality, man is not, as one might suppose, happy if he is left alone and given free rein to follow his own desires; on the contrary, if he is allowed to do so he is most unhappy, since his desires are unlimited and he is constantly led from one excess to another, believing all ends attainable and therefore never knowing the contentment of achieving a clearly limited goal. "A need, a desire which is free from all restraint and all regulation and by this same restriction limited and kept within bounds, can only be for the man who

feels it a source of perpetual torment of mind".¹ It is for this reason - man's unhappiness if his desires are left unbounded - that Durkheim holds that the family for instance has a salutary effect on the individual in that it provides him with a discipline and at the same time links him to some group.

But it is not merely a discipline, a controlling factor, that man requires because of his nature - he also requires a perception of some end higher than himself - "Life is only tolerable" says Durkheim "if one can perceive some *raison d'être*, if one has an end worth suffering for. The individual himself is not a sufficient end for his activity - in a word the state of egoism is a contradiction of human nature".² Man therefore needs something higher than himself to which he can attach himself, and to which he can aspire, which is sufficiently strong to control his selfish desires. For "human passions stop only before a moral power they respect. If all authority of this kind is wanting the law of the strongest prevails and, latent or active, the state of war is necessarily chronic".³

The problem here is "where is such an authority to be found?". "Morality" says Durkheim "starts where attachment to a group begins"⁴ - looking for the highest group possible

1. "L'éducation morale" p.45.

2. "Le Suicide" pp.224-5.

3. Preface to 2nd Ed. "The Division of Labour in Society".

4. "Sociologie et Philosophie" p.63. (Article on "Détermination du fait moral").

we find society - and there is the answer. "Society alone is over and above individuals. It is thus from that that all authority emanates. It is society which imparts to such and such human qualities their character sui generis, the prestige which raises above themselves the individuals who possess these qualities."¹ Society therefore is man's natural fulfillment - it is something he needs because of his own intrinsic nature, yet it is something which has authority over him, it is moral - "It is easy to see that duty is society inasmuch as it imposes rules and sets limits to our nature; while the good is society inasmuch as it is a reality richer than our own to which we cannot attach ourselves without an enrichment of our own being."²

It is this "enrichment of being" which puts man above the animals - in other words man is only man insofar as he is a member of an enduring society. It is from society that he derives the ways of thinking and acting, the customs, traditions, arts and sciences that make man the supreme product of evolution. In this case it can only be said that man, far from losing richness of personality, gains it by living under the authority of society - he benefits by living under constraint. "The individual submits himself to society and this submission is the condition of his liberation.

1. "L'éducation morale" p.103.

2. Ibid. p.110.

To liberate himself for man is to free himself from physical forces."¹ In appearance this view of man's benefit from constraint is similar to that of Hobbes, who also held that man benefitted from living under the constraint of society and that without it, far from being the state of happy innocence conceived by Rousseau, the life of man would be one of "continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."² But in reality the two approaches to the question of the advantages accruing to the individual from social life are radically different - Hobbes is thinking materially, as it were, Durkheim spiritually.

When Hobbes says man benefits from social constraint he thinks of what might be called mechanical constraint - e.g. laws forbidding theft, murder, etc. which preserve for man at the loss of some freedom of action the safety of his person and possessions. But when Durkheim speaks of the benefit of social constraint he thinks of the moral and spiritual enrichment afforded to man's nature, not so much by definite prohibitions and restraints (since these would be only outward symbols of the feelings of the group) as by the constraint which to him is a moral obligation to obey a rule.

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1. "Sociologie et Philosophie" p.106.
Viz. also p.326 "The Division of Labour in Society".
 2. Part I Chap. XIII Hobbes - "Leviathan" (1651)

It follows therefore that constraint in the Durkheimian sense is not every kind of regulation. Constraint one might resent as an infringement of normal liberty "only begins when regulation no longer corresponding to the true nature of things and accordingly no longer having any basis in customs can only be invalidated through force."¹ Looked at in this way there is little reason why authority in society should be resented by the individual, for "Authority thus understood has nothing violent or repressive about it; it consists entirely in a certain moral ascendancy."²

In Durkheim's view, then, there should be, as stated before, no conflict between the individual and society; the former cannot normally oppose the latter on the grounds that it obstructs his liberty of spirit and denies dignity to human personality if his true liberty is found when he participates in social activity. "These two terms (liberty and authority, that is) imply rather than cancel out each other. Liberty is the daughter of authority properly understood. For to be free is not to do as one pleases, it is to be one's own master."³ Here then, Durkheim in affirming the value and importance of social constraint is not, and the point cannot be too strongly stressed, preaching the necessity for the effacement of individual personality or refusing any worth to the isolated

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1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.376.
 2. "Education et Sociologie" p.71.
 3. Ibid. p.73.

individual, since he believes that "it is generally acceptable that social constraint is not necessarily incompatible with the individual personality"¹; not incompatible but complementary, that is, if the enriching qualities of social (i.e. moral) constraint are realised.

In short, Durkheim is saying that in society there are not merely contractual but stable relationships and that the equilibrium and well-being of its members is dependent upon the existence of this normative structure in regard to their conduct, since it not only regulates their choice of means to end but partly determines their needs. Durkheim's essential solution to the problem of the position of the individual in society is that the essence of social constraint is the moral obligation to obey a rule. He is therefore using a special sense of the word which is not always realised. Since social constraint embodies both the elements of morality, i.e. duty and attachment to the good, it does not exclude the possibility or importance of co-operation as Sorokin claims - "When Durkheim says that only the phenomena which are compulsive are social phenomena, he unreasonably limits their field - all instances where there is free co-operation are to be excluded from the field of social facts."² Likewise Piaget³ draws a very clear line between

1. "The Rules of Sociological Method" p.4 (Catlin Ed.)

2. Sorokin - "Contemporary Sociological Theories" p.466 (Pub.1921)

3. Vis. Piaget - "The Moral Judgment of the Child" (Pub.1932)

constraint and co-operation, criticising Durkheim on the grounds that he allows no room for the latter in the constitution of society. If this were true it would indeed be a serious criticism, for it seems fairly obvious that more and not less co-operation is needed in the majority of societies today. But both Sorokin and Piaget fail to see how close a rapprochement Durkheim's moral theory brings about between the ideas of constraint and co-operation - to him they are inseparably linked. Man, by nature, is amoral, therefore to talk of human morality without accepting the idea of constraint is meaningless; but man only has a duty, an obligation because in the first place he co-operates in society. Durkheim has reached a stage beyond that entailing an antithesis between constraint and co-operation as Professor Parsons¹ says, he has concluded that adherence is voluntary, but is none the less binding because it is morally and not physically so - co-operation when voluntary is no less a discipline. In fact Durkheim's stress on the necessity of constraint is only an insistence on the fact that social life is and always must be a natural constraint and not merely built on the assertion of individual desires.

So much for the theory of social morality - but in application it apparently meets with difficulties. No one would deny that a certain amount of social discipline, social

1. "The Structure of Social Action" - p.384. T. Parsons (1937)

influence is inescapable, but is Durkheim justified in saying that a strengthening of this kind of discipline can solve the problem of the maladjustment of the individual in civilised societies? In theory it undoubtedly would, but in practice certain complicating factors arise. In the first place there is the attitude of individuals themselves. "An over-pleasant morality is a relaxed morality",¹ says Durkheim - yet, as he comments elsewhere, the idea of the beneficial qualities of discipline is not one which is widely accepted. "Unfortunately we cannot conceal the fact that this notion of discipline and its use is still far from being accepted and popular. Public opinion still sees in all ruling an evil to which it must resign itself for the moment but must attempt to reduce to the minimum."²

But there must be some reason for this - the essence of social constraint according to Durkheim is that it is natural, spontaneous and unperceived, therefore there should be little conscious antagonism to it. Were it not for this we could explain the antagonism by the growth of individualism described by Durkheim - but even so, apart from the imperceptibility of social control man, even in civilised countries, has not been used to acting purely of his own accord, otherwise we could accept as an explanation of man's reluctance to acknowledge the

1. "Le Suicide" p.419.

2. Conclusion to article "Divorce par consentement mutuel" published in Revue Bleue 1906.

value of discipline Durkheim's phrase - "All discipline appears intolerable when one is used to acting only under rules of one's own making."¹

Why then is the individual increasingly less amenable to the notion of discipline? Huxley in his book "The Uniqueness of Man"² comments interestingly on the development of certain thought processes in man. In medieval times, he says "men in England and other western countries accepted certain schemes of thought - religious, political and philosophical, because they offered moral support and imbued man with courage to face a universe about which he knew so little. But these schemes of thought gradually began to develop, from being a support, into an abnormal constraint - they became embodied by representative authorities (e.g. the Church and State) which refused to allow man to make a natural departure from the schemes of thought they had outgrown - hence, when the revolt came it came against the discipline which enforced the ideas as well as against the ideas themselves. This in some way explains the aversion to the idea of discipline which is applied not only to material but to spiritual things; but there is another explanation in a factor which has developed rapidly during this century in particular, and that is that man is not only aware of actually perceptible authorities, but is beginning to become aware of previously

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.239.

2. "The Uniqueness of Man" - Julian Huxley - p.265 sq.

unobserved restraints because of the advance in the study of the mind. When speaking of the education of the child and his being constrained to observe certain rules Durkheim says "If in time this constraint ceases to be felt, it is because it gradually gives rise to habits and to interval tendencies that render constraint unnecessary." ¹ How many of these unconscious thought-ways and habits are raised to the level of conscious thought, and herein lies a difficulty; it is true that the individual can never entirely break away from the influence of his environment, but having become conscious of this influence he may do his best to allow for it and counteract it.

As Mannheim says "it is by no means an accident that the unconscious which has hitherto motivated our thought and activity has been gradually raised to the level of awareness".² It is not an accident that is, because it is only at a time of social instability that it may happen. But if this symptom of the social instability with which Durkheim is concerned is such a stumbling-block to the ways in which he proposes to banish that instability, what then? One cannot banish a newly-arisen science or eradicate from men's minds the self-knowledge they have acquired from it.

1. "The Rules of Sociological Method" p.6 (Catlin Ed.)

2. "Ideology and Utopia" - Karl Mannheim p.5.

But more troublesome than this difficulty is the confusion increasingly felt between types of constraint - Durkheim himself said, having reached his own definition of constraint "We do not mean to imply by that that all constraint is normal"¹; and the type of constraint he would consider abnormal is rapidly increasing in the world. He says of his own conception of constraint in society - "This constraint does not result from more or less learned machinations destined to conceal from men the traps in which they have caught themselves. It is due simply to the fact that the individual finds himself in the presence of a force which is superior to him and before which he bows; but this force is an entirely natural one. It is not derived from a conventional arrangement which human will has added bodily to natural reality; it issues from innermost reality, it is the necessary product of given causes. Also, recourse to artifice is unnecessary to get the individual to submit to it of his own free will."² But in the majority of civilised societies the constraint of which men are most aware does have these properties - it is not the emanation from some superior natural force but of an "arrangement" (i.e. the state, government) and apparently a great deal of artifice is necessary before the individual "submits to it of his own free will".

1. Footnote to p.4. "Rules of Sociological Method" (Gatlin Ed.)

2. Ibid. p.125.

I think it is because of the development of the state together with the increasing complexity of society, and still more that the organ of government, the 'state' is liable to be confused or identified with society that constraint and authority is viewed as such an evil and conceived in such a different manner from that in which Durkheim viewed it.

When the individual was concerned with society as a whole, his ties, duties, etc. tended to be spontaneous and ruled by moral relations and tradition. With the development of strong central authority together with an increasing complexity of occupations the problem of authority becomes a new one. "In effect what has characterised our historical development" says Durkheim "is that it has successively eradicated all our old social framework."¹ Family groupings, territorial groupings, productive groupings - all have had their day and gone. Comparing the initial stages of the development with the later ones therefore, in Durkheim's own words - "Society is not seen in the same aspect in the two cases. In the first, what we call society is a more or less organised totality of beliefs and sentiments common to all the members of the group. This is a collective type. On the other hand the society in which we are solidary in the second instance is a system of different special functions which definite relations unite".² In this

1. "Le Suicide" p.446.

2. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.127.

case the position of the individual is very different - in the former state he is linked to society, in the latter united to fellow-men and indirectly to society by "definite relations" These definite relations fall increasingly under the charge of the government, as being the only body which is at once centralised and recognised enough to supervise them, therefore the trend of events is making the government more and more predominant. Not only that, but it is becoming by acceptance if not by nature a different thing from the government considered by Durkheim. He says "Whenever a directive power is established its primary and principal function is to create respect for the beliefs, traditions and collective practices. That is, to defend the common conscience against all enemies, within and without."¹ But events tend to distort the government from a "directive power" recognised as one social group among others, events which he mentions himself without apparently recognising their significance. Taking some of his statements for instance and adding them together:-

- (a) The individual, as Durkheim constantly says, is less directly attached to his society as the grip of intermediary institutions such as the family and religion slackens.
- (b) "One collective force only survived the upheaval, that is, the state. It tends therefore by the force of circumstances to absorb into itself all

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.84.

the forms of activity which can present a social character."¹

- (c) In addition to that, society grows more complex as it evolves and relationships need more and more supervision, this supervision always, up to the present, meaning increasing centralisation.

The result of the combination of these three tendencies seems to be that the government is more and more unconsciously equated with society, as it was long ago in the Greek city state; the individual while losing the immediate sense of belonging to a group which he once possessed is instead given the sense of belonging to a state, a political organisation, since its actions increasingly concern his activities. This leads to two problems. In the first place, as has already been mentioned, with the development of a strong central authority and the direct impact of its actions on the individual, the problem of authority and liberty assumes another aspect. Where there is group authority (that is Durkheim's natural social constraint) each member in a way participates in that he is part of the very authority to which he submits - no one's liberty appears directly affronted by a shared and impersonal authority. But when a ruler or a group forming the government, the directive organ of a society, assumes increasing prominence and authority a personal element

1. "Le Suicide" p.447.

enters into the question. Man may understandably resent the authority of another or of others if he feels it is an authority in which he has no share and to which he makes no contribution.¹ As Spencer said "Every man must have a master, but the master may be nature or may be a fellow man. When he is under the impersonal coercion of nature we may say that he is free, and when he is under the personal coercion of someone above him we call him according to the degree of his dependence a slave, a serf or a vassal."²

What we are saying amounts to this - modern developments, the increasing complexity of social organisation and hence the need for detailed regulation, the resulting increasing prominence of the governing body together with the individual's loss of the consciousness of belonging to a society are leading to a problem which Durkheim does not recognise in that the government, instead of being recognised as only a part of society is equated with society, and in that government - regulation, increasingly complex as the circumstances it controls become so, causes a sharp split in authority. Social constraint may continue but governmental constraint increases and may be

1. Even in a democracy where in theory every individual does have a share in government this is seldom felt by individuals and has to be constantly reiterated for resentment at authority to be avoided.

2. Introduction to "Plea for Liberty" (Pub. 1891).

opposed to social constraint. This possibility is particularly strong in the economic sphere. When saying that individual movements should be spontaneous, Durkheim says "By spontaneity we must understand not only the absence of all express violence but also of everything that can even indirectly shackle the free unfolding of the social force that each carries in himself. It supposes not only that individuals are not relegated to determinate functions by force, but also that no obstacle, of whatever nature, prevents them from occupying the place in the social framework which is compatible with their faculties."¹

Yet the individual's choice of occupation is not now in the majority of Western countries spontaneous - true we may say that the circumstances are abnormal, or that the individual must realise that it is to benefit the group that he is thus regulated in his occupation, but these objections are not really valid since the tendency to control employment is an increasing and not a temporary one, and since the individual does not in most cases accept his new job as his contribution to the group.

The result of this difficulty of the possible split between social and governmental authority is that we must conclude that the individualism Durkheim so disliked and criticised might after all be justified. The seventeenth

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.377.

century brought criticism of the authority of Church and government which probably carried the case for individualism too far since every society is something more than a mere jumble of individuals. But now individualism is possibly increasingly not, as Durkheim takes it to be, against social (i.e. natural beneficial) constraint, but against a tangible authority which, reinforcing itself with the claims of society may well not represent it at all.

I say "may well not represent it" in view of the second problem to which the predominance of the state leads - i.e. the development of totalitarianism. This is probably truly accounted for by the increased stress on the value of individual personality, without an accompanying realisation that this personality is dependent on the group, which Durkheim so regretted. He is surely right in that the individual is unhappy and purposeless when separated from social activity and left to go his own way - as Julian Huxley says, for example "The Nazi system is a negation of any civilised order. It is a form of black magic designed to exercise the despair of men caught in the death struggles of the laissez-faire world."¹ Whatever the reason it is certain that the strength of totalitarianism governments must, in the initial stages at least, come from the acceptance of the doctrine by the people as well as from their physical coercion.

1. p. viii Preface to "The Uniqueness of Man" - Julian Huxley.

As Durkheim himself says "in a general way it is easy to understand why individuals will not be submissive except to a collective despotism for the members of society can be dominated only by a force which is superior to them and there is only one which has this quality, that is the group. Any personality, as powerful as it might be, would be as nothing against a whole society; the latter can carry on in spite of it. That is why, as we have seen, the force of authoritarian governments does not come from authorities themselves but from the very constitution of society."¹

The trouble is that here again, of course, we meet with the difficulty discussed earlier - that of the increasing knowledge about the processes of the human mind, which has a two-way effect. If it teaches man more about the effect of his environment on himself, it also teaches those in power how to more subtly influence the individual mind - the increasing use of propaganda is the surest indication of the fact that the constraint with which we are most familiar today is what Durkheim would call abnormal, for with the normal constraint in society "recourse to artifice is unnecessary to submit of his own free will."²

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.194

2. "Rules of Sociological Method" (Catlin Ed.) p.123.

But chiefly this totalitarianism is due, I think, to precisely the equation or identification between the state and society which is one of the difficulties facing the application of Durkheim's theory of social constraint. Considering a thinker like Hegel,¹ for example - up to a point his conclusions are very like those of Durkheim. Freedom he said, is desirable, but conceived as the absence of all restraint it can be nothing more than a negative conception, far from being absence of restrictions, freedom should equal self-determination (i.e. a rational system of conduct) which is only achieved for the individual by the tried customs and traditions of the society in which he moves. Up to this point there is no radical difference between his reasoning and Durkheim's, both concluding that the individual's truest and most desirable development is through society. But Hegel goes on to say that what sustains the social framework is the state, and that therefore the state is the highest realisation of the moral ideal; freedom to self-determination therefore becomes a duty to obey the state. In this case if the state (and not, as Durkheim said, society) is the highest moral ideal, Durkheim's final defence against abnormal constraints breaks down for there is nothing superior to the political restraining body to which any appeal can be made. In his own conclusions "there is something which is generally accepted as superior to the state; this is

1. *Vis.* Hegel's works throughout.

morality. Morality is, no doubt, merely a matter of ideas, but these ideas are forces which move men. If it (the state) is under their authority its sovereignty has limits which it is not within its competence to transgress at will."¹

In some countries this is still true (England, for instance); as Laskei says² in England there are some things the government cannot do, because it knows public disapproval would be too strong. But in totalitarian governments this does not apply - the words of Hegel are taken literally and the state becomes the highest moral ideal. Yet at the same time that it is thus equated with society, it has "the vice of centralised authority. It is so baffled by the very vastness of its business as necessarily to be narrow and despotic and over-formal in character"³, so that it cannot afford to the individual who accepts its supremacy the satisfaction which participation in the moral life of society can.

Summing up, we can say, then, that Durkheim has a very valuable estimation of the importance of moral constraint in society and its stabilising effect on the individual, but that in applying its corollary - i.e. that in a state of lax morality and social instability it is necessary that this social discipline should be tightened - there are difficulties.

1. Article "Germany Over All" (Pub. 1916)

2. "Authority in the Modern State" Chap. I.

3. Ibid. Chap. I.

Firstly the problem of authority is no longer primarily between the individual and society, but between individual and state, therefore individualistic reactions may be more justified than Durkheim thinks and their case not met by the application of his theory of social constraint. Secondly there is a tendency for his analysis of human nature (which I think a more valid one than that of psychological hedonism, for example) and his stress on the need for some ruling authority to be perverted. His stress on group morality may become transformed into a stress on state authority and the morality of complete submission to the state, which apparently heads to the complete negation of the individual personality.

It seems that the problem of individuality and authority is then at once an increasingly difficult and an increasingly vital one, for as Professor Huxley has said "If individuality has no play society does not advance; if individuality breaks out of all bounds society perishes."¹

1. "Method and Results" - JHuxley (Essay)

CONCLUSION

During the course of this thesis we have attempted to bring out to as great an extent as possible the link formed between various of Durkheim's works by his concern with the problem of individuality - with the position of the individual in relation to the society in which he lives. Having done so we are left with two kinds of suggestions which he makes, the value of which we must estimate.

Firstly, to deal with what we have singled out as the interesting motif in Durkheim's work, there is his analysis of the needs of the individual, the reasons why society increasingly fails to fulfil them and consequently his suggestions for the improvement of the position. The starting point is quite clear; Durkheim is supposing that man fundamentally needs a moral ascendancy to which he can look with respect and which will provide for him a moral code which, although interpreted according to his own individual nature will nevertheless provide a secure moral background without which he is purposeless and unhappy. Furthermore, Durkheim is affirming that this moral ascendancy does not have to be provided artificially, but is found naturally and normally in society.

What is making the position of the individual so unstable in civilised societies at the present time is that this moral ascendancy proper to a society is not felt by the majority of the members living in it - their sense of belonging to a society and of its respect-inspiring quality is becoming increasingly dimmed as the links which connect them intimately to social life are loosened or lost. In Durkheim's own words "The more we advance into history the more human civilisation becomes a thing of vastness and complexity; consequently the more it grows out of the range of individual consciousness the more the individual feels that society goes far beyond him. Each member of an Australian tribe carried within himself the entirety of his tribal civilisation; in our actual civilisation each of us can only reach a feeble integration with society."¹

Since then society is not regarded as it would normally be, and the individual is unhappy because he is left without a moral mainstay, a mainstay which the aim of his own self-development cannot properly provide, Durkheim has proposed ways of bringing back some of the lost intimacy of the individual with his society, ways which may be divided into three groups.

1. "Sociologie et Philosophie" p.78.

- (a) He proposes the inculcation of the respect for society, and a stress on its moral superiority through two media. Firstly such respect is to take the place of the religious beliefs which are already fading, so that man may have a "lay morality".¹ Secondly this result is to be achieved primarily by means of education - the child is to be taught his position in relation to the society in which he lives much as he was once taught (and still is in some schools, e.g. Roman Catholic and Church of England) his position in relation to God.
- (b) He proposes the reformation (in the true sense of the word) of some social groups - notably those not too weak to preserve. The family, for instance, the disintegration of which is one of the chief contributory causes of the instability of the individual's position today, can be reinforced by making divorce less easy to obtain, since it is divorce which deprives marriage and the family of their original powers of endurance and fortifying of the individual, while the economic group must be developed and placed at the base of a new moral order.

1. *Vis.* "L'Éducation morale" throughout.

(c) His last proposal is for an external study of the morality of particular studies - a study to judge what system of morality does exist there and what system of morality is appropriate.

How far are we to regard all these as valuable? Firstly, I cannot help regarding as valuable Durkheim's analysis of man and his moral needs. It would be generally accepted that a man without some source of goal which he can regard as of greater importance than himself and his own temporary desires is a man with very little stability and strength of purpose in life, a man who is in most cases restless and discontented; it seems true therefore to hold that the individualism which, taken to an extreme, sees self-development as only achievable through man's withdrawal from society and social demands cannot last. For in spite of the tenets of extreme individualists it is in effect practically impossible to distinguish between "social" and "individual" even if we can make a distinction between the "individual" and "society". A society based on the contractual relations of Spencer¹ cannot exist; contracts only hold for a short period of time, but social relations are enduring, for the individual is obviously not only materially (economically, that is) dependent on his society but emotionally dependent.

1. Vix, Part II Spencer's "Principles of Sociology" (1876-1896)

Durkheim's stress on the influence and authority of society over man is therefore the very opposite of a denial of the value of human personality. It seems to consider such value far more truly than those doctrines which say "Man must be free" or man must be anything else, as if man were anywhere and everywhere of exactly the same disposition and in the same circumstances. As Durkheim says "This general man always and everywhere identical with himself is only a logical concept without objective value. The real man evolves as does the environment in which he lives."¹ Furthermore I believe that whatever its appearance the ascendancy thus granted to society in Durkheim's conclusions does not mean that he is thinking of it as a metaphysical entity. The language he uses to communicate what is admittedly a difficult idea to express may sometimes suggest that he does so think of society, but he explicitly refutes this impression; speaking of his use of the much discussed name "collective conscience" for instance, he says "Despite its metaphysical appearance, the word designates nothing other than a collection of natural facts which should be explained by reference to natural causes."² In this chief analysis, then, I think Durkheim right in that man does need to look to some morality superior to himself, and is unhappy without it; but the practical

1. "La science positive de la morale en Allemagne" p.143
(Pub. in Revue Philosophique XXIV 1887)

2. "Sociologie et Philosophie" p.48.

suggestions with which he follows it cannot meet with such unqualified approval.

With regard to the first type of suggestion for the improvement of the individual's moral position, i.e. via religion and education - up to a point there are no real grounds for quarrelling with Durkheim except doctrinal ones. He is correct in observing that the conception of God as an external law-giver supported the system of morality in society the corollary therefore is that, if this conception of the existence of God is fading, some other central notion is needed to fulfil the same function of supporting moral rules in society, self-development not being sufficiently central or satisfying. But in suggesting replacing the fading belief in God with that of a belief in the strength of society, surely Durkheim is only attempting to replace one vague conception with another, carrying over the feelings of awe and reverence intact from one to the other. There are two great obstacles to doing this. In the first place the very foundation of religion according to Durkheim himself is unconscious awe at the strength of society, so that religion, a symbolization of worship of the group, derives its power from this awe of the group. But the logical conclusion is that if religious beliefs are losing their strength it is because their roots are weakening - because, in other words the feeling for the group is becoming less strong. It seems impossible, then, to replace religion with the very thing which it symbolised,

the very thing which, weakening, causes the fade of religion.

Moreover, the attempt to inculcate awe of the group by means of education, the attempt to retain the values of religion without its doctrines that is, involves us in a puzzling problem. It would seem impossible to consciously introduce ideas which previously derived their strength from being unconscious, as the awe for one's group which was so strong as to lead to the symbol of religion was by its nature, particularly in view of the fact that wider fields of unconscious thought-activity are now becoming accessible to conscious observation. Moreover, one can hardly put the case to the individual and demand of him his understanding of the danger of waning systems of morality and his acceptance of the compensating allegiance to society instead of God. Durkheim's plan only seems operable then if we suppose a sort of Platonic state in which an "enlightened" few supervise the attitudes of the "unenlightened" many. Since this state of affairs does not exactly exist,¹ the transitional stage to it, if we think the aim a desirable one, holds difficulties. In the sphere of education there will first be needed teachers who can impart an awe of society they may not feel themselves.

1. Except, that is, in totalitarian states, and even there it is difficult to judge how far the people are in reality intellectually and spiritually inspired by their leaders, and how far they are intimidated into an appearance of being so.

and who will therefore not be able to impress the children by sheer force of their own feeling as much as Durkheim would wish.¹ Secondly, for a generation at any rate, the aim of education will run directly contrary to Durkheim's expressed aim - the aim of education is to fit the child into his society he stresses; but during the process of referring the moral precepts taught to the central moral ascendancy of society, the teachers will be training children to hold strong beliefs not held by the adult society into which they will grow.

This difficulty of the hiatus between one state of opinion and affairs and the result of the inculcation of another also affects Durkheim's second kind of suggestion - the reformation of certain groups. "Morality commences with the attachment to a group"² he says, and this is probably true; but what if the longing to be a member of a group is so consciously realised that it is shunned as a weakness? In that case again, Durkheim's suggestions need the authority of some few savants who will put them into operation. Even so, with the reform of certain groups, as stated before,³ it seems difficult to change those of their features which depend on some widespread social development. Where the strengthening

1. *Viz.* "L'éducation morale".

2. "Détermination d'un Fait Moral" in "Sociologie et Philosophie".

3. *Viz.* Part II Chap. V.

of the family is concerned, for example, the tightening of divorce regulations alone would not be sufficient, since there are other trends discussed previously in the chapter on economic organisation which have also been causes of the loosening of family life. Yet these trends being corollaries of the increasing industrialisation of civilised societies it is difficult to see how their bad effect can be nullified if industrialisation is here to stay. Equally with the suggestions for the revival of the "groupe professionnel" objections to which have already been discussed at some length, industrialisation puts in the way the difficulty that occupations are so widespread as not to provide in themselves a suitable means of intimate organisation.¹

As for Durkheim's final suggestion for reinforcing the moral relations between the individual and his society by means of the scientific study of morality, its value is difficult to assess. Such a study is certainly a worthwhile one and would produce interesting results; moreover it would achieve no mean feat if it taught tolerance of the different moral beliefs and systems arising from different social conditions. But as far as its application to the improvement

1. Durkheim is, of course, writing of his own contemporary France, so that his views cannot strictly be applied to our own country. *Viz.* on this point, p.183 Gehlke "Durkheim's contributions to Sociological Theory" and pp.30-40 Alpert "Emile Durkheim and his Sociology".

of the moral system of a society and hence the stability of its members is concerned, it is doubtful whether such a study could give to a society the morality appropriate to it. "For morality to be able to aspire to the perfection of customs, the science of morality must be founded"¹ says Durkheim - but in the first place, accepting Durkheim's contention that the moral system of any group is social in origin and that it can become the object of study of a science of morality how can that science determine whether a society observes an appropriate moral system or an unsuitable anachronistic one. Even if some way of overcoming this obstacle is found, how can we, according to Durkheim's own pronouncements, substitute an appropriate morality for one we have decided to be inappropriate? Morality is social in origin - every moral system, that is, arises from the nature of a particular society. "Each people has its own morality which is determined by the conditions in which it lives. Another therefore cannot be inculcated, be it ever so elevated, without disorganisation as a consequence."² This is seen in many historical cases - in the case of Socrates, for instance, who in Durkheim's words "explained more faithfully than his judges the morality appropriate to society at his time"³ far

1. p. 874 Article - "Introduction a la sociologie de la famille" Pub. in Annales de la Faculte des Lettres de Bordeaux. 1888.

2. "The Division of Labour in Society" p.239.

3. "Sociologie et Philosophie" p.93.

from introducing this morality which was more appropriate to the society in which he lived, he lost his life. It seems therefore that Durkheim himself saw and admitted that a science of morality could not really change the moral system found in a society even if it wished to do so for the better, for "it should be maintained that one can never wish for a morality other than that which is required by the social state of the times."¹ Thus Durkheim himself seems to give the final objection to the hope that the establishment of the science of morality can substantially aid the society studied to stabilise its morality.

With regard to Durkheim's theory of the position of the individual in society therefore I cannot but conclude that although Durkheim's analysis of the cause of maladjustment in present-day societies is substantially correct and illuminating it cannot be cured through the application of reforms depending upon these precise things which have gone wrong.

But Durkheim makes other suggestions which cannot be included under the heading of these relating to the position of the individual in society, and it is these which we must secondly estimate. They fall mainly into two final proposals - the first regarding sociology, the second education.

1. "Sociologie et Philosophie" p.54.

Durkheim is famous for his insistence on the application of proper scientific method in sociology, but it must not be forgotten that his scientific outlook and practical suggestions for moral requirements are not two distinct and distant products of the same mind but two aspects of a uniform and practical aim. Durkheim was undeniably constantly interested in sociology *sui generis*, but he insisted on its being a science in order that it might be accepted as of practical use. This point cannot be too clearly stressed for whereas in Durkheim's day the most frequent question asked about sociology was "Shall we accept it as a legitimate branch of study?", it is now increasingly becoming "But what good can it do?". As Comte said (and Durkheim was affected more than a little by him) "Social physics does not reduce us to the simple passive observation of human events without any continuous and powerful intervention.¹... social phenomena are modifiable."² On the other hand, Durkheim's stress on method does serve as a reminder that sociology is, like any other study, a subject requiring painstaking study and not unfounded opinions and judgments. For as long as sociology does not keep apart from popular partisan struggles it will have no dignity, power or authority to "silence passions and prejudices".³ As Durkheim says "Assuredly the time when it

1. Comte "Cours de Philosophie Positive" p.405.

2. Ibid. p.394.

3. "Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique" p.124 (Catlin Ed.)

will be able to play this role successfully is still far off. However, we must begin to work now in order to put it into condition to fill this role some day."¹

His second suggestion for the establishment of a science of education seems to me to be one of Durkheim's most important and valuable proposals, and it is difficult to understand why the suggestion has not been accepted and put into practice a great deal more than it has been. Margaret Mead has indeed written on the education of the child as seen against his social environment,² but apart from this little has been done. Yet, during the past century or so the educational system has undergone considerable changes - having first been open only to a few fortunate children, it has become extended to all, and of late years the intense concentration of the education of the child on the examination system is becoming rightly condemned. Rightly, because to provide the achievement of any set examination standard as the aim of a child's education is to limit education painfully and to set it an entirely artificial and for the most part useless aim, which leaves it open to condemnations such as Rabindranath Tagore expresses so dramatically in talking of his own school. "We have come to this world to accept it, not merely to know it. We may become powerful by knowledge,

1. "Les Regles de la Methode Sociologique" p.124 (Catlin Ed.)

2. Via. Margaret Mead - "Coming of Age in Samoa" (1929) and "Growing up in New Guinea" (1930).

but we cannot attain fullness by sympathy. The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence. But we find that this education of sympathy is not only systematically ignored in schools, but is severely repressed."¹

Durkheim's clear reminder that education should fit the child into his society is timely. Increasingly as the aim of passing certain examinations fails to suffice in education, the aims taking its place are idealistic and inconsiderate of the fact that a child cannot live in a void, as it were, and that he must some day take his place in a society which has already certain ways of acting and thinking. If he is too much at variance with these, he is obviously going to be very unhappy; therefore it would pay to consider the nature of the society of which a child will finally be an active member rather than entering into yet other unsubstantial theories of what the child should be, or how he should be allowed to develop his individual expression, etc.

But our final estimate of Durkheim's work, valuing some of it, feeling other parts open to difficulties, cannot disregard the most important feature of it - that of the general keynote and purpose. Perhaps one of the most

1. Rabindranath Tagore - Article "My School" included in "Personality" (1917).

eternally discussed and increasingly complicated problems of humanity is that of the apparent conflict between social order and spiritual activity. Since the time of the Greek city-state "politics" and "ethics", man's social and man's spiritual life, that is, have become increasingly separated - perhaps not without reason since the Greek city-state offered a unique and remarkable form of organization and hence of opportunities. Small and compact enough to avoid the conflict of innumerable differences of opinion, sufficiently in touch with the outside world to be stimulated by new ideas and wealthy enough to indulge in their examination and development it also escaped the chief curse of modern societies - complicated administrative business. Nevertheless, although these advantages have been lost, the undue distinction between social and spiritual life is one which leads to difficulties in the conduct of the average man and woman. It is to Durkheim's credit that he showed much of this distinction to be artificial, the result of sophistry, and that far from being hindered man is only free to develop his spirituality because he alone participates in an enduring society. "Liberty itself is the product of regulation. Far from being antagonistic to social action it results from social action. It is far from being an inherent property of the state of nature. On the contrary it is a conquest of society over nature. Naturally men are unequal in physical force; in short, liberty is the subordination of external forces to social forces, for it is only in this condition that the

latter can freely develop themselves. But this subordination is rather the reverse of natural order. It can then realise itself progressively insofar as man raises himself above things and makes law for them - that is, insofar as he becomes a social being. For he can escape nature only by creating another world where he dominates nature. That world is society."¹

Whatever our opinions as to the value of Durkheim's investigations and the practicability of the proposals for reform he puts forward, we cannot deny the worth of the intense moral concern which runs through or parallel with his sociology. As Bouglé says "Le sociologie durkheimian est bien plutôt un effort pour fonder et justifier de façon nouvelle les tendances spiritualistes,"² and for this effort we can only respect Durkheim as the sincere and persevering sociologist he is.

1. "The Division of Labour in Society" pp.386-7.
 Vix. also p.159 sq. "Liberty in the Modern State" -
 H. Laski (1930).

2. Bouglé's Preface to "Sociologie et Philosophie" p. xxx.

A CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF DURKHEIM'S WORKSDate of
pubn.Section One - Books

- 1898 Quid Secundatus Politicae Scientiae Instituendae Contulerit.
- 1898 De la division du travail social.
- 1898 Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique.
- 1897 Le Suicide.
- 1912 Les Formes Elémentaires de la vie Religieuse.
- 1922 Education et Sociologie.
- 1924 Sociologie et Philosophie - preface by C. Bouglé
 consisting of essays:- "Représentations individuelles
 et représentations collectives".
 "Détermination d'un Fait Morale".
 "Réponses aux objections".
 "Jugements de valeur et jugements
 de réalité".
- 1925 L'éducation morale.
- 1928 Le Socialisme (unfinished)

Section Two - Articles and Reviews

- 1886 The Study of Social Science (Revue Philosophique XXII)
- 1887 Les Sciences positives de la morale en Allemagne
 (Revue Philosophique XXIV)
- 1887 La philosophie dans les universités allemandes (Revue
 Interieure de l'Enseignement XIII)
- 1888 Introduction à la sociologie du famille (Annales de la
 Faculte des Lettres Bordeaux)
- 1888 Cours de science sociale. (Annales de l'Enseignement)
- 1888 The Economic Programme of Schaeffle (Revue d'économie
 politique II)

Date of
pubn.

Section Two - Articles & Reviews, contd.

- 1888 Subde et Natalité. (Revue philosophique XXVI)
- 1895 L'Origine du mariage dans l'espèce humaine d'après
Westermarck. (Revue philosophique XL)
- 1895 L'enseignement philosophique et l'agregation de
philosophie. (Revue Philosophique XXXIX)
- 1895 Crime et Santé sociale (Revue Philosophique XXXIX)
- 1898 La prohibition de l'inceste et ses origines (Année
Sociologique I)
- 1898 L'individualisme et les intellectuels (Revue Bleue IV -
Vol. X)
- 1898 Représentations individuelles et collectives
(Revue Métaphysique VI)
- 1899 Definition of Religious Phenomena (Année Sociologique II)
- 1900 Sociology in France in the Nineteenth Century (Revue Bleue)
1
- 1901 Deux Lois d'évolution penale (Année Sociologique IV)
- 1902 Sur le totemisme (Année Sociologique V)
- 1903 (In collaboration with M. Mauss)
De quelques formes primitives de classification
(Année Sociologique VI)
- 1903 Sociologie et sciences sociales (Revue Philosophique)
- 1903 Pédagogie et sociologie (Revue Philosophique)
- 1905 Sur l'organisation matrimoniale des sociétés
Australiennes (Année Sociologique VIII)
- 1905 Réponse à une enquête sur la morale sans Dieu (La Revue LXX)
- 1905 The Relation of Sociology to social sciences and
to Philosophy (Sociological papers Vol. I)
- 1906 La Détermination du Fait Moral (Bulletin of French
Philosophical Society)
- 1906 L'évolution et le rôle de l'enseignement secondaire
en France.
Le Divorce par consentement mutuel
(Both in Revue Bleue V Vol. V.)

Date of
pubn.

Section Two - Articles & Reviews contd.

- 1909 Examen critique des systemes classiques sur les
origines de la pens e religieuse. (Revue Philosophique LVII)
- 1909 La sociologie religieuse et theorie de la
connaissance (Revue Metaphysique XVII)
- 1910 Chapter on Method in the Social Sciences (Methode dans
les Sciences)
- 1913 Le probleme religieuse et la Dualite de la Nature
Humaine (Bulletin of French Philosophical Society)
- 1916 L'Allemagne au-dessus de tout. Mentalite
Allemagne et la guerre.

DURKHEIM'S WORKS IN RELATION TO THOSE OF SOME OTHERWRITERS

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Other works of social interest</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>Durkheim (1858-1917)</u> |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1857 | <u>AUGUST COMTE</u> | | |
| 50 | Cours de Philosophie Positive. The Evils of Dispersed Speciality. | | |
| 1873 | <u>JOHN STUART MILL</u> | | |
| | System of Logic (including Book on Method in the Social Sciences) | | |
| 1903 | <u>HERBERT SPENCER</u> | | |
| | Social Statics | | |
| | (1859 - DARWIN'S "Origin of Species") | | |
| 76) 80) 96) | Principles of Sociology 3 vol. | 1886 | Studies in Social Science. |
| | | 1887 | Positive Science of Morality in Germany. |
| | | 1888 | Several articles on family, suicide, &c. |
| | | 1893 | The Division of Labour in Society. |
| | | 1895 | Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique. Several articles. |
| 1925 | <u>PARETO</u> | | |
| 7 | Manual of Political Economy | 1897 | Le Suicide. Several articles. |
| | <u>FRAZER</u> | | |
| 10 | The Golden Bough | | |
| 11 | Psyche's Task | | |
| 11-12 | Belief in Immortality | 1912 | The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. Several articles. |

Durkheim's Works in Relation to those of some other Writers, contd.

| No | <u>Other works of social interest</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>Durkheim (1858-1917)</u> |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------|
| 16 | <u>PARETO's Treatise of General Sociology</u> (Published as "Mind & Society") | | <u>Edited and Published Posthumously</u> |
| 1-1917 | <u>TYLOR</u> | 1922 | Education et Sociologie. |
| 1924 | Primitive Culture | 1924 | Sociologie et Philosophie. |
| | | 1925 | L'education morale. |
| | | 1928 | Le Socialisme. |

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