

International Sociology

<http://iss.sagepub.com>

Rethinking Durkheim's Intellectual Development II: Working Out a Religious Sociology

Jeffrey C. Alexander

International Sociology 1986; 1; 189

DOI: 10.1177/026858098600100205

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://iss.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/1/2/189>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



International Sociological Association

Additional services and information for *International Sociology* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://iss.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://iss.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations <http://iss.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/1/2/189>

RETHINKING DURKHEIM'S INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT II: WORKING OUT A RELIGIOUS SOCIOLOGY*

Jeffrey C. Alexander

Abstract In the first part of this paper I established Durkheim's intense dissatisfaction with the materialism of his earlier work. I demonstrated also how the series of critical reviews of this work embarrassed Durkheim and crystallized his desire to revise his theory. Finally, I showed how a much more subjectivist theory emerged in the 1893-1896 period. In this second part, I argue that these developments were themselves transitional. Beginning in the published work of 1896, there emerges a much more subjectivist theory still. Durkheim calls this his 'religious sociology'. With it, he felt, he could finally present the alternative to materialism he had always sought, and through it he argued with his critics that he had never been 'materialist' at all! The 'spiritual programme of Durkheim's later writings' has never been appreciated. In the last twenty years of life he sought to rethink and rewrite every aspect of his theory of society. Properly understood, this theory, though badly one-sided, offers a precious legacy to contemporary studies of cultural life.

In my conclusion to Part I of this essay, I argued that by the middle of the 1890s Durkheim found himself in a real quandary. From the dramatic shifts which immediately postdated *The Division of Labour* in 1903, from responses to reviews of this and other early work, and from more personal documents as well, it seems clear that Durkheim realised, consciously or not, that the theory which had informed so much of *Division* was a drastic mistake. But his positivist faith that scientific objectivity must reveal the very consistency of social life, his intellectual pride in the integrity of his theorising, and perhaps also his lack of critical self-consciousness - all of these factors prevented Durkheim from acknowledging in the mid-1890s that he was, in fact, embarked upon a drastic theoretical revision. To his understandable but, nonetheless, illegitimate indignation, no one seemed aware of this fateful turn - neither his antagonistic critics nor his faithful students. If his new path were to be recognised - if his divergence from the theory of Marxian socialism were ever to be recognised for what it was - his innovation would have to be asserted in a more emphatic and radical way.

The Transition: 'Revelation' and Anti-Materialist Reconstruction

At a later and more secure point in his intellectual career, Durkheim talked about the 'revelation' that had allowed him to resolve this quandary. 'It was not until 1895', he wrote in the 1907 letter (Durkheim 1907) that protested a polemical analysis of the history of his work, 'that I achieved a clear sense of the essential role played by religion in social life'.

It was in that year that, for the first time, I found the means of tackling the study of religion sociologically. This was a revelation to me. That course of 1895 marks a dividing line in the development of my thought, to such an extent that all my previous researches had to be taken up afresh in order to be made to harmonise with these new insights... This reorientation was entirely due to the studies of

* This is the second part of a two-part article. The first part 'On "Marxism" and the Anxiety of Being Misunderstood' appeared in Vol. 1, No. 1, pp.91-107.

religious history which I have just undertaken, and notably to the reading of the works of Robertson Smith and his school (1907 : 612-614).¹

Durkheim refers here to the course on religion, which he first offered at Bordeaux in the school year 1894-95, a course in which he encountered the new historical approach to religion. Smith's work was revolutionary because it linked the theological ideas of the great religions to religious practice and ritual association, and it argued that this interaction is what gave to symbols their sacred power.² Knowledge of Smith's work was crucial for Durkheim, because it allowed him to transform the scheme of affective and moral interaction of his middle period work into a more comprehensive understanding that linked the power of solidarity to the sacred ideational forces he called collective representations.

Few analysts have been aware of this formative break in Durkheim's development, but even the few who have been so aware have almost always taken this encounter with Smith as being revolutionary in itself, as constituting an 'epistemological break' *sui generis*.³ In view of the preceding discussion, however, it is clear that this encounter must be seen in the context of Durkheim's on-going development: it offered him an escape from the quandary he faced. Durkheim felt compelled to find a way of making his subjectification of social order at once more explicit and more refined. It was only within this context that he gave his course on religion and encountered the new anthropological writings of Smith and his followers.

Durkheim could have been so attracted to Smith only because he himself had already embarked on a similar path. Moreover, while Smith shared with Durkheim an emphasis on the human practice, or association, that underlined any commitment to ideal beliefs, Smith applied this thinking about the relation between beliefs and practices only to religious activity, not to social action itself. Why, then, does Durkheim's public statement insist that his encounter with Smith initiated a much more radical break, one that forced him completely to rethink all his previous work? Because, quite simply, Durkheim had never publicly admitted, and may himself never consciously have been aware, that his own writing had already taken a dramatic turn with the earlier publication of *Rules*. Nonetheless, Durkheim did not, in fact, really abandon all of his pre-1895 sociology. Indeed, it was the momentum created by his earlier shift that led him to find in the anthropology of religion the more voluntaristic vocabulary he so urgently sought. The subjective model of association was already in place in early 1894. When he encounters religion later that year, or in 1895, there is more of a convergence than a radical break. Rather than a call to start anew, Durkheim sees in Smith's writing on religion a means of finally completing a renewal that is well underway. He read this theory of religion in a way that meshes perfectly with his own developing theory of association.

The result was a theory that, no matter how flawed by an idealist strain, allowed Durkheim to solve the theoretical problem that had always prevented

RETHINKING DURKHEIM'S INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

him from achieving his fundamental theoretical and ideological goals. He now understood how society could be determinate, organised, and voluntary at the same time: collective order would be accepted because it was held to be sacred. It would be revered and sanctified in the very same moment that it would be obeyed. Although Durkheim's systematic understanding of the religious nature of society did not appear until 1897, he had already begun to express his intuition in 1896, and in the final Book of *Suicide* we find him arguing that legal and moral precepts are the 'sacrosanct' form of living sentiments. After making this point, in fact, he makes a footnoted assertion that strikingly reveals the polemical animus that is behind this new religious reference:

We do not expect to be reproached further, after this explanation, with wishing to substitute the exterior for the interior in sociology. We start from the exterior because it alone is immediately given, but only to reach the interior. Doubtless the procedure is complicated; but there is no other unless one would risk having his research apply to his personal feeling concerning the order of facts under investigation, instead of to this factual order itself (1951 : 315, n. 12 1897).

Two years later, in the conclusion to his first attempt to describe religious representations as the centre of secular order, he makes precisely the same point. 'Nothing is wider of the mark', he writes, 'than the accusation of materialism which has been levelled against us'. 'Quite the contrary', he argues (1974 : 34 [1898]) 'from the point of view of our position, if one is to call the distinctive property of the individual representational life *spirituality*, one should say that social life is defined by its hyperspirituality'. And perhaps most revealing, in the 1902 Preface to the second edition of *Division of Labour*, he announced (1964 : 4) that his earlier explanation had been 'incomplete'. 'If it is true', he writes, 'that social functions spontaneously seek to adapt themselves to one another, provided they are regularly in relationship, nevertheless this mode of adaptation becomes a rule of conduct only if the group consecrates it with its authority'.

With the spiritualisation of his understanding of order, Durkheim could, therefore, finally fulfill his thwarted theoretical and ideological ambition, and in doing so meet head on the threat of misinterpretation produced by the increasingly polarised intellectual and political climate of the day. In the light of this motivation, it seems only fitting that as soon as this understanding has been articulated Durkheim should return to the problem of instrumental Marxism, the theoretical tradition against which he had tried to direct his work and with which he felt he had so mistakenly been identified. In the very first year that his first explicitly 'religious' sociology appeared, Durkheim initiated debate with two of the leading Marxists of the day.

One of these, Paul Lafargue, the son-in-law of Marx himself, was engaged only indirectly (see Vogt 1976). Lafargue had reviewed a book on Marxist socialism by Gaston Richard, at the time a member of Durkheim's circle and the author of the book on law which had earlier been the occasion of Durkheim's first break with the *Division of Labour*. Lafargue denounced

Richard's work on socialism as anti-Marxist and idealist. Durkheim chose to reply to Lafargue with a review of his own. For the most part, this review consisted in a complimentary summary of Richard's sharp rejection of Marx's ideas. Toward the end of the review, however, Durkheim took Lafargue directly to task. 'We ... find at once surprising and regrettable', he wrote (1978a : 135 [1897]), 'the attacks to which he Richard has been subject on the part of the authorised representatives of socialist doctrine'. After this rebuke, Durkheim stresses that his own position on socialism is similar to Richard's. Socialism has no validity as a scientific theory, he writes. It must, rather, be viewed as a collective representation: 'Socialism is, above all, the way in which certain strata of society which have been tested by collective suffering represent the latter to themselves' (1978a : 137 [1897]). The popularity or persuasiveness of socialism must not be viewed, in other words, as evidence for the validity of Marx's theory about the coercive and external nature of social order. To the contrary, socialism itself was a 'religious' force; its power, therefore, only demonstrated the representational character of social life. Socialism could be understood, Durkheim concludes, only by penetrating the underlying moral reality that produced it. It was Durkheim's new ability to define socialism specifically as a 'representation' that evidently gave him the confidence to make the challenge to Marx much more direct.

More important, however, is Durkheim's challenge to Antonia Labriola in a review that directly engages Marxism as a theoretical system. Labriola's *Essay on the Materialist Conception of History* had just been translated into French, and George Sorel, in an introduction to the work, had hailed its publication as a 'landmark in the history of socialism' (Labriola 1897 : 19). Labriola was one of the premier Marxist philosophers of his time, and he presented his master's theory in anything but a vulgar light. In making his review, therefore, Durkheim could publicly confront the major alternative to the nascent sociological theory of his middle period work. He could finally respond to the gauntlet Sorel had thrown down two years before.

Durkheim organised his response to illuminate the differences between his theory and Marx's at the most general level. After a balanced presentation of Labriola's argument, he approvingly discusses the anti-individualistic position of historical materialism. Rather than focusing on pure ideas, or on isolated individuals, historical materialism focuses on a much more fundamental level, on 'the artificial milieu which the work of associated men has created of whole cloth and then superimposed on nature' (Durkheim 1978b : 126 [1897]). Durkheim insists (1978b : 127 [1897]), however, that this kind of collective emphasis is not exclusive to Marx. What is peculiar is that Marx's collectivist theory emphasises the primacy of material factors. 'Just as it seems true to us', Durkheim writes (1978b : 128 [1897]), 'that causes of social phenomena must be sought outside individual representations, it seems to that same degree false that they can be reduced, in the final analysis, to the state of industrial technology, and that the economic factor is the mainspring of progress'. Durkheim then demonstrates this Marxist error by discussing his

own newly-discovered view of the importance of religion. In opposition to historical materialism, he claims that 'historians tend more and more to meet in the confirmation that religion is the most primitive of all social phenomena'. 'Everything', he insists (1978b : 129-130 [1897]), 'is religious in principle'. Is it not probable, he asks, 'that the economy depends on religion much more than the second on the first?'

Durkheim's interpreters have often mistakenly read his religious theory as a kind of deracinated materialism. Others, when they have recognised the seriousness of the break, usually insist on seeing in the theory that results from it an alternative that subsumes Marx's by being much more multidimensional in scope. This 1897 confrontation with Marxism demonstrates that both views are incorrect.⁴

The Spiritual Programme of Durkheim's Later Writings

The vast implications of Durkheim's religious revelation have never been fully appreciated. It is scarcely realised that after 1896 he systematically revised every piece of his sociological writings, and every one of his series of lectures as well, to make them reflect his new understanding of the role that ritual, sacred authority and representation played in secular life. Durkheim's society became a hierarchy of institutions that were composed of crystallized emotions, not material forms. At the top were sacred symbols of culture, the themes of individualism that provided the most universalistic imperatives of modern social life. At the bottom were two spheres of particularistic spirit, the family and occupational group. The state and legal orders mediated between these institutions and general culture through representations that had a more transcendent nature. Education was another institution that provided a universalising spiritual force, and it was the background for any effective functioning of law and policies. In this scheme, the coercive aspects of order are eliminated. Economics, for example, was either moralised as a form of cultural particularism, or relegated to the position of a residual category - an instrumental, individualistic, and profane fact that simply could not be explained.

At the heart of this later religious sociology was Durkheim's journal, *L'Année sociologique*. He created it as an intellectual vehicle only after he had achieved his symbolic break through in the years 1895-97, and although many of his students implicitly disagreed, he himself fully intended to make it into a statement of his religious model of social order. 'This year, as well as last', he wrote (1960 : 350 [1899]) in his important Preface to the *L'Année's* second issue, 'our analyses are headed by those concerning the sociology of religion'. He acknowledges that 'the according of the first rank to this sort of phenomenon has produced some astonishment', but he defends this decision on grounds which clearly derive from his recent theoretical insights.⁵ 'It is these [religious] phenomena', he writes (1960 : 350 [1899]), 'which are the germ from which all others - or at least almost all others - are derived'. Durkheim asserts (1960 : 350-351 [1899]) that 'religion contains in itself from the very

beginning, even if an indistinct state, all the elements which in dissociating themselves from it, articulating themselves, and combining with one another in a thousand ways, have given rise to the various manifestations of collective life'. 'One cannot understand our perception of the world, our philosophical conceptions of the soul, or immortality, or life, if one does not know the religious beliefs which are their primordial forms.' *L'Année* would concentrate on demonstrating exactly these historical connections and, by implication, Durkheim's analytical points as well. For Durkheim concludes this defence of his organisational format by emphasising that religion is not important only from an historical perspective; it is equally crucial in terms of the general theoretical framework that it provides. 'A great number of problems change their aspects completely', he writes, 'as soon as their connections with the sociology of religion are recognised.' He concludes by insisting that 'our efforts must therefore be aimed at tracing these connections'.

With the single exception of the brief reply to a critic, which I have noted above, Durkheim never admitted the extent to which his encounter with religion had transformed his sociology. Indeed, he never admitted to any radical break in his work at all. He never disclaimed the instrumental presuppositions of *Division of Labour*, nor did he ever acknowledge that *Rules* was not a codification of the theory employed in that work, but rather a blueprint of things to come. Nor, needless to say, was the religious encounter that transformed his later work ever accorded its due. This silence about the true inner development of his work is perhaps the major reason for the gross misinterpretation to which Durkheim's work has been subject, not just among so many contemporary critics but among observers in his own time and even among his own students as well. Like all of the great sociological theorists, Durkheim desperately wanted to present his work as a consistent whole. To do anything else, to acknowledge, for example, that an encounter with religion could cause major theoretical upheaval, would imply that the great body of his work was not completely 'scientific', that it was not, in other words, derived simply from acute insight into the structures of the empirical world.

Yet the warning Durkheim had once given about the failure of Saint-Simonianism might, perhaps, be read as an implicit account of the theoretical pitfalls which he has tried to avoid. 'What caused the failure of Saint-Simonianism', he wrote (1958 : 240 [1895-96]), was that 'Saint-Simon and his disciples wanted to get the most from the least, the superior from the inferior, moral rule from economic matter'. Only too late had Saint-Simon realised that self-interest 'was no longer enough', that 'without charity, mutual obligation, and philanthropy, the social order - and still more the human order - was impossible' (1958 : 185 [1895-96]). Durkheim was determined that this mistake would not happen to him. What Saint-Simon had realised only at the end of his life, Durkheim had been able to understand while there was still enough time left to change his theoretical direction in a drastic and fundamental way. Durkheim had learned that to create social order without sacrificing voluntarism, men must 'feel a positive bond among them' (1958 :

185 [1895-96]), and the model of this bond, he had discovered, must be the communion of religious life.

It would not be unfair to say that ever since his first day as a sociologist it had been Durkheim's goal to create a fundamental alternative to instrumental Marxism. Only after his breakthrough to symbolic religious order, however, did he feel ready to create a theoretical alternative to Marxism that could match its generality and scope. This new theory, he insisted, was just as collective and structural as Marxism, but because it was also resolutely anti-instrumental it would avoid the problem of coercion that seemed to correspond to the Marxist understanding of social control. Durkheim had finally differentiated his own theory from Marx's in a conclusive way. That in doing so he had created a theory whose voluntarism was as exaggerated as the determinism he despised did not, apparently, occur to him, for in creating it he was in flight from *The Division of Labour*, with all the intellectual and social consequences it had implied.

Like Marx's critique of idealist - Hegelian - thought, Durkheim's attempt to counteract the exaggerations of an antagonistic theory - Marxist materialism - became paradigmatic of an approach to social structure that denied to this theoretical emphasis any status at all. It is for this reason that, from the time of its initial conception to the present day, Durkheim's subjective structuralism has represented for sociological thought the theoretical antithesis to the objective structuralism of Marx.

Conclusion

The argument in this paper has been made at three levels. First, I have made an argument about the course of Durkheim's career. Most interpreters have seen this career as continuous, yet even those who have appreciated its discontinuity have viewed Durkheim's development as linear and progressive. I have argued, rather, for a distinctive circularity. Durkheim went over the same intellectual problems again and again. The period between 1885 and 1893 constitutes one 'full time through' these constitutive problems of Durkheim's life. This first time through was a failure, and *The Division of Labour in Society*, far from being his crowning achievement, is emblematic of this early failure. Durkheim began his 'second time through' immediately after *Division's* completion. This second time through was a success, but it was so only partly because of Durkheim's theoretical growth. He had also narrowed his ambition in a significant way. Interpreters who have insisted on the failure of Durkheim's project have failed to appreciate the restricted framework of his later work, and the enormous intellectual growth he evidenced within it. Those who have seen his career simply as a success have failed to see this framework's limitations, and the personal and restrictive definition of growth it produced.

This first argument about the nature of Durkheim's theoretical career has implied at every point a second one - an argument about the nature of sociological theory per se. I suggested at the beginning of this essay that sociologists keep returning to Durkheim in order to think through problems

which remain unresolved, so that while arguing about Durkheim we are really arguing about contemporary ideas, indeed about contemporary society. Some interpreters have seen in Durkheim's career a marvellous vindication of historical materialism; others have testified that its course indicates a rapprochement with interactionism; still others see in it the affirmation of a purely normative sociology. In part because my own theoretical interests and commitments are none of the above, I have been drawn to understand Durkheim's development in a very different way.

Durkheim's sociology, I have argued, is about the meaning of structure. He rejected individualism, yet he also rejected theories that postulated the external determination of individuals. To understand why Durkheim rejected these alternatives is to understand something vital about sociological theory today. Individualistic theories are rampant in contemporary sociology: anti-structuralism and hermeneutics on the continent, phenomenology and action theories in England, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, and rational actor models in the States. To describe Durkheim's development in the way I have is to see, through Durkheim's eyes, why such individualism must fail. Though they illuminate the voluntary qualities of action, these theories underestimate the problem of order. Each posits either a natural identity of interests (an inherent social stability) or a latent social structure (a residual patterning).

Now, in rejecting such individualism, it is tempting to move, as Durkheim did in *Division*, to a so-called structural solution, that is, to its antithesis. Such objectivist structuralism also is omnipresent in contemporary thought: in Althusserianism, in political theories like Skocpol's and Tilly's, in stratification theories like Treiman's, in development theories like Moore's. Yet the logical quandaries and personal anxieties produced by Durkheim's own experiment with such structuralism allow us to see a continuing truth. The very impersonality that is structuralism's 'scientific' achievement is its existential undoing, for in explaining order structuralism negates order's individual base (see Alexander and Giesen, forthcoming).

The theoretical step we must take today is the same as Durkheim took long ago: we must recognise that questions of order are separated from questions of action. Structure can be based on normative and affectual as well as instrumental motives. If contemporary arguments wish to preserve order and volition, they must evolve in the same way as Durkheim's thought. Volition must be seen as a social act, and structure must be seen as based on volition in turn. The social must be given some power - sacred or otherwise - to structure by virtue of its subjective attraction, and the individual must be given some capacity for ordering which comes out of his or her personal wish (Alexander, forthcoming [1]). Sociology must reunderstand that this is precisely what Durkheim set out to do in his later work: 'representation' is just this social and individual process. It is because Durkheim faces the very same quandaries that sociology faces today that the story of his personal development resonates so deeply. We need not follow him into idealism to appreciate his achievement,

and, indeed, to make it part of our own (see Alexander, forthcoming [2]).

The third level of my argument concerns the sociology of knowledge, more specifically the sociology of science. To understand the nature of Durkheim's development and the issues it involved is to see the error of the positivist view that sociology is a 'science' whose theories proceed only through accumulation and falsification. Durkheim was one of the greatest founding scientists of our discipline, but such empiricist criteria had little to do with the growth of his work. For more appropriate criteria we must consider issues raised by post-positivist philosophy and history of science, issues central to the sociology of knowledge more broadly defined.

Kuhn's work, and the controversy it has generated (see, e.g., Alexander 1982b) have raised in an acute form an issue which has dogged the sociology of knowledge since Mannheim: what is the relationship between the internal development of scientific thought and its external environment? In response to the limits of earlier empiricism, contemporary science studies have shifted to environmental and group explanations; in this emphasis, of course, they resemble most Mannheimian exercises in the sociology of knowledge. The dangers of this shift are also familiar. Just as the sociology of knowledge has too often led to a dangerous relativism, so have contemporary 'externalist' studies in science. These dangers spark defences of scientific realism that are often too internalist in turn.

The account I have presented of Durkheim's development responds to these issues in two ways. First, of course, I have relativised Durkheim's science by showing that he continually responded to the social and cultural context of his time; as it changed, so did his work. Yet this externalism has not produced a complete relativism: I have sought to maintain a reconstructed realism by insisting, at the same time, that there was an element internal to Durkheim's theorising which was relatively autonomous vis-à-vis external events. This internal element derives not from the empirical logic of internal observation and inductive generalisation but from a 'theoretical logic' that proceeds from generalised understandings about action and order which are of a more metaphysical scope. Only by maintaining an analytical framework that encompasses such independent, generalised concerns can we fairly evaluate the success and 'truth' of Durkheim's theory.

Historians of social thought once believed that Marxism mattered little to Durkheim. It is now beginning to be understood that the origins and growth of Marxism and socialism in France had enormous repercussions. Yet these repercussions did not, as vulgar Mannheimian or Marxist interpretations would have it (Llobera 1978), unfold in purely ideological and class related ways. I have shown that while political developments were vital for Durkheim, they were so only as they were mediated by his scholarly milieu and by the internal logic of his work. A theorist's responsiveness to external factors depends upon the anxieties and sensibilities generated by developments in his scientific work. After he had experienced the travails of *Division*, for example, Durkheim became particularly sensitive to the challenge of Marxism. Yet

external factors are actually twice mediated: political, economic, and 'social' events are filtered through a scientist's more immediate and personal intellectual environment. For Durkheim, this milieu was constituted, in part, by the reviews he received. Social developments, combined with the theoretical problems of *Division*, put Durkheim into an objectively vulnerable position, but only processes in an environment toward which he was cathected could make him *feel* that vulnerability. By accusing him of materialism, these reviews 'spoke' Durkheim's doubts. Science is a communicative situation where information is exchanged for recognition (Hagstrom 1965). If recognition is denied, or indeed, if it is wrongly imputed, scientific information may be withdrawn or reformulated.

The reformulation of scientific theories, then, cannot be understood in purely cognitive and rational ways. Theorists present themselves, of course, as guided by purely rational considerations, for not only do they themselves accept the official norms of science but their audiences do as well. The impact of external and internal developments, however, can be understood only if a more complex social psychology is maintained. Denial, self-deception, and deceit are the favoured defence mechanisms of social scientific theorists, as they are of other mortal men and women. The careers of great theorists, therefore, must be understood as psychological *gestalts* and not just as intellectual ones. Each of their ideas has for them an emotionally laden and highly personal meaning; it is for this reason that the stakes of intellectual combat are so enormous, that the interpretive and critical debates over their work often resonate so deeply. Their own theories have emerged from hidden and sometimes not so hidden oppositions, oppositions which often take the form of systematic misunderstandings of their predecessors' works (Bloom 1973).

What could be more frustrating for a great theorist, then, and more provocative of further theoretical change, than the anxiety of himself being misunderstood?

Notes

- ¹ I have adopted the translation of this crucial passage from Lukes (1972 : 237) with a few exceptions, the most important of which is that in the original French Durkheim employs the verb *marquer* (to mark) in the present tense, whereas Lukes translates it in the past tense, as 'marked'. The correct tense gives a more vivid sense of the fact that Durkheim feels as if the 'revelation' about the role of religion which he is recounting some ten years subsequent to the event is still, in fact, occurring.
- ² The work that had the most impact on Durkheim was Smith's *Lectures on the Religion of Semites*, written in 1887.
- ³ For those who emphasise, incorrectly, the continuity of Durkheim's work, see note 5 in Part I of this article. For the contrasting error - those who take the encounter with Smith's work as constituting, in itself, an epistemological break - see, for example, Beidelman (1974), who overemphasises Smith's effect on Durkheim primarily because he is not aware of the movement of Durkheim's thought before he encountered Smith's work. Lukes (1972 : 238-239) is guilty of the same exaggeration when he tries to demonstrate the impact of Smith simply by comparing his religious theory with Durkheim's earlier writing on the narrow topic of religion itself, without, that is, considering the shifts that had taken place in Durkheim's

RETHINKING DURKHEIM'S INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

general social theory in immediately preceding years. While Filloux's (1977 : 91-92) assessment is more cautious on this point, he moves too far over to the other side by claiming that Durkheim knew 'in principle that all is religious' as early as 1886 and 1887, and that Smith merely gave him a better understanding of how this social permeation of religion could come about. In other words, despite his unusual interest in Durkheim's attention to religion, Filloux still errs because of his belief that Durkheim's work is consistent from beginning to end.

- ⁴ Perhaps the major failure of interpretation of this crucial phase in Durkheim's theoretical development rests with the widespread inclination of writers to describe the issue he was grappling with as exactly parallel to the Marxian concern with base versus superstructure. Thus, Emile Benoit-Smullyan (1948 : 511) writes about the crucial relationship for Durkheim of 'material substratum' and 'collective representation'. Pope (1973) talks about whether or not 'material foundations' still play a significant role. Giddens (1977 : 290) tries to indicate the continuing impact, and therefore anti-idealist reference, of social institutions on ideas in Durkheim's sociology. This same dichotomy is the principal organising rubric for Lukes' (1972 : 237-244, 450-484) thinking about the shift in Durkheim's theory initiated by religion, as it is for La Capra (1972 : 245-291), Marks (1974), Gouldner (1958) and Aron (1970 : 53-79). These interpreters take different positions on whether or not a shift did occur, but the error is the same no matter what their conclusion. For the issue in this confrontation with religion is not whether or not the material base will be dominant. This issue had already been decided by Durkheim in 1894. The issue rather is what the nature will be of the normative order to which Durkheim is already committed.

Many interpreters, of course, have simply failed to appreciate the significance of this early encounter with religion altogether. In this influential earlier work on Durkheim, Parsons (1937 : 409), for example, viewed Durkheim's religious understanding as coming into play only with the publication of *Elementary Forms*. (It is an extraordinary testimony to the sensitivity of this early interpretation that Parsons was able to describe the transition to subjectivity in Durkheim's middle writings without comprehending the early significance of religion.) Yet, even among those who have seen the importance of this encounter, none have adequately assessed its enormous impact on Durkheim's later theory of society. Lukes (1972), for example, who is much more aware of this crucial biographical fact than most, basically considers this religious breakthrough as a separate line of analysis culminating in *Elementary Forms*, and he integrates it hardly at all with Durkheim's writing on education, politics, and other institutions. The only important exceptions, to my knowledge, are Poggi (1972 : 252-254 and passim), and the important dissertation by Lacroix (1976). Even Poggi's analysis, however, is mainly programmatic, and he fails to link the importance of religion to any decisive break in Durkheim's work. Lacroix's excellent work has two problems, from my perspective. First, although he firmly exposed '*la coupure*' that Durkheim's religious revelation created in his theoretical development, he tries to tie this religion-inspired shift too closely to the middle period work. Any definitive resolution of this question, of course, must await firmer historical evidence, but at this point it seems evident to me that Durkheim's theory underwent two shifts after the publication of *Division of Labour*, not one. The first, which begins even as the latter work is published - in the 1893 'Note' and socialism review I discussed in Part I - reorganises this schema in a radically subjective manner without any particular reference to collective representations or religion. The second phase, which is barely visible in the lectures of 1895 and which does not become explicit until 1897, brings 'spiritual' considerations into the centre of this newly subjectified theory. Only the second development, it would seem, can be linked to the 'revelation' of 1895. The second problem is that Lacroix's analysis, valuable as it is, does not expose the 'religious dimension' of Durkheim's later institutional theory in a systematic way. Bellah's interpretation (1974) takes some initial steps in the direction in which such an analysis would have to go, as does my own analysis in the text which follows above. For a fuller analysis of the manner in which Durkheim's entire body of post-1896 writing is reorganised around the religious model, see Alexander 1982c.

- ⁵ Evidently, this 'astonishment' was not limited to Durkheim's critics. Paul Lapie, the reviewer turned follower who had earlier applauded the subjective turn of Durkheim's *Rules*,

complained in an 1897 letter to C  lestin Bougl  , one of Durkheim's collaborators on the *L'Ann  e*, that 'Durkheim explains everything, at this time, by religion; the interdiction against marriages between parents is a religious affair, the punishment is a religious phenomenon, all is religious' (quoted in Lacroix 1976 : 213, n. 2).

References

- ALEXANDER, J.C. 1982a. 'Kuhn's Unsuccessful Revisionism: A Reply to Selby'. *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 7 : 66-71.
- ALEXANDER, J.C. 1982b. *The Antinomies of Classical Thought: Marx and Durkheim*. Vol. 2 of *Theoretical Logic in Sociology*. Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California.
- ALEXANDER, J.C. Forthcoming [1]. 'Action and Its Environments' in ALEXANDER, J.C. et al (eds.) *The Micro-Macro Link*. Los Angeles/Berkeley: University of California Press.
- ALEXANDER, J.C. ed. Forthcoming [2]. *Durkheimian Sociology*.
- ALEXANDER, J.C. and GIESEN, B. Forthcoming. 'From Reduction to Linkage: The Long View of the Micro-Macro Debate', in ALEXANDER, J.C., GIESEN, B., MUNCH, R. and SMELSER, N. (eds.), *The Micro-Macro Link*. Los Angeles/Berkeley: University of California Press.
- ARON, R. 1970. *Main Currents of Sociological Thought*, II. New York: Doubleday Anchor.
- BEIDELMAN, T.O. 1974. *W. Robertson Smith and the Sociological Study of Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- BELLAH, R.N. 1974. 'Introduction'. *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago. pp. ix-lv.
- BENOIT-SMULLYAN, 1948. 'The Sociologism of Durkheim and His School' in BARNES, H.E. (ed.) *Introduction to the History of Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago. pp. 499-537.
- BLOOM, H. 1973. *The Anxiety of Influence*. New York: Oxford.
- DURKHEIM, E. 1964 [1893]. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Free Press.
- DURKHEIM, E. 1958 [1895-96]. *Socialism and Saint-Simon*. Yellow Springs, Ohio: Antioch.
- DURKHEIM, E. 1951 [1897]. *Suicide*. New York: Free Press.
- DURKHEIM, E. 1978a [1897]. 'Review of Gaston Richard, *Le socialisme et la science sociale* in TRAUOGOTT, M. (ed.) *Emile Durkheim on Institutional Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago. pp. 131-138.
- DURKHEIM, E. 1978b [1897]. 'Review of Antonio Labriola, *Essai sur la conception materialiste de l'histoire* in Traugott, M. (ed.), *Emile Durkheim on Institutional Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago. pp.123-130.
- DURKHEIM, E. 1974 [1898]. 'Individual and Collective Representations' in DURKHEIM, E., *Sociology and Philosophy*. New York: Free Press. pp. 1-34.
- DURKHEIM, E. 1960 [1899]. 'Preface to *L'ann  e sociologique* 2' in WOLFF, K. (ed.), *Emile Durkheim et al on Sociology and Philosophy*. New York: Harper & Row. pp.347-352.
- DURKHEIM, E. 1907. Letter to the Director. *Revue neo-scolastique* 14 : 612-614.
- FILLOUX, Jean-Claude. 1977. *Durkheim et le socialisme*. Geneva: Librairie Droz.
- GIDDENS, A. 1977. 'The Individual in the Writing of Emile Durkheim' in GIDDENS, A., *Studies in Social and Political Theory*. New York: Basic. pp.273-291.
- GOULDNER, A.W. 1958. 'Introduction'. *Socialism and Saint-Simon, Emile Durkheim*. Yellow Springs, Ohio: Antioch. pp. v-xxvii.
- HAGSTROM, W. 1965. *The Scientific Community*. New York: Basic.
- LABRIOLA, A. 1897. *Essai sur la conception mat  rialiste de l'histoire*. Paris: V. Giard and E. Briere.
- LA CAPRA, D. 1972. *Emile Durkheim: Sociologist and Philosopher*. Ithaca: Cornell.
- LACROIX, B. 1976. 'Durkheim et la question politique'. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. University of Paris.
- LLOBERA, J.R. 1978. 'Durkheim, the Durkheimians, and their Collective Misrepresentation of Marx'. 9th World Congress of Sociology, Uppsala, Sweden. Unpublished manuscript.
- LUKES, S. 1972. *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work*. New York: Harper & Row.

RETHINKING DURKHEIM'S INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

- MARKS, S.R. 1974. 'Durkheim's Theory of Anomie'. *American Journal of Sociology* 80 : 329-363.
- PARSONS, T. 1937. *The Structure of Social Action*. New York: Free Press.
- POGGI, Gianfranco. 1971. 'The Place of Religion in Durkheim's Theory of Institutions'. *European Journal of Sociology* 12 : 229-260.
- POPE, W. 1973. 'Classic on Classic: Parsons' Interpretation of Durkheim'. *American Sociological Review* 38 : 399-415.
- VOGT, W.P. 1976. 'The Confrontation of Socialists and Sociologists in Pre-war France, 1890-1914' in FALK, J.D. (ed.), *Proceedings*, Western Society for French History 4, pp. 313-320.

Biographical Note Jeffrey C. Alexander is Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles (U.C.L.A.). He has written *Theoretical Logic in Sociology* (4 volumes), *Twenty Lectures: Sociological Theory since World War II* and *Structure and Meaning: Essays in Sociological Theory* (both forthcoming, Columbia University Press), and edited *Neofunctionalism* (Sage 1985) and, with Giesen, Munch and Smelser, *The Micro-Macro Link* (forthcoming, University of California Press). Past Chair of the Theory Section of the American Sociological Association, he is currently (1985-86) a Fellow at The Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton, New Jersey.

Address: Department of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles, California 90024, USA.