

**Scholar, Sociologist and Public Figure: The Intellectual
Trajectory of Émile Durkheim in *fin-de-siècle* France.**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

I, Colette Vesey, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Acknowledgements

It would not have been possible to complete this PhD without the guidance and help of a number of people around me. Above all, I extend my gratitude to my principal supervisor Prof. Philippe Marlière for his support from the beginning right through to the final stages of my work. His sound advice, patient reading and judicious comments on my research and writing have been invaluable. I also thank my second supervisor Dr. Mark Hewitson for his help with academic writing and for simply being available to offer advice whenever needed.

I would like to acknowledge the academic support of University College London and its staff, the Centre for European studies, and especially Dr. Stephanie Bird and Dr. Kevin Inston for their assistance on numerous occasions over the past few years. I also thank the French Department and its staff, especially Prof. Mairéad Hanrahan who helped make possible my extended stay in France.

With fond memories, I thank all my friends at the University of Paris Sorbonne-Nouvelle for their warm welcome, and Dr. Ivan Birks in particular for his professional support throughout the time I spent in Paris.

Finally, a special thanks to Ermanno for being an unfailing source of encouragement, and to all my family and friends in Ireland, to my parents Ann and Eugene, who helped and supported me right to the end.

The period stretching from around 1880 to 1914 was one of great creative effervescence in France, marked by new trends in art and literature and the opening up of new fields of knowledge. A time of increasing political polarisation, it was also in this epoch that scholars, writers and artists began to get involved in the political life of the nation on an unprecedented scale and when the term ‘intellectual’ first came into common usage. Remembered today as the founder of the French school of sociology it is from this period that Émile Durkheim’s scientific breakthrough dates. Drawing on a set of conceptual tools elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu, this project delves into the early period of French sociology and seeks to explain how Durkheim managed to distinguish himself among his contemporaries as *the* legitimate representative of the new discipline in France. Through looking at his ties to the major institutions of the French intellectual field it traces Durkheim’s progress from a situation of relative marginality in the 1880s to a dominant intellectual position by the eve of the First World War. The suggestion is that through enquiring into the sources of Durkheim’s legitimacy we can also gain an original perspective on the debated topic of his politics and conception of his own role as a public intellectual during the French Third Republic.

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Introduction

If the name of Émile Durkheim is remembered today and if his work continues to attract scholarly interest it is largely due to the fact that he is recognised, alongside Karl Marx and Max Weber, as one of the founders of modern sociology.¹ Indeed his four major works, the *Division of Labour in Society*, the *Rules of Sociological Method*, *Suicide* and the *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, all endure as classics of the discipline.² Yet what precisely stands out about Durkheim among the three figureheads of classical sociology is not exactly what he is best known for - his relentless effort to promote the institutionalisation of the discipline within the French university in a timeframe stretching roughly from around 1880 to 1914.³ Taking up the term ‘sociologie’ first coined by Auguste Comte, Durkheim, as a scholar and ‘universitaire’, specifically identified himself as a ‘sociologist’ and saw his own professional goal as one of developing this new science, making it a respectable academic discipline and staking out a legitimate space for it within the French university curriculum.

¹See for example Anthony Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) and Ken Morrison, *Marx, Durkheim, Weber: Formations of Modern Thought* (London: Sage, 1995).

²Émile Durkheim, *De la division du travail social: thèse présentée à la faculté des lettres de Paris* (Paris: Alcan, 1893), *Les Règles de la méthode sociologique* (Paris: Alcan, 1895), *Le Suicide: étude de sociologie* (Paris: Alcan, 1897) and *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: le système totémique en Australie* (Paris: Alcan, 1912). The *Division of Labour* was subsequently published as *De la division du travail sociale: étude sur l'organisation des sociétés supérieures* (Paris: Alcan, 1893). The only difference between these two printings is the subtitle, and it is the first version, the thesis, that I have used throughout. Durkheim's methodological treatise first appeared as a series of journal articles, ‘Les règles de la méthode sociologique’, *Revue philosophique* (hereafter *RP*), 37 (1894), 465-98, 577-607 and *RP*, 38 (1894), 14-39, 168-82. It is however to the 1895 book version that my page numbers below refer.

³Kenneth Thompson, *Émile Durkheim* (London & New York: Tavistock, 1982), p. 8, p. 27.

In sociology textbooks it is generally Durkheim's effort to develop a scientific approach to the study of society that often provides the starting point for the discussion of Durkheim in sociology textbooks.⁴ In this regard, it was in his second published book, the *Rules of Sociological Method*, that he most explicitly formulated the methodological principles guiding his scientific project, principles that had already been applied in the *Division of Labour* (1893) and whose analytical power he would later try to demonstrate in *Suicide* (1897).⁵ And it was also in this methodological treatise that Durkheim famously declared the most basic 'rule' of sociology to be that of treating social facts as 'things', that sociology must start out from the controlled observation of social facts rather than from unverified, pre-conceived ideas.⁶ He wanted to establish that social reality was indeed a valid object of scientific study, distinct from the reality studied by other sciences such as biology or psychology, but which could nevertheless also be studied just as objectively.⁷ While social facts did consist of immaterial phenomena such as 'feelings' or 'beliefs' what made these facts recognisable and distinct from biological or psychological facts was, argued Durkheim, their external quality and constraining character in relation to the individual. Thus he defined social facts as 'manners of thinking and feeling external to the individual, which are invested

⁴ See for example Anthony Giddens, 'Introduction', Émile Durkheim, *Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 1-50 (p. 1) or Gianfranco Poggi, *Durkheim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 16-17.

⁵ Frank Parkin, *Durkheim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 18, subsumes his discussion of *Suicide* under the chapter entitled 'Sociology as science'.

⁶ Durkheim, *Les Règles de la méthode sociologique*, pp. 20-23. Also see the English translation, *The Rules of Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology and its Method*, ed. by Steven Lukes, trans. by W.D. Halls (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 60-62

⁷ Steven Fenton, *Durkheim and Modern Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 18.

with a coercive power by virtue of which they exercise control over him'.⁸ Beyond the question of science however, Durkheim also presented a set of concepts upon which he based an assessment of modern society and of what he believed to be its most pressing problem. In the *Division of Labour* he presented a critical examination of the rapid advance of specialisation that was occurring not only in industry but in all areas of social life, and asked whether this was a positive thing to be embraced or something that one ought to resist.⁹ Contrasting two principal social types - the traditional and the modern - each one defined by the nature of its social tie, Durkheim called the solidarity proper to societies of the traditional type 'mechanical solidarity', and argued that here society was held together by a powerful 'collective conscience' or shared beliefs and values that allowed little space for individual difference. If, as he proposed, the division of labour ought to be embraced, it was because it acted as the source of another type of solidarity, 'organic solidarity' built on differences that complement each other, which emerged as society progressed towards the modern type characterised by heterogeneity. There was, according to Durkheim, no necessary conflict between the demands of modern individualism and those of social solidarity.

Yet the modern social type cohering through difference was, he recognised, more of an ideal to be realised than a perfect expression of an actual existing reality, and alongside the concepts of 'organic' and 'mechanical' solidarity we also have the idea of social 'abnormality' exemplified in what Durkheim called in the third part of the *Division of Labour* the 'anomic' and 'forced' division of labour. If, under normal circumstances, society ought to progress towards organic solidarity, in reality

⁸ Durkheim, *Les Règles de la méthode sociologique*, pp. 5-8; trans, pp. 50-52.

⁹ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 4.

contemporary society found itself in the grip of social conflict and beset by crises in industry. That this situation has arisen, he argued, was due to the fact that the appropriate moral regulation and means of coordination between individuals and groups performing different social functions had not accompanied the advance of specialisation. Whereas the *Division of Labour* dealt mostly with modern society in its ideal or 'normal' state, *Suicide* was by contrast wholly taken up with the discussion of this idea of 'social abnormality'. Taking the consistent statistical rise in suicide rates in nineteenth century as a social fact indicative of an underlying state of social malaise, Durkheim argued that both the degree of social integration and the capacity of society to perform its regulating function were key to explaining the intensity of the 'suicidogenic' currents in modern European societies.¹⁰ Constructing a typology of causes of suicide, Durkheim distinguished 'egoistic' suicide resulting from weak levels of social integration and 'anomic' suicide resulting from a lack of stable moral regulation as the two types specific to modern society.

Published some fifteen years after *Suicide*, the *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* was Durkheim's last book and here he extended his sociological method to study of religion, which he explained as a social fact rooted in collective existence and irreducible to the psychic needs of the individual. A work built on an examination of Australian totemism, Durkheim argued that the existence of a divinity or divinities was not a necessary characteristic of religion at all and what was essential rather was that religious belief presupposed the division of the universe, the 'classification of all things'

¹⁰ Durkheim, *Le Suicide*, pp. 222-23, pp. 283-88.

into two separate classes, the 'sacred' and the 'profane'.¹¹ Consisting of both beliefs and ritual practices, and taking a definite institutional form, religion was defined by Durkheim as a 'unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things... beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community called a Church, all who adhere to them'.¹² With the concept of 'collective effervescence' he also tried to show how, at times of intense social activity when individuals come out of their isolated everyday existence to participate in emotionally charged collective celebrations, the idea of the sacred is given shape and revitalised. It is at these times of collective ferment that individuals come to feel overpowered by a force greater than themselves and an awareness of a separate divine realm, different to ordinary or 'profane' existence - the division between the sacred and the profane - is awakened.¹³

In agreement with Anthony Giddens, we can say that over the course of his career as a sociologist, Durkheim concentrated on a number of principal themes.¹⁴ Firstly, there was his effort to found the science of society, his definition of society and formulation of the 'rules' as to what it meant to study it scientifically. A second point was his conception of social things - religion, morals, laws, 'ways of thinking and doing' - as being of a supra-individual character, underpinned by the fundamental fact of sociability and his argument that moral authority and guiding ideals were generated from collective life. Finally, there were the implications of this for modern society. For Durkheim modern individualism was itself a social fact, which ought not 'normally'

¹¹ Durkheim, *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, p. 50; *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. by Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), p. 34.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 65; trans, p. 44.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 307-14. Also see Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, pp. 107-10.

¹⁴ Anthony Giddens, *Durkheim* (London: Fontana, 1978), p. 9.

entail the evaporation of collective ideals and moral norms. Where this happened, one was in a situation of social abnormality and it was in this light that Durkheim judged the society of his own time, which he believed was suffering from a weakness of social solidarity and corresponding lack of guiding moral ideas. At this point Durkheim's self-conception as a 'scientist' crossed paths with practical political demands, and he saw it as part of the work of sociology to put an end to this state of social malaise, to put modern society back on track towards the 'normal' realisation of organic solidarity.¹⁵ Given this normative aspect of sociology, Durkheim's idea that it could help resolve some of the problems of modern industrial society, a brief look at the social and political backdrop would be helpful.

1. Context

The period in which Durkheim lived was without a doubt an important junction in French history. All over Europe, countries were experiencing great change in the transition to new social and political arrangements and France in the 1870s was no exception. After a turbulent century involving no less than eight regime changes since 1789, a new Republican regime, the Third Republic, had been founded, one which sought to deal with the legacy of the French Revolution and to set its ideals on a firmer institutional basis.¹⁶ It was an ambitious goal, given that for a large part of the

¹⁵ On Durkheim's theory of social solidarity see Steven Lukes, *Émile Durkheim. His Life and Work: A Historical and Critical Study* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), chapter 7, and below sections 2.4, 3.2.1, 3.3.3. On the academic debate surrounding the question of Durkheim's politics see my literature review below.

¹⁶ Jeremy Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic: A History of Political Thought in France since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 27-28.

nineteenth century, in the aftermath of the Revolution, the country had alternated between various forms of monarchy and empire. Indeed even after the Republic had definitively overcome the threat of a monarchist restoration in the late 1870s, it then had new forms of political extremism to contend with, ranging from an emergent right-wing nationalism to violent revolutionary syndicalism on the left, and a growing awareness of the need for social reform.¹⁷ Alongside these internal political problems there was also the question of French national prestige, which had suffered considerably after the defeat to Prussia in 1870.¹⁸ In the 1870s, as a student at the *École normale supérieure* in Paris, Durkheim formed part of an extraordinary generation, with the philosopher Henri Bergson and the future socialist leader Jean Jaurès being among his school-friends. The city was a hub of intellectual ferment and optimism in this era, and Durkheim believed that it would be part of his future role as a scholar to have some part to play in the political life of the new regime.¹⁹ And politics indeed became a central concern of Durkheim's as he worked to establish sociology.²⁰ On many of the issues of concern in the early Third Republic - national prestige, political consolidation and social reform - the sociologist was to have some input.

¹⁷For a general overview of some of the political challenges the regime faced see Michel Winock, *La Fièvre hexagonale: les grandes crises politiques, 1871-1968* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987). On this new type of political extremism see Zeev Sternhell, *La Droite révolutionnaire, 1885-1914: les origines françaises du fascisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978).

¹⁸ Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, pp. 197-98. For more on the concerns about decline also see the opening chapter to William Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in 20th Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). This political context will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5 below

¹⁹ Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, p. 43, pp. 46-47.

²⁰ Bernard Lacroix, *Durkheim et la politique* (Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1981).

Although Durkheim's importance within the sociological tradition is unanimously recognised, his role as a public figure very much involved in the French society of his time tends to receive less attention. And yet, if it was Durkheim's achievement to have established sociology as a serious academic discipline in the French university, he had, in order to be able to do this, to have been an academic of considerable weight, and his chair in the science of education at the Sorbonne that he held from 1902, which became a chair in the science of education and sociology in 1913, would indeed testify to this.²¹ And at a time when Sorbonne professors were valued not just as academics but also as active participants in social and political affairs Durkheim, as a sociologist and a 'universitaire' also had a very specific understanding of his own role in public life.

These initial remarks indicate at least two possible ways of approaching Durkheim and his work: one could, for example, focus on the critical evaluation of his social theory and methodology, look at its place within the sociological tradition and the relevance of his concepts to sociologists today; or, one could instead approach the subject from the perspective of cultural and intellectual history, and ask questions about Durkheim's role within the life and political institutions of late nineteenth and early twentieth century France. By way of an initial distinction therefore, it is to this second aspect that I propose to direct my attention. My interest will be in how Durkheim actually managed to found a distinct school of thought in sociology, how he introduced the new discipline into the French university and about the role he envisaged for it in the society and politics of his time.

²¹ See Giddens, *Durkheim*, p. 19 and Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, p. 360, pp. 365-66.

2. Durkheim, Politics and the Republic: A Review of the Literature

Durkheim's posthumous career has had varied fortunes from one period and country to another. Whereas in France, in the immediate aftermath of his death, sociology went into relative decline and his legacy into neglect, it was mainly in the United States that scholars first began critically discussing and producing works on Durkheim, his sociological theory and his politics. Indeed the readings elaborated here remained authoritative right up until the 1970s, when in both the United Kingdom and in France there was something of a revival of interest in Durkheim and a major re-assessment of his work on many different themes. For this reason I have divided up my discussion of the literature on Durkheim and his politics into two sections, the first dealing with the early reception and the second on this more recent body of scholarship.

a) Early Representations

In some of the earliest posthumous commentaries in the English language on the political aspect of his sociology, Durkheim was represented as an extreme anti-individualist, who believed that the solution to social unrest in the France of his time was the restoration of the moral authority of the traditional community. So Marion Mitchell, writing in 1931, attributed to Durkheim a fundamentally anti-democratic position, and argued that in his exaltation of the community and denigration of the individual was a philosophy of nationalism, which foreshadowed some of the principal doctrines of the extreme right wing, anti-Republican Action Française of Charles Maurras.²² This interpretation of Durkheim's politics seems to have arisen from a particular

²² M. Marion Mitchell, 'Emile Durkheim and the Philosophy of Nationalism', *Political Science Quarterly*, 46.1 (1931), 87-106.

understanding of his methodological premises in sociology: as Roscoe Hinkle has shown, in the early reception of Durkheim by American sociologists his insistence on the need to treat social facts objectively as things was generally taken as evidence of an extreme social realism, and a radically determinist position that negated individual free will in social causation.²³ Thus, argued Mitchell, Durkheim's nationalism derived logically from his 'gospel of social determinism which exalted the group or "society" and minimised the importance of the individual'.²⁴ In a similar vein Svend Ranulf described Durkheim as an anti-individualist who believed that individualism and the ideals of the French Revolution were at the root of the modern social malaise, and wished to see the re-establishment of the pre-capitalist 'gemeinschaft' or moral community in modern times. This, according to Ranulf, made Durkheim a 'scholarly forerunner of Fascism'.²⁵

Reading the letters he sent to his nephew Marcel Mauss during the First World War, there can be little doubt that Durkheim had a good sense of the way in which the academic world was developing at an international level and the predominant role that universities in the United States would come to play therein.²⁶ Indeed, not only were the

²³ See, Roscoe C. Hinkle Jr, 'Durkheim in American Sociology', in *Émile Durkheim, 1858-1917*, ed. by Kurt H. Wolff (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1960), pp. 267-95 (pp. 267-73), and also, Sue Stedman Jones, 'Reflections on the Interpretation of Durkheim in the Sociological Tradition', in *Durkheim Today*, ed. by W.S.F. Pickering (Oxford: Berghahn, 2002), pp. 117-41 (pp. 118-21).

²⁴ Mitchell, p. 88.

²⁵ Svend Ranulf, 'Scholarly Forerunners of Fascism', *Ethics*, 50.1 (1939), 16-34.

²⁶ On Durkheim's 'academic propaganda' in the United States during the First World War see Marcel Fournier, *Émile Durkheim: A Biography*, trans. by David Macey (Malden MA and Cambridge: Polity, 2013), pp. 710-14. Reference to his various initiatives can be found in Durkheim's letters to Mauss. See for example, Émile Durkheim, Letters to Marcel Mauss, 10 February 1915 and 11 June, 22 July, 12 August, 20 October and 14 November 1916 in Émile Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, ed. by Philippe Besnard and Marcel Fournier (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), p. 435, pp. 526-27, pp. 534-36, pp. 542-43, pp. 554-55, p. 559.

first comprehensive studies of Durkheim in the English language penned by American scholars, but over the course of the 1930s and 1940s the interpretation of his social theory that emerged from the United States would guide critics and students alike for decades to come. In terms of sociological theory, it was primarily the work of Harry Alpert, which helped to mitigate the conception of Durkheim as an extreme social realist who took society as a transcendental entity, literally outside and above individuals.²⁷ Alpert argued that although Durkheim stated that social facts existed as an independent reality, he was not actually making an ontological statement about society itself, but merely asking that the principle of causation be attributed to social facts. In fact, as Alpert pointed out, for Durkheim, society was made up only of individuals associating together and existed only to the extent that it was represented in the consciousness of individuals.²⁸ Two years prior to Alpert, Talcott Parsons had also called into question the anti-subjectivist reading, as he attempted to construe Durkheim as a forerunner of his own voluntarist theory of action.²⁹ He did this however by imposing an ‘epistemological break’ on Durkheim’s intellectual development, arguing that in his explanation of social conduct Durkheim shifted his emphasis away from an early ‘positivist’ focus on external social constraint to the subjective awareness of moral obligation.

On the question of politics however, it was on the basis of these readings of his sociology that Durkheim became known to the English-speaking world as a theorist preoccupied by the problem of order in modern society. As Hinkle has emphasised, the

²⁷ Stedman Jones. ‘Reflections on the Interpretation of Durkheim’, p. 121.

²⁸ Harry Alpert, *Émile Durkheim and his Sociology*, 2nd edn (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961), pp. 150-52.

²⁹ Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action: A Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers*, 2nd edn (New York: Free Press, 1949), pp. 301-450.

assessments of Durkheim's work that were produced in this period were influenced by the concerns that the sociologists who read him had about the state of their own society. In a historical context of economic and social crisis in the years immediately following the Great Depression, they looked to Durkheim for what he had to say about social integration and the necessary conditions of social harmony.³⁰ For Talcott Parsons, Durkheim's main concern was the question of how to guarantee social order in a modern individualist society where the traditional supports of religion and community had become less solid.

This interpretation of Durkheim's social theory continued to influence how he was situated politically. Robert Nisbet may not have referred to a link between Durkheim and nationalism or fascism, but he nevertheless rooted him firmly within the French conservative tradition. This conservative interpretation focussed on Durkheim's supposed concern for social order above change, and with the stability of group life above demands of individuals, his insistence on the primacy of society in the explanation of social facts and critique of ideas of individual freedom. This viewpoint, according to Nisbet, amounted to a rejection of the ideals of the Enlightenment and French Revolution, and indeed had grown out of the conservative reaction to the French Revolution associated with Joseph de Maistre and the Vicomte de Bonald. Durkheim, in Nisbet's view, represented a conservative reaction to individualism and rationalism, which he sought to build into a more scientific framework and to develop sociology as a means to restoring

³⁰ Hinkle, p. 281.

order and authority in modern times.³¹ For Louis Coser, conservatism meant an inclination to maintain the existing order of things. He argued that whereas radical thinkers tend to start out from an ideal of how society ought to be, then criticise the existing state of affairs, imagining its transformation, Durkheim was only interested in what actually existed in reality, and in maintaining the status quo. For Coser, Durkheim idealised supposedly integrated societies and labelled social conflict as an abnormal deviation from the norm of order, rather than expressions of a need for social change.³²

b) Republicanism and Socialism

What soon becomes clear as one reads through the scholarship on Durkheim from the mid-twentieth century onwards is that the series of oppositions commonly used to talk about intellectuals and their work - materialist/idealist, objectivist/subjectivist, collectivist/individualist, theorist of order/theorist of change - are inadequate not only to an understanding of Durkheim's social theory but also its place in the historical context. If Durkheim's concern was with the question of order, this, Melvin Richter pointed out, did not in context of the late nineteenth century France translate into a politically conservative position: Durkheim was a fervent supporter of the French Third Republic. The real conservatives were those supporters of the Catholic Church and the army, and the enthusiasts of an emergent right-wing nationalism that attacked the existing order and

³¹ Robert A. Nisbet, 'Conservatism and Sociology', *American Journal of Sociology* (hereafter *AJS*), 58.2 (1952), 167-75. On this counter-revolutionary tradition see Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, pp. 44-47 and pp. 327-34.

³² Lewis A. Coser, 'Durkheim's Conservatism and its Implications for his Sociological Theory', in *Émile Durkheim*, ed. by Wolff, pp. 211-32.

wished to see its destruction.³³ In a separate article Joseph Neyer emphasised that although Durkheim seemed to start out from a series of collectivist, philosophical insights that were generally associated with the opponents of the Republic and of democracy, he nevertheless developed these into a strong argument in defence of individualism.³⁴

By far the most influential work in challenging the perception of Durkheim as an anti-liberal and anti-individualist conservative was Steven Lukes's biography. Firmly placing Durkheimian sociology in its historical context, it is from here that we begin to get a bigger picture of how Durkheim's scientific work related to the major political questions of his time and place.³⁵ Not only did Lukes provide us with a much needed comprehensive catalogue of Durkheim's writings, but he also drew attention to an important but previously ignored article, which he translated and had republished, Durkheim's 'Individualism and the Intellectuals'. Written at the height of the Dreyfus Affair, this article showed Durkheim in the role of the engaged social critic, who defended the values and ideals of moral individualism.³⁶ Anthony Giddens also writing in the 1970s, emphasised the importance of distinguishing between Durkheim's theoretical opposition to methodological individualism in sociological explanation and an adherence to the values of moral individualism in politics.³⁷

³³ Melvin Richter, 'Durkheim's Politics and Political Theory', in *Émile Durkheim*, ed. by Wolff, pp. 170-210.

³⁴ Joseph Neyer, 'Individualism and Socialism in Durkheim', in *Émile Durkheim*, ed. by Wolff, pp. 32-76.

³⁵ Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*.

³⁶ Steven Lukes, 'Durkheim's "Individualism and the Intellectuals"', *Political Studies*, 17.1 (1969), 14-30.

³⁷ Anthony Giddens, 'The Individual in the Writing of Emile Durkheim', in Anthony Giddens, *Studies in Social and Political Theory* (London: Hutchinson, 1977), pp. 273-91.

Perhaps more so than any other author Giddens has cast doubt over Parsons's interpretation of Durkheim as a theorist of order. He also questioned the account of Durkheim's theoretical development from an early 'materialism' to a later 'idealism' and argued that Parsons tended to minimise the importance of the *Division of Labour* as a general framework for the rest of Durkheim's studies. In Giddens's view, Durkheim was primarily concerned not with order but with the question of changing forms of social solidarity and was, throughout his career, interested in immaterial phenomena such as moral beliefs and ideas.³⁸ Giddens also emphasised Durkheim's sociological defence of Republicanism and his concern with setting the ideals of the revolution on a more stable basis, while also pointing to the more socially critical aspects such as Durkheim's interest in socialism and in occupational associations as a basis of democratic reform.³⁹

A number of other writers have agreed with Giddens's critique of Parsons. Robert Bellah, for example, having already argued that the historical dimension was of fundamental importance in all of Durkheim's sociological work, also stressed that moral beliefs and ideals were considered by the sociologist throughout his œuvre as part of the essence of society.⁴⁰ If furthermore, as Hans Joas has argued, Durkheim was indeed concerned with morality and modern solidarity throughout his life it was out of a concern

³⁸ See Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory*, p. 106, 'Introduction' in Durkheim, *Selected Writings*, p. 41 and 'Durkheim's Political Sociology', in Giddens, *Studies in Social and Political Theory*, pp. 235-72.

³⁹ Giddens, 'Durkheim's Political Sociology'.

⁴⁰ Robert N. Bellah, 'Durkheim and History', *American Sociological Review*, 24.4(1959), 447-61 and 'Introduction', to Émile Durkheim, *On Morality and Society: Selected Writings*, ed. by Robert N. Bellah (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. ix-lv.

to see the germination of a *new* morality and *new* institutions.⁴¹ This perspective would seem to make more sense in context given that Durkheim in his own lifetime was immensely popular among French socialists and republicans. He did have his enemies too, but as Stjepan Mestrovic has pointed out, if he really did hold the conservative position earlier attributed to him, it would have made him more than some enemies: in *fin-de-siècle* Paris, it would have been a veritable intellectual suicide!⁴²

While it seems clear that Durkheim was a supporter of the Republic, his relationship to socialism and his position on the ‘social question’ - another dominant political issue in his time and particularly so from the 1890s onward - still remains a debated issue. If, wrote Hans Peter Müller, Durkheim was indeed guided by the normative framework epitomised by the values of the French Revolution, and wanted to contribute to the realisation of these in appropriate institutions, he must nevertheless be situated politically between two poles considered to be an *equal* threat to the Republic: the anti-republican extreme-right on the one hand and revolutionary socialism on the other.⁴³ It is in this guise that Marxists since Paul Nizan have read Durkheim, as one of the ‘watchdogs’ or ideological agents of the Third Republic, and as the major ideologies of the twentieth century congealed Marx and Durkheim came to be seen as occupying opposite poles of the political spectrum in social thought.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Hans Joas, ‘Durkheim’s Intellectual Development: The Problem of the Emergence of New Morality and New Institutions as a Leitmotif in Durkheim’s Œuvre’, *Émile Durkheim: Sociologist and Moralist*, ed. by Steven Turner (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 229-45.

⁴² Stjepan G. Mestrovic, *Émile Durkheim and the Reformation of Sociology* (Lanham, MA: Rowmann and Littlefield, 1988), p. 5.

⁴³ Hans-Peter Müller, ‘Durkheim’s Political Sociology’, in *Émile Durkheim*, ed. by Turner, pp. 95-109.

⁴⁴ Paul Nizan, *Les Chiens de garde*, 2nd edn (Paris: Maspero, 1960), p. 98.

So even accepting the point that Durkheim was a Republican we nevertheless are brought back full circle to the theorist of order argument, and while Marx was the radical critic of capitalist society, Durkheim became the defender of modern industrial order. John Horton opposed a Marx, interested in problems of power and change, to a Durkheim interested in the maintenance of order.⁴⁵ Likewise, Irving Zeitlin argued that Marx, at the one pole of the political spectrum, stood for social change and the full realisation of the ideals of the French Revolution, while Durkheim, at the other end, stood for the restoration of order in the post-revolutionary era.⁴⁶ And even though Göran Therborn certainly recognised the progressive and reformist aspect of Durkheim's thought, he nevertheless concluded that the aim of sociology was ultimately to restore order and to prevent a socialist revolution.⁴⁷ For Sanford Elwitt the programme of 'bourgeois reform' in late nineteenth century France was merely an attempt to 'defend' the Republic against the masses of workers, and through popular education and material improvements in social conditions to stem any revolutionary ferment and avoid real political change. In no uncertain terms he describes this, using the words of Freidrich Hayek, as the 'counter-revolution of science'.⁴⁸ For Tom Bottomore, Durkheim was 'a convinced opponent of Marxism' whose political concerns were with defending the Republic not just against the traditionalists in the army and the church but also against the socialists.⁴⁹ According to

⁴⁵ John Horton, 'The Dehumanization of Anomie and Alienation: A Problem in the Ideology of Sociology', *British Journal of Sociology*, 15.4 (1964), 283-300.

⁴⁶ Irving M. Zeitlin, *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968).

⁴⁷ Göran Therborn, *Science, Class and Society* (London: NLB, 1976), pp. 269-70.

⁴⁸ Sanford Elwitt, *The Third Republic Defended: Bourgeois Reform in France* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), p. 19.

⁴⁹ Tom Bottomore, 'A Marxist Consideration of Durkheim', *Social Forces*, 59.4 (1981), 902-17 (p. 902).

Josep Llobera, Durkheim held a dim view of political activism, which he referred to disparagingly as ‘art’, and went to great pains to discredit Marxism, which he saw as a threat to his own ‘scientific’ enterprise.⁵⁰

At the same time however there is another body of work that would seem to question the theoretical opposition between Marx and Durkheim and that considers instead how Durkheim elaborated his own ideas in engagement with nineteenth century socialist thought. Since Lukes’s biography there has been revival of interest in Durkheim both in Great Britain and in France that has also helped move the work of interpretation in this direction. Philippe Besnard for example studied the evolution of concept of ‘anomie’ in American sociology in the twentieth century and emphasised the contrast with the way in which Durkheim had originally employed it as part of a critique of modern industrial society.⁵¹ Alongside this re-evaluation of the concept of anomie, Besnard also highlighted the importance of Durkheim’s concept of fatalism, the opposite of anomie, in a critique of modern society: whereas anomie referred to a lack of regulation, the problem of fatalism had to do with unjust and excessive regulation.⁵² In his discussion of the concept of fatalism Frank Pearce suggested that for Durkheim excessive and unjust social constraint was one of the principal sources of social malaise, and also highlighted the sociologist’s attack on inherited wealth in his concept of the

⁵⁰ Josep R. Llobera, ‘The Socialist Durkheimians’, *Critique of Anthropology* 5.3 (1985), 55-68 and ‘Durkheim, the Durkheimians and their Collective Misrepresentation of Marx’, in *The Anthropology of Pre-Capitalist Societies*, ed. by Joel S. Kahn and Josep R. Llobera (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 214-40.

⁵¹ Philippe Besnard, *L’Anomie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987).

⁵² Philippe Besnard, ‘Anomie and Fatalism in Durkheim’s Theory of Regulation’ in *Émile Durkheim*, ed. by Turner, pp. 169-90.

forced division of labour.⁵³ Carmen Siriani too has pointed to the critique of capitalism presented in the *Division of Labour* and recognised Durkheim's commitment to a more a more just and equal society, arguing that his work can in fact be rescued for a critical analysis committed to democratic and egalitarian reform.⁵⁴

In Jean-Claude Filloux's study of the relationship between sociology and socialism, Durkheim appears as a sociologist committed to social reform or 'action', whose guiding concern was the theoretical and practical reconciliation of individualism and socialism.⁵⁵ With Filloux as with Giddens however, the question of Durkheim's theoretical development as raised first by Parsons also came back into the picture, and thus within the contours of a 'socialist' reading of Durkheim another question was whether his œuvre was characterised by overall continuity or by a radical break between an early materialism and a later idealism. If Filloux came down on the side of an overall continuity of purpose and took the *Division of Labour* as a general framework for a critique of modern society, Jeffery Alexander, while building yet another case in favour of a socialist interpretation of Durkheim, came down on the contrary in favour of intellectual discontinuity. So, according to Alexander, whereas the early Durkheim was a materialist and empiricist he gradually moved towards a more idealist perspective out of a concern to differentiate himself from the type of economic determinist Marxism that

⁵³ Frank Pearce, *The Radical Durkheim* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

⁵⁴ Carmen J. Siriani, 'Justice and the Division of Labour', *Sociological Review* (hereafter *SR*), 32(1984), 449-70.

⁵⁵ Jean-Claude Filloux, *Durkheim et le socialisme* (Geneva: Droz, 1977). Also see Filloux's introduction and notes to Émile Durkheim, *La Science sociale et l'action*, ed. by Jean-Claude Filloux, rev edn (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France/Quadrige, 2010), first publ. in 1970.

was being introduced in France in the 1890s.⁵⁶ On the question of Durkheim's intellectual development therefore, there seems to be no definite consensus, although Warren Schmaus has suggested that we see it not as a matter of a fundamental break between two totally contrasting theoretical perspectives, but as a development of an original research programme into new intellectual 'niches'.⁵⁷

Collaborative projects for research in 'Études durkheimiennes' or 'Durkheimian studies' were formed both in France by Philippe Besnard and in the United Kingdom around W.S.F. Pickering and Willie Watts Miller. These projects continued to advance our knowledge of both Durkheim's work itself and of those close to him and have in turn tended to reinforce the liberal, humanitarian and socialist side of Durkheim in his relation to politics.⁵⁸ The re-awakening of interest in Durkheim also brought with it publications and translations of many of his lesser known writings (reviews, journal articles, lectures), as well as letter collections and, most recently, Marcel Fournier's new biography of Durkheim, which was published in French in 2007 and translated to English in 2013.⁵⁹ Meanwhile numerous special editions of the *Revue française de sociologie* also greatly advanced our understanding of Durkheim's work itself, the group of scholars that

⁵⁶ Jeffrey C. Alexander, 'The Inner Development of Durkheim's Sociological Theory: From Early Writings to Maturity', in *The Cambridge Companion to Durkheim*, ed. by Jeffrey C. Alexander and Philip Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.136-59.

⁵⁷ Warren Schmaus, *Durkheim's Philosophy of Science and the Sociology of Knowledge: Creating an Intellectual Niche* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁵⁸ See for example, W.S.F. Pickering, *Individualism and Human Rights in the Durkheimian Tradition* (Oxford: British Centre for Durkheimian Studies, 1993), Kenneth Thompson, *Durkheim, Europe and Democracy* (Oxford: British Centre for Durkheimian Studies, 1995) or W. Watts Miller, *Durkheim, Morals and Modernity* (London: UCL, 1996).

⁵⁹ Fournier, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 2-3.

gathered around him and of the competing schools of thought in sociology that existed in France at the time.⁶⁰ Biographical accounts of individuals close to Durkheim have also shown that, far from being an ideological opponent of the socialist left during his lifetime, Durkheim actually counted a number of militant socialists among his scientific collaborators and was himself was a friend of the socialist leader Jean Jaurès.⁶¹ So while Durkheim had, in the English speaking world, initially been understood as a functionalist celebrant of the American way of life, more recently the socially critical aspect of his work and his closeness - both in terms of personal relationships and in terms of ideas - to a certain form of socialism have come to the fore.⁶² As both Frank Pearce and Mike Gane have pointed out, it is unfair to read Durkheim's critique of historical materialism, of revolutionism and of communism as an outright rejection of socialism. Indeed, they suggest, given what we now know about the future of these doctrines in the 20th century, we should perhaps consider Durkheim's as a valid critique from an author who was also concerned with democratic and egalitarian reform.⁶³ Indeed Pearce suggested that having harnessed the potential of Durkheim's key concepts for critical analysis, we can build on his analysis of the shortcomings of Marxist theory in order to develop a more realisable political programme. Far from proposing a critique of modern industrial society that acted

⁶⁰ See 'A propos de Durkheim', *Revue française de sociologie* (hereafter *RFS*), 17.2 (1976), 'Les Durkheimiens', *RFS*, 20.1 (1979) and 'Sociologies françaises au tournant du siècle: les concurrents du groupe durkheimien', *RFS*, 22.3 (1981). Also see the collection of essays, *The Sociological Domain: The Durkheimians and the Founding of French Sociology*, ed. by Philippe Besnard (Cambridge and Paris: Cambridge University Press and Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1983).

⁶¹ Henri Desroche, 'Marcel Mauss, "citoyen" et "camarade" : ses "incursions écrites dans le domaine du normatif"', *RFS*, 20.1 (1979), 221-37, Marcel Fournier, *Marcel Mauss* (Paris: Fayard, 1994), pp. 201-37.

⁶² Mike Gane, 'Introduction', in *The Radical Sociology of Durkheim and Mauss* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-19 (p. 5).

⁶³ Gane, p. 1.

as the foundation for either a traditionalist or an anti-socialist political position Sue Stedman Jones has suggested that we see Durkheim's sociology as a close to the 'humanistic', intellectual socialism of Jean Jaurès which took individualism and socialism as interdependent and mutually reinforcing.⁶⁴

3. Thesis Question

The centrality of the political to Durkheim's project is thus an important theme in Durkheimian studies. From having been represented as a nationalist, a 'forerunner of fascism', a theorist of order, a conservative republican, Durkheim, under the light of more recent scholarship, now appears as a left-leaning republican in context, with a sociology embracing what can either be described as a type of 'humanistic' socialism concerned about individual freedom, or 'communitarian' form of liberalism concerned about social justice.⁶⁵ Yet in the discussion of both the political implications of Durkheim's sociology and his intervention in support of specific political causes, other aspects of his role within the political and social life of the Third Republic - his position within its educational institutions, or within the world of publishing for example, or his relationship to the dominant philosophical ideas of his day - seem to have been

⁶⁴ Sue Stedman Jones, *Durkheim Reconsidered* (London: Polity Press, 2001), p. 57. Also see Harvey Goldberg, *The Life of Jean Jaurès* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1962) and Aaron Noland, 'Individualism in Jean Jaurès' socialist thought' in *Socialism*, ed. by Jeremy Jennings, 4 Vols (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), ii, pp. 379-94, first publ. in the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 22.1 (1961), 63-80.

⁶⁵ On 'communitarian' liberalism Mark S. Cladis, *A Communitarian Defense of Liberalism: Émile Durkheim and Contemporary Social Theory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992).

neglected.⁶⁶ Yet these less visible factors are, I believe, important in explaining how he came to develop political ideas he held and to conceive of his own role in politics in a certain light. Integrating these factors into an examination of Durkheim's politics I aim to follow his professional, intellectual and political trajectory and answer what I consider to be a more fundamental question of how Durkheim became the academic, the social scientist and public figure that he was. My question is therefore, how did Durkheim *become* both the founder of the French school of sociology and a public intellectual with a political voice that mattered? At the same time I also suggest that through inquiring into the sources of a Durkheim's intellectual prestige we can gain a new perspective on aspects of his social theory and politics.

In the mid to late nineteenth century, the idea of sociology was still a relatively new one in France and it was, I believe, Durkheim's capacity to both move with what was most intellectually innovative while still drawing on more traditional sources of scholarly prestige that can go a long way towards explaining his success. With this in mind I have divided my thesis into six parts and, influenced by Marcel Fournier's work, I

⁶⁶ Some exceptions to this and works which I shall draw on further ahead are Terry N. Clark, *Prophets and Patrons: The French University System and the Emergence of the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973); George Weisz, 'L'idéologie républicaine et les sciences sociales: les durkheimiens et la chaire d'histoire d'économie sociale à la Sorbonne', *RFS*, 20.1 (1979), 83-112; Victor Karady, 'Durkheim, les sciences sociales et l'Université: bilan d'un demi-échec', *RFS*, 17.2 (1976), 267-311 and 'Stratégies de réussite et modes de faire-valoir de la sociologie chez les durkheimiens', *RFS*, 17.2 (1979), 49-82; John I. Brooks III, *The Eclectic Legacy: Academic Philosophy and the Human Sciences in Nineteenth Century France* (Newark Del and London: University of Delaware Press and Associated University Presses, 1998) and Warren Schmaus, *Rethinking Durkheim and his Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

have mostly taken a chronological approach rather than the thematic approach more common in Durkheimian studies. So, after an opening chapter dealing mainly with theoretical considerations and a further exploration of the context, I move on to what I have called Durkheim's 'scientific debut', where I discuss his early writings, those articles published between 1885 and 1890. The third chapter will look at Durkheim's educational background and relationship to the world of academic philosophy, and will be based on the monumental works he produced in a crucial the period between 1892 and 1896. In chapter four, I examine Durkheim's position in relation to other schools of thought in sociology in France at the time and the significance of his foundation of the *Année sociologique* journal. Although politics come into all of this in an indirect way the fifth chapter will deal explicitly with the changing political climate in republican France, how this influenced the intellectual fortunes of Durkheimian sociology and Durkheim's active involvement as an intellectual in the body politic. Finally I shall end with a chapter on what can be called the 'hegemonic' period of French sociology and will look at Durkheim's position within the dominant spheres of French intellectual life towards the end of his career and his conception of his own role in public life.⁶⁷

In my reading of Durkheim's work I have tried to work, as far as possible, from the original French texts, many of which can be found either online, on the 'gallica' catalogue of the French national library, or else at the *Bibliothèque nationale* itself and at the French national archives both in Paris. In the case of Durkheim's writings, where it

⁶⁷ Both the ideas of Durkheim's 'scientific début' and the 'hegemonic' period of his sociology draw on the terminology used by Anna Boschetti in her study of Jean-Paul Sartre's rise to intellectual prominence. See Anna Boschetti, *The Intellectual Enterprise: Sartre and Les Temps Modernes*, trans. by Richard Mc Cleary (Evanston, IL, Northwestern University Press, 1988).

has not been possible to gain access to the original text I have read either from the three volume collection of his work edited by Victor Karady or from the much smaller selection of articles edited by Jean-Claude Filloux.⁶⁸ Although I have worked from French editions, quotations are in English and where I have drawn on an existing English translation I give the page number in the footnotes alongside the reference to the French version; where there is no reference to any text in English the translation is my own.

My reasons for wanting to work from the original French texts are threefold. Firstly, as I shall explain in chapter one, it is one of my theoretical assumptions that the journals in which Durkheim published and the publishing house with which his work originally appeared are themselves significant factors in explaining how he accumulated influence and elaborated his distinctive position. It thus seemed to make more sense to use the first French editions where possible rather than subsequent re-editions and translations where these original associations are generally effaced. Secondly, rather than focussing exclusively on his four main books, the argument of my thesis will be based on lesser-known articles, critical reviews, lectures and conference papers given by Durkheim. While most of this material has indeed been translated into English, it is dispersed between various different collections and there is no single work in English comparable to Victor Karady's collection in French, a collection which groups together in one place all of this translated material. From a practical point of view I have therefore found it easier simply to consult the original French versions and either Karady's or Filloux's collections where this has not been possible. Finally, while most of Durkheim's writings have been translated into English there are still some untranslated pieces -

⁶⁸ Émile Durkheim, *Textes*, ed. by Victor Karady, 3 Vols (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1975) and Durkheim, *La Science sociale et l'action*, ed. by Filloux.

mainly collections of letters or archival material - that I have found important to my argument. For the sake of maintaining overall consistency it again made sense to work from the French texts throughout. With these final considerations aside I shall now move on to chapter one and outline the contextual and theoretical foundations of the chapters on Durkheim to follow.

Chapter 1

Durkheim as Sociologist and Intellectual

Stretching from around 1880 up until the eve of the First World War, the period under consideration here, the French *fin-de-siècle*, was a time of artistic and literary innovation, an exciting time of intellectual creativity when entirely new disciplines were formed.⁶⁹ The era of the Dreyfus Affair, it was also one in which the word ‘intellectual’ began to be used to refer to the scholars, writers and artists who were getting involved in the political life of the nation on an unprecedented scale.⁷⁰ Much in tune with the times, it was in this period that Émile Durkheim made his breakthrough in ‘founding’ sociology, and however much Durkheim himself styled his enterprise as ‘scientific’, it too was bound up with the dominant political issues of the day. Since this epoch, the question of what exactly defines an ‘intellectual’ and what role intellectuals have in public life has been the subject of debate. In this opening chapter, before going on to consider Durkheim’s case specifically, I shall first introduce some of these questions concerning intellectuals and their role in politics.

⁶⁹ H. Stuart Hughes, *Sophisticated Rebels: The Political Culture of European Dissent, 1968-1987* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 145.

⁷⁰Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Les Intellectuels en France de l’Affaire Dreyfus à nos jours*, 2nd edn (Paris: Colin, 1992), pp. 5-6.

1.1 Intellectuals and their Social Role

If we are to draw any one significant marker in our discussion of the role of intellectuals in French political life, it would have to be Émile Zola's intervention in the Dreyfus Affair in 1898. Such was the importance of this event that almost a hundred years later the period stretching from here until the end of the twentieth century has been described as the 'century of the intellectual'.⁷¹ Indeed, it was during the Dreyfus Affair that the 'myth' of the French intellectual as a heroic figure speaking back to authority was born.⁷² And over the course of the twentieth century questions regarding what or who exactly was an intellectual and whether there was a specific type of political involvement that characterised *genuine* intellectual commitment became topics for scholarly discussion. Some of the questions that emerge include: are the types of people considered to embody the intellectual always the same or do they vary according to historical and social context? And is there just one way of defining the relationship between the intellectual and society in which he or she lives?

⁷¹ The phrase is from Jeremy Jennings and Tony Kemp-Welch, 'The Century of the Intellectual: From the Dreyfus Affair to Salman Rushdie, in *Intellectuals in Politics: From the Dreyfus Affair to Salman Rushdie*, ed. by Jeremy Jennings and Anthony Kemp-Welch (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1-21.

⁷² Jeremy Ahearne, *Intellectuals, Culture and Public Policy in France: Approaches from the Left* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p. 1.

1.1.1 The Demand for Disinterest

In a series of lectures delivered in 1993, Edward Saïd defined an ‘intellectual’ in the broadest terms possible, as someone with a particular ‘vocation for the art of representing’, someone who ‘visibly represents a standpoint of some kind, and...makes articulate representations to his or her public’, be it through talking, writing, teaching or even appearing on television.⁷³ For the French authors Pascal Ory and Jean-François Sirinelli intellectuals too were characterised not so much by what they did professionally or by any specific expertise, but by the fact that they communicated their thought publicly, intervening in the political domain and the value-loaded debates over the affairs of the ‘cité’.⁷⁴ Yet, from the very point when it first came into common usage in France in the final decade of the nineteenth century during the Dreyfus Affair, the word ‘intellectual’ was taken, both by those who proudly wore the title and those who used it as a derogatory term, to mean someone with a unique capacity for critical thought.⁷⁵ If, wrote Émile Durkheim, intellectuals were in a privileged position to step into the public debate, it was not due to any specific expertise, but because they were individuals accustomed to the use of critical reason, to questioning unfounded assumptions and reserving judgement.⁷⁶ With an acquired gift for critical analysis and abstract thought the intellectual was seen as having unique access to transcendental principles of truth and justice and was thus in a special position to act as a social critic, to recall temporal power

⁷³ Edward Saïd, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (Bath: Vintage, 1993), p. 10.

⁷⁴ Ory and Sirinelli, p. 9.

⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 5-6, p. 9

⁷⁶ Émile Durkheim, ‘L’individualisme et les intellectuels’, in Émile Durkheim, *La Science sociale et l’action*, ed. by Filloux, pp. 263-79 (pp. 271-72), first publ. in the *Revue bleue*. 4th ser (1898), 7-13.

and indeed society as a whole to these principles. The intellectual was therefore not just someone who took up a position in the public debate, but was also expected to do this from a wholly disinterested point of view, motivated by a thirst for truth alone.

Although this ideal of the ‘universal’ intellectual may strike us today as no more than a chimera, it has nevertheless proved to be a powerful myth and one that has dominated the discussion of the role of intellectuals in public life over the course of the twentieth century. When, for example, in the years prior to the outbreak of the First World War and in the interwar period intellectuals failed to act as disinterested social critics, the problem was not seen to be with the ideal of the ‘universal’ intellectual itself, but that intellectuals themselves had committed ‘treason’. In his celebrated essay, *La Trahison des clercs* Julien Benda lamented precisely this ‘treason’ committed by his fellow intellectuals in contributing to the rise of nationalist and class-based ideologies and their betrayal of what he considered to be their unique vocation. Intellectuals, in Benda’s view, consisted of a minority of extraordinary individuals set apart from the ‘laity’ or secular majority and were individuals with a particular gift for critical thought. Above the base workings of temporal power, as disinterested scholars with no concerns for political or economic advantage, they had privileged access to the universal principles underlying human civilisation. Their vocation and role in society was thus to speak the truth back to secular authority, to denounce corruption and the violation of universal principles when necessary. However, in taking a stand publicly in favour of particular class-based or nationalist movements, in contributing to the ideological turmoil of his own time these intellectuals had, wrote Benda, committed treason.⁷⁷ Whereas treason, in

⁷⁷ Julien Benda, *La Trahison des clercs* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1927).

secular terms would commonly be considered as a betrayal of one's patriotic duties, treason, for the intellectual was the betrayal of one's duty as a representative and interpreter of universal principles of truth and justice.

Benda's description of the 'universal' intellectual has indeed proved appealing to intellectuals themselves. In the introduction to Edward Shils's collection of essays *The Intellectuals and the Powers*, we find, for example, intellectuals again depicted as persons with an 'unusual sensitivity to the sacred, an uncommon reflectiveness about the nature of their universe and the rules which govern their society'. They form part of that 'minority of persons' who, in every society 'more than the ordinary run of their fellow men, are inquiring, and desirous of being in frequent communion with symbols which are more general than the immediate concrete situations of everyday life'. Although Shils did not refer here to universal principles common to all humanity, but to principles underlying a specific society, his message was still that intellectuals were set apart from the 'ordinary' people preoccupied by their worldly concerns, and that their condition almost presupposed a situation of 'tension' between themselves and the 'value orientations embodied in the actual institutions of any society'.⁷⁸ Here again, the genuine intellectual appeared as an unyielding social critic.

Finally, however much he sought to recognise the problems with the Dreyfusard ideal, Saïd himself too ultimately re-asserted Benda's vision of the intellectual vocation as one of social critique. Even if intellectuals were always involved in the world representing particular 'secular' standpoints, even if they were generally tied to and reliant on particular institutions or organisations or audiences, he argued that they could

⁷⁸ Edward Shils, *The Intellectuals and the Powers, and Other Essays* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 3, p. 7.

nevertheless take the position of outsider in relation to society's dominant values and groups. Intellectuals, according to Saïd, could do one of two things: either question the current order of things or contribute to its legitimation and naturalisation. The fundamental point was not whether one was visibly involved in party-politics, well established in academia or whether one appeared on television. The real distinction to be made was between the 'yea-sayers' and the 'nay-sayers', between 'those on the one hand who belong fully to the society as it is, who flourish in it without an overwhelming sense of dissonance or dissent, those who can be called yea-sayers; and on the other hand, the nay-sayers, the individuals at odds with their society and therefore outsiders and exiles so far as privileges, power and honours are concerned.'⁷⁹ What made for a *genuine* intellectual then was the act of speaking back to authority.⁸⁰ Before considering whether or not this distinction could be taken as a useful typology with which to judge the political commitment of a given intellectual, the next question is how or if this view can be reconciled with a recognition of the fact that intellectuals, like all individuals, are also preoccupied by what may be referred to as 'secular' interests.

⁷⁹ Saïd, p. 39.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 90.

1.1.2 Before ‘Yea-Sayers’ and the ‘Nay-Sayers’

In one of his several diatribes where Durkheim and sociology came in for particularly harsh words, Charles Péguy took issue with what he considered the base motives of the ‘intellectual party’ of his time, allured as they were by the ‘temptations’ of temporal power, by the opportunity to crucially influence the younger generation through control of the examination system, by the glory of university chairs and decorations, and by the money and public recognition they could derive from their position. The most irritating thing about it all was, he raged, that these intellectuals actually dressed up this temporal ambition as disinterest.⁸¹ And yet, a more worldly-wise reader in our present day might feel like responding to Péguy, “but what exactly did you expect?” As Edward Saïd underscored in his lectures, intellectuals are always largely beholden to institutions, from which they derive their authority and with which their own intellectual fortunes are intertwined.⁸² However much the interwar generation of French intellectuals (of which Péguy could perhaps been taken as a foretaste) railed against their intellectual predecessors at the Sorbonne, the fact is that later writers such as Jean-Paul Sartre also derived their prestige and authority from a particular set of social and cultural circumstances in which the role of publishing houses such as the Nouvelle Revue Française rather than the university became central.⁸³ If we accept these general remarks,

⁸¹ Charles Péguy, ‘De la situation faite au parti intellectuel dans le monde moderne devant les accidents de la gloire temporelle, 6 octobre 1907, *Cahiers de la quinzaine*’, in Charles Péguy, *Œuvres en prose*, ed. by Robert Burac, rev edn, 3 Vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), ii: *Période des Cahiers de la quinzaine, 1905-1909*, pp. 678-774, (p. 695, p. 698).

⁸² Saïd, pp. 50-51.

⁸³ For an example of this effort by the interwar intellectuals to break with the previous generation see Nizan. On the interwar period and the role of publishing houses see Debray, *Le Pouvoir intellectuel en France*. On the rise of Sartre and its cultural conditions see Boschetti.

the question however becomes one of explaining how certain cultural figures could indeed come to be seen as ‘genuine’ intellectuals, in the sense of ‘disinterested’ devotees to truth and justice, while at the same time reaping the ‘temporal’ rewards.

Before even seeking to answer the question of whether an intellectual was a critic or a conformist, a more fundamental one would therefore seem to be how a given scholar, scientist, artist or literary figure could come to be endowed with a certain prestige and authority to speak on public matters. Furthermore, while Saïd’s distinction between the ‘yea-sayers’ and the ‘nay-sayers’ is a helpful starting point, his characterisation of the ‘genuine’ intellectual as a social critic existing in a situation of tension with the society’s dominant values and institutions, disregards the historical reality of political commitment - during the Dreyfus Affair intellectuals mobilised under the banners of both Truth/Justice and Order/Authority - and disqualified a whole series of thinkers from the title ‘intellectual’.⁸⁴ Rather than fixing an ideal of ‘genuine’ intellectual commitment and weighing up whether or not a given figure fits the criteria or not, a more fruitful approach may be to try to account for the way in which an individual becomes an intellectual with a public voice that mattered in the first place and to account for the range of political alternatives that were open to them in a given historical context.

One of the most prominent French intellectuals of the late-twentieth century, the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu provides us with a set of what can be called ‘conceptual tools’ for thinking about such sociological problems.⁸⁵ Worked out and refined largely through his anthropological work in Algeria (Kabylia), Bourdieu’s concepts of ‘field’,

⁸⁴ Ory and Sirinelli, p. 10, pp. 17-20.

⁸⁵ Jeremy F. Lane, *Pierre Bourdieu: A Critical Introduction* (London and Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2000), p. 3

‘habitus’, ‘practice’, ‘strategy’, ‘doxa’ to list just a few, could all be imported back into an analysis of what constituted ‘legitimate culture’ in contemporary France.⁸⁶ And Bourdieu indeed suggested that his own sociology of intellectuals could help shed light on what was at stake in the dispute between the New Sorbonne as personified by intellectuals such as Durkheim, Ernest Lavisse and Charles Seignobos and its opponents in the first two decades of the twentieth century.⁸⁷ Bourdieu’s theoretical model does therefore seem suitable here in what will be my attempt to explain how Durkheim gained recognition as a scholar, sociologist and public intellectual, and to understand Durkheim’s own political position as well as the ideological reaction (of which Péguy was just one expression) that developed around his persona. And particularly helpful would seem his point that within the parameters of a French society which viewed culture in terms of a high-minded detachment from economic or political gain, ‘disinterest’ could become a mark of distinction, precisely what allowed intellectuals become aristocrats of culture, as it were.⁸⁸

I shall come back to the Bourdieu’s sociology of intellectuals below. Returning to the idea of the ‘genuine’ intellectual as a social critic however, it is fair to say that Saïd’s lectures seem to have been in response to a wave of conservative anti-intellectualism that had been prevalent in Britain throughout the 1980s, and to plethora of works that sought to disparage the heroic Dreyfusard figure.⁸⁹ As Anna Boschetti noted in her study of

⁸⁶ Lane, *Pierre Bourdieu*, pp. 48-49, p. 67, p. 103, pp. 129-30.

⁸⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1984), p. 155.

⁸⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques: Sur la théorie de l’action* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994), pp. 149-67 and also *Méditations pascaliennes* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1997), pp. 21-27. Ahearne, pp. 21-22.

⁸⁹ On this context see Jeremy Jennings and Tony Kemp-Welch, ‘The Century of the Intellectual’ and also on France, Jeremy Jennings, ‘Of Treason, Blindness and Silence:

Sartre, the very representation of the politically committed intellectual can indeed become a stake in political debates.⁹⁰ Yet the point of Bourdieu's sociology of intellectuals was not to discredit the 'universal' intellectual or to diminish science's claims to knowledge, but more to encourage greater awareness of the social conditions and the limits of knowledge and action.⁹¹ Intellectuals may not be absolute outsiders and unyielding social critics but this does not mean that they can never be in a position to contest the established order. They can, in times of social change and crisis, for various reasons to do with their relation to the dominant cultural institutions, be either galvanised into contesting the established state of affairs or acting in defence of it.⁹² The task however is to try to explain the social and cultural mechanisms behind this.

Dilemmas of the Intellectual in Modern France', in *Intellectuals in Politics*, ed. by Jennings and Kemp-Welch, pp. 65-85.

⁹⁰ Boschetti, p. 6.

⁹¹ Loïc Wacquant, 'Toward a Reflective Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu', *Sociological Theory*, 7(1989), 26-63. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Questions de Sociologie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1984), pp. 13-14 or Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes*, pp. 126-27.

⁹² Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, p. 96.

1.2 The Making of an Intellectual

From a position of relative obscurity at the beginning of his career in the 1880s Durkheim had, by the time of his death in 1917, become one of if not *the* dominant figure in French intellectual life. Not only this but sociology, which can hardly be said to have existed as a serious academic discipline before 1880, had been integrated within the university system and endowed with wider intellectual prestige, while Durkheimian sociology specifically had outdone all its competitors to become recognised as *the* French school of sociology. Yet apart from Terry Clark's study of the early days of French social science and its relationship to the university system, one special edition of the *Revue française de sociologie* on Durkheim's competitors and two articles by Victor Karady - one on the social sciences in the French university, another on the strategies of legitimation pursued by the Durkheimians - there has been little consistent analysis of this question.⁹³ Inspired by Anna Boschetti's study of Jean-Paul Sartre's intellectual ascent in the mid-twentieth century, is it therefore this process by which Durkheim became an important public figure (an analysis which I believe is also crucial for understanding both his social theory and his politics) that I shall seek to explain in the chapters that follow. First however, I shall go through the set of concepts drawn from the work of Bourdieu that will underpin this analysis.

⁹³ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*; 'Sociologies françaises au tournant du siècle: les concurrents du groupe durkheimien', *RFS*, 22.3 (1981); Karady, 'Durkheim, les sciences sociales et l'Université' and 'Stratégies de réussite et modes de faire-valoir de la sociologie'.

1.2.1 Symbolic Violence and the Intellectual Elite

From his anthropology of colonial Algeria, to his studies of education, art, culture and language, a concern underlying Bourdieu's entire work was that of exposing the mechanisms of symbolic violence. Seeking to break the 'enchanted circle', to bring into focus the 'social magic' that hides from view the culturally arbitrary nature of social hierarchy, symbolic violence refers to how the categorisations that order the world and constitute people come to be misrecognised as natural.⁹⁴ It is a violence that generally goes unperceived, as the established order is produced and upheld not so much by force but symbolically; hierarchies and systems of dominance are reproduced to the extent that both the dominant and the dominated take the social world as it is as legitimate, and cannot see it as product of history.

In *Reproduction in Education* Bourdieu explicitly defined the concept of 'symbolic violence' and put it to work in his analysis of the 'legitimate culture' of his own society. This 'legitimate culture' he called a 'cultural arbitrary' in the sense that it embraced a specific set of values, ways of thinking, speaking and doing, capacities and tastes that, far from being of a universal character, are incorporated from childhood through socialisation in a 'cultured' bourgeois milieu.⁹⁵ Although Bourdieu, in his later work seemed to express a more classical republican view of education and the role of the state, here he questioned the optimistic view of education as a vehicle for social change and equality. In modern French society, he argued, it was largely through a school system

⁹⁴ Loïc Wacquant, 'Sociology as Socioanalysis: Tales of *Homo Academicus*', *Sociological Forum*, 5.4 (1990), 677-89 (p. 678). Pierre Bourdieu, *Choses dites* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1987), p. 126 and *Méditations pascaliennes*, p. 14.

⁹⁵ Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *La Reproduction: éléments pour une théorie du système d'enseignement* (Paris: Éditions du Minuit, 1970), pp. 18-19. Lane, *Pierre Bourdieu*, p. 67.

that imparted a very specific type of learning and culture, that rewarded skills and values picked up through socialisation in the bourgeois environment but which it presented as 'objective' indicators of intellectual ability, that the established symbolic order and its rules were naturalised.⁹⁶ The school also being an institution of consecration for those who do well in it, a diploma from one of the Parisian elite schools or 'grandes écoles' could also be a rare source of social prestige. At the same time it is through the culture received over their whole educational trajectory towards such qualifications that social actors come to develop certain worldviews and lifestyles.

This fundamental idea of symbolic violence is also important for understanding the idea of an 'intellectual elite', used by Christophe Charle to describe a particular group within the new social structure that came into being in the second half of the nineteenth century in France. While in official discourse decline of the 'notables' - the old aristocracy combined with the upper echelons of the bourgeoisie who had hitherto monopolised economic, social and political power - was said to have given way to 'meritocracy' with the advent of the Third Republic, it would be more exact, going by Charle's analysis, to say that what occurred was more a re-shuffling of the cards. If distinguished positions in the new social hierarchy - positions in political, economic or intellectual life - were in theory now accessible to anybody with the right natural capabilities and a taste for hard work regardless of their social origins, wealth or connections, in reality what we see is the emergence of new political, economic and

⁹⁶ Jeremy Lane, *Bourdieu's Politics: Problems and Possibilities* (London and New York: Routledge), p. 4 and *Pierre Bourdieu*, p. 59, p. 67, pp. 200-01. Bourdieu and Passeron, p. 19 and Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques*, p. 39.

intellectual elites each with their own channels of access and criteria of distinction.⁹⁷ While access to positions of power opened up to a larger number and though intellectual credentials became an important source of prestige, it nevertheless remained the case that in politics as in the administration, the overwhelming proportion of those in the highest positions were drawn from a pre-selected section of the population – men from the upper or middle level bourgeoisie, with a secondary education and the distinctions of higher education.⁹⁸

New among the ranks of society's dominant groups, scholars with a high degree of the idealistic, 'disinterested' humanist culture imparted by the French university system may have set themselves apart from the politically and economically dominant as the new moral conscience of the nation, and yet this new elite had too its privileged channels of access and criteria of distinction.⁹⁹ Part of my concern in this thesis will be to explain how Durkheim not only gained access to this world but also distinguished himself within it.

⁹⁷ Christophe Charle, *Les Élités de la République, 1880-1900* (Paris: Fayard, 1987) and *La Naissance des 'intellectuels'* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1990), pp. 68-73.

⁹⁸ Christophe Charle, *Histoire sociale de la France au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1991), pp. 255-67.

⁹⁹ Charle Christophe, 'Le champ universitaire parisien à la fin dix-neuvième siècle', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* (hereafter *ARSS*), 47-48 (1983), 77-89.

1.2.2 Field, Capital, Habitus

At this point however it is necessary to introduce three other concepts, central to Bourdieu's theory of practice and to understanding the workings of the type of symbolically constituted social and intellectual world described above: field, capital and habitus.¹⁰⁰ The term 'field' refers to such a historically shaped, structured social space within which knowledge is produced, a space where actors, be they individual or collective, meet and within which they take up different positions in relation to one another. There are various different fields making up the social world - the economic field, the political and bureaucratic fields, the intellectual field – and there are also subfields, such as the university field, which would occupy a place within the broader intellectual field. Participants in the field can be individuals or small groups, 'schools', even academic disciplines. While fields exist in definite historical and social settings, it is important to note that it is not a question of reducing matters to the surrounding context: fields have their own internal dynamics and over time a field will increasingly assert its autonomy from other fields, from demands external to it and come to be governed by its own internal logic or *nomos*.¹⁰¹

A field however is not just a network of relations; it is also a hierarchical social space governed by its own laws, with its own set of rules as to what counts as valuable or legitimate within it. Participants are recognised by the field as possessing varying degrees of power or authority within it and the field itself is, crucially, a site of struggle for the

¹⁰⁰ This theory of practice was outlined in Pierre Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique, précédé de trois études d'ethnologie kabyle* (Geneva and Paris: Droz, 1972) and in *Le Sens pratique* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980).

¹⁰¹ Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques*, p. 76, pp. 158-59.

monopoly of this authority.¹⁰² An actor or even a new academic discipline can only gain any authority within a field to the extent that it is recognised by pre-existing institutions of legitimation. In other words, there are stakes in every field, as the field is a distribution of symbolic power where actors have ‘interests’ and compete with each other for this power, for the authority to define what counts as legitimate and valuable within it. On the question of interest however it is important to note that what is of high symbolic value varies according to the specific demands of the field. Interest should not to be taken as interest in a narrow, economic sense of material interest and this is especially the case in the intellectual field where the blatant pursuit of economic or political power could indeed damage one’s legitimacy in a milieu where the supreme ideal is the disinterested pursuit of truth for its own sake.¹⁰³ Some of the questions we might ask in relation to the subject of intellectuals would include, how a given intellectual type comes to appear as the very embodiment of disinterest; or how in a university field, with a given hierarchy of disciplines, sociology could make space for itself within the definition of what counted as legitimate knowledge; or how indeed within a sociological field made up of a set of competing schools and individuals Durkheim could come to gain the monopoly on the legitimate definition of what sociology actually was.

The concept of capital is, on this note, important in explaining the symbolic power that any actor, an individual or entire school of thought, holds within a field. On the one hand, capital is important for understanding the place of intellectuals within the social hierarchy generally. In a world where the socially dominant never maintain their

¹⁰² Bourdieu, *Choses dites*, p. 126.

¹⁰³ Ibid, pp. 124-27, Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques*, p. 163 and *Méditations pascaliennes*, pp. 24-27.

position by brute force and where social divisions are sanctified symbolically, cultural capital acquired mainly through institutionalised education helps to reproduce the divisions of the social space, and intellectuals owe their privileged position in society to their high levels of cultural capital.¹⁰⁴ At the same time the concept of capital is also important for understanding the position of an agent within the intellectual field itself. Again, capital is not to be understood in the narrow sense of economic capital alone: as a field becomes more autonomous and comes increasingly to be ruled by its own internal logic, the more it develops its own symbolic economy and criteria of what counts as valid or valuable within it.¹⁰⁵ The intellectual field and its subfields have their own ways and means of consecrating the hierarchy of authors, specialists, disciplines and so on. It is through the accumulation of specific forms of symbolic capital – examples would be graduation from certain schools, examination results, book reviews, journal articles, appointments and titles, inaugural lectures, the founding of a journal – that participants can come to wield symbolic power within the intellectual field.¹⁰⁶ It is certainly possible for someone such as Durkheim who, as we shall see, began from a relatively dominated position within the intellectual field, to reach a hegemonic position through acquiring specific symbolic capital.

Finally, the concept of habitus is important in explaining the strategies pursued by actors with given resources within a field presenting them with a range of possibilities. Habitus is perhaps best described as socially acquired ways of seeing and doing, ‘structured’ by one’s lived history and present circumstances, but also as ‘structuring’ in

¹⁰⁴ Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 160-61 and Bourdieu, *Choses dites*, pp. 125-26.

¹⁰⁶ Karady, ‘Stratégies de réussite et modes de faire-valoir de la sociologie’, pp. 69-70.

that this acquired habitus can orientate the behaviour of actors in the form of dispositions. In this sense the idea of actors in a field pursuing various ‘strategies’ of legitimation, seeking to acquire various forms of symbolic capital, is not to be understood as a rational means-ends calculation but as conduct informed by a ‘practical sense’ or a feel for the game within a given field.¹⁰⁷ These inherited dispositions are transmitted in many ways, starting from the family, but in modern society, the role of the school, of institutionalised education is most important. In the case of Durkheim, as we shall see, his education in philosophy was crucial in the formation of his intellectual habitus.

The concept of habitus is a way of reconciling the theoretical opposition between social structure and individual agency, in that it can explain individual practice within the limits of incorporated habitus, in a given state of play of the field. Part of the effect of habitus is that participants in a field learn the rules and master the skills that the field requires of an actor. At the same time, all of these participants, whatever their position, are united in the sense that no one is indifferent to what is at stake in their encounters within the field; all believe that the stakes over which they struggle are fundamentally worthwhile.¹⁰⁸ A ‘universe of belief’, every field has as its very cornerstone a reigning doxa or common set of assumptions that rationalise the existing rules of the game, and regardless of one’s position within a field, be it more orthodox or heterodox, the habitus of an actor pre-disposes them to accept the underlying, unspoken ‘rules of the game’ as valid.¹⁰⁹ Given importance of the concept of doxa and Durkheim’s feel for this game in

¹⁰⁷ Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques*, p. 45, pp. 170-71 and *Choses dites*, pp. 127-30.

¹⁰⁸ Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques*, p. 152.

¹⁰⁹ Bourdieu, *Choses dites*, p. 107, *Méditations pascaliennes*, p. 22, p. 121 and *Questions de sociologie*, p. 114

later explaining his intellectual success, it is on these points that I shall give, to finish, some further clarification.

1.2.3 Doxa, Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy

The concept of ‘doxa’ refers to the ‘self-evident’, elemental assumptions that form the cornerstone of every field, the beliefs that are taken for granted by social actors to the extent that they do not even need to be explicitly formulated: doxic beliefs go without saying.¹¹⁰ As such, it is what underpins symbolic violence, what allows arbitrary social relations to be recognised as natural and gives the existing order of things its legitimacy. Also intimately linked to the concept of habitus, it is through internalising doxic beliefs or the unquestioned, unthought assumptions underlying a field, and through not merely a formal adherence to, but unreflective recognition of the legitimacy of its rules, that the doxa is perpetuated. All fields thus have a structuring doxa, ingrained in the worldview of its actors and I suggest that by considering Durkheim’s relationship to the intellectual doxa of his time, his instinctive sense for the ‘rules of the game’, we can understand his rise to intellectual prominence.

At the same time however, this idea of doxa does not mean that a challenge to the existing state of affairs in a given field is never possible, and in terms of the intellectual order, Bourdieu’s analysis of the events of 1968 in *Homo academicus* showed how situations of crisis in a number of fields could combine to result in a questioning of the prevailing academic doxa. At times of crisis, which may or may not end up in a final overhaul, there can be two main positions in relation to the doxa: an orthodoxy, where doxic beliefs are made explicit but defended and held fast to, and a heterodoxy which opposes it and depends on the emergence of an alternative set of beliefs. Although the

¹¹⁰ Bourdieu, *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique*, p. 163 and *Méditations pascaliennes*, p. 121. On doxa also see Cécile Deer, ‘Doxa’, in *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, ed. by Michael Grenfell (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008).

heterodox position is usually constructed in opposition to the orthodox, it is actually mediated by doxa, which is after all what makes possible the polar opposition between orthodoxy and heterodoxy.¹¹¹ These three terms - doxa, orthodoxy and heterodoxy - I suggest are useful in understanding the state of the French academic field that Durkheim met with when he began writing about sociology, the reciprocal relationship between Durkheimian sociology and academic philosophy, and how the position of Durkheimian sociology in relation to other sociological schools of thought was mediated by its position in the academic field.

¹¹¹ Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes*, p. 123.

1.3 A Specifically French Context

In order to be able to use the conceptual tools just outlined however it is first necessary to take into consideration the specific conditions of the French intellectual field in the late nineteenth century and how it worked to confer intellectual legitimacy in practice. Before trying to explain, in the chapters to follow, how Durkheim from a position of relative obscurity at the beginning of his academic career in the 1880s managed to reach the pinnacle of French intellectual life by the time of his death in 1917, I shall briefly outline here how the French intellectual field could work to both bestow this symbolic legitimacy and shape his intellectual habitus. In line with the distinction emphasised by Victor Karady between the institutional and the scientific forms of symbolic capital, I shall consider in two separate sections below the role of both the official academic institutions and then looser set of structures such as journals and professional associations in conferring of symbolic legitimacy.¹¹² First, however, I shall start with a brief introduction on Durkheim's initial penchant towards a teaching career and its relation to the wider historical context.

¹¹² Karady, 'Stratégies de réussite et modes de faire-valoir de la sociologie', pp. 69-70.

1.3.1 Durkheim's Intellectual Vocation

Going by the published accounts of his childhood and family background, the young Émile Durkheim might seem an unlikely candidate for a prolific intellectual career. To begin with, one can only suppose that his family had other plans for him. Born into an orthodox Jewish community, rooted in Alsace-Lorraine since the Middle Ages, his future, it would seem, was to be in the rabbinate. His father Moïse was the Chief Rabbi of the Vosges and Haute-Marne, and his grandfather and great-grandfathers, going back eight generations, had also all been rabbis.¹¹³ His family's means were modest, and growing up far from the capital in an austere household, Durkheim would have had none of the objective advantages of wealth or proximity to Paris facilitating access to the heights of French intellectual life.¹¹⁴ At the local Collège d'Épinal he nevertheless distinguished himself as an outstanding student and decided early on that he wanted to continue his studies beyond school to which his father consented on the condition of being serious and working hard.¹¹⁵ After gaining his baccalaureate in 'lettres' in 1874 and in science the following year, and distinguishing himself in the nationwide competitive exams, the 'concours généraux', Durkheim left home to go to Paris to prepare for the entrance exams to the elite school, the École normale supérieure. One can only hypothesise as to why he broke with the family tradition and set his sights on an intellectual career instead; one may also wonder why his father readily agreed to him

¹¹³ Jean-Claude Filloux, 'Il ne faut pas oublier que je suis fils de rabbin', *RFS*, 17.2 (1976), 259-66 (p. 259).

¹¹⁴ Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, p. 39. On this point see Robert J. Smith, *The École Normale Supérieure and the Third Republic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), pp. 34-35. Due to the centralisation of the system all the important schools and institutions of intellectual consecration were in Paris.

¹¹⁵ Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, p. 41.

following this path. The one thing that is clear though, is that Durkheim was part of a wider social movement that was affecting students like himself all over the country. Indeed, it was very much the social and political changes that were going on in the society of the time that opened up this path to him.

The *École normale supérieure* was an elite Parisian institution for the training of secondary school teachers, and the graduates of this school were something of nobility among the profession. Students would normally spend three years here, passing their 'licence' (bachelor's degree) in the first year, having a second year free from exams for more independent work and then a third year entirely taken up with preparations for the demanding and highly competitive final exam, the 'agrégation'. However prestigious the school was in education and however much an achievement it was to gain the 'agrégation', being a 'normalien' and an 'agrégé', was, in the mid-nineteenth century, still by no means a sure source of social status. For much of the century, teachers in higher education, even if they had the education and culture of the bourgeoisie, would have been in a subordinate position in the general field of power in terms of income, social origin and lifestyle, all of which confirmed the humility of their position.¹¹⁶ This all changed from the mid to late nineteenth century as, summarised by Smith, using the titles of two well-known works, the 'republic of dukes' gave way to an educative republic, the 'republic of professors'.¹¹⁷ In the transition to a modern capitalist economy not only did education become an increasingly important factor in social mobility, with

¹¹⁶ Antoine Prost, *Histoire de l'enseignement en France, 1800-1967* (Paris: Colin, 1968), pp. 74-78.

¹¹⁷ Smith, p. 17. These expressions are from Daniel Halévy, *La Fin des notables*, 2 Vols (Paris: Grasset, 1930-1937), ii: *La République des ducs* (1937) and Alfred Thibaudet, *La République des professeurs* (Paris: Grasset, 1927).

the possession of rare educational diplomas from elite Parisian schools such as the *École centrale* and the *École polytechnique* becoming a coveted source of distinction, but we also see the arrival of university professors in particular among society's dominant groups.¹¹⁸ With levels of education on the increase, the classical humanist secondary education dispensed by the *lycée* became a hallmark of distinction coveted by the new bourgeoisie.¹¹⁹

In this setting the graduates of *École normale* became members of a veritable aristocracy of culture. While many of them would still go into secondary education, towards the end of the nineteenth century, as new possibilities opened up in the universities many *normaliens* would go on to brilliant careers in higher education or in research.¹²⁰ Although an elite training school, the *École normale* was nevertheless impregnated with the meritocratic ideology of the new society that was coming into being, in which talent and hard work, it was believed, would trump wealth and family connections. The myth of the school painted it as the perfect realisation of the democratic ideal, as a school open to students from all social backgrounds, which offered scholarships to the outstanding students from poor families. Indeed, the state actively sought out the brightest students from the *lycées* in the provinces, and the academic authority called on these schools to encourage the 'valuable elements' within their establishments to try out for the elite schools in Paris.¹²¹ If a student demonstrated

¹¹⁸ See Charle, *Les Élités de la République* and *Histoire sociale de la France*, pp. 267-74.

¹¹⁹ Charle, *Les Élités de la République*, p. 43.

¹²⁰ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 33-42.

¹²¹ Victor Karady, 'Normaliens et autres enseignants à la belle époque: note sur l'origine social et la réussite dans une profession intellectuelle', *RFS*, 13.1 (1972), 35-58 (p. 51).

promise in the concours généraux, as Durkheim did, it was likely that they would be encouraged to set their sights on one of the Parisian elite schools.

The accounts of Durkheim breaking with a family tradition and indeed literally moving away from his community to continue his studies in Paris are echoed by a whole generation of students in a similar position to himself. Smith, in making this point, cited the case the young Edouard Herriot who, having impressed an inspector from the Ministry of Public Instruction with his Latin to French translation skills, was offered a scholarship for the *École normale*. Although Herriot's father, a military officer, had planned on a military career for his son he soon renounced such plans when he read up on the 'prestigious' school in Paris.¹²² For these students, however the transition was a difficult experience and Durkheim, some years later, wrote of 'that feeling of emptiness and isolation familiar to all those who come to complete their studies in Paris'.¹²³ He certainly shared with many other students an experience of isolation and hardship on his arrival in Paris: living away from home in a boarding house for students from outside Paris, with scant financial resources and with his father having recently become ill, the young Durkheim, we are told, worried about his family responsibilities, his insecure future and struggled with both the harsh regime of the preparatory school and weight of

¹²² Smith, pp. 19-20.

¹²³ Émile Durkheim, 'Notice biographique sur Victor Hommay', in Durkheim, *Textes*, ed. by Karady, i: *Éléments d'une théorie sociale*, pp. 418-24 (p. 418), first publ. in the *Annuaire de l'Association amicable des anciens élèves de l'École normale supérieure* (1887), 51-55. The phrase was also quoted and translated by Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, p. 42. Also see Smith, p. 21 who has documented similar problems experienced by students in adjusting to life in Paris and the regime at the preparatory schools.

the classical curriculum. On his third attempt at the tough entry examinations he managed to be admitted to the school.¹²⁴

On the one hand we can see Durkheim's eventual graduation from the *École normale* as a first step on his path towards establishing himself as an intellectual and developing the academic credentials other potential founders of sociology would lack. Of all of the Parisian *grandes écoles*, the *École normale* was the supreme institution for scholarly consecration and most of France's leading intellectuals, philosophers such as Henri Bergson and Jean-Paul Sartre, were graduates of this school. At the same time politics mediated Durkheim's intellectual formation. If, contrary to the official ideology, the elites of republican France (be they political and administrative, economic or intellectual) did not exactly become any more open to those most deprived of economic, cultural and social capital, within the intellectual field the creation of scholarships and the system of competitive examinations did, in exceptional cases, allow students, like Durkheim, of 'humble' origins to take the 'royal road' (the 'concours général', the *École normale supérieure* and *agrégation*) to the pinnacle of the academic edifice.¹²⁵ These students - who were referred to collectively as the 'boursiers' or the 'new men' - saw themselves as the living embodiment of the regime's ideology of an 'open meritocracy'. Like many of the students at this school in the 1880s, Durkheim too was a fervent supporter of the Republic, identified with the ideals of 1789, revered the figure of Gambetta and hoped to be able to contribute something, in his future as an academic, to

¹²⁴ Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 42-43.

¹²⁵ Charle, 'Le champ universitaire parisien à la fin dix-neuvième siècle', p. 83.

the ‘re-building’ of France and the consolidation of the Republic.¹²⁶ If he could feel that the life of a scholar would put him into a unique position to live up to this task, it was due to a unique conjunction of social and historical circumstances.

¹²⁶ Georges Davy, ‘Émile Durkheim: l’homme’, *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* (hereafter *RMM*), 26.2 (1919), 181-98 (p.189). On the idea of the ‘open meritocracy’ see Charle, *La Naissance des ‘intellectuels’*, pp. 83-84 and ‘Les normaliens et le socialisme, 1867-1914’, in *Jaurès et les intellectuels*, ed. by Madeleine Rebérioux and Gilles Candar (Paris: Éditions de l’atelier, 1994), pp. 133-68 (pp. 135-36). On Durkheim’s contemporaries Charle directs us towards Harvey Goldberg’s biography of Jaurès, Charles Andler, *Vie de Lucien Herr* (Paris: Rieder, 1932), Ernest Tonnelat, *Charles Andler: sa vie, son œuvre* (Paris: Les Belles Letres, 1937).

1.3.2 Paris and the Academic Structure

Perhaps the most striking feature of the French intellectual field in the period under consideration is the extreme centralisation of its institutions. All of the most prestigious sources of symbolic capital - a degree from one of the 'grandes écoles', a university chair, a nomination to or an award from the parallel set of scientific and cultural bodies - came from Paris. While the history of the French universities goes back to the Middle Ages, with the foundation of the University of Paris in the thirteenth century, its structure had been largely demolished during the French revolution and in its place specialised educational institutions for the professional training of experts were created in the nineteenth century. The most prestigious of these Parisian 'grandes écoles' were located in Paris and included the École polytechnique and École centrale for the training of engineers, and the École normale supérieure for the training of lycée teachers.

Parallel and related to these professional schools, there was however the 'university' another highly centralised Napoleonic construction, referring not to any one particular institution of higher education but a unified administrative and teaching body. It had its central authority in Paris at the Ministry of Public Instruction and was comprised of the separate university faculties (arts, science, law, medicine) and of the secondary schools (lycées). This system was divided up into various administrative units (académies), each administered by a 'recteur' under whom was the 'doyen' of each faculty within a given academy. While, for most of the nineteenth century, the faculties of law and medicine functioned as professional schools, the role of the arts and science faculties was simply to provide examination juries for the baccalaureate, while graduates from the École normale or from the arts or science faculties provided a steady supply of

teachers for the lycée system.¹²⁷ A strict hierarchical system, the best positions were those in the prestigious Parisian lycées and if an ‘agrégé’ started out teaching in a school in the provinces, a clear indicator of progression in the hierarchy would be a move to a position in the capital. Every year those who ranked highest in the agrégation were awarded the best teaching positions, often also being awarded a year’s travel scholarship for research abroad, while the less prestigious posts in provincial lycées and collèges were distributed among those lower in the ranking and among those with only the bachelor’s degree.¹²⁸

Another step in the progression through the academic hierarchy, the possibility of an appointment of those with the agrégation to positions as faculty professors was also a way of accumulating symbolic capital, and, up until the final two decades of the nineteenth century, these professors would usually have been chosen from among the senior lycée professors. Again Paris exerted its dominance with the most prestigious chairs being at the Sorbonne, and indeed a teaching post at one of the Parisian grandes écoles or lycées could often be considered more prestigious than a chair in a provincial faculty. Before 1870, the arts and science faculties had few full-time students (since the degrees they granted could be obtained without actually studying at a faculty) and the public lecture aimed at the cultivated bourgeoisie was their main teaching activity. This however began to change after 1870 as a home-grown movement pushing for the

¹²⁷ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 18-19, pp. 21-22; Christophe Charle et Jacques Verger, *Histoire des universités*, 2nd edn (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2007), pp. 70-72.

¹²⁸ John I. Brooks, III, ‘The Definition of Sociology and the Sociology of Definition: Durkheim’s *Rules of Sociological Method* and High School Philosophy in France’, *Journal of the History of the Behavioural Sciences* (hereafter *JHBS*), 32.4 (1996), 379-407 (p. 383).

foundation of 'modern universities' - large, intellectually unified, multidisciplinary establishments devoted to science rather than merely professional training - combined with an increased awareness of the advances of the German universities put university reform on the political programme of the new republican regime.

With the creation of 300 fellowships for licence students in 1877 in the humanities and science and 200 more for aggregation candidates in 1880, not only did the faculties now have serious students, but more teaching positions below the rank of professor - the position of 'maître de conférence' and 'chargé de cours' - were created. Candidates were drawn, as before, from among advanced lycée teachers but increasingly from those who had demonstrated a capacity for original, independent research through completion of a doctorate.¹²⁹ At the same time there was a move towards decentralisation, with the authority for the selection of courses, the creation or suppression of chairs, the selection and supervision of teaching staff and management of the budget given over in 1885 to new bodies made up of members of the faculties themselves. Both in the capital and in the provinces the literal reconstruction of faculty buildings was perhaps the most obvious sign of the times.¹³⁰ In this context, minor university positions could become another valued source of symbolic capital and although a position at the Sorbonne would have generally remained the ultimate aim, a position in one of the provincial faculties was no longer necessarily as humble as it previously would have been.

With the foundation of the *École pratique des hautes études* by Victor Duruy in 1868 yet another possibility and source of symbolic capital emerged up for scholars

¹²⁹ Prost, *L'Enseignement en France*, p. 230.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 235, p. 238.

pursuing independent research, and here it became possible to pursue a career in research without ever having worked within the national education system of secondary schools and university faculties.¹³¹ Intended as a loose structure for promoting research and communicating specialised scientific work, this initiative was the first response to a growing awareness of the problems with the Napoleonic university and of concerns about the decline of French science. The school offered no official diplomas, nor did one even need any specific qualifications (agrégation or doctorat) to study or teach there; there were no professors but ‘directors of studies’ who were paid less than professors in the mainstream faculties. Yet the idea behind it was to provide the resources for professional, scientific laboratories and research projects, and to train scientists who would push knowledge beyond the contours of what was taught in universities.¹³² Although the original structure contained four separate sections (mathematics, physics and chemistry, natural history and physiology, history and philology), by the 1880s the only one which had developed a distinct identity was the history and philology section, which was run by Gabriel Monod and housed at the university library at the Sorbonne.¹³³ With the closure of the Catholic faculties of theology in 1885, another section for the ‘religious sciences’ was added, which also flourished.¹³⁴ Declaring its aim to be that of rejecting religious dogmatism and applying scientific methods to the study of religious facts, this new

¹³¹ *Histoire générale de l'enseignement et de l'éducation en France*, 2nd edn, 4 Vols (Paris: Perrin, 2003-2004), iii: Françoise Mayeur, *De la Révolution à l'école républicaine, 1789-1930* (2004), p. 486.

¹³² *Ibid*, pp. 485-90. Georges Weisz, ‘Le corps professoral de l'enseignement supérieure et l'idéologie de la réforme universitaire en France, 1860-1885’, *RFS*, 18.2 (1977), 201-32.

¹³³ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 42-44.

¹³⁴ See Louis Havet, ‘L'École pratique des hautes études’, in Émile Durkheim and others, *La Vie universitaire à Paris* (Paris: Colin, 1918), pp. 182-193.

school was at the cutting edge of developments in the human sciences and a position here could be a valuable source of symbolic capital.¹³⁵

This school was not however the only intellectual institution existing parallel to the university - there were also the old institutions, the Collège de France and the Institut de France. Like the *École pratique*, both of these had been founded out of a response to a situation of stagnation in the university, though in a completely different era.¹³⁶ Founded in 1530 and initially called the Collège royal, the Collège de France was another loosely structured institution for the support and diffusion of original research by advanced scholars in a variety of disciplines across the sciences and humanities.¹³⁷ Again, it did not have any degree-granting capacity and its professors were not required to have any official academic qualification, but a nomination to a chair at the Collège de France, was like chair at the Sorbonne, a supreme source of intellectual consecration. Another extra-university institution with roots going back to the old regime, the Institut de France was reconfigured after the revolution and came to consist of five 'académies': the Académie française, the Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres, the Académie des beaux arts, the Académie des sciences and the Académie des sciences morales et politiques. With regards to the social sciences, a prize from this last class for a piece of work or nomination to one of its chairs was not only an honour, but could also bring one in contact with centres of political power, and this type of symbolic capital was important

¹³⁵ Havet, p. 189.

¹³⁶ Charle and Verger, pp. 60-61.

¹³⁷ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, p. 51.

for social scientists more orientated towards government, administration and policy-making.¹³⁸

A symbolic moment, the traditional inaugural lecture given by a professor on their nomination to a chair either in the university or at one of these scholarly institutions has been described by Pierre Bourdieu as a sort of rite of passage and investiture when the new incumbent is allowed to speak with authority and whose words are instituted as a 'legitimate discourse'.¹³⁹ As such, inaugural lectures at these institutions provide us with an invaluable source of evidence not only of the accumulation of symbolic capital by individual intellectual figures, but also of the kind of ideas that were held up as legitimate within the intellectual field at given points in time.

¹³⁸ See Charle and Verger, pp. 60-61 and Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 56-59.

¹³⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Leçon sur une leçon* (Paris: Éditions du Minuit, 1982), p. 7.

1.3.3 Journals, Associations and the Privilege of Philosophy

If it is important to consider scientific capital as separate to institutional capital it is because alongside these official institutions for the consecration and diffusion of knowledge there was also a whole series of academic journals and professional associations that were just as important in conferring intellectual legitimacy. The term scientific legitimacy thus refers to recognition by the scientific community more generally, beyond the contours of the official institutions, and sources of symbolic capital here could include critical reviews, articles and papers, or indeed the founding of a journal or an association.

On the one hand, these two forms of symbolic capital - institutional and scientific - may actually reinforce one another, and in an epoch when the academic publishing industry was in full growth certain journals became associated with a certain academic readership as journals in which professional academics would choose to publish. In France in the late-nineteenth century, for example, the publishing house Felix Alcan came to be the name immediately associated with the publication of journals and books by professional academics, usually in the human sciences.¹⁴⁰ At the same time, while many new journals in many different domains were founded in this epoch - the *Revue historique*, the *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, the *Année psychologique*, the *Année sociologique*, to name but a few, the relative capacity of a journal to impart symbolic capital was also associated with its relationship to the official intellectual institutions. So for example the prestige of a journal could be reflected in an editorial board comprised mainly of chair holders at dominant Parisian institutions or the fact that it managed to

¹⁴⁰ Jean-Louis Fabiani, *Les Philosophes de la République* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1988), p. 35.

attract articles and a readership from among ex-graduates of the *École normale*. At the same time, in a world where the ‘disinterested’ pursuit of knowledge for its own sake (as against knowledge for practical aims) was the hallmark of distinction, the relationship of a journal to academic philosophy also counted in the generation of its scientific capital. Taught in the final year of the *lycée* in an era when disciplinary specialisation in higher education was in its very early stages, philosophy was considered not only to be the privileged fiefdom of disinterested study, but also to be the ‘crowning’ of a bourgeois education.¹⁴¹ Thus a journal or an association’s ties to academic philosophy and its capacity again to attract the elite of this universe, the ‘normalien, agrégé de philosophie’, could also be taken as an indicator of its symbolic, intellectual worth. Given that different journals and associations, with their ties to different institutions, could be a source of varying sorts of legitimacy, the choice, as we shall see, on the part of the aspiring sociologist of one journal or society over another can be interpreted as a definite strategy of legitimation, itself informed by intellectual habitus.

At the same time however there may at times be a tension between what or who the education system and official institutions recognise as legitimate and what the wider intellectual field considers to be so. This was indeed the case, as we shall see, in the epoch under consideration where demands for the introduction of new methods of study and new specialisations into the classical curriculum first articulated themselves within the wider network of journals and professional societies. In this way, the opening declarations of the various newly founded journals also provide us with valuable indicators of the innovative trends and cutting-edge ideas within the field, proposals

¹⁴¹ Fabiani, p. 49 and Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes*, pp. 24-27, p. 46.

which were bound only later to become integrated within the official institutions of intellectual consecration. Again association with such new journals can be indicative of a certain strategy of legitimation on the part of the individual academic, an effort to align oneself with the most innovative positions. I shall come back to all these points more concretely in the discussion of Durkheim's manoeuvrings within the intellectual field. Suffice to note for now however that nominations to academic institutions, opening lectures, publications, journal contributions, involvement with certain learned societies will all serve as evidence in determining what or how certain new ideas came to be instituted as intellectually legitimate, the figure that the individuals who voiced them sought to cut and the strategies pursued towards this end.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter I aimed to do two main things: firstly, to introduce the figure of the public intellectual and consider some different viewpoints on his or her role in modern society. From this I arrived at what seemed to be the more fundamental issue regarding the process by which an intellectual such as Durkheim came to be recognised as an important public figure. Secondly I wanted to go through the set of concepts that I will draw on in trying to answer this question and to indicate how they might be applied in context.

While still a student at the *École normale*, we are told that Durkheim could not imagine a philosophy without a social or political application, and that it was indeed a vague idea of his to devote the first half of his life to pure science and the second half to politics.¹⁴² Before asking about the nature of his politics later on in life, whether he was a social critic or whether on the contrary he sought to legitimise and naturalise the established order of his time, the theoretical model that I have chosen refers us back first to the aspiring sociologist's initial heterodox position in the intellectual field when he started out in his career. With this in mind, it is to Durkheim's 'scientific debut' in the late 1880s and his engagement with German social theory that I shall now turn.

¹⁴² Davy, 'Émile Durkheim: l'homme', pp.188-9, also quoted in Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 46-47.

Chapter 2

Durkheim's Scientific Début and the Question of Legitimacy

Prior to the publication of his first book, the *Division of Labour in Society*, Émile Durkheim had already published a significant body of work consisting mainly of reviews, journal articles and lectures. It is this lesser known material that I have chosen to focus on in this chapter. A number of critics already agree that these texts are important, though for different reasons. They can, we are told, provide us with an insight into the early development of Durkheim's sociological theory and method, and about the influence of the organicist ideas then prevalent in Germany on his intellectual development.¹⁴³ We could alternatively trace out Durkheim's early political views in these texts, though commentators tend to disagree in their conclusions: what has been interpreted in one reading as traditionalism, has from another point of view been seen as a concern for national re-generation, and yet elsewhere an interest in reconciling individualism with socialism.¹⁴⁴

I shall argue here however that these texts are significant in another way. When Durkheim started out as a critic and as an aspiring author, when he had his first review articles published in 1885, sociology simply did not exist as a legitimate academic

¹⁴³ Anthony Giddens, 'Durkheim as a Review Critic', *SR*, 18 (1970), 171-96, Robert A. Jones, 'La Science positive de la morale en France: les sources allemandes de la *Division du Travail Social*', trans. by Marie-France Essyad, in *Division du travail et lien Social: la thèse de Durkheim un siècle après*, ed. by Philippe Besnard and others (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993), pp. 11-41.

¹⁴⁴ See respectively, Michael J. Hawkins, 'Traditionalism and Organicism in Durkheim's Early Writings, 1885-1893', *JHBS*, 16(1980), 31-44, Bernard Lacroix, 'La Vocation originelle d'Émile Durkheim', *RFS*, 17.2 (1976), 213-45 and Filloux, *Durkheim et le socialisme*, p. 22.

discipline and its scientific credentials were hardly recognised. A decade later, the situation had changed considerably. What I propose is to read these early writings with a view to understanding the initial legitimation of sociology and the strategies pursued by Durkheim towards this end. The aim is not primarily to ask whether the early work can in itself be labelled ‘organicist’ or ‘positivist’ but more to understand its position within a changing intellectual field. If on the one hand, Durkheim’s main concern was to insist on the scientific credentials of sociology, he also sought to overcome an opposition he himself drew on, between a ‘disinterested’ scientific study of society *and* one motivated by more practical, political concerns.¹⁴⁵ It was, I suggest, this rather contradictory effort to answer twin demands, to present himself as both devoted to science and concerned about the state of his own society that gave the normative dimension of his sociology its particular form.

¹⁴⁵ This opposition between ‘disinterested’ study and practical concerns is inherent, according to Bourdieu, in the ‘scholastic point of view’ and can be taken as one example of the influence of Durkheim’s philosophical education. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes*, p. 24-27. I shall discuss this further in chapters 3 and 6.

2.1 The Scientist and the Intellectual Field

When Pierre Bourdieu employed the term ‘interest’ to speak about the universe of intellectuals, he was not referring, as I have indicated above, to interest in a narrow economic or political sense. The cornerstone of the functioning of any field, interest can mean different things according to the specific demands of a field, and in the intellectual field, where culture is defined in terms of a high-minded opposition to material concerns, a disinterested devotion to truth can become a powerful source of distinction.¹⁴⁶ In France in the second half of the nineteenth century, one figure in particular, the scientist, emerged as the dominant intellectual type, as the very embodiment of disinterest, whose high-minded devotion to truth was built up and sustained through innumerable public speeches, inaugural lectures, official banquets and state funerals.¹⁴⁷ And it was this situation that Durkheim met with - an intellectual field in which the scientist held the monopoly on disinterest - when he started out in his career as a published author, with his first review article in 1885.

¹⁴⁶ Bourdieu, *Choses dites*, pp. 124-27, *Questions de Sociologie*, pp. 61-66 and *Raisons Pratiques*, pp. 149-67.

¹⁴⁷ Charle, *La Naissance des ‘intellectuels’*, pp. 28-30.

2.1.1 From the Laboratory to the People

Imagining life in the year 2000, the French chemist Marcellin Berthelot presented the society of his ‘dreams’, where scientific progress would have solved all the problems of agriculture, industry and international relations. Indeed, he wrote, there would be no longer any need for agriculture or coal mines as chemistry and physics would have discovered better and more reliable ways of producing inexhaustible quantities of food and energy, while the development of air travel would mean that boundaries between nations would cease to exist, and along with them excise duties, economic protectionism and war.¹⁴⁸ Written less than two decades before the outbreak of the First World War, this vision is striking in its naivety, its faith in the benignity of science. And yet it is reflective of the mood of the times when there was a widespread belief in the power of science to satisfy all human needs.

Although there had been no shortage of brilliant French scientists in previous decades, it was in this context that scientists were called on to exit, not the ‘ivory-tower’ as we are used to saying in relation to twentieth-century intellectuals, but the laboratory, to take up their duties towards the nation and become involved in the life of the ‘cité’. Far from actively seeking out popularity or political success, scientists, according to Berthelot, would perhaps prefer to devote themselves to their specialist research, but their services had been called upon in industry, in national defence, in education and in politics.¹⁴⁹ A disinterested figure, as Ernest Renan said of Claude Bernard, who sought out the truth for its own sake, the scientist was believed to be above all political factions;

¹⁴⁸ Marcellin Berthelot, *Science et morale* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1896), p. 510.

¹⁴⁹ Marcellin Berthelot, *Science et philosophie* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1886), pp. i-ii and *Science et morale*, p. v.

similarly Louis Pasteur was described as a someone who ‘never wore a glittering uniform, was never involved in political quarrels and never flattered the masses’.¹⁵⁰ In this way, according to Avner Ben-Amos, the scientist could also become a figure of political unity and while Bernard had been a senator during the Second Empire and died a Catholic, with Pasteur having been a Bonapartist and a Catholic, both could be hailed by the Republic as benefactors of humanity.¹⁵¹

If, as Ben Amos writes, the public honouring of ‘great men’ - artists, writers, philosophers - had been part of the republican culture since the time of the Revolution, a phenomenon itself part of the effort to establish forms of emotionally fulfilling but secular ceremonial life, it was from around 1878 that the scientist in particular became an object of public veneration.¹⁵² If 1878 stands out as a significant juncture it is because it was the year in which the eminent physiologist and founder of experimental medicine Claude Bernard was accorded a state funeral, the first time that such an honour had ever been bestowed on a scientist in France. More state funerals of scientists were to follow including that of Paul Bert in 1887, Louis Pasteur in 1895 and Marcellin Berthelot himself in 1907.¹⁵³ Among the living, 1878 also marked an important moment, being the year when two figureheads of secular, scientific culture, Ernest Renan and Hippolyte Taine were elected to the Académie française. Through the myriad reception speeches given on such occasions, or at the jubilee banquets at the Sorbonne in honour of eminent

¹⁵⁰ Ernest Renan ‘Discours de réception et réponse de Alfred Mézières’, www.academie-francaise.fr/discours-de-reception-et-reponse-de-alfred-meziers and Avner Ben-Amos, *Funerals, Politics and Memory in Modern France, 1789-1996* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 239 quoting from *Le Temps*, 6 October, 1895.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp. 237-40.

¹⁵² Ben-Amos, p. 117. On the idea of science as a ‘new religion’ see Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, pp. 344-70.

¹⁵³ For a list of state funerals during the Third Republic see Ben-Amos’s appendix.

scientists during their lifetime or at the unveiling of statues after their death, what we see after 1878 is the transformation of the scientist into the model of intellectual legitimacy.¹⁵⁴ In Marcellin Bertholot's words, science had now become the only possible basis of authority: 'No man, no institution, will any longer have any lasting authority unless they conform to its teachings'.¹⁵⁵ And new entrants to the intellectual field certainly took note.

¹⁵⁴ Charle, *La Naissance des 'intellectuels'*, pp. 28 -30.

¹⁵⁵ Berthelot, *Science et morale*, p. xii.

2.1.2 Positivism and the Cult of Science

The fortunes of positivist philosophy were also very much tied to this public cult of science. A marginal figure during his lifetime, indeed ridiculed as something of an eccentric, Auguste Comte gained a new popularity after his death, bordering on the intellectual mainstream. While the author of the *Cours de philosophie positive* had never in his own time held any official academic position, nor received an appointment to any of the important Parisian institutions and while his doctrine had remained obscure, known only in restricted intellectual circles, by the 1880s his thought had come into the domain of public acquaintance, largely through the efforts of his disciples Émile Littré and Pierre Laffitte.¹⁵⁶ Indeed Littré himself, after having had his candidature opposed by the Archbishop of Orléans Msr. Dupanloup in 1863, had by 1871 been nominated to the supreme institution of intellectual consecration the Académie française, where he would later be remembered as ‘great and faithful friend of truth’, while in 1892 Laffitte was appointed to a new chair that had been created for him at the Collège de France in the history of science.¹⁵⁷ As a final salute, a statue of Comte himself was erected in Place de la Sorbonne in 1902.

Yet, although there were many scientists, intellectuals and indeed politicians who employed the vocabulary of ‘positive science’, what positivism actually meant, and who exactly could be considered a genuine ‘positivist’ is in fact a contentious matter. Indeed pages have been written debating the question of whether or not a Claude Bernard, an

¹⁵⁶ W. M. Simon, *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century: An Essay in Intellectual History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1963), p. 74.

¹⁵⁷ Simon, p. 63. The description of Littré is from Ernest Renan, ‘Réponse au discours de réception de Louis Pasteur’, www.academie-francaise.fr/reponse-au-discours-de-reception-de-louis-pasteur

Ernest Renan, a Hippolyte Taine, or the so-called ‘positivist’ historians, Charles-Victor Langlois or a Charles Seignobos, can really be considered positivists.¹⁵⁸ The issue is further complicated by the fact that in the context of nineteenth-century France, positivism could be taken to mean a number of things. Firstly, it could be understood as simply the philosophy developed by Auguste Comte and expressed in the opening lesson of the *Cours de philosophie positive*, which affirmed the priority of observation and empirical verification in the formation of knowledge and which rejected any unverifiable claims about the nature of the absolute, the origin of the universe or anything that was unobservable.¹⁵⁹ This interpretation of positivism was popularised after Comte’s death by Émile Littré, who argued that the true essence of Comte was contained in the *Cours*.

Yet, on a uniquely ‘scientific’ definition, Comte himself, who also professed positivism as a new ‘religion of humanity’ must be disqualified as a ‘genuine positivist’. This other understanding of positivism involved a philosophy of history which saw human society as having progressed from a theological stage in which traditional religion and superstition predominated, to a metaphysical or negative stage in which traditional beliefs were torn down, towards a positive stage where science itself would become a ‘new religion’ with its own calendar, feast days and rituals.¹⁶⁰ During his lifetime Comte himself took on the role of the positivist high priest of humanity and was succeeded after his death in 1857 by Pierre Laffitte as ‘president of the religious committee’.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ See for example the special issue of *Romantisme*, 21.2 (1978).

¹⁵⁹ See Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*, 2nd edn, 6 Vols (Paris: Baillière, 1864), i, p. 9.

¹⁶⁰ Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, pp. 356-60.

¹⁶¹ Simon, p. 18.

Yet, from the point of view of understanding the strategies pursued by new entrants to the intellectual field, it is not so much the essence of positivism that is most important but more which interpretation of positivism that predominated as the legitimate one. And although Laffitte did eventually have his chair at the Collège de France it was, in the context of republican France, the positivism of Émile Littré, proclaiming the superiority of empirical science while avoiding the authoritarian overtones of the ‘positivist polity’, that won out.¹⁶² Hailed by Renan before the Académie française as a democrat and republican, Littré was the point of contact between republican politicians such as Jules Ferry and positivist philosophy.¹⁶³ Against an abstract, metaphysical thinking that worked by deduction from a priori axioms, Marcellin Berthelot defined positive science as that which observed empirical facts, in order to construct the chain of relations between them without asking about where the chain began or ended and sought to arrive at new convictions more in conformity with the real nature of things.¹⁶⁴ So if Comte’s doctrine could, as Simon argued, be divided into a philosophy of history ending in the positivist polity and the theory of knowledge, where each science progressively extricated from the metaphysical viewpoint it was the latter, the theory of knowledge associated with Émile Littré, that became intellectually legitimate.¹⁶⁵ In many ways, this popularity of Littrean positivism can explain how the Comtiam science/metaphysics

¹⁶² Renan, ‘Réponse au discours de réception de Louis Pasteur’. Also see Claude Nicolet, *L’Idée républicaine en France, 1789-1924* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), pp. 188-91.

¹⁶³ Jean-Michel Gaillard, *Jules Ferry* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), part 2, chapter 1.

¹⁶⁴ Berthelot, *Science et philosophie*, p. 3, pp. 14-16.

¹⁶⁵ Simon, p. 3.

opposition became a central idea in the nascent human sciences, as many new entrants to the field proposed to free their discipline from the ‘yoke’ of metaphysical thinking.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Brooks, *The Eclectic Legacy*, pp. 29-30.

2.1.3 The Allure of Germany

In a sense, the public veneration of the scientist and the enthusiasm for positivism in the context of the 1870s was rather paradoxical in that beneath the surface what we find is actually a profound anxiety about the state of French science. It was indeed Louis Pasteur, one of the great heroes of the cult of science, who best gave expression to this anxiety in three short pieces published in 1871, where among other things he lamented the state of French scientific laboratories and the lack of resources available to scientists.¹⁶⁷ Experimentation, he insisted, was absolutely crucial in the natural sciences, and while, all over Europe, investments were being made in scientific laboratories, nothing was being done in France: even at the country's most illustrious institutions, the Collège de France and the Sorbonne, resources were tight and laboratories were dark, damp and unhealthy places.¹⁶⁸

The decline of French science marked a sharp turnaround, which was only too clear to contemporary observers such as Pasteur. Although France had, up until the mid-nineteenth century, led the world in scientific discovery, from around 1850, in various disciplines, the foundations established in France earlier on in the century were being built on mainly in Germany.¹⁶⁹ After the events of 1870-71 the alarm-bell sounded all the more urgently and in Pasteur's view the French collapse in the Franco-Prussian war came down to the decline of French science and the ascendancy of German science. In the opening statement to his collection of essays he warned those in power and the general

¹⁶⁷ Louis Pasteur, *Quelques réflexions sur la science en France* (Paris: Gauthier-Villars, 1871).

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 5-8.

¹⁶⁹ Robert Gilpin, *France in the Age of the Scientific State* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1968), chapter 4.

public alike that one must work, by all possible means to guarantee, 'the scientific superiority of France'. Germany, in short, with its laboratories and spirit of discovery had become a model of scientific legitimacy, which France needed to emulate and surpass.

However, not only was German science admired in France, its universities were also held in high esteem among the French academic community, and when, from the 1860s onwards, academics began to express their dissatisfaction with the French university system, they took the German university as a model and called for the reform of the French system along German lines.¹⁷⁰ A university system characterised by its extreme centralisation under one administration in Paris, whose faculties of medicine, law, arts and science were, as we have seen, essentially professional schools for the training of doctors, lawyers and teachers, higher education in France for much of the nineteenth century was the polar opposite of the German model.¹⁷¹ With the French professor's primary role being the administration of the baccalaureate and delivering public lectures to the cultivated bourgeoisie, there was a clear division between research and teaching and most innovative scientific work went on not in the university faculties but in the parallel set of research institutions, such as the Collège de France. By contrast, the German model that had developed in the nineteenth century consisted of largely autonomous, intellectually unified, multidisciplinary establishments, which housed both teaching and innovative research, as renowned scholars were also university professors.

¹⁷⁰ George Weisz, *The Emergence of Modern Universities in France, 1863-1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), chapter 2.

¹⁷¹ On the German model see Friedrich Paulsen, *The German Universities and University Study*, trans. Frank Tilly and William W. Elwang (London, New York & Bombay: Elwang, Longmans, Green, 1906), p. 4. Also Gilpin, pp. 92-93

If a movement in favour of university reform already existed in the 1860s, the military defeat and political change of 1870-71 gave it increased momentum. By 1880 a powerful pressure group the Société de l'Enseignement Supérieur, had been founded and in the pages of its journal the *Revue internationale de l'enseignement* all the important questions relating to the university reform were brought up. With a general secretary, Ernest Lavissee, who was also on the advisory board to the minister of public instruction, the Conseil supérieur de l'instruction publique, and the participation of other intellectual dignitaries including Pasteur, Taine and Renan, this pressure group and its journal had considerable influence on government policy on higher education.¹⁷² As the republicans consolidated their power in the late 1870s, the reform movement met with political will, and the appointment of Louis Liard as Director of Higher Education in 1884 marked the decisive turning point. If he had been told on his appointment by Jules Ferry, the Minister for Public Instruction at the time, that his job would be to 'make French universities', during his time in office he undertook numerous measures towards this end: the creation of scholarships in arts and science, the investments in buildings and resources, the granting of autonomy to universities over their budgets and over the creation of courses.¹⁷³ What is important here however is not so much the precise nature of the reforms, but more that these reforms opened up space for innovation in the traditional university curriculum and also offered new career opportunities for graduates. At the same time Germany again with its superior science and its superior universities stood as a model of scientific legitimacy, one to be learned from and surpassed.

¹⁷² William R. Keylor, *Academy and Community: The Foundation of the French Historical Profession* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 61

¹⁷³ Ernest Lavissee, 'Louis Liard', *Revue internationale de l'enseignement* (hereafter *RIE*), 72 (1918), 81-99 (pp. 90-91).

2.2 Sociology and its Scientific Credentials

When Pierre Bourdieu described sociology in the mid-twentieth century as ‘doubly dominated’ he was referring to the discipline’s marginal position within official academic institutions and to its status as a science among the intellectual community generally, independently of academia.¹⁷⁴ This idea is helpful in understanding the place of sociology within the intellectual field at the time when the discipline first emerged in France the 1880s, and indeed Victor Karady, invoking the theoretical distinction referred to in chapter one between institutional capital and scientific capital, has written of its ‘doubly dominated’ status in this period.¹⁷⁵ When Durkheim started out with his first published review article in 1885, sociology did not have a legitimate place within the official academic or educational structures; and while neighbouring disciplines such as history and psychology had already begun to introduce the rhetoric and procedures of ‘positive science’ through their newly founded journals, sociology as a late-comer, lacking its own firmly established journal or professional society, was at a disadvantage. The first issue refers to sociology’s institutional legitimacy, the second its scientific legitimacy more generally. It is the second aspect, Durkheim’s initial effort to establish the scientific credentials of the new discipline that I shall focus on first.

During the period under consideration Durkheim published a total of 11 review articles, two opening lectures, one independent study and one report. Most of this material was published either in the recently founded journal, the *Revue philosophique* (11 pieces), or the reform-orientated journal, the *Revue internationale de l’enseignement*

¹⁷⁴ Bourdieu, *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse*, p. 51.

¹⁷⁵ Karady, ‘Durkheim, les sciences sociales et l’Université’, p. 296 and ‘Stratégies de réussite et modes de faire-valoir de la sociologie’, pp. 69-70. Also see chapter 1 above, points 1.4.2 and 1.4.3

(three pieces). Through examining these articles and the image Durkheim projected of the new science, we can begin to see some of the strategies he employed towards the scientific legitimation of sociology, strategies which in several respects responded to the state of the intellectual field.

2.2.1 History, Psychology and Sociology

In a sense it is perhaps mistaken to say that when Durkheim started out on his academic career there were no existing sociological journals for him to publish in: the term ‘sociology’ itself had earlier originated with Auguste Comte and the idea of a science of society was, since the 1850s, already being put into practice by the group of ‘social economists’ that had formed around Frédéric Le Play.¹⁷⁶ Yet - and this is where we begin to see in practice how habitus informs strategy - within the intellectual universe that Durkheim inhabited these other schools of thought may as well not have existed and in terms of the symbolic capital he sought out, he had no interest in getting involved with the Leplayists or even for that matter with the Parisian positivists of Littrean inspiration. In fact, it is not possible to entirely separate institutional capital from scientific capital, because, as in Durkheim’s case, the type of institutional capital he started out with, his educational background as a philosophy graduate of the École normale supérieure guided the strategies he pursued within the wider intellectual field. When he sought to publish his first review articles he aligned himself, as we shall see, with a journal that had definite ties to the arts faculty and to elite academic philosophy.¹⁷⁷

If the distinction between institutional capital and scientific capital remains helpful here however it is because, in the context of the 1870s, developments in the wider field of journals very much anticipated developments that would occur within higher education. In the field of history for example after the École pratique des hautes études, with its fourth section for the historical and philological sciences, the foundation of the

¹⁷⁶ On these early sociologists see Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, chapter 3. I shall develop this point further in chapter 4.

¹⁷⁷ On this point see Brooks, *The Eclectic Legacy*, chapters 2, 3 and 5.

Revue historique by Gabriel Monod in 1876 gave voice to the demand for a more rigorously methodological approach to history and the introduction of German scientific methods to French historical scholarship.¹⁷⁸ Looking back on the period, Ernest Lavissee remembered his own extreme dissatisfaction with the type of classical bookish learning that predominated when he himself had been a student, the disdain for the natural sciences and the endless translations of random extracts from Latin to French and vice versa, offering little contact with concrete historical facts.¹⁷⁹ With the introduction in 1880 of some amount of specialisation at bachelor's degree level, with the foundation of three separate 'licence' options in history, a crucial step was taken towards the creation of professional scientific training for future historians.¹⁸⁰ In the meantime however, the *Revue historique* from 1876 served as the forum for the promotion of professional solidarity and more rigorous scientific research methods inspired by German scholarship.

It was however not among the dissatisfied 'normaliens agrégés d'histoire' that Durkheim first sought company but among his fellow philosophy graduates at the *Revue philosophique*, also in a situation of minor rebellion against their philosophical predecessors. While the provocative statement, 'every time a social phenomenon is directly explained by a psychological phenomenon, we may rest assured that the explanation is false', would certainly make us expect an absolute opposition between

¹⁷⁸ See Gabriel Monod, 'Du progrès des études historiques en France depuis le XVI^e siècle', *Revue historique* (hereafter *RH*) 1 (1876), 5-38. On Monod see Charles-Olivier Carbonell, 'Gabriel Monod', in *Dictionnaire biographique des historiens française et francophones*, ed. by Christian Amalvi (Paris: La Boutique de l'histoire, 2004), pp. 228-29. Also see below chapter 6 point 6.1.1

¹⁷⁹ Ernest Lavissee 'Souvenirs d'une éducation manquée', in Alfred Croiset and others, *L'Éducation de la démocratie* (Paris: Alcan, 1903), pp. 1-35 (pp. 4-13).

¹⁸⁰ Patrick Garcia, 'Le moment méthodique', in Christian Delacroix and others, *Les Courants historiques en France, 19^e-20^e siècles* (Paris: Colin, 1999), pp. 53-104 (p. 71).

sociology and psychology, it was to a certain extent, on the back of experimental psychology that Durkheimian sociology actually came into being.¹⁸¹ Founded in 1876 with Théodule Ribot as its editor, the *Revue philosophique* gave expression to a body of new ideas that were emerging from within the philosophical tradition. Ribot himself, like Durkheim, had a background in philosophy, was graduate of the *École normale* and had also taught philosophy for a period at the *lycée*. Like all academic philosophers of his generation, Ribot had been educated in the tradition of eclectic spiritualism but, influenced by evolutionary, biological and associational perspectives from England and Germany, broke with the spiritualist method of psychological introspection and proposed to study psychological phenomena in an ‘objective’ and ‘scientific’ manner.¹⁸² Against a philosophy in which spiritual beings escape the determinism of the physical world, Ribot argued that other facts such as heredity could explain consciousness and that this could be analysed through observation and experimentation. His views were controversial and although he successfully defended them in his doctoral thesis in 1873, he was not initially offered any university position and took an indefinite leave of absence from his teaching obligations.

Although the *Revue* claimed to be a ‘neutral ground’, open to all philosophical schools, in reality it opened the door for the diffusion of the new ideas in the human sciences through its openness to ‘positivism’ and to the ‘experimental school’ both in France and abroad and on its contents pages the names of Taine, Renan, Herbert Spencer

¹⁸¹ Durkheim, *Les Règles de la méthode sociologique*, p. 128; Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, p. 129.

¹⁸² On Ribot and see Brooks, *The Eclectic Legacy*, pp. 67-80. On ‘eclectic spiritualism’ also see Brooks, chapter 1, Warren Schmaus, *Rethinking Durkheim*, and also chapter three below.

and Wilhelm Wundt stand out alongside mainstream philosophers such as Paul Janet and Louis Liard.¹⁸³ Alfred Espinas, the author of the first doctoral thesis in sociology, an ex-classmate of Ribot at the *École normale* and fellow-enthusiast for Herbert Spencer, was also very much involved and most of the early volumes of the *Revue* featured several of his contributions. Thus the creation of the *Revue philosophique* and collaboration of Ribot and Espinas in activities such as the translation of Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Psychology* into French were important in creating the conditions for the development of sociology and its promotion among the intellectual elite associated with the *École normale* and the university. As Raymond Lenoir tells us, these activities helped to spread a 'new spirit' among a new generation of academics and laid the groundwork for a more rigorously scientific approach to the study of psychological phenomena.¹⁸⁴ So when Durkheim published his first reviews of contemporary work in sociology he was not introducing a radically new subject to an unprepared audience. The appropriate journal and readership already existed. What his work involved however was convincing this public of both the scientific credentials of sociology itself and of his own authority in the subject.

¹⁸³ Théodule Ribot, *RP*, 1(1876), 1-4 (pp. 1-2).

¹⁸⁴ Célestin Bouglé and others, 'L'oeuvre sociologique d'Émile Durkheim', *Europe*, 22 (1930), 281-304 (p. 293).

2.2.2 The Fouillée/Espinas Encounter

The year 1885 is an important one in the history of sociology being the year in which Durkheim's first publications, three review articles, appeared in Ribot's *Revue philosophique*. It is to one of these articles, his review of Alfred Fouillée's *La Propriété sociale et la démocratie*, that I shall turn here, while I shall consider his views on German social theory contained in the other two articles in the next section.¹⁸⁵ Compared to his later monumental works, these reviews may seem unimportant. Yet at this point in time, three years after Durkheim's graduation from the *École normale*, while he was working as a lycée philosophy teacher and still not having left for his year of research in Germany, these articles offer a window onto how he viewed his own intellectual position, the figures with whom - be they orthodox or heterodox forces within the field - he aligned both himself and the set of ideas eventually to be developed in his doctoral thesis. In the case of the Fouillée review we see Durkheim consciously aligning himself with the position of Alfred Espinas and calling into question 'out-moded' conceptions of scientificity and approaches to the study of social phenomena.

Of course, Durkheim did not mention Espinas at all in the article, but he didn't need to. Espinas would have been well known to readers as the author of the very first doctorate in sociology, the controversial thesis, *Des sociétés animales*, which he had defended before a jury of spiritualist philosophers in 1877.¹⁸⁶ A polarity that would come

¹⁸⁵ These were Émile Durkheim, 'Schaeffle, A., *Bau und Leben des sozialen Körpers: Ester Band*', *RP*, 19 (1885), 84-101, 'Fouillée, A., *Propriété sociale et la démocratie*', *RP*, 19, 446-53 and 'Gumplowicz, L., *Grundriss der sociologie*', *RP*, 20, (1885), 627-34.

¹⁸⁶ Alfred Espinas, *Des sociétés animales*, 2nd edn (Paris: Baillièrre, 1878). On Espinas see Georges Davy, *Sociologues d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), part 1, and William Logue, *From Philosophy to Sociology: The Evolution*

up again and again in the academic debate over sociology, Espinas's thesis was built around what he presented as a fundamental opposition between an 'artificial' conception of society, which he associated with Rousseau, and the idea of society as a 'natural' reality, which he deemed necessary for it to become an object of scientific study. Against the view of society as an artificial human creation, one which can be built in conformity with an abstract principle and which be changed by an act of will, Espinas proposed that society was natural, a living whole made up of co-ordinated parts, governed by laws like a biological body and that association was to be observed at all stages of animal and human life.¹⁸⁷ So it was not something that a lawmaker or politician one day just created in accordance with an ideal, and if, he argued, a genuinely scientific knowledge of human societies was to be developed at all, the practice of deriving the best form of society from unobserved a priori principles must be broken with.

His thesis may read more like a work of zoology, the main part being almost wholly taken up with the observation of animal societies, but he suggested that biology then zoology actually prepared the way for social science and that from teasing out the laws governing animal societies one could gain insight into those of human societies.¹⁸⁸ Following Herbert Spencer, he suggested that human societies were governed by the same laws as all organic and inorganic matter. From an initial state of homogeneity they became increasingly differentiated, with social evolution bringing ever increasing structural complexity. The formation of social organs working in co-ordination with each other and with each one essential to the functioning of the whole was, he argued, what

of French Liberalism, 1870-1914 (DeKlab, ILL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1983), pp. 100-11 and Brooks, *The Eclectic Legacy*, chapter 3.

¹⁸⁷ Espinas, *Des sociétés animales*, p. 9

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 93-94

guaranteed social stability. In the higher forms of society, not only did relationships of hierarchy develop between the various organs, with a central organ, a 'social brain', coordinating the activity of the whole, but in human societies the links between the component parts took on a predominantly psychological or moral nature.¹⁸⁹

Although this work caused something of a controversy in 1877 what was at issue was not so much the thesis itself - his adjudicators awarded him the doctorate in the end - but, John Brooks tells us, the historical introduction. The jury of spiritualist philosophers took issue with his description of the history of sociology as the battle between the artificial, philosophical view and the natural, scientific view, and with the pivotal place Espinas accorded to Auguste Comte in developing the latter. The condition they set Espinas for its complete publication was the removal of the sections on Comte and when Espinas refused, the entire introduction was suppressed in the first edition.¹⁹⁰ It was thus principally through the *Revue philosophique* that his thesis was introduced to the French public, with Ribot reviewing the first edition in 1877 and the second edition (complete with the historical introduction) in 1879.¹⁹¹

Now, when Durkheim set about writing his review of 1885, a conversation on sociology had already been held in the pages of the *Revue philosophique* between Espinas and Alfred Fouillée.¹⁹² Fouillée was a highly respected and self-trained independent philosopher and both Espinas and Durkheim recognised the immense

¹⁸⁹ Espinas, *Des sociétés animales*, pp. 114-28, pp. 514-26.

¹⁹⁰ The Sorbonne was wary of being perceived as promoting 'radical positivism', fearing a reaction from the religious authorities, see Célestin Bouglé in 'L'oeuvre sociologique d'Émile Durkheim', p. 293 and Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, p. 66.

¹⁹¹ Théodule Ribot, 'Espinas, A, *Des sociétés animales*', *RP*, 4 (1877), 327-334 and 7(1879), 88-90.

¹⁹² See Alfred Fouillée, 'Vues synthétiques sur la sociologie', *RP*, 9 (1880), 369-96 and Alfred Espinas, 'Les études sociologiques en France', *RP*, 14 (1882), 337-67, 509-28.

authority invested in Fouillée.¹⁹³ What was significant about Fouillée however is that he was the first important figure in the world of philosophy to open up to the science of society proposed by Espinas. Departing from a tendency in philosophy to associate the term invented by Auguste Comte, sociology, and the naturalist view of society with materialism and fatalism, Fouillée in *La Science sociale contemporaine*, and in his 1880 article in the *Revue philosophique*, had tried to reconcile Espinas's organicism with ideals and action. He argued that while society may have developed like a biological organism, the higher one goes in the chain of development the more adherence to the organism becomes conscious, and that when one reached the highest stage of evolution, that of truly human society, it becomes possible to direct society and to pursue ideals, or what he called the 'idées-forces', immanent in every society. The social body thus became for Fouillée a voluntarily adhered to 'contractual organism'.¹⁹⁴ Although in his response, Espinas welcomed the openness of the philosopher to the naturalist perspective, he did criticise Fouillée for building his entire argument from logical deduction rather than empirical observation and also for passing back over to the idealism of the 'politicien logicien' in the end. Rather than trying to explain contemporary political consciousness, Fouillée was, in Espinas's view, content to locate the source of action in ideals, and ignored the role of traditions and instincts in modern life.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Espinas, 'Les études sociologiques en France', p. 338, Émile Durkheim, 'L'état actuel des études sociologiques en France' in Durkheim, *Textes*, i, pp. 73-108 (p. 90), first publ. in Italian in *La Riforma sociale* 2.3 (1895), 607-22, fasc. 8 and 691-708, fasc. 9. On Fouillée see Logue, *From Philosophy to Sociology*, chapter 6. Also see Pierre Janet, *Notice sur la vie et les oeuvres de M. Alfred Fouillée* (Paris: Institut de France, 1916).

¹⁹⁴ Fouillée 'Vues synthétiques sur la sociologie', pp. 369-86.

¹⁹⁵ For Espinas's critical comments see 'Les études sociologiques en France', pp. 352-56.

It was on these comments that Durkheim built his own case against Fouillée in the 1885 review. The work in question here was another of Fouillée's books, *La Propriété sociale et la démocratie*, in which the author had sought to reconcile individualism and socialism.¹⁹⁶ Given what we know about Durkheim's own interest in this same issue at the time we would indeed expect a more positive review.¹⁹⁷ Yet in his critical comments Durkheim took issue not so much with the actual social and political content of Fouillée's argument, one which was based on a rejection of extreme conceptions of both an 'individualism' where one owed nothing to anybody beyond one's self, and of a 'socialism' which subordinated the individual to the needs of the community. For Fouillée society and the individual were not two mutually exclusive terms but, given that society was made up only of individuals and that individuals needed society to live and to work, actually implied each other. He concluded that in modern individualist society there was no contradiction in the idea of a duty of charity to ensure greater social equality, and advocated a moderate re-distribution of wealth, while suggesting that universal suffrage combined with civic education should be promoted to permit equal participation in politics.

However it was not so much Fouillée's political arguments but more his conception of society and his method of logical reconciliation that Durkheim opposed. Viewing Fouillée's solution to what he considered to be one of the most pressing questions of the day as too simple, Durkheim doubted that it would work in reality. The point was not whether individualism and socialism were mutually exclusive in terms of

¹⁹⁶ Alfred Fouillée *La Propriété sociale et la démocratie* (Paris: Hachette, 1884).

¹⁹⁷ On Durkheim's early interest in this question see Marcel Mauss, 'Préface', to Émile Durkheim *Le Socialisme: sa définition, ses débuts, la doctrine saint-simonienne*, ed. by Marcel Mauss (Paris: Alcan, 1928).

logic, but that they referred to very complicated real-life issues, which did not lend themselves to such quick and easy logical fixes: ‘sociology’, he wrote, cannot be too wary of such ‘simple solutions’.¹⁹⁸ In short, he criticised Fouillée’s conception of scientific method, and argued that while the method of reconciliation may be intellectually attractive it was merely a form of logical gymnastics. In his own later attempt in the *Division of Labour* to analyse the relationship between individualism and socialism, Durkheim would display a new conception of scientificity in social studies, involving empirical observation and induction. In this article, for the meantime, he aligned himself with Espinas in criticising the excessive role accorded to human action by Fouillée and argued that even in its modern form, society still needed to be considered as an organism, not an artificial creation of a lawmaker.¹⁹⁹ Finally, he pointed out holes in Fouillée’s knowledge of the topic under discussion, in particular, his caricature of socialist thought as implying the annihilation of the individual and ‘mis-reading’ of the work of the German social theorist Albert Schaeffle.

In this review, unlike in the Espinas article, there was little expression of gratefulness towards the eminent philosopher for putting his weight behind sociology, as Durkheim confidently refused the offer to accommodate sociology within the ‘logical gymnastics’ of philosophy. Although, this critique of a highly respected figure from a newcomer to the field could have easily backfired, the risk was actually minimal given that Espinas had already softly indicated some of the problems with Fouillée’s viewpoint. Durkheim, in the hospitable territory of the *Revue*, criticised the philosopher’s method of logical reconciliation, his intellectualist bias and indicated the need for a more

¹⁹⁸ Durkheim, ‘Fouillée’, p. 450.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 451.

sociological, more 'genuinely scientific' approach. In the process he presented himself as better informed than his eminent opponent on one crucial point, developments in Germany.

2.2.3 The German Connection

The question of the German influence on Durkheim in the development of his sociology would become a controversial one in the years running up to the First World War as anti-German feeling and bitterness over the events of 1870-71 began again to be stirred up.²⁰⁰ Indeed, when the Catholic polemicist Simon Déploige accused Durkheim of repeating German ideas to an unsuspecting French public, the latter replied, clearly offended, that while he did introduce certain German authors to France, the English influence on his work was more important, and he even seemed to try to play down any debt to German social theory.²⁰¹ Yet it is undeniable that Durkheim devoted much attention to German authors in his early work.²⁰² However, beyond debating the precise nature and extent of the German influence, it is worth considering how Durkheim, with a clear sense for the opportune, was attracted to recent developments in German social theory and incorporated his knowledge of it into a strategy of scientific legitimation. If by the early twentieth century the German influence had become like an accusation to defend oneself against, twenty years earlier, in the 1880s, German science was invested with immense prestige in France; it was the model to be emulated and surpassed. One of the distinguishing features of new journals such as the *Revue philosophique*, Karady tells

²⁰⁰ On this context see Eugen Weber, *Action française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth-Century France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 52, pp. 89-90.

²⁰¹ Émile Durkheim, 'Deux lettres sur l'influence allemande dans la sociologie française. Réponse à Simon Déploige', in Durkheim, *Textes*, i, pp. 401-405, first publ. in the *Revue néo-scholastique*, 14 (1907), 606-07, 612-14.

²⁰² See Jones, 'La science positive de la morale en France' or Giddens, 'Durkheim as a Review Critic'.

us, was precisely the eye to intellectual developments abroad, to Germany especially, and Ribot himself had written books on experimental psychology in England and Germany.²⁰³ German science thus offered more than inspiration: it was the embodiment of scientific legitimacy.

However, whereas the scientific history proposed by Lavisse and Monod or the scientific psychology proposed by Ribot already had a base from which to work, with sociology it was not simply a question of introducing new methods into a pre-existing field of studies; the discipline itself had to be built practically from scratch. And in order to convince the French intellectual public of the legitimacy of such an effort Durkheim played on concerns about the decline of French science and the progression of German science. If sociology was born in France with Auguste Comte, he argued, it was, almost echoing Pasteur's concerns, becoming more and more a German science: the seeds laid in France, he lamented, were being cultivated elsewhere.²⁰⁴ While Durkheim may have been highly critical of some of the sociological work being carried out in Germany, whatever its faults the very fact that work in sociology was being conducted at all, he argued, was a further demonstration of the perseverance of German thinkers in developing the new science.²⁰⁵

Throughout these early articles, Durkheim constantly presented himself as both an admirer of and expert on the German social theorist Albert Schaeffle. In the same 1885 volume of the *Revue* in which his Fouillée review was published, Durkheim wrote a highly favourable account of Schaeffle's *Bau und Leben des sozialen Körpers*, praising

²⁰³ Karady, 'Stratégies de réussite et modes de faire-valoir de la sociologie', p. 71.

²⁰⁴ Durkheim, 'Schaeffle', p. 85.

²⁰⁵ Durkheim, 'Gumplowicz', p. 627.

the way in which the author, like Espinas, took society as a natural reality and used the organic analogy to show how its various parts were linked together like the organs of a body.²⁰⁶ If Spencer had been concerned with what Comte called ‘social dynamics’, Schaeffle worked on ‘social statics’, analysing the composition of contemporary nations and their principal social groups. While Schaeffle used the organism as a metaphor he also, wrote Durkheim, highlighted the fundamental difference between the individual organism and the social organism in that these groups were made up of and linked to each other by ideal bonds.²⁰⁷

This distinction was important, argued Durkheim, and although he aligned himself with Espinas at the outset, he sought to draw a clearer distinction than Espinas ever did concerning the difference between biology and sociology. And in his effort to draw this distinction, Schaeffle, was the pivotal figure. The problem in France, Durkheim complained, was that Schaeffle was completely misunderstood as a biological sociologist.²⁰⁸ While Schaeffle used the biological analogy, he also, Durkheim claimed, understood that since social science studied a different type of reality to that of biology it also needed its own methods. So, Schaeffle, argued Durkheim, could not therefore be called a biological sociologist, as Fouillée and other French readers had argued; his message was, on the contrary, that sociology could not be subsumed under biology, that it must establish itself on an independent basis.²⁰⁹ Unlike Fouillée, Schaeffle in fact understood the complexity of social life and the methods needed to study it; he proposed not a grand logical synthesis but emphasised the need for detailed, precise studies, for

²⁰⁶ Durkheim, ‘Scaheffle’, p. 87, pp. 94-95.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, pp. 85-86.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 84.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 85.

painstaking observation of society's constituent parts and the links between them.²¹⁰ In this way, Durkheim did not just introduce his own conception of scientific method in sociology, but through his comments on the failure of French readers to properly grasp Schaeffle's thought, he presented himself as an authority where it mattered, on German science. Indeed it was not just Fouillée's mis-interpretation that Durkheim highlighted: in his reviews of Ludwig Gumplowicz in Austria and Guillaume de Greef in Belgium he lamented that neither had managed to properly grasp Schaeffle's message.²¹¹ The type of organicist theory that people erroneously attributed to Schaeffle should, wrote Durkheim, in actual fact really be attributed to Paul de Lilienfeld, who, beyond using the biological organism simply as a metaphor, sought to derive laws of society directly from biology.²¹²

Given the prestige of German science in France, and indeed given that the German university too served as a model for the French university reform movement, it is not surprising that Durkheim himself should have chosen to spend part of the academic year of 1885-86 in Germany. On his return, like most of the graduates sent there on government scholarships, he produced a report detailing his observations at the German universities, which was published in the reform-orientated *Revue internationale de l'enseignement*.²¹³ He also wrote a second article, his survey of 'positive moral science' in Germany, which was published in the *Revue philosophique*.²¹⁴ In an effort to prove the scientific legitimacy of the new approach to the study of moral facts that he himself

²¹⁰ Durkheim, 'Schaeffle', , p. 97.

²¹¹ Durkheim, 'Gumplowicz', p. 627, p. 632 and 'De Greef.G, *Introduction à la sociologie*, 1er partie' *RP*, 22 (1886), 658-63 (p. 661).

²¹² *Ibid*, p. 627.

²¹³ Émile Durkheim, 'La philosophie dans les universités allemandes', *RIE*, 13(1887), 313-38, 423-40.

²¹⁴ Durkheim 'La science positive de la morale en Allemagne', *RP*, 24 (1887), 33-58, 113-42, 275-84.

was trying to introduce to France, Durkheim told his readers that only in Germany was any real attempt being made to go beyond deductive approaches which seek to artificially reduce very complex moral reality to a single principle, and to develop a ‘truly inductive method’. Only the German moralists, he wrote, saw moral phenomena as both ‘empirical and *sui generis*’ and have tried to develop moral science as an autonomous science, irreducible to biology and psychology, with its own object - morals, customs, law, economic facts - methods and explanatory principles.²¹⁵

I shall also come back to this second article further on in relation to Durkheim’s effort to outline the subject matter and internal divisions of sociology and on the relation between social ‘science’ and social ‘art’ (by which he meant conscious human action on society). For now however it is interesting to note how the image of Wilhelm Wundt in the report on philosophy in the German universities serves almost as a symbol of what had been lost in French science and what the university reformers were seeking to retrieve. Emphasising the international renown of Wundt, Durkheim depicted hordes of enthusiastic students flocking every year to his laboratory in experimental psychology at Leipzig, conjuring up an image of the previous epoch when students from all over Europe would have travelled to Paris to come into contact with the newest ideas and discoveries. At the same time however, Durkheim seemed to be suggesting that all was not lost to Germany. Indeed he was not uncritical of the German universities, which, he suggested, failed in reality to live up to the ideal. In these institutions he argued, the ‘old metaphysics’, of Kant and Schopenhauer continued to dominate: not only was Herbert Spencer hardly studied at all, but, he complained, the new ideas in sociology and

²¹⁵ Durkheim, ‘La science positive de la morale en Allemagne’, p. 278.

experimental psychology represented by Schaeffle and Wundt were almost completely ignored at an official level.²¹⁶ Durkheim depicted both figures as relative outsiders, seeking to introduce new ideas and methods: Wundt was described as an ‘original mind’, who shook the ‘yoke of tradition’, by breaking with metaphysics, but who met with hostility and indifference from the establishment. In a subtle plug for Ribot’s work Durkheim remarked that Wundt was in fact better known in France than in Germany.²¹⁷ His message here and overall is, I suggest, that the direction indicated by Schaeffle and Wundt ought to be built on in France and that the development of sociology could represent something of an opportunity to regenerate French science, and to perhaps even overtake Germany on this count.

²¹⁶ Durkheim, ‘La philosophie dans les universités allemandes’, p. 330.

²¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 330-31.

2.3 An Institutional Foothold

Having hitherto focused on Durkheim's initial interaction with the scientific community generally, without mention of the official channels of intellectual consecration and diffusion of knowledge, the aim here is, by contrast, to look specifically at the legitimation of sociology within the institutions of French academic life. In the French system, this *institutional* legitimacy, as distinct from *scientific* legitimacy, can come from two sources: firstly, it can derive from appointments within the national education system, which I call here university capital, or it can come from appointments to a parallel set of academic institutions of consecration such as the Collège de France or the Académie française, which we can call academic capital.²¹⁸ Between 1887 and 1892, there were no appointments in sociology to any of these important academic institutions, nor was any space made for the discipline in the prestigious Parisian educational institutions such as the Sorbonne or the École normale. Nevertheless, Durkheim's appointment to a minor position in a provincial university, as chargé de cours in pedagogy and social science at Bordeaux, was no slight development. It was in this period that sociology gained an initial foothold within the educational system.

²¹⁸ My idea here comes from the schema employed by Karady, 'Stratégies de réussite et modes de faire-valoir de la sociologie', pp. 49-50.

2.3.1 The Appointment to Bordeaux

Scientific and institutional capital, although never entirely distinct from one another, do not necessarily imply or reinforce each other: an author or a discipline may be widely recognised as legitimate by the intellectual field generally - their work may be respected among learned societies or among the readership of specialist journals - while being denied a place within the official institutions. Indeed, the career paths of both Théodule Ribot and Alfred Espinas should highlight the difficulty in assuming a direct passage from scientific legitimacy to institutional legitimacy or vice versa. What both Ribot and Espinas had in common was that they both sought to develop new approaches to the study of psychological and moral phenomena, to introduce into these subjects insights and methods from the natural sciences. Although Ribot successfully defended his doctoral thesis in 1873, the university administration, not wanting to be accused of endorsing positivistic ideas, was not prepared to offer him a university position. He subsequently remained outside academia for some 12 years. It was not until 1885 that there was any prospect of his return to the educational system when a 'cours complémentaire' in experimental psychology was created at the Sorbonne; in 1887, with the support of Ernest Renan a chair was then created for Ribot in comparative and experimental psychology at the Collège de France.²¹⁹

The case of Espinas was less extreme, but he too had a long wait before being offered a post in his chosen subject. After his thesis defence in 1878 he was appointed to the University of Douai as a lecturer in philosophy; he then moved to Bordeaux in 1880 to replace Louis Liard as a professor of philosophy, and here he also created a course in

²¹⁹ On Ribot's return to academia see Brooks, *The Eclectic Legacy*, pp. 88-95.

pedagogy; in 1887 he was appointed Dean of the arts faculty at Bordeaux. In spite of what may seem like institutional acceptance, Espinas was never offered a position teaching social science and indeed in his philosophy lectures he seems to have spent much energy denouncing traditional philosophy and advocating positive science. It was not until 1895 that he was nominated to take on a newly created course in 'économie sociale' at the Sorbonne.²²⁰

In Durkheim's case by contrast, his recognition by the philosophy avant-garde associated with the *Revue philosophique* (with its informal attachments to the arts faculty and the academic elite) as an authority on social science could be readily converted into institutional, here, university capital. Due to the changes occurring within the university itself, Durkheim's career path, unlike that of Ribot or Espinas, met with considerably fewer obstacles early on. In the years immediately after his graduation from the *École normale*, he followed the road of most successful agrégés and for three academic years between 1882 and 1885 he taught philosophy in a number of provincial lycées. However, for the year 1885 he requested and was given what is described as a 'congé d'inactivité', or time off from his teaching duties on half salary, so that he could begin to develop his doctoral thesis.²²¹ Although he did not yet have a doctorate, it seems that, at this point, he already aspired towards a university position.²²² Furthermore given changes that were occurring in the university field, this aspiration was not entirely unrealistic. In the past, the career path of a philosophy agrégé would have involved first spending several years teaching in the provinces, then moving to the more prestigious Parisian lycées before

²²⁰ On Espinas' university career see Brooks, *The Eclectic Legacy*, pp. 120-27

²²¹ See Durkheim's file in the French national archives, F/17/25 768.

²²² See in Durkheim's file the letter of the 10 August 1886 addressed to Louis Liard, where Durkheim referred to a possible university teaching post.

taking on a university teaching post. With the university reform however, positions below that of professor, such as ‘chargé de cours’ were created and it became common for the lycée teacher aspiring to a university career to pass from the provincial school into one of these minor posts in a provincial university, rather than onto a Parisian school as before.²²³ Such was the route embarked on by Durkheim.

In January 1886 he had a crucial meeting with Louis Liard, the Director of Higher Education, in which there was talk of a possible promotion to a university position in the following academic year, and it was directly after this meeting that he left for Germany. However, if Durkheim at this point was hopeful about a university appointment, the prospect of it being in ‘social science’ did not even enter his field of vision – what he sought from Liard was, like Espinas before him, a position in philosophy.²²⁴ The day after his return from Germany, in August 1886, Durkheim wrote a letter to Liard enquiring about the possible appointment referred to during their meeting in January. For the year 1886, nothing materialised and he was sent as a philosophy teacher to the lycée of Troyes. Meanwhile however, Espinas had recently been made Dean of the Arts Faculty at Bordeaux and with the backing of Liard, himself an honorary professor at the same university, created a new course in social science, added to that of pedagogy. Although Liard was no positivist, as his book *La Science positive et la métaphysique* indicates, he believed that, as part of the reform, universities needed to open up to the new intellectual trends, to make space for the new approaches and new

²²³ Karady, ‘Les professeurs de la République’, pp. 96-101.

²²⁴ See the letter from Durkheim to Liard of the 10 August 1886, where he referred to an interview with Liard of ‘January last’.

disciplines.²²⁵ Thus, in what has been described as a ‘revolutionary measure’ introducing into the traditional curriculum an ‘entirely new discipline’, an opening emerged for Durkheim within the university not in philosophy but in the new discipline of social science.²²⁶

When it came to choosing someone for the new post, Durkheim’s authority was immediately recognised. His work of intense reading and reviewing, his collaboration with the *Revue philosophique* and his trip to Germany paid off. In contrast to the case of Ribot or Espinas, Durkheim, within two years of his debut as a review writer and without yet having his doctorate, was offered a university position in his chosen subject. The critique of traditional philosophy and the desire for innovation did not work against his university career as it did in the case of Ribot or Espinas. The university field itself was changing, and Durkheim’s scientific authority this time reinforced his search for institutional recognition. Not only had he got the appropriate background in academic philosophy, he had also proved himself to be ‘perfectly informed’ on the ‘most recent works in social science’: ‘Nobody’, wrote René Lacroze ‘was better qualified than he was.’²²⁷

²²⁵ Louis Liard, *La Science positive et la métaphysique* (Paris: Baillière, 1879).

²²⁶ René Lacroze, ‘Émile Durkheim à Bordeaux’, *Annales de l’Université de Paris*, 1(1960), 26-32 (p. 26).

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

2.3.2 The History of Sociology

An inaugural lecture, wrote Bourdieu, is loaded with symbolism: it is a sort of ‘rite of passage’, similar to the medieval *inceptio*, whereby the members of an existing corporation of teachers come to recognise a new ‘maître’.²²⁸ Durkheim’s opening lecture at Bordeaux is doubly significant in that it marked both his own passage into the university and with him, a new course of studies. At the same time, the choice of lecture topic, the history of sociology, and his particular approach to this subject, announced this entry with gusto.

In his 1886 survey of current state of sociological studies, Durkheim had remarked on the importance of tracing the history and the intellectual roots of a science: people, he wrote, are wary of a science which just seems to have appeared out of the blue, without any ‘historical antecedent’.²²⁹ It was finally to this issue that he turned in his opening lecture to his course on sociology at Bordeaux.²³⁰ In itself, there was nothing remarkable about tracing the history of an idea or a school of thought, a common practice in philosophy at the time. However, it was precisely this topic, Espinas’s introductory chapter on the history of sociology, that had proved so explosive ten years previously. Not only this but the main problem with Espinas’s historical sketch was the way in which he wrote this history as a struggle between ‘science’ and ‘philosophy’. There were, he had argued, two opposing ways of seeing society: one a metaphysical, unscientific view that took society as an artificial, human creation and another scientific view, which took

²²⁸ Bourdieu, *Leçon sur la leçon*, p. 7.

²²⁹ Durkheim, ‘Les études de science sociale’, *RP*, 22 (1886), 61-80 (p. 78).

²³⁰ Émile Durkheim, ‘Cours de science sociale: leçon d’ouverture’, *RIE*, 15(1888), 23-48.

society as a natural reality.²³¹ It was, he had claimed, only through the triumph of the latter, of science over a priori thinking that sociology could come into being.

It was therefore significant that Durkheim's lecture opened with a similar opposition between 'science' and 'art', between science which studies what exists and art, which is concerned with what ought to be. If sociology was to constitute itself as a science it must, he argued, observe the social reality; it must break with the practice in philosophy of starting out from an a priori principle posited as a universal ideal and deriving the best form of society from it. Durkheim's lecture, like Espinas's history, was constructed around this opposition between the artificial and the naturalist view. While the former started out from an unobserved, timeless ideal and derived from it the best form of society, the sociologist, argued Durkheim, must start out from the observation of facts and proceed by induction.

Since antiquity, Durkheim argued, philosophers had been concerned with the study of society. However up until recently the tendency to view society as an artificial creation, entirely constructed by individuals and infinitely malleable to will, had prevented the development of a genuinely scientific perspective on society.²³² In France certain theorists in the eighteenth century, such as Condorcet and Montesquieu, realised that societies, like all natural phenomena, were governed by laws. It was however the classical economists who first applied this idea to the economic realm, which they took to be governed by laws as necessary as those of the physical world. They considered efforts by governments to modify societies as pointless or even harmful: 'Extend this principle

²³¹ Espinas, *Des sociétés animales*, pp. 7-136; Brooks, *The Eclectic Legacy*, chapter 1.

²³² Durkheim, 'Cours de science sociale', p. 24.

to all social facts and sociology is established'.²³³ Although Durkheim praised this insight of the classical economists, he also argued however that one must step back from their tendency to see in society only the individual. While they derived their laws from an abstract human nature, proposed as always and everywhere the same, Durkheim argued that the reality was in fact far more complex.²³⁴

The name of Auguste Comte which had provoked so much controversy ten years previously was pivotal here and while the classical economists, in Durkheim's view, 'stopped at the halfway point', Comte built on their work and founded sociology. For Comte, as for the classical economists, social facts could not be viewed as artificial constructions, but his big advance was to show that society was 'as real as a living organism'.²³⁵ Social things could not, for him, be explained in terms of individuals, as nothing more than an aggregate of individuals. Society was something more than the sum of its individual parts and had its own nature and laws. To study society scientifically one could not start out from metaphysical speculation about individual nature but should begin by looking at the empirical social reality.²³⁶

Comte almost always emerged as the decisive figure in Durkheim's writings on the history of sociology and these consistent references partly explain the 'positivist' label that has stuck to his sociology. However, these references to positivism need to be seen as part of a strategy through which Durkheim built his own definition of sociology

²³³ Durkheim, 'Cours de science sociale', p. 26. Also see the English translation, 'Course in Sociology: Opening Lecture', in Émile Durkheim, *On Institutional Analysis*, ed. and trans. by Mark Traugott (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), p 46.

²³⁴ Ibid, pp. 28-29.

²³⁵ Ibid, p. 30; trans, p. 50.

²³⁶ Ibid, p. 31.

through engaging with a set of well known, if controversial references in late nineteenth century thought. Comte's very name was, at the same time, symbolic of the rebellion against the traditional introspective philosophy, and placing it at the centre of his lecture was an act of intellectual position taking. However, the idea of Durkheim as a positivist needs some qualification. If he welcomed Comte's insight into the distinct nature of social reality and the need for any genuine science of society to break from a priori thinking, when it came to the other aspect of the positivist doctrine - the philosophy of history and the evolutionary law of the three stages - he stepped back. The problem with Comte, Durkheim argued, was that he assumed there was only one Society, a universal Humanity following along the same path towards *the* ideal. This, according to Durkheim, was an abstraction, nowhere confirmed in reality and denied the immense complexity of social life.²³⁷

So although Comte was central to the progress of sociology, Durkheim implicitly situated himself within the Littrean tradition and criticised Comte's descent into metaphysical speculation. Indeed it was on similar grounds that he criticised Herbert Spencer, another common reference point in experimental psychology and early sociology. Spencer, through his detailed empirical studies and focus on specific questions, went beyond Comte in making society altogether less abstract. However, he too had started out from an assumption about the law of evolution, and the facts he gathered only served to prove his 'grand hypothesis', that humanity was evolving towards ever-greater happiness.²³⁸ The scientific path to be followed, argued Durkheim, was that indicated by Espinas who highlighted the need for detailed empirical studies,

²³⁷ Durkheim, 'Cours de science sociale', pp. 32-33.

²³⁸ Ibid, p. 33.

and that of the German social theorists who had taken a historical approach to the study of morality, the economy and legal institutions.²³⁹

So according to Durkheim the triumph of sociology as a ‘positive science’ would involve overcoming what he depicted as the hitherto dominant philosophical approach to society, coined as ‘social art’. One must leave behind the artificial view with its tendency to derive everything from a few abstract principles and follow Espinas in viewing society as a natural reality, governed by its own laws, which could be grasped through observation. In short, what had been a taboo topic in 1877 had now definitively entered the establishment. Not surprisingly, Espinas, the new Dean at Bordeaux, hailed the occasion as a ‘great event’.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Durkheim, ‘Cours de science sociale’, pp. 38-40.

²⁴⁰ René Lacroze, quoted by Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 100-101.

2.3.3 A Strategy of Moderation?

In the confidential annual reports of the rector of Bordeaux to the Ministry of Public Instruction social science was initially described as an ‘idea which could bear fruit’, but the tone was distinctively careful: the ‘difficult’ and ‘delicate’ nature of both this subject and the class in pedagogy was stressed.²⁴¹ Over the next few years the tone changed considerably: by 1889 Durkheim’s ‘great success’ was being applauded, and by 1893 the faculty was pressing for the course in social science to remain at Bordeaux and for Durkheim to be promoted to a permanent chair.²⁴² Durkheim clearly impressed his colleagues with his intellectual and scientific authority and was described as the ‘only one in France who is up to date on the sociological movement’, and as someone who ‘lives only for science’.²⁴³ His teaching and public lectures were referred to as ‘excellent’ or ‘remarkable’, and he was praised for being able to appeal to a diverse and difficult audience, ranging from primary-school teachers, to all those ‘curious about sociology’ including the law professors, attracted by the newness of the subject.²⁴⁴ However, what seemed to impress his colleagues the most was the capacity of the young ‘maître’ to deal, in a sensitive manner, with ‘the most delicate questions’.²⁴⁵

In the opening lecture it is as if Durkheim had a sense of the concerns about the nature of the subjects he had been employed to teach. Almost echoing the terms used by the rector in his first report, Durkheim began by recognising the ‘difficulties’ of his task.

²⁴¹ Report of 1888, Durkheim’s file, F17/25768

²⁴² Reports of 1889 and 1893. This promotion came after Durkheim’s doctoral thesis defence in 1893.

²⁴³ Report of 1890 and 1892 respectively.

²⁴⁴ Reports of 1891, 1892 and 1889 respectively. René Lacroze also commented on this audience consisting of ‘historians, jurists, teachers and people of the town’, Lacroze, p.28.

²⁴⁵ Report of 1892.

Rather than presenting the course in sociology as a ‘revolutionary break’, as he could well have done, he consciously avoided making any exaggerated claims for science. Social science was ‘born only yesterday’ and as yet could only claim a small number of definitively established principles. He himself had not come to reveal a doctrine that was the ‘secret possession of a tiny school of sociologists’, but to progressively construct a science, to ‘pose a certain number of questions about society which are related to each other’ and to ‘propose a method which we shall experiment together’.²⁴⁶ Throughout the lecture he insisted on the complexity of social life, which is why he stepped back from Comte’s descent into scientism.²⁴⁷ Durkheim, it was later remarked, constructed his sociology ‘patiently, piece by piece, year by year’; he was against those sort of ‘vague generalities’ typical of Spencer and focussed his attention on specific questions, the solution to which he would then build into his theory’.²⁴⁸

The political counterpart of this scientific moderation was expressed in the refusal of simple intellectual solutions to social and political issues. He was not offering ‘ready-made remedies to cure our modern societies. Science does not move so quickly. It needs time, a great deal of time, to become of practical use’.²⁴⁹ This should not be seen as a rejection of politics per se, but more a recognition of the depth and complexity of social life. Durkheim’s point was that one should not jump to hasty political conclusions and dress them in the language of science. Indeed it was precisely this tendency to become dogmatic, to jump prematurely into politics in a way that had nothing scientific about it that he criticised in Comte and Spencer.

²⁴⁶ Durkheim, ‘Cours de science sociale’, p. 23; trans, p. 43.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. 32-33.

²⁴⁸ Lacroze, p. 28.

²⁴⁹ Durkheim, ‘Cours de science sociale’, p. 23; trans, p. 43.

This may have reassured the more traditionally inclined sectors of the audience, and those in the establishment such as Liard, who wanted to innovate but who were nevertheless wary about some of the exaggerated claims of a certain type of positivism. Yet, paradoxically, the moderate tone also enabled him to appeal to the new ideal of scientificity in the intellectual field, while disarming those critics who were still in doubt as to the scientific credentials of sociology. He himself realised that a ‘young ‘science...enjoys greater credibility among scientific minds when it presents itself with greater modesty’.²⁵⁰ He described sociology as a science that had only just come into being and as one yet to be made. It was a science of discovery, and, depicting himself in the image of the German teacher-researcher dear to the reformers, he argued that alongside the chairs from which ‘established science and acquired truths are taught’, there was room for a professor who ‘creates his science even as he is teaching it’.²⁵¹ Indeed each of his lecture courses were constructed around research topics many of which would later be published as book-length studies. In the first year at Bordeaux he lectured on ‘La Solidarité Sociale’, where many of the central concepts of the *Division of Labour* were introduced.²⁵² In a similar fashion his lecture course of 1889-90 dealt with a topic, suicide, on which he had recently published a short study in the *Revue philosophique*.²⁵³

²⁵⁰ Durkheim, ‘Cours de science sociale’, pp. 23-24; Durkheim, ‘Course in Sociology’, p. 44.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 23; trans, p. 43.

²⁵² Lacroze, p. 28. For the list of lecture courses given by Durkheim at Bordeaux, see Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 617-19.

²⁵³ Émile Durkheim, ‘Suicide et natalité: étude de statistique morale’, *RP*, 26 (1888), 446-63.

So the depiction of sociology as a science of discovery was also a way of enhancing his scientific standing in the public view. In his introductory lecture on the family he rejected again the practice of starting out from abstract assumptions about the ideal family, and outlined his experimental approach. In doing this he appealed to Claude Bernard, the ultimate symbol of scientific legitimacy, and his conception of experimentation as means of comparing how phenomena vary in differing circumstances. The sociological method towards the study of the family, he argued, would also involve ‘indirect experimentation’: it would look at how domestic relations vary according to the family types found at different points in history and in different places. Such a study would proceed from observation, using external indicators such as legal codes and statistics where possible.²⁵⁴ Significantly, Durkheim’s presentation of sociology as a science of discovery also helped him to distinguish his sociology from other versions, which started out with a preconceived definition of a ‘social problem’. Thus whereas Frédéric Le Play had started out from the idea of the patriarchal family as the best form of family life Durkheim argued that we can have not such preconceptions, at least not at the beginning of research.²⁵⁵

According to Célestin Bouglé one of the most striking differences between Durkheim and Espinas, was that Durkheim’s tone was altogether ‘more modest’.²⁵⁶ While both sought recognition as a ‘scientist’, and emphasised the need for sociology to break with a priori thinking, to pass to the positive stage of empirical observation,

²⁵⁴ Émile Durkheim, ‘Introduction à la sociologie de la famille’, in Durkheim, *Textes*, ed. by Karady, iii: *Fonctions sociales et institutions*, pp. 9-34 (pp. 13-14), first publ. in the *Annales de la Faculté des lettres de Bordeaux*, 10 (1887), 257-281.

²⁵⁵ Durkheim, ‘Introduction à la sociologie de la famille’, p. 24.

²⁵⁶ Bouglé, ‘L’oeuvre sociologique d’Émile Durkheim’, p. 281.

Durkheim did not attack ‘philosophy’ as Espinas sometimes seemed to. In fact he consciously sought to appeal to philosophers, arguing that sociology could indeed offer a new perspective on ethics.²⁵⁷ Furthermore, his very definition of sociology, as involving the study of morals, religion, collective ideals as well as legal and economic institutions as they evolved through history, reinforced the interdisciplinary guise of the new course of studies.²⁵⁸ This could only serve to reinforce its scientific legitimacy in that it again appealed to the ideal dear to the university reformers of breaking down the divide between the faculties of law, science and arts. So although the moderate tone may have reassured the more traditional sectors of his audience at Bordeaux, it also helped him to reinforce the scientific credentials of his subject.

Given the traditional prestige of the Parisian institutions it would be easy to assume that Durkheim’s appointment to Bordeaux was an effort on the part of a hostile establishment to keep a positivistic sociology at bay. All the evidence however points to the contrary. The university field itself was becoming more receptive to social science. At the same time, more opportunities for agrégés were opening up within the universities and the reform movement sought to develop institutions outside the capital. Just as Durkheim found in the *Revue philosophique* an organ through which he could diffuse his ideas long before the foundation of his own journal the *Année sociologique*, at Bordeaux, he found a base from which to introduce sociology into the university curriculum. As one witness to Durkheim’s doctoral defence remarked, it was no longer necessarily the case that the intellectual elite would automatically set their sights on Paris: Bordeaux, where a

²⁵⁷ Durkheim, ‘Cours de science sociale’, p. 42. Also see Karady, ‘Stratégies de réussite et modes de faire-valoir de la sociologie’, pp. 55-56.

²⁵⁸ Durkheim, ‘Cours de science sociale’, pp. 42-43. Also see Karady, ‘Durkheim, les sciences sociales et l’Université’, pp. 278-79, footnote 33.

number of important figures, including Durkheim, were based, was already proving itself to be an ‘université avant la lettre’.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹ Report of Perreur, in Durkheim’s file, F/17/25768.

2.4 Science and Politics

While a line can certainly be traced from Alfred Espinas and organicist social theory to Durkheim, it is also important to emphasise Durkheim's efforts to draw a clear distinction between both biology and psychology, and the science of human societies, to explicitly define the distinct subject matter and method of the latter.²⁶⁰ A strategy of legitimation informed by his philosophical education, this argument was also pursued by Durkheim as a way of setting apart his sociology from other existing definitions of social science.²⁶¹ I shall come back to the influence of academic philosophy in the next chapter and look at here the strategy of distinction in his effort to define sociology and its subject matter. And although the opening lecture at Bordeaux had been built around the opposition between 'science' and 'art', his very outline of subject-matter of sociology elaborated before 1890, as we shall see, led directly on to the question of politics.

²⁶⁰ Brooks, *The Eclectic Legacy*, pp. 208-12.

²⁶¹On the effort in later work to distinguish durkheimian sociology from other competitors see Charle, *La Naissance des 'intellectuels'*, p. 52. For the definition of science proposed by the philosophers see Paul Janet, 'Introduction à la science philosophique: la philosophie est-elle une science?', *RP*, 25 (1888), 337-53 (p. 338).

2.4.1 Sociology and its Divisions

If Durkheim could praise Albert Schaeffle for his use of the organic metaphor, he was nevertheless careful to point out that it was just a metaphor, a useful source of insights, and that if sociology was to constitute itself as a legitimate science it must 'prove that its object was distinct from the phenomena studied by other sciences'. This point, he remarked approvingly, had been made by both by De Greef and by Gumplowicz, who had also insisted on the importance of distinguishing sociology from biology, of constituting it as an independent science '*sui generis*'.²⁶² Where the organic analogy was helpful in Durkheim's view, was in that it guided one against the two extreme views on the relationship between the individual and society, one represented by De Greef, the other by Gumplowicz: according to the former social life in its highest form of evolution would be a result of individual free choice, while Gumplowicz went to the opposite pole of defining society as an immense collective force acting on individuals wholly from without.²⁶³

Society, in Durkheim's view, and this is where he drew on the organic analogy, had its own internal cohesion, a 'solidarity that comes from within', that is not imposed from without by any external power.²⁶⁴ Rather than starting off with the economy or the state or religion, for Durkheim it was this primary fact of 'sociability' that served as the basis from which all these other facts grew.²⁶⁵ So if he did not accept the methods or the conclusions of either Gumplowicz or De Greef, he nevertheless drew out what he

²⁶² Durkheim, 'De Greef', p. 659 and 'Gumplowicz', p. 629.

²⁶³ Durkheim, 'De Greef', p. 662 and 'Gumplowicz', p. 632.

²⁶⁴ Durkheim, 'Les études de sciences sociales', p. 79.

²⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 71, Durkheim, 'De Greef', pp. 662-63, Émile Durkheim, 'Guyau, J.-M., *L'Irréligion de l'avenir*', *RP*, 12(1887), 299-311 (p. 308).

considered to be the grain of truth from their work - their recognition that sociology must establish itself on an independent basis - which he would in turn build into the presentation of his own social theory.

Distinct from biology, sociology however must also avoid becoming just another chapter of psychology, and in this vein Durkheim praised De Greef for drawing attention to a particular contradiction in Herbert Spencer's thought: if on the one hand Spencer had recognised that sociology must distinguish its object from the facts studied by other sciences, his very conception of society as an aggregate of individuals itself undermined the independent disciplinary status of sociology and reduced it to psychology.²⁶⁶ According to the Comtian theory of scientific progress, each science (astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology) had, over the course of history, progressively disentangled itself from both theology and metaphysics, to embark on the search for positive laws. In the positive stage, each science thus would have its own specific object of investigation, irreducible to any other, and its own distinct methods. Biology and psychology were the most recent sciences to free themselves from external doctrines and reductionism. With yet another reference to Claude Bernard, Durkheim hailed the physiologist's great achievement in freeing biology from the 'yoke' of physics and chemistry and constituting it as an independent science.²⁶⁷ Now, he argued, it was the turn of sociology, which must also reject biological and psychological reductionism and begin to study the 'facts themselves', to 'determine their laws' and 'special properties'.²⁶⁸ If there was a parallel between biology and psychology therefore, the conclusion drawn from it was that

²⁶⁶ Durkheim, 'De Greef', pp. 658-659.

²⁶⁷ Durkheim, 'Schaeffle', p. 98.

²⁶⁸ Durkheim, 'De Greef', p. 662.

sociology needed to distinguish itself from both. Against those who would class his method as ‘materialist’, Durkheim’s message even at this early stage was on the contrary that a genuinely scientific sociology must resist all forms of reductionism.

Given that sociology was a new science in the 1880s, there were, as Durkheim himself pointed out, still many critics who doubted its scientific validity and were not at all convinced that it had any future. However, he argued, the best way to prove such critics wrong was simply to demonstrate that sociology was actually being practiced, that the discipline was ‘alive and progressing’ and to explicitly define its object, the internal division of its subject-matter and its method.²⁶⁹ It was again through his review writing, that Durkheim sought to establish an initial outline of this subject-matter, by bringing together in a general survey of the field a number of recently published authors in sociology. In his 1886 collective review of Spencer’s *Ecclesiastical Institutions*, Regnard’s, *L’État, ses origines, sa nature et son but* and of Coste’s *Les Questions sociales contemporaines*, each of the authors in the survey served to elucidate the internal division of the subject-matter: first there was the branch which studied immaterial forms of social regulation such as religious beliefs and morals (Spencer), then there was the study of political institutions and the state (Regnard) and finally the study of economic institutions.²⁷⁰

Durkheim was far from uncritical of these authors and expressed his reservations about the excessive ‘simplisme’ of Spencer’s individualist account of religion and of Coste’s views on economic regulation, while at the other extreme, he criticised Regnard’s denial of natural internal solidarity, his postulation of an initial state of war and

²⁶⁹ Durkheim, ‘Les études de science sociale’, pp. 78-80.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, pp. 79-80.

explanation of the state in terms of a need for a less precarious existence.²⁷¹ In an almost mocking tone he deplored the lack of any coherent scientific method on the part of both Regnard and more generally at the ‘recent discussion’ of the state at the Académie des sciences morales et politique - referred to almost ironically as ‘la savante assemblée’ - a passage in which his sense of entitlement, as a philosophy graduate of the *École normale* with a research trip to Germany and university position on the horizon, shines through.²⁷²

While these ‘authorities’ on the social sciences thus serve more as a starting point from which to outline the basic subject matter, through the critique of their methods Durkheim at the same time cleared the field around him and suggested the possibility of a ‘more scientific’ approach. A similar line of argument was taken up in his survey of ‘positive moral science’ where the critique of a number of German theorists was built into an attempt to outline sociology’s subject matter, its internal divisions and method. The article was divided into three main parts, again corresponding to the division of the subject matter of sociology: German economists (Wagner, Schmoller and Schaeffle), German legal theorists (Ihering and Post) and finally, theorists of religious and moral life (Wundt). Presenting their ‘positivist’ approach to morality as something different to anything known in France with its penchant for a priori moral philosophy, Durkheim admired how these authors approached moral rules and actions as observable properties of social organisation, which varied throughout history and from one society to the next.²⁷³ The German economists, for example, did not try to derive the best form of economic or legal institutions from an abstract moral principle or argument about

²⁷¹ Durkheim, ‘Les études de science sociale’, pp. 65-68, p. 70, p. 75.

²⁷² Ibid, pp. 69-72.

²⁷³ Durkheim, ‘La science positive de la morale en Allemagne’, p. 33.

individual nature or interest, but sought to understand existing institutions in relation to the concrete moral norms and customary regulations presented by specific societies.²⁷⁴ Similarly, Wilhelm Wundt's efforts to create a moral science, starting out from the empirical study of religion, custom and law and tracing the evolution of moral rules and obligations from their origins in religious beliefs and custom, to their crystallisation in positive law also resonated with Durkheim, himself seeking to break with Kantian and utilitarian explanations of morality.²⁷⁵

If Durkheim had a criticism to make of the German economists generally, it was their premature eagerness to move from science to political action, a hasty step he argued, given that the social reality was too complex for them to be able to claim to have grasped it once and for all in a manner to be able to base an infallible politics on 'scientific' knowledge of it. Their final conclusion that society could be transformed through the will of the legislator had in fact 'nothing scientific about it'.²⁷⁶ Again, however, Schaeffle, with his patient work of observation, description and classification, represented the truly scientific position, and while building on the economists' historical viewpoint he also understood that however advanced science might be, society was not infinitely malleable.²⁷⁷ Durkheim also praised the same work of patient observation and experimentation in Wilhelm Wundt, who stuck to the study of what existed and avoided of the premature leap to the question of what ought to be.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁴ Durkheim, 'La science positive de la morale en Allemagne', pp. 33-49.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 112-42.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 44.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, pp. 45-48.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 137.

However just as Durkheim's distinction between sociology and psychology did not mean that facts of a psychological nature such as religious ideas and morals did not form part of the subject matter of sociology, his cautious remarks on the relationship between 'science' and practical 'art' did not mean that sociology would have no political role in modern society. Through his reference to the authoritative figure in early French sociology, the criminologist Gabriel Tarde, Durkheim indicated what form political intervention could take: alongside the branches of sociology studying religion, morals, legal and economic institutions, there would also be a branch devoted to cases of social pathology.²⁷⁹ Although in these early articles Durkheim insisted primarily on the need to develop sociology as a science that observed and explained what existed, rather than as a means of social change, he did say that this was because the science was still in its infancy and that a day would come in the future when it would be able to guide practice.²⁸⁰ And from his early work we can also gain an idea of what form this 'social art' might later take and how it might be reconciled to the scientific ideal.

²⁷⁹ Durkheim, 'Les études de science sociale', p. 80.

²⁸⁰ Durkheim, 'La science positive de la morale en Allemagne', p. 284.

2.4.2 Solidarity and Social Action

If on the one hand the scientist could be held up as the embodiment of disinterest, it was paradoxically, in this role as eternal devotee to truth that scientists were called on to exit the laboratory in order to contribute to the betterment of their society.²⁸¹ Although the ‘social science’ and ‘social art’ opposition was central to Durkheim’s definition of sociology, he also however understood the contemporary demands on science to fulfil a social and political role, to contribute to the cause of national regeneration, political consolidation and social reform.²⁸² Indeed, as we have seen above, in his review articles he presented the very act of developing a positive science of society as part of the effort to return France to its place of prestige in the context of German scientific advances. On the question of reform, he told his audience at Bordeaux that while ‘science’ studied what exists and has existed and ‘art’ involved action in accordance with an ideal, the two were not mutually exclusive: if art could improve the reality, it was science that helped us know the reality we want to improve. And it was by constructing social types and classifying societies in terms of their social tie, that Durkheim avoided contradicting himself here and sought to overcome the opposition between ‘science’ and ‘art’.²⁸³ Postulating natural sociability as a fundamental fact from which all other social facts crystallise - religion, morality, codified laws, political and economic institutions - he proposed to go beyond the ‘simplisme’ of philosophy where everything was explained

²⁸¹ Berthelot, *Science et philosophie*, pp. i-ii.

²⁸² On the context and the hopes placed in social science see Alfred Espinas, ‘Être ou ne pas être: ou, du postulat de la sociologie’, *RP*, 51 (1901), 449-80.

²⁸³ Durkheim, ‘Introduction à la sociologie de la famille’, pp. 25-26.

with a 'single principle', while avoiding the opposite danger of empiricism or the 'dust' of 'small facts'.²⁸⁴

In the first instance, his argument concerning a natural sociability already implied a definite normative judgement in relation to modern society. If against Spencer, religion was a system of representations that both hid and expressed underlying social conditions, then changes in the nature of these representations did not occur simply because the human mind changed. It was thus likely in Durkheim's view, that beliefs, values and rules which, like older religious systems, had extra-individual origins and which imposed themselves on the individual consciousness, would continue to exist in modern society.²⁸⁵ If sociability gave rise to religion, then although the content of religion may change as society changes, it would be hard, argued Durkheim against Guyau, to envisage the end of such socially generated religious-like beliefs and rules themselves. Even the revolution in thought or the progress of science, would not, he predicted, lead to the total disappearance of religious beliefs and rules.²⁸⁶ In modern society, rather than implying the disintegration of collective beliefs and obligations, individualism, argued Durkheim, in his praise of Ferneuil's 'scientific' or sociological explanation of the values of the French Revolution, actually implied a new set of collective beliefs and moral rules.²⁸⁷

In another review of the previous year, his discussion of the German theorist Ferdinand Tönnies, Durkheim had indeed already presented his own conception of the modern social type. Accepting on the one hand Tönnies's construction of two principal

²⁸⁴Durkheim, 'Introduction à la sociologie de la famille', p. 24; Bouglé, 'L'oeuvre sociologique d' Émile Durkheim', p. 282.

²⁸⁵ Durkheim, 'Les études de sciences sociales', p. 69.

²⁸⁶ Durkheim, 'Guyau', p. 310.

²⁸⁷ Émile Durkheim, 'Les principes de 1789 et la sociologie', *RIE*, 19 (1890), 450-56.

social types, the traditional and the modern, and also with the characterisation of the traditional 'gemeinschaft' as a homogenous community sharing similar beliefs and values, Durkheim disagreed that the life of modern individualist society was any less natural or cohesive than that of small traditional social aggregates.²⁸⁸ Modern life implied neither social disintegration nor an artificial social harmony imposed from without by a strong state, but it too had its own internal harmony. This proposition however, as he remarked towards the end of the Tönnies review, would in fact need a whole book to prove scientifically, which was precisely what he would go on to do in his doctoral thesis, the *Division of Labour*.²⁸⁹ Meanwhile, in his study of the statistical variations in suicide and birth rates across different societies, he suggested, against biological and racial explanations, that only social causes could account for the combined rising suicide and declining birth rates in France at the time: both, he argued, against the optimistic and ideal picture of modern society he presented in the Tönnies review, could be traced to a social milieu experiencing a loss of 'family feeling', which had become a place where the 'cold wind of egoism' blew.²⁹⁰ By this point however Durkheim had already out-lined the direction his research would take over the course of the next decade.

²⁸⁸ Émile Durkheim, 'Tönnies, F. *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*', *RP*, 27(1889), 416-22.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 421.

²⁹⁰ Durkheim, 'Suicide et natalité', pp. 462-63. For the English translation see Émile Durkheim, 'Suicide and the Birth Rate: A Study in Moral Statistics' trans. by Barclay D. Johnson, in *Émile Durkheim: Le Suicide. 100 Years Later*, ed. by D. Lester (Philadelphia: Charles Press, 1994), p. 132.

Conclusion

By looking at these early articles and lectures I have sought to bring to the fore Durkheim's efforts to establish both the scientific legitimacy of sociology and his own scientific authority in the new discipline. Alongside this I have also looked at his related pursuit and establishment of institutional legitimacy through the appointment at Bordeaux. While Durkheim's university appointment was itself made possible by developments within the university field, it also seems clear that the way in which he defined both sociology as a science and its social role was very much shaped by demands of the intellectual field. At the same time however, if, with his articles in the *Revue philosophique* and the *Revue internationale de l'enseignement*, he sought to appeal to a certain ideal of scientificity, the strategies pursued here reveal more than an acute sense for the opportune: in his very definition of science, of sociology and its social role we can, I suggest, also find the influence of his philosophical education. It is thus to the roots of Durkheimian sociology in French academic philosophy, its ties to the *École normale* and the arts faculty that I shall turn next.

Chapter 3

Philosophy, Sociology and the Confrontation over Moral Science

At the top of the disciplinary hierarchy in France in the late-nineteenth century, philosophy acted both as an important instrument of intellectual consecration and a vehicle through which a certain intellectual worldview could be imparted. Among those in possession of the rare diploma, the ‘agrégation de philosophie’, the graduates of the elite *École normale* were perfectly positioned and - after the years of training at both the institution itself and at its preparatory schools - conditioned as the ‘nobility’ within this philosophical edifice.²⁹¹ Since it was precisely from within this milieu that Durkheim came, it is important to consider the relationship of the sociology he would go on to develop to this philosophical background. Not only were the first confrontations over his work with philosophers but the way in which he defined sociology and its social role was also marked by this philosophical heritage. So before considering in chapter four, as Jean-Marie Berthelot has suggested one ought to do, the rivalry in early French sociology between different schools of thought in the new discipline, I shall first look at Durkheim’s position in the field of philosophy.²⁹²

Drawing on the work of John Brooks which has highlighted the continuity between philosophy and the nascent human sciences of experimental psychology and sociology, and on that of Warren Schmaus who has shown how Durkheim can be situated within the history of French academic philosophy, I shall in this chapter approach

²⁹¹ Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes*, pp. 46-47.

²⁹² Jean-Michel Berthelot, *L’Avènement de la sociologie scientifique* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1995), p. 135.

Durkheim's publications of the period roughly between roughly 1892 and 1896 with specific focus on their relationship to philosophy. An important few years, it was during this period that Durkheim defended his doctoral thesis, which appeared as his first book the *Division of Labour in Society*, and outlined the methodological principles that would be published as the *Rules of Sociological Method*. Before going on to a discussion of these works however it is necessary to begin by considering the state of the philosophical field Durkheim met with just at the point when he was starting out on his academic career.

3.1 The Crisis in Philosophy

What immediately stands out from different accounts by philosophers commenting on the state of their own discipline towards the latter part of the nineteenth century is a widespread perception of crisis. For one of the main representatives of the discipline during most of the period under consideration, Paul Janet, the ‘crisis’ was more of a threat, and in his view positive science and the ‘anti-spiritualist breeze’ were undermining philosophy and the university.²⁹³ From another perspective, slightly later in the century, the ‘crisis’ could however have a more positive connotation: the decades before 1914, wrote Dominique Parodi, were a period of expansion and innovation when the dominant philosophy of first half of the century was challenged and philosophers set off in a multitude of new directions.²⁹⁴ While the second interpretation, will, as we shall see prove instructive with regards to Durkheim’s position in the field, it is nevertheless only against the background of the Napoleonic university and philosophy’s place within it earlier on in the century that the term ‘crisis’ makes sense any at all.

²⁹³ Paul Janet, *La Crise philosophique et les idées spiritualistes: MM. Taine, Renan, Littré, Vacherot* (Paris: Baillière, 1865), p. 87.

²⁹⁴ Dominique Parodi, *La Philosophie contemporaine en France*, 3rd edn (Paris: Alcan, 1925), p. 9.

3.1.1 The Edifice of Victor Cousin

Although the name of Victor Cousin may spark little interest nowadays, he was without a doubt the most important figure in French academic life in the early to mid-nineteenth century, being the person who shaped both the university and the discipline of philosophy during this formative period. Indeed, the contrast between his position in the nineteenth century and his contemporary irrelevance couldn't be more clearly reflected in the number of older studies devoted to him, by important nineteenth century philosophers in France.²⁹⁵ If Cousin's memory was so important to the philosophers of the time it is because it was through him that their discipline acquired its central place within the French education system and came to be invested with immense prestige, as the 'crowning' of a liberal education.²⁹⁶

It was with the foundation by Napoléon I of the *Université de France* - the corporation of teachers and administrators working in second and third-level education, employed directly by the state - that philosophy was instituted as a subject to be taught in the final year of the lycée, necessary for the baccalaureate and necessary to proceed to higher education. And within the university Victor Cousin came to wield immense power. Having started out as a *suppléant* to Royer-Collard in 1815, delivering immensely popular public lectures at the Sorbonne, he was forced out of his chair in 1822 being considered, in a period of monarchical reaction, as too much of a liberal.²⁹⁷ However

²⁹⁵ See for example Paul Janet, *Victor Cousin et son oeuvre* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1885), as well as Adolphe Franck's chapter on Cousin in *Moralistes et philosophes* (Paris: Didier, 1872) and the entry on Cousin in Adolphe Franck, *Dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques*, 2nd edn (Paris: Hachette, 1875), pp. 309-14.

²⁹⁶ On the metaphor of the crowing see Fabiani, p. 49

²⁹⁷ On Cousin's career see the entry in Adolphe Franck's dictionary.

with the arrival in power of the Orléanists, or the July Monarchy in 1830, Cousin was not only restored to his old chair, but became ‘all-powerful’, to use the words of Adolphe Franck.²⁹⁸ Within the space of a few years in the early 1830s he had monopolised a number of important positions and appointments: alongside his chair at the Sorbonne he served on the Royal Council of Public Education, was elected to the Académie française, the Académie des sciences morales et politiques and became director of the École normale supérieure between 1835 and 1840.²⁹⁹

In certain respects, Cousin’s teaching can be seen as part of an effort to deal with the legacy of the French Revolution and to create a new consensus in the post-revolutionary era. As Durkheim himself wrote, it was a philosophy which grew out of the needs of French society of the time.³⁰⁰ During the revolutionary epoch, ‘idéologie’ (a type of empiricism associated with Condillac that traced the roots of ideas and concepts to sensation) dominated philosophical discussion. Although by the early 1800s the ideologues had definitely fallen out of favour with Napoléon I, philosophy had remained locked into an opposition between idéologie (represented by Laromiguière) and the anti-idéologues (represented by Royer-Collard).³⁰¹ In his early public lectures at the Sorbonne, Cousin, rather than simply refuting the theses of idéologie, built up a new system altogether and founded a new philosophical consensus.³⁰²

²⁹⁸ Franck, *Dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques*, p. 310.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ Émile Durkheim, ‘L’enseignement philosophique et l’agrégation de philosophie’, *RP*, 39 (1895), 121-46 (pp. 124-28).

³⁰¹ See George Boas, *French Philosophies of the Romantic Period* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1925), chapters 1, 2 and 5, on the ideologues and the rise of Cousin.

³⁰² Victor Cousin, *Du vrai, du bien et du beau* (Paris: Didier, 1860). This book is a collection of these early lectures and provides the best exposition of his doctrine.

The two terms used to describe the system built by Cousin are eclecticism and spiritualism, though the combination ‘eclectic spiritualism’ perhaps best describes this type of philosophy.³⁰³ The term eclecticism refers to Cousin’s rejection of exclusive thinking, his effort to combine different philosophies into an eclectic synthesis. This, as Adolphe Franck tells us, derives from the idea that we do not create philosophy out of a void but build from ideas already present in the mind, out of a common stock of reason that forms part of our nature. The reason why different philosophical systems seem so contradictory is that each only accesses a small portion of truth, but believing to have accessed the whole truth they denounce other philosophies as false. The job of the eclectic philosopher is therefore to distil the element of truth out of each system and to combine these in a synthesis. The second term spiritualism, refers to the idea that within each human being there is an immaterial substance, the soul or the mind, independent of body and of sensation, that acts as an independent criterion of the true, the good and the beautiful. There are, wrote Franck, universal and necessary principles to which nature conforms and to which our mind conforms, and we have the capacity to access these principles to some extent through introspection.³⁰⁴

Cousin’s method was thus psychological and historical, being based on an inquiry into the nature of the mind and the distillation of the ‘element of truth’ from other systems in the history of philosophy. Being the person who controlled what was taught in the philosophy class in schools and universities throughout France, his influence was imprinted on the syllabus, which started off with psychological inquiry and concluded

³⁰³ This is the terminology used in Brooks, *The Eclectic Legacy*, p. 43 and in Schmaus, *Rethinking Durkheim*, p. 61.

³⁰⁴ Franck, *Dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques*, p. 311.

with the history of philosophy. From the nature of the human mind, and its faculties, the ‘natural subdivision’ of the subject matter of philosophy is derived from which one proceeds into logic and ethics, and then onto metaphysics or theodicy.³⁰⁵ Furthermore, as Brooks has also demonstrated with reference to the syllabi of 1832, 1874, 1880 and 1902, even though Cousin retired in 1852 his influence on French education remained right up until the end of the nineteenth century.³⁰⁶ Given that Durkheim came through this education system, given that he studied at the École normale between 1879 and 1882 it is reasonable to expect that the Cousinian heritage would form part of his intellectual habitus and in turn condition the formation of his sociology.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁵ Franck, *Dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques*, p. 311. For an outline of the syllabi from 1832 to 1902 see Brooks, *The Eclectic Legacy*, Appendix B, pp. 248-56.

³⁰⁶ See Brooks appendix B, pp. 248-256, and Schmaus, *Rethinking Durkheim*, p.20.

³⁰⁷ On Durkheim’s education and early career as a philosophy teacher in the early 1880s see Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, chapter 2. For an insight into the curriculum Durkheim taught see André Lalande, *Durkheim’s Philosophy Lectures: Notes from the Lycée de Sens Course, 1883-1884*, ed. and trans. by Neil Gross and Robert Alun Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

3.1.2 Spiritualism and Positive Science

Cousin's influence continued to be felt in the second half of the nineteenth century through the work of three figures in particular: Adolphe Franck (1809-93), Elme Caro (1826-87) and Paul Janet (1823-99).³⁰⁸ Franck, to begin with, was a member of the Académie des sciences morales et politiques and titular holder of the chair of natural law and international law at the Collège de France from 1856; he espoused a philosophy which was both eclectic and spiritualist.³⁰⁹ While Franck's best-known work, the celebrated philosophical dictionary, represented an important contribution to the history of philosophy, this work itself bore the clear stamp of his spiritualism.³¹⁰ A strident critic of materialism and empiricism, Franck vigorously attacked Auguste Comte and positivism in his writings on the history of philosophy, and as Alfred Fouillée remarked, figures such as Taine, Spencer and Wundt were conspicuous by their absence from the dictionary.³¹¹ Adhering to the spiritualist distinction between the body governed by sensations, appetites and inclinations and the soul or mind irreducible to anything in the material world (economic factors, the physical environment or society), Franck depicted the human personality, or human soul/mind, acting consciously in accordance with duty, as the highest form of human activity. He saw in the word 'sociology' invented by

³⁰⁸ Logue, *From Philosophy to Sociology*, p. 20.

³⁰⁹ Alfred Fouillée, *Notice sur les travaux de M. Adolphe Franck* (Paris: Institut de France, 1894).

³¹⁰ Also see M. Daresté and Gaston Boissier, *Funérailles d'Adolphe Franck* (Paris: Institut de France, 1893) who also applauded this work.

³¹¹ Logue, *From Philosophy to Sociology*, p. 29. Fouillée, *Notice sur les travaux de M. Adolphe Franck*, p. 12. For Adolphe Franck's views on Comte see Franck, *Philosophie et religion*.

Comte, a new form of authoritarianism, which denied human freedom to choose between good and evil and did away with moral responsibility.³¹²

Although Franck was important as a member of the Collège de France and the Institut, perhaps of more interest here would be Caro and Janet, both of whom held top positions at the Sorbonne and could more directly influence national education. Caro, who had been elected to both the Académie des sciences morales et politiques in 1869 and to the Académie française in 1874, held the chair of philosophy at the Sorbonne until his death in 1887. It is from Charles Waddington, another spiritualist philosopher, holder of the chair of the history of ancient philosophy at the Sorbonne and a member of Durkheim's doctoral dissertation jury in 1893, that we get a brief account of Caro's life and works after his death. Caro, Waddington tells us, was, like Franck, a sworn enemy of positivism and materialism, who not only believed that materialism was bad science, but that it also had moral consequences, of which the rising suicide rate was clear proof. Materialism 'affected souls' and led to the decline of ideals in favour of fleeting pleasures of the flesh, reducing human to animal life.³¹³ He contested the right of utilitarianism to found morality, saw positivism as a sickness of the heart and of the mind and, says Waddington, believed that only spiritualist beliefs would be capable of combating the moral 'mal de siècle'.

On Caro's death in 1887 it was Paul Janet who took over from him in the chair of philosophy at the Sorbonne, and who was therefore to be one of Durkheim's main interlocutors during the thesis defence in 1893. Unlike Franck and Caro, Janet had come

³¹² Logue, *From Philosophy to Science*, pp. 22-25.

³¹³ See Elme Caro, *Études morales sur le temps présent* (Paris: Hachette, 1855) and *Le Matérialisme et la science* (Paris: Hachette, 1867). On Caro see Charles Waddington, *Notice sur M. E. Caro*, (Paris: Alphone Picard, 1889).

into direct contact with Victor Cousin, having worked as his secretary for two years before embarking on his own career in education. By the 1890s having, from 1889 to 1896, served on the advisory board to the Minister for Public Instruction, the Conseil supérieur de l'instruction public, and as holder of the chair of philosophy at the Sorbonne, Janet was the dominant figure in academic philosophy.³¹⁴

Janet thus had considerable influence on what was taught in the philosophy class in French schools and was also the author of a philosophy teaching manual, published in 1879 to coincide with the publication of the new syllabus of 1880.³¹⁵ This manual was intended to be used by teachers in need of guidance on the new curriculum, and it seems that Durkheim himself also consulted it when he was working as a lycée philosophy teacher in the 1880s.³¹⁶ Again Janet's philosophy bore the clear spiritualist stamp of the distinction between the body and the soul and the association of the 'truly human' with the latter. What is indeed striking about this manual, as Schmaus has highlighted, is that it started off with a long section describing the physical body, something that would almost seem out of place in a philosophy textbook.³¹⁷ The point in this I would suggest, was to recognise, on the one hand, the progress that was being made in the biological sciences, while at the same time re-affirming the distinction between the physiological body and 'truly human' intelligence. He argued that in the human being there resided an irreducible, superior principle, an active volonté, a capacity for conscious reflection and ability to determine one's own actions. While, for Janet, animals were not automatons

³¹⁴ On Janet see Émile Boutroux, *Notice sur Paul Janet*, (Versailles: Cerf, 1900) and Georges Picot, *Paul Janet* (Paris: Hachette, 1903).

³¹⁵ Paul Janet, *Traité élémentaire de philosophie à l'usage des classes* (Paris: Delgrave, 1879).

³¹⁶ Schmaus, *Rethinking Durkheim*, p. 76.

³¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 77.

and had a ‘certain intelligence’, this intelligence was almost wholly passive: animals know the world mainly through sensation and when they act they are fatally driven by spontaneous, unconscious inclinations. What distinguished the truly human from the animal was the active intelligence of the *personne humaine* or *personnalité*. Distinct from the ‘individu’ who goes blindly about the world, this human person is endowed with understanding and volition and can ‘think’, ‘love’ and ‘want’.

Although the spiritualists, as William Logue has argued, certainly did interpret materialism and positivism as the new enemies of metaphysics, it is not the case that they were against science itself.³¹⁸ What they rejected was a certain type of science, which banished philosophy from the search for truth and took only that which was empirically observable and measurable, only that which was accessible to sense perception as part of science. The spiritualists believed that science should combine reason with observation, which meant that metaphysics and the inquiry into the first principles of thought and existence could never totally be ruled out. While Elme Caro, for example, was concerned to show the falsity of positivism and materialism, he nevertheless embraced experimental science and praised the method of Claude Bernard, which combined reason with empirical observation.³¹⁹ More than anyone else in the circle of elite philosophers, it was perhaps Janet who went to most lengths to show that philosophy was not anti-scientific. While refuting materialism he not only engaged with the new scientific ideas (which also partly explains the long section on the workings of the physical body in his philosophy manual) but wanted to show that philosophy itself was a science that combined reason

³¹⁸ Logue, *From Philosophy to Sociology*, p. 33.

³¹⁹ See Caro, *Le Matérialisme et la science*.

and observation.³²⁰ As we shall see, although Durkheim claimed to be founding a scientific approach to ethics, distinct from existing philosophical approaches, his doctoral thesis, the *Division of Labour*, actually bore the stamp of the spiritualist definition of the human person, as did his very definition of science.

³²⁰ See in particular, Paul Janet, 'Introduction à la science philosophique', pp. 337-53.

3.1.3 The Demand for Originality

A recurrent theme in Durkheim's writing is his criticism of what was then and indeed still is taken as a characteristically 'French style' of thought and philosophical discussion, with its taste for abstractions and the 'a priori', for clear and distinct ideas, and literary brilliance.³²¹ In his article on philosophy teaching and the philosophy agrégation Durkheim, while not attacking either philosophy or metaphysics themselves, voiced his distaste for the type of 'verbal and formal' philosophy that valued the simplicity of clear ideas and rhetorical flair over empirical content. As such, philosophy had become no more than a logical gymnastics or an exercise for the mind that had little positive content.³²² In his commentary on Durkheim's survey of philosophy teaching in German universities, Christophe Charle too noted the implicit criticism that Durkheim made of his teachers in France, of a philosophy that was too much like 'literary art'. This criticism, wrote Charle, was all the more bold, given that the author was still a young philosophy graduate whose career was by no means assured.³²³ Yet, there is something not entirely surprising about Durkheim's critical remarks, and just as in the Fouillée review I referred to in chapter two, I would argue that at no point was he risking coming across as an upstart, let alone putting his career in jeopardy.

To explain this it is helpful to refer back to the changes that were occurring in academic philosophy at the time, drawing on Jean-Louis Fabiani's analysis of the

³²¹Theodore Zeldin, *France, 1848-1945*, 2 Vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973-77), ii: *Intellect, Taste and Anxiety* (1977), chapter 5. Also see Louis Pinto, 'L'école des philosophes: la dissertation de philosophie au baccalauréat', *ARSS*, 47-48 (1983), 21-36 (p. 23).

³²²Durkheim, 'L'enseignement philosophique et l'agrégation de philosophie', pp. 128-31.

³²³Émile Durkheim, 'La philosophie dans les universités allemandes', p. 438, Christophe Charle, *La République des universitaires, 1870-1940* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994), pp. 42-43.

evolution of the field in late nineteenth century France. Defining the community of academic philosophers as made up of all those bearing the title ‘professeur de philosophie’, Fabiani argued that this field drew its coherence from the lycée philosophy class and its syllabus, which structured the year and provided an identifiable range of themes.³²⁴ Now, although during Cousin’s era philosophy had come to occupy its prestigious place in French education, the discipline was then still very much conditioned by external demands of a political, religious or economic nature. With the educational reforms of the Third Republic however and the exaltation of teaching in political discourse, the members of this community of professional academic philosophers began to enjoy ever increasing social prestige and better employment prospects.³²⁵ It was precisely in this period, coinciding with the foundation of the Third Republic, that academic philosophy began to assert itself as an autonomous domain, made up of a network of positions with its own internal logic.³²⁶

There are different possible ways of explaining Durkheim’s trajectory from philosophy to sociology: in terms of an epiphany or a moment of illumination that struck him during his reading of Comte or on his German trip; at the other extreme, one might suggest it was a result of macro socio-economic developments, a reflection on the nature of the problems brought forth by the advent of industrial society.³²⁷ However what Fabiani’s work indicates is that the explanation can be found in the more local context. In

³²⁴ Fabiani, p. 29.

³²⁵ Ibid, chapter 1. On the educational reforms see Prost, *L’Enseignement en France*, Weisz, *The Emergence of Modern Universities in France* and above points 1.3.2 and 2.1.3.

³²⁶ Fabiani, p. 61

³²⁷ Neil Gross, ‘Introduction’ to Lalande, *Durkheim’s Philosophy Lectures*, pp. 1-30 (pp. 5-6).

accordance with Bourdieu's theory of fields, the development of a type of sociology from within academic philosophy can in fact be viewed as an effect of the field of philosophy itself. As this field consolidated itself as a self-sufficient, self-regulating whole it also contested the instrumentalisation of philosophy as in Cousin's era and resisted any conditioning by external political, religious or economic demands.³²⁸ This explains, how, although the syllabus still retained the stamp of Cousin, the dominant theme in French philosophy of the late nineteenth century became that of intellectual freedom: as Dominique Parodi stated, 'we no longer have any official doctrine'.³²⁹ In short, the mood had turned decidedly against the imposition of a unique philosophical line, to the point that the defiance of one's teachers, the demonstration of originality and independence as a philosopher became a hallmark of distinction. Given the nature of the changes that were taking place in the field, Durkheim, by criticising his teachers, was actually doing something that was highly legitimate: the rejection of the past was part of a strategy for those destined to brilliant futures.

At the same time, the increasing confidence and independence of the philosophers of Durkheim's generation was made possible by specific structural developments. The university reforms offered the possibility of a quicker rise through the system for those who began teaching in the 1880s, while the secularisation of public education encouraged philosophers to go into more specialised domains such as ethics, pedagogy and the science of education.³³⁰ Meanwhile, an expanding philosophical book market, the expansion of the 'librairie savante', saw the entrance of new editors into the field, Felix

³²⁸ See Bourdieu, *Questions de sociologie*, pp. 113-20 and Fabiani, p. 74.

³²⁹ Parodi, p. 7.

³³⁰ Fabiani, p. 20. See below chapter 5, points 5.1.1 and 5.1.2.

Alcan being the most prolific university book publisher in the humanities. These increasing possibilities encouraged the emergence of an entirely new figure, the ‘university author’.³³¹ Alongside book publications, the communication of ideas was made possible through the new specialised reviews that also grew up in the same period, a number of which (the *Revue philosophique* and later *the Année psychologique* and *Année sociologique*) were also published by Alcan. Whereas before philosophers either wrote in politico-literary journals or else in journals tied to a particular school of thought, the ‘university’ philosophy journal was defined not so much by its adherence to a specific editorial line, but more by the fact that it was open to all schools of thought. At the same time its contributors all bore similar professional and intellectual credentials, their writing adhered to university criteria and the journal itself was designed for an audience of professors and educational administrators.³³²

Durkheim was not only part of this community, but as a normalien agrégé he was also part of its elite. If he did not come top of the class at École normale, in hindsight, his biographers say, the problem was with the old style of teaching: the Latin and Greek, the excessive emphasis on classical learning and the formal, rhetorical character of the studies that were too literary and not scientific enough.³³³ In contrast to the long lycée apprenticeships of the previous generation (where 10-15 years would have been normal before receiving a university post), Durkheim only spent four years as a lycée teacher, benefiting from the university reforms to get the post at the University of Bordeaux. By

³³¹On philosophy book production see Fabiani, pp. 23-25. The phrase ‘auteur universitaire’ is again from Fabiani, chapter 4.

³³² Ibid, p. 35.

³³³ Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 52-53, quoting Georges Davy, ‘Émile Durkheim: l’homme’, p. 185.

the late 1880s he was already a published author with his contributions to the *Revue philosophique* and the *Revue internationale de l'enseignement*, and was writing his doctorate, itself destined for publication with Alcan.

Although Durkheim would become an actor in a new field of studies, sociology, and indeed become widely known not as a philosopher but as a sociologist, his passage from one to the other began as part of the general rebellion against the philosophical past and the search for originality that was predominant within the field. While one expression of this mood was the critique of one's teachers, another was the attraction of the younger generation to more modern authors. Whereas, Fabiani tells us, the classics of antiquity and of the seventeenth century had hitherto formed the staple of the philosophical heritage, the younger generation sought out inspiration among nineteenth century writers such as Comte, Schopenhauer or Maine de Biran and often among ones from outside the boundaries of the French tradition.³³⁴ Indeed, it was through his reading of precisely such a set of philosophically non-conventional authors - Comte, Spencer, the German theorists - that Durkheim began his elaboration of a new approach to an old question in philosophy, that of determining what moral end contemporary man ought to desire.

³³⁴ Fabiani, p. 58.

3.2 Durkheim's Doctoral Thesis

The *Division of Labour in Society* was not only Durkheim's first published work and one which would become a classic in sociology, it was also his doctoral thesis defended before a jury of philosophers at the arts faculty at the Sorbonne on 3 March 1893.³³⁵ As such, both the thesis itself and the response it received can act as window onto the relationship between the academic philosophy of Durkheim's education and the nascent sociology. Although Durkheim tended to present himself as 'breaking' with philosophy, this very attempt to set off in a new direction on the part of someone who was trained as a philosopher can itself be viewed as an effect of changes that were occurring in the field. As Bourdieu tells us, it is only those who have thoroughly mastered the rules of the game that are in a position to play with them, to go beyond them while remaining within the contours of legitimacy.³³⁶ And while as we shall see, Durkheim's doctoral thesis paid homage to the philosophical tradition, in presenting his work to the jury Durkheim also managed to play with this same heritage.

³³⁵ Philippe Besnard, 'Introduction', in *Division du travail et lien social*, ed. by Besnard and others, pp. 1-7.

³³⁶ Bourdieu, *Choses dites*, p. 95, p. 97.

3.2.1 Specialisation and Solidarity

If Durkheim had from early on been interested in the relationship between the individual and society, and if he did touch on this topic in some of his early review articles, it was in his doctoral thesis, the *Division of Labour*, that the question really came to the fore. Focussing on the increasing specialisation that was spreading to all areas of modern social life, particularly to industry, the ‘moral’ question he sought to answer in this regard was whether the phenomenon was something desirable or something that ought to be resisted. The problem when it came to the individual was to know whether the modern person should agree to become one part of a social whole, where all individuals with specific skills and talents are interdependent, or seek rather to jealously guard one’s own autonomy, to be a self-sufficient whole, a rounded and complete being.³³⁷ His suggestion was that individual differences actually complement each other and as such cultivate feelings of mutual dependency; not only could life in a modern society characterised by an advanced division of labour be fulfilling for individuals but far from undermining the social tie, individual difference and professional specialisation could actually become a source of social solidarity. Far from being simply an economic link or a source of greater material prosperity, the division of labour therefore, Durkheim proposed, was the very foundation of modern solidarity.³³⁸ If this were to be proved then, he argued, given how beliefs, values and rules emanate from such spontaneous social solidarity, it would follow that the modern division of labour also had a moral role.

Built around a contrast between two principal social types - the traditional and the modern - which corresponded to two different types of social solidarity, Durkheim’s

³³⁷ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 4.

³³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 49-55; Schmaus, *Durkheim’s Philosophy of Science*, pp. 126-27.

argument was that although these social types were very different both structurally and ideologically, it was not the case that the traditional type was naturally cohesive and the modern one was not. It was rather a case of a solidarity of a different nature. Going back to the Tönnies review, he turned this author's polar opposition on its head and employed the term 'mechanical solidarity' to refer, not, like Tönnies, to a modern type threatened by dissolution and where harmony had to be imposed by a strong state, but to the traditional type of structurally simple and ideologically homogenous communities. Given that in such societies a common set of beliefs and values was at the source of social cohesion, individual difference would generally be experienced as a threat to the life of the community. The community in this case would generally react negatively to individual difference and punish as an offence anything that went against the *conscience collective*, or the totality of common beliefs and values.³³⁹ On the other hand, Durkheim employed the term 'organic solidarity' to describe the type of solidarity by difference he believed to be preponderant in modern society.³⁴⁰

From an initial situation of ideological homogeneity, over the course of history, as the population density grows, as new technologies and means of transport and communication links develop, previously isolated, self-contained communities spread out beyond their original boundaries and mix with other communities to form a more structurally complex and more ideologically diverse society.³⁴¹ While the importance of common beliefs and values in guaranteeing social cohesion declined, this did not mean however that solidarity itself evaporated in the process, as Tönnies's *Gesellschaft* would

³³⁹ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 84 and on 'mechanical solidarity' see book 1, chapter 2.

³⁴⁰ Ibid, book 1, chapter 3.

³⁴¹ Durkheim, *De la Division du travail social*, book 2, chapter 2.

suggest. On this point Durkheim drew a parallel between his own vision of modern society and that of Herbert Spencer, who as we have seen, was an important reference point for intellectuals in France in the late nineteenth century, particularly popular in the pages of the *Revue philosophique*. If Spencer had theorised the process of change from traditional to modern society as an evolution from simple to more complex forms of social organisation and established two contrasting social types, the ‘militant’ and the ‘industrial’, he had, unlike Tönnies, considered the movement from social homogeneity to increasing heterogeneity, in an optimistic light.³⁴² Durkheim thus welcomed Spencer’s thesis that in modern society the division of labour could guarantee solidarity.³⁴³

Yet if Durkheim could agree that the division of labour was more than just a source of economic improvement and increased productivity, in that it linked different functions closer together, establishing bonds which stretched considerably beyond the moment of exchange and founding ‘a social and moral order *sui generis*’, he disagreed that the modern social order resulted spontaneously from freely contracted agreements between rational agents.³⁴⁴ While Spencer had argued that as society approached contractual solidarity the sphere of social action would grow increasingly smaller, that state intervention would no longer have any purpose ‘save to prevent individuals from encroaching upon one another and from doing mutual harm’ and that the sole remaining link between individuals would be that of ‘absolutely free exchange’, Durkheim pointed

³⁴² Robert Alun Jones, ‘Durkheim’s Critique of Spencer’s *Ecclesiastical Institutions*’, *Sociological Inquiry*, 44.3 (1974), 205-14 (p. 206). On Tönnies see Rudolf Heberle, ‘The Sociological System of Ferdinand Tönnies: “Community and Society”’ in Harry E. Barnes, *Introduction to the History of Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 227-48. Also see John W. Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 75.

³⁴³ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 218.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 63; trans, p. 21.

out that this was in clear contradiction with the reality.³⁴⁵ On the one hand, the modern community does not generally punish individuals for offences against a set of strongly held collective sentiments, while it comes to consider the breaking of a contractual agreement as an offence with reparation consisting merely of the restoration of the *status quo ante*.³⁴⁶ However, taking the legal code as an indicator of obligations imposed on individuals by society, Durkheim pointed out that such obligations did not in fact decrease but continued to grow and become more complex, while the state took on a whole range of new tasks in ensuring education, healthcare, public assistance, transport and communication.³⁴⁷ Furthermore, he argued, if the number of contracts multiplied with social evolution, these same relationships also had a non-contractual aspect that also became more ‘weighty and complex’.³⁴⁸ Contracts, in short, were more than just private agreements between two individuals: they had a public character and society conditioned the way in which agreements were entered into and dissolved. So ‘in a contract not everything is contractual’, and not only did society lay down certain conditions in which contracts must be drawn up to be binding, but contracts could give rise to obligations of a customary nature which have not been explicitly expressed in the terms of the agreement.³⁴⁹ Spencer’s explanation of modern solidarity as resulting spontaneously from individual agreements was, according to Durkheim, therefore insufficient; the social type characterised by the division of labour and co-operation had its own ‘intrinsic morality’, a

³⁴⁵ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 219; trans, pp. 149-50.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 118

³⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 214-42.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 230; trans, p. 158

³⁴⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 230-36; trans, pp. 158-62.

higher moral law inherent in the nature of society from which our modern beliefs and values, duties and obligations derive.³⁵⁰

However beyond simply analysing the difference between the traditional and modern social types, and the process of evolution from one to the other, Durkheim was clearly and self-consciously seeking to engage with a moral question of contemporary relevance, seeking to formulate some practical maxims as to how the modern society in which he lived ought to be. More than the question itself however, what seems to have struck his audience most on the day of the thesis defence was his effort to apply a genuinely scientific method in answering it.

³⁵⁰ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 250.

3.2.2 The Question of Moral Science

Where the originality of Durkheim's work lay was not I suggest primarily in his effort to reconcile modern demands for greater individual freedom with the demands of the modern collectivity on the individual. The question of the moral value of the division of labour was a particularly urgent one, wrote Durkheim, given that its advance could not occur without 'profoundly affecting our moral constitution'.³⁵¹ And although modern industrial and individualist society had often been viewed negatively as the source of all kinds of moral vices, Durkheim's optimistic view of this society as naturally cohesive, had, as the philosopher Henri Marion emphasised during the subsequent thesis defence, certainly already got its supporters.³⁵² Marion here may have been thinking of Spencer's concept of contractual solidarity and his argument concerning the correspondence between individual interest and the interest of society, an idea which many French economists at the time also espoused.³⁵³ He was perhaps more likely thinking of Alfred Espinas who had defended his thesis at the Sorbonne over a decade ago and of the philosopher Alfred Fouillée both of whom considered individuation and social cohesion to be mutually reinforcing.³⁵⁴

Durkheim's suggestion that a modern society characterised by individual difference was not only cohesive but that it too had its own 'intrinsic morality' was therefore not exactly all that new. What was most innovative about his work, as both Durkheim himself and the public who received it recognised, was the method he

³⁵¹ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 4; trans, p. 3.

³⁵² Ibid, pp. 51-52. Lucien Mulfield, 'Les thèses en Sorbonne', *Revue universitaire*, 2.1 (1893), 440-43, (p. 441).

³⁵³ William Logue 'Durkheim et les économistes français', trans. by Christine Delange, in *Division du travail et lien social*, ed. by Besnard and others, pp. 43-58 (pp. 44-49).

³⁵⁴ See above, 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.

employed in answering his question as to the moral value of the division of labour.³⁵⁵ Against the a priori approaches of moral philosophers who started off from an abstract, timeless ideal and then worked by deduction to construct an entire moral system, Durkheim in the *Division of Labour* sought to put into practice the scientific method he had praised in the work of the German moralists.³⁵⁶ In this regard, his Latin thesis on Montesquieu - the subsidiary thesis that all doctoral candidates in France at the time were required to prepare - is also important as a statement of what he was trying to do in the main thesis, the *Division of Labour*.³⁵⁷ In Durkheim's view, Montesquieu merited attention as someone who had understood the objective character of customs, ideals and institutions, and had seen that social things were not infinitely malleable but governed by laws and had a stable nature of their own: rather than addressing moral questions from the point of view of an abstract ideal, Montesquieu always started out from the observation of the empirical facts of social existence.³⁵⁸ The thesis on Montesquieu could thus serve as a perfect introduction for the exercise in 'positive moral science' that Durkheim would elaborate in the main thesis to follow, while at the same time avoid risking a hostile reaction among the jury of philosophers that a thesis on Auguste Comte might have provoked.

³⁵⁵ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 5 and Mulfield, p. 441.

³⁵⁶ Durkheim, 'La science positive de la morale en Allemagne', p. 33, pp. 275-78.

³⁵⁷ This thesis has been translated into English from the French translation of the Latin text as 'Montesquieu's Contribution to the Rise of Social Science', in Émile Durkheim, *Montesquieu and Rousseau. Forerunners of Sociology*, trans. by R. Manheim (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1960), pp. 1-64. Uniquely among Durkheim scholars Willie Watts Miller has highlighted the importance of this thesis. See Watts Miller, *Durkheim, Morals and Modernity*, chapter 2.

³⁵⁸ Durkheim, 'Montesquieu's Contribution to the Rise of Social Science', pp. 11-13.

In practice, Durkheim's originality and claims to scientificity on the question of modern morals had its basis, as one member of the audience on the day of the thesis defence recognised, in his 'objective' method and his claim to have found an external indicator of social solidarity. Rather than starting out from a pre-conceived idea and proceeding by deduction, Durkheim sought instead some external indicator of the phenomena under examination. Taking law codes as an expression of underlying social solidarity and moral ideas, he thus managed to establish his two principal social types: one in which 'repressive' law punishing offences against the collective consciousness was predominant and another in which 'restitutive' law was predominant.³⁵⁹ These two types of law he argued, acted as indicators corresponding to two different types of social solidarity to be found in two different social types, the traditional and the modern respectively; the advance of restitutive law and the regression of repressive law stood, he argued, as evidence that solidarity by difference was taking over from mechanical solidarity.

Yet, for all this emphasis on empirically observable facts, it was not the case that Durkheim's concerns were limited to the observation of positive law. Just as it would be mistaken to view Montesquieu's interest in what exists or what has existed as a lack of concern for ethical principles, a disregard for how things ought to be, it would be equally erroneous to take Durkheim here as a 'positive scientist' unconcerned with the practical moral questions he called 'social art'.³⁶⁰ For Montesquieu as for Durkheim it was only

³⁵⁹ Mulfield, p. 441.

³⁶⁰ For an interpretation of Durkheim and Montesquieu as 'conservative', 'positivistic' thinkers see Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 321-22. Against this reading see on Montesquieu, Georges Davy, 'Durkheim, Montesquieu and Rousseau', in

through studying what *is* that one can understand what *can* or *ought* to be.³⁶¹ Having posited at the beginning of his work a moral question of contemporary relevance, Durkheim saw his work not simply as an exercise in detached scientific observation, but as an effort to form a judgement about how his own society ought to be without however falling back on unobserved, a priori principles. While his insistence on observation and induction and critique of existing approaches to moral questions may have been new, in this fundamental intention Durkheim was, as we shall see, carrying on a long French academic and philosophical tradition.

Durkheim, *Montesquieu and Rousseau*, p. 145, Durkheim, 'Montesquieu's Contribution to the Rise of Social Science', p. 16 and 'Editor's Introduction', to Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. by Franz Nugent, ed. by T. Neumann (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1949), pp. 9-54 (pp. 32-33).

³⁶¹ Georges Davy, 'Durkheim, Montesquieu and Rousseau', in Durkheim, *Montesquieu and Rousseau*, p. 145.

3.2.3 Spiritualism, Utilitarianism and the Jury

The *Division of Labour* was received at the Sorbonne by a jury composed of six philosophers (Paul Janet, Henri Marion, Charles Waddington, Émile Boutroux, Victor Brochard and Gabriel Séailles), on which Cousinian spiritualism was well represented. The most senior member was Paul Janet, who held the chair of philosophy, while Charles Waddington, another spiritualist held the chair of the history of ancient philosophy.³⁶² Henri Marion held the chair of the science of education at the Sorbonne and led the discussion. Émile Boutroux, who held the chair of the history of philosophy was a neo-Kantian and Durkheim's thesis supervisor, while the less senior members, the two 'chargé de cours', Victor Brochard and Gabriel Séailles were neo-criticist and neo-spiritualist respectively. Given the positivistic rhetoric of the early review articles and the subsequent mythology depicting the 'sociologist' battling from the corner against a hostile establishment, we would expect the candidate to have gotten a rather tough time from his adjudicators. And yet, from the three reports that we have of the session, it is clear that not only was there no outright hostility to his work, but that he made a big impression and that the thesis was unanimously approved.³⁶³ Indeed, it seems that Durkheim, as a 'normalien, agrégé de l'Université', ex-philosophy teacher, regular contributor to the *Revue philosophique*, would have had more in common with, in terms of both cultural and symbolic capital and intellectual habitus, than what separated him from the philosophers on the jury.

³⁶² For information on all of these figures see Christophe Charle. *Les Professeurs de la faculté des lettres de Paris: dictionnaire biographique*, 2 Vols (Paris: Institut national de recherche pédagogique, CNRS, 1985-86), i: 1809-1908 (1986). Also see Fabiani, p. 94 and Besnard, 'Introduction', p. 1.

³⁶³ See Mulfield and also the reports of M. Himley and M. Perreur both in Durkheim's file in the national archives, F/ 17/25/768.

This shared habitus shows through in Durkheim's view of academic work as a serious activity, and his belief that scholars devoted as they were to the disinterested pursuit of truth, also had an important moral and social role. While biographers tell us that Durkheim had an extremely serious personality and could not imagine a philosophy without a social or political application, what they fail to mention is that the philosophers who traced their intellectual lineage back to Victor Cousin also had a very serious conception of philosophy and its social role.³⁶⁴ Philosophy was for them no mere logical gymnastics, detached from reality, but was a guide to life, a guide to how one should act in society, to what kind of society one ought to desire.³⁶⁵ Adolphe Franck's *Philosophie du droit civil*, for example, shows how the philosophical theorisation of the 'human personality' (the spiritual being, distinct from the material body) was not just an intellectual exercise but served as the basis for outlining a whole series of rights and duties towards oneself and others, and for judging actually existing laws.

This 'serious' conception of intellectual activity, of philosophy as a contribution to the betterment of man and society, as a guide to a good moral life can also be seen in the work of Henri Marion and Paul Janet. Holder of a newly created chair at the Sorbonne in the science of education (a chair Durkheim would later come to hold) Marion in *La Solidarité morale*, had examined the formation of individual moral character. Arguing that while there were many elements within the individual constitution, within society and within the surrounding environment, which can pre-determine our moral formation, we can through enlightened self-knowledge and correct

³⁶⁴ Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, p. 40, p. 48. Georges Davy, 'Émile Durkheim', *RFS*, 1(1960), 2-24 (p. 6) and 'Émile Durkheim: l'homme', p. 188.

³⁶⁵ Logue, *From Philosophy to Sociology*, p. 20.

understanding of external influences, still take control of the development of our own personality and build a strong moral character.³⁶⁶ The serious nature of the activity is emphasised by Marion when he concluded that in becoming aware of our duty and of how doing our duty affects others, we work towards the future happiness of our family, of our country and of humanity in general.³⁶⁷ Paul Janet, with just as serious a conception of the nature of his enterprise, looked however not at the formation of individual moral character, but sought to define the higher moral good towards which humanity should aim and to outline its implications for society and for individual well-being.³⁶⁸

Alongside this conception of scholarly work, French academic philosophy of the period was also characterised by a distinct conception of the human person as being made up of a body-soul dualism and a conception of the nature of human happiness. Setting apart the physiological, material body from the spiritual human person or the intellectual and moral being, Paul Janet argued that the good consisted of ‘preferring’ in ourselves and in others the distinctly human qualities. This meant elevating oneself above the ‘senses, appetites and instincts’, overcoming the blind passions and appetites which can sometimes dominate the individual, and becoming capable of conscious and freely chosen activity.³⁶⁹ The idea of a moral law, for Janet, presupposed a prior natural good that acted as its foundation.³⁷⁰ This ‘natural good’ cannot be derived from what causes us pleasure or happiness, nor can it be equated with an overall sum of pleasures or even with social utility. For this reason he refuted utilitarian moral philosophy in its various

³⁶⁶ Henri Marion, *La Solidarité morale: essai de psychologie appliquée*, 3rd edn (Paris: Alcan, 1890).

³⁶⁷ Marion, *La Solidarité morale*, p. 319.

³⁶⁸ Paul Janet, *La Morale*, 4th edn (Paris: Delgrave, 1894).

³⁶⁹ Janet, *Traité élémentaire de philosophie*, p. 645.

³⁷⁰ Janet, *La Morale*, p. vi

forms.³⁷¹ It was not that Janet disregarded happiness, but according to him, although we do ultimately become happy when we live a moral life, the desire for happiness cannot explain the good.³⁷² At the same time he conceived of this happiness as distinct from material gain and pleasure, as a modest and sober spiritual joy which one experiences in being able to understand and freely choose to live in accordance with the moral law. Philosophy, for Janet, was again more than just a theoretical activity, and from the maxim that we must prefer in ourselves and in others what it is that distinguishes us as truly human, he derived practical moral obligations and duties for social life.³⁷³ In his philosophy-teaching manual therefore, in the section on ‘practical morality’, we find a whole series of duties and obligations towards inferior beings (animals), towards ourselves and other human beings, towards our family, towards society and towards God. All of these duties he claimed, had their theoretical justification in a prior law which was independent of the material realm and which we have the capacity to understand through the exercise of reason.

In terms of his ideas on the social role of the scholar and on the nature of morality, I suggest we can find much of this academic philosophical tradition incorporated into Durkheim’s intellectual worldview and it is from this perspective that his argument with Herbert Spencer again becomes important. While this intellectual encounter with Spencer is generally taken as part of a strategy to distinguish the sociological approach from an individualist one, his rejection of utilitarian social theory can, I suggest, be traced to his intellectual habitus formed within the contours of French

³⁷¹ Janet, *La Morale*, chapter 1, and *Traité élémentaire de philosophie*, pp. 621-45.

³⁷² See Janet’s preface to *La Morale*.

³⁷³ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 19; Janet, *Traité élémentaire de philosophie*, p. 569.

academic philosophy. What indeed is apparent from Durkheim's discussion of Spencer's happiness thesis - that the individual desire for greater material wealth and happiness is what drives the advance of the division of labour - is a conception of human nature as consisting of a body and a spiritual being, or soul. Durkheim, in his effort to refute Spencer, defined happiness as the contentedness we gain from the satisfaction of our separate bodily and spiritual needs: the body, on the one hand, has certain, limited needs and its happiness derives from their satisfaction (just as hunger is assuaged with a certain quantity of food), while spiritual happiness or the happiness of the mind, derives from the satisfaction of our intellectual and moral needs. The individual mind and its faculties need not absolute freedom from all constraints, but certain intellectual and moral parameters within which its capacity to understand and to form value judgements can be exercised.³⁷⁴

Highlighting the increasing suicide rates in modern society, Durkheim stressed that while this did not mean the progress of division of labour was harmful in itself - the two variables were merely concomitant - it did show that material advancement did not necessarily lead to increased happiness, that happiness and material pleasure were two different things.³⁷⁵ One aspect of spiritual happiness or the satisfaction of the soul was, according to Durkheim, to be found through living consciously in accordance with a higher moral principle. In all of this Durkheim was still very much speaking the same philosophical language as his examiners: he assumed the same distinction between body and soul, associated the moral and intellectual with the 'soul' and conceived of happiness not as infinite material improvement, but as contentedness arising from the satisfaction of

³⁷⁴ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 263.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 270-75

one's dual physical and spiritual needs. One aspect of spiritual happiness or the satisfaction of the soul was to be found through living consciously in accordance with a higher moral principle, and for both the philosophers in the French academic tradition and for Durkheim, it was the work of 'moral science', however conceived, to work out what exactly this principle could be and what it would imply. Ironically, in an era when Cousin's edifice was increasingly coming under attack from the younger generation of philosophers, Durkheim at times seemed to portray his sociology as faithful to the Cousinian tradition on two points - the moral and social value of intellectual activity and spiritual nature of the moral law. Indeed, in his criticisms of philosophy he did not take issue with Cousin's edifice itself, which he argued had grown out of the needs of the society of its time, but with the fact that the discipline had lost its connection with social life, and had become too abstract and formal.³⁷⁶ In this way he could implicitly cast his positive moral science as a modernisation of Cousin's conception of the moral role of philosophy. Where the real debate started on Durkheim's work was however over the question of method, and in his claim to have derived practical moral conclusions from the study of society and not from psychological introspection.

³⁷⁶ Durkheim, 'L'enseignement philosphique et l'agrégation de philosophie', pp. 124-28.

3.3 The Constitution of Positive Moral Science

While Durkheim was, as we have seen, very much expressing himself in the same terms as the philosophers on the jury, his claim to originality lay in a method, which, he argued, made possible a genuinely scientific approach to moral questions. Yet, even this - his claim to be doing 'moral science' - was not something entirely new. If his approach to the study of morality differed from that of the French academic philosophers it was not in the sense that one could be considered scientific and the other could not. As John Brooks's work shows, the philosophers in the Cousinian tradition already defined their own work as 'moral science', and what we have is rather the confrontation of two different methods, each laying claim to scientific status.³⁷⁷

Well versed in the philosophy taught in French schools Durkheim was on the one hand, able to use this to his advantage, and we see him in the original introduction to the *Division of Labour* playing with his philosophical heritage, seeking to derive his sociological approach to morals from principles that the jury could not but concede.³⁷⁸ Although a large part of it was subsequently omitted from the second edition of 1902, this introduction to the 1893 thesis remains an important document, in that it acts as further testimony to the roots of Durkheimian sociology in academic philosophy.³⁷⁹ At the same time it provides a good illustration of how the university field, just like all fields, could be a site of struggle over specific stakes.³⁸⁰ As we shall see, the fact that 'moral science' was already part of the domain of philosophy meant that the exchange between Durkheim and

³⁷⁷ Brooks, *The Eclectic Legacy*, pp. 43-46.

³⁷⁸ Schmaus, *Durkheim's Philosophy of Science*, p. 123.

³⁷⁹ For the introduction to the second edition see Émile Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, 2nd edn (Paris: Alcan, 1902), pp. 1-9. My page numbers below continue to refer to the 1893 thesis.

³⁸⁰ Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques*, p. 91.

philosophy turned into a confrontation over legitimate method in this science, a struggle for the monopoly on the definition of scientificity.

3.3.1 Moral Philosophy as Science

In his early articles for the *Revue philosophique* and in his opening lecture at Bordeaux Durkheim had introduced his sociology as a development of the scientific project of Auguste Comte and espoused the opposition between sociology and philosophy: sociology, unlike philosophy, was to be a genuinely scientific approach to the study of society and its institutions. When it came to moral beliefs, values and rules the aim was to ‘constitute the science of morality’.³⁸¹ However, in presenting himself here as the founder of something entirely new, Durkheim willingly ignored the fact that, as he would have well known, the eclectic spiritualists already considered their discipline to be a science in its own right and called the branch dealing with ethics moral science.³⁸²

This conception of philosophy as a science, as John Brooks has shown, is clearly reflected in the work of Adolphe Franck. In his dictionary of the ‘philosophical sciences’, Franck wrote under ‘philosophie’ that the discipline had grown out of the human need to know, and that its aim, like that of all sciences, was to go beyond fleeting impressions, common sense and faith, to constitute ‘true knowledge’. Like all science again, philosophy had its own distinct subject matter, the human mind. However, Franck continued, given the nature of this subject matter philosophy was a ‘superior science’ because it studied the principles of thought itself and sought to access the truth behind all existence. For this reason, Franck claimed, it formed the basis of all knowledge, the trunk from which the many different branches of science have grown.³⁸³ While many different specialised sciences may have grown out of philosophy, two subjects in particular, logic

³⁸¹ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. i.

³⁸² Brooks, *The Eclectic Legacy*, pp. 43-46.

³⁸³ Franck, ‘Philosophie’, in *Dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques*, pp. 1313-1327.

and ethics, still remained specifically within its domain. The appropriate scientific method for their study, argued Franck, was that of psychological introspection, a method which he considered to be neither exclusively empirical nor exclusively idealist, but combined self-observation with reason.³⁸⁴

Right to the end of the nineteenth century Paul Janet continued to defend this conception of philosophy as science. In his philosophy teaching manual of 1879 we find him repeating Franck's argument that philosophy was a science with its own distinct subject matter (the human mind, with its intellectual and moral faculties) and that given this subject matter, it also sought out the first principles of all knowledge, acting therefore as a synthesis of the specialised branches of science.³⁸⁵ What stands out about Janet's discussion of philosophy as science however is its defensive tone and he was clearly concerned about mounting attacks on philosophy's claims to scientific status. Indeed, he used the occasion of his appointment to the chair of philosophy at the Sorbonne in 1887 to defend, in his inaugural lecture, the conception of philosophy as science.³⁸⁶ Philosophy, he reiterated again, had, like all other sciences, its own subject matter and sought to answer questions relating to it through the formulation of hypotheses. Far from being a purely abstract activity, in philosophy one started out from the observation of facts (that is, the observation of the human mind), which it described then classified, before becoming able to choose between competing hypotheses and forming laws.³⁸⁷ Janet seemed to be concerned here with defending philosophy against the claims that it was

³⁸⁴ Franck, 'Philosophie', p. 1323.

³⁸⁵ Janet, *Traité élémentaire de philosophie*, pp. 1-12.

³⁸⁶ Brooks, *The Eclectic Legacy*, pp. 55-66; Janet, 'Introduction à la science philosophique'.

³⁸⁷ Janet, 'Introduction à la science philosophique', pp. 338-44.

abstract and dogmatic, firstly emphasising the role of what he understood to be ‘empirical’ observation (psychological introspection), then in saying that although philosophy aspired towards absolute truth, in reality its capacity to access this truth was limited. There were rather, ‘stages of truth’ and while the answers one finds may be relative or provisional, they are ‘approximations’, small steps towards the final truth, which does exist but which may never be fully grasped.³⁸⁸

So as well as presenting philosophy as a science of observation, Janet was trying to avoid making exaggerated claims for the discipline and present it too as a non-dogmatic science of discovery. He was not denying that absolute truth existed but admitting that the human science of the absolute was fallible. As Brooks’s work has indeed indicated, neither in its aims (true knowledge) and its method (observation combined with reason) was philosophy conceived of as any different to other sciences. What distinguished it was the subject matter (the human mind) and the break down of this subject matter into specific areas of study - logic (the true), ethics (the good) and in theory also aesthetics (the beautiful). And it was precisely into one of these domains (ethics) that Durkheim went with his sociological method. Rather than constituting a moral science from scratch, he was actually challenging the scientific claims of moral philosophy in the Cousinian tradition. What he proposed was a new method, befitting moral science as a genuinely non-dogmatic science of observation.

³⁸⁸ Janet, ‘Introduction à la science philosophique’, pp. 346-48.

3.3.2 The Original Introduction to the *Division of Labour*

Coming himself from within the field of philosophy, Durkheim would have been well aware of this conception of moral philosophy as science, and about the concerns of Janet to defend philosophy's scientific status. Indeed in a 35-page section from the original introduction to the *Division of Labour*, where he presented the method followed in answering his thesis question (the section omitted from the second edition and from the English translation) we find him playing with the spiritualist conception of moral science in order to present his method as more rigorously scientific. Far from being, as a sociologist, on the outside of academic philosophy, he is more like someone so sure of their own cultural heritage that they are able to play with it. As Bourdieu wrote, the 'privilege of privileges' is that of being able to 'take liberties with one's privilege'.³⁸⁹ In this passage from the original introduction to his thesis we find him employing precisely the same piece of advice he would later offer his nephew Marcel Mauss for the philosophy agrégation exam: 'Introduce them into your thought progressively, taking theirs for your point of departure'.³⁹⁰

Durkheim is well known for this opposition to any moral system which derived duty from an abstract general formula, established a priori and which dispensed with empirical observation, and here again he stated categorically that this could not be the method employed.³⁹¹ Although it is usually on the basis of this abstract, a priori method that we find him rejecting 'philosophy' en bloc and promoting sociology as the solution,

³⁸⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), p. 131. Also see Bourdieu, *Choses dites*, p. 95, p.97.

³⁹⁰ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, July 1895, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, ed. by Besnard and Fournier, p. 38.

³⁹¹ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 5.

he was well aware that philosophers in the eclectic spiritualist tradition held that the proper scientific method in philosophy and in moral science combined both reason and empirical observation. As he told his students in his philosophy classes at the lycée of Sens, the method held to be the most appropriate to science was one which cut between idealism and empiricism - the experimental method - and involved observation, classification and generalisation of facts, then the formulation of hypotheses and finally the verification of the hypotheses by means of experimentation.³⁹² So far the philosophers could not but agree with the critique of abstract reasoning, and Janet too would have stressed the importance of observation, classification and inductive generalisation in moral science.³⁹³ Indeed in the original introduction to the *Division of Labour* Durkheim actually quoted Janet to the effect that moral science must be based on observed facts.³⁹⁴

However, the problem with all of moral systems known so far - be they utilitarian, Kantian or spiritualist - was that in practice they never really did start out from observation but sought to build a whole moral system out of a pre-conceived idea, such as utility, duty or human perfection.³⁹⁵ It was here that he began to implicitly question the scientific validity of introspection. While the philosophers would agree that moral science required the combination of reason and observation, for them empirical observation meant psychological self-observation. Now Durkheim clearly refused to recognise this as 'empirical' observation and for him, observation meant the observation of things in the external world, outside of one's own mind. To pass from one to the other however, he was able to use as leverage the belief among French academic philosophers that

³⁹² Lalande, *Durkheim's Philosophy Lectures*, pp. 38-40.

³⁹³ See Janet, 'Introduction à la science philosophique'.

³⁹⁴ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 5.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 6-18.

‘theoretical’ morality (that is, philosophising about the nature of the ideal) and ‘practical’ morality (what moral rules should be abided by in daily life) were not two separate, disjointed spheres. ‘Applied’ morality was not, wrote Durkheim an ‘inferior branch of ethics’; moral philosophy does not just occupy itself with ideal theoretical principles without concern for the social reality.³⁹⁶ Indeed, as Durkheim also pointed out, Janet himself rejected the idea of two absolutely separate moralities and believed that theoretical morality must be able to account for practical morality.³⁹⁷ So while any moral philosophy worthy of the name of moral science must be able to account for external facts of morality, so far the problem with all systems known so far was that they could not account for many of the moral maxims that we actually do abide by in real life. For example, the principle of utility could not, according to Durkheim, account for the fact that we look after the sick, that we are kind to animals or we follow certain religious practices.³⁹⁸ The fact is that the totality of obligations and rules we ordinarily call moral involves a whole series of particular rules and is extremely complex. All moralists so far have tried to do is jump straight away to a single formula which would account for all these real laws, but given the complexity of the real situation their method is bound to be insufficient as moral science.³⁹⁹

In order for a ‘general law’ of moral behaviour to be of any scientific value, argued Durkheim, it must be able to account for ‘the diversity of moral facts’. Therefore, he continued, it would make more sense, if one really wanted to be scientific, to start out

³⁹⁶ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 10.

³⁹⁷ Janet, *Traité élémentaire de philosophie*, where he puts practical morality before theoretical morality. Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 19.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 8.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 15.

from observing existing moral facts and then work back to the higher general principle.⁴⁰⁰ ‘Obviously’, Durkheim wrote, in his first direct criticism on the spiritualist method, ‘it is not enough to look attentively inside ourselves’: we must confront morality where it exists, in the outside world and in the rules in which it is manifested. Yet at the same time, the very authority he cited to back up this statement was none other than Paul Janet, who, in his teaching manual, had placed the section on ‘practical morality’ before theoretical morality, arguing that it was important to start from positive rules and then move to the theoretical principles behind them.⁴⁰¹ In starting out by observing the moral maxims that actually exist in society, Durkheim thus presented himself to the jury as merely developing the teaching of Janet.

This much drawn out from Janet, Durkheim then, in the space of a few lines, proceeded to his conclusion that moral science must be sociological if it is to be scientific at all. A genuinely scientific method, he argued, would require that an objective indicator of moral obligation be found in the external world. Now one way of recognising moral facts, he continued, would be by their obligatory character and what is obligatory also came with a sanction. It is not that we act in a certain way out of an interest in avoiding the sanction, but the moral law nevertheless implied a sanction. Durkheim thus defined moral behaviour as ‘sanctioned conduct’.⁴⁰² In this way, he went on, we can come to understand the moral ideal not through psychological introspection, but through studying actually existing law codes. However, he continued, one cannot very well say, as Janet did, that the positive laws, the practical moral obligations in one’s own society expressed

⁴⁰⁰ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 15.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 16, p. 19 footnote 19.

⁴⁰² *Ibid*, pp. 23-24.

something about the general moral ideal while those of other societies did not.⁴⁰³ Either the moral ideal is always expressed to some extent in positive law or it is not at all.⁴⁰⁴ If however this positive law changes from one social and historical context to another, so therefore does the moral ideal, which is why, he concluded, genuine moral science is a branch of sociology, and why sociology itself does not just confine itself to noting historical forms of law but can also access the realm of the ideal.

⁴⁰³ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 21.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 26.

3.3.3 Normality as a Critical Concept

In his methodological treatise published the year after the *Division of Labour* first as a series of articles in the *Revue philosophique* then in book form in 1895, Durkheim emphasised that scientific sociology did not bar the formation of value judgements about how society ought to be. Indeed, he wrote, for this science to have any ‘real justification for its existence’ it must be able to instruct us as to what is ‘desirable’ in practice, to instruct us as to what ought to be and help improve the reality.⁴⁰⁵ Yet, so far, the obvious problem with the method as presented in the original introduction to the *Division of Labour* is that, by itself, the observation of positive facts such as legal codes would seem not to offer any way of looking beyond or judging what actually exists or has existed.⁴⁰⁶ As Durkheim himself noted, society may in fact accord an outward sign of morality to rules of conduct that may not have any real foundation in morality at all while also leaving unsanctioned other rules that are wholly moral.⁴⁰⁷

Scholars often interpret Durkheim’s concept of normality as an inherently conservative idea, which idealised orderly, integrated society devoid of conflict.⁴⁰⁸ However looked at in context, it was to get around the above difficulty, to make possible a judgment between social facts that were ‘entirely appropriate and those that should be different from what they are’, while still employing the same scientific rhetoric that Durkheim introduced the concepts of normality and pathology.⁴⁰⁹ Drawing on the

⁴⁰⁵ Émile Durkheim, *Les Règles de la méthode sociologique*, p. 60. Also see Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. iii.

⁴⁰⁶ Mulfield, p. 441

⁴⁰⁷ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 33.

⁴⁰⁸ See Coser, pp. 214-5 and Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 29-30 where both say that Durkheim idealised integrated societies as ‘normal’.

⁴⁰⁹ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 33.

contemporary intellectual legitimacy of the biologist and physiologist to boost his own scientific claims, Durkheim employed a medical metaphor here, describing his concept of social normality as a 'state of health' of the social body, with pathology being a departure from this.⁴¹⁰ The idea was first to construct social types, defined by the nature of their social tie, then for each social type form an idea of the state of affairs which would correspond to the ideal of what ought to be, and which could be called the 'normal'. While life in society can never be totally free of constraint, while laws, duties, obligations are a normal part of social life, there are nevertheless certain types of constraint, certain social facts which are wholly abnormal, and have no basis in the underlying collective life or state of the social milieu. At the same time certain aspirations for change can be wholly moral, even if they have not yet passed into codified law.

Normality could only be judged in reference to a specific social type and to establish whether or not a moral fact is normal for a given social type, one did need to have an idea of what would be general in a society of that type.⁴¹¹ However, neither society, which is continually evolving, nor the ideal state is fixed so it is necessary to distinguish what would be normal at different stages of development. The difficulty was that when societies were in a state of transition, one needs to seek out the 'normal' type or the ideal they are tending to and from this discern what facts would be conducive to such a 'state of health', or which facts would be in synch with the conditions of existence of this future state.⁴¹² Normality therefore is perhaps best seen as a critical concept

⁴¹⁰ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, pp. 34-35.

⁴¹¹ Ibid, p. 34. On the definition of normality also see Durkheim, *Les Règles de la méthode sociologique*, chapter 3.

⁴¹² Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, pp. 35-36.

introduced as a means of making it possible to judge what was desirable for society, to judge what ought to change, without falling back on ‘universal’, a priori assumptions.⁴¹³

In practice too, when used to judge nineteenth century French society, rather than implying a conservative adherence to the status quo, the concept also seemed to imply a progressive programme of social reform. While contemporary society, Durkheim argued, was undergoing a process of transition there were many facts still impeding the realisation of the ideal of organic solidarity. If the concept of organic solidarity presented an optimistic view of the future in that it showed that individualism did not necessarily lead society into conflict this, as he showed in the third book of the *Division of Labour*, was really an ideal still to be realised. The rising suicide rate he had analysed in his 1888 study and had discussed here in his argument against Spencer was one indication that all was not right in modern society. This however was not part of the normal state of modern society and he argued that certain morbid phenomena (the ‘anomic division of labour’ and the ‘forced division of labour’) were hampering the development of organic solidarity.

The first of these problems, the ‘anomic division of labour’, referred to the lack of appropriate economic regulation and rules governing labour relations.⁴¹⁴ While society had changed, appropriate regulation had not yet emerged, leading to crises of overproduction in industry, a disjunction between supply and demand, and a mounting conflict between capital and labour. However, if the lack of appropriate legislation was a problem so too was the continued existence of abnormal constraints. The conflict

⁴¹³ On normality as a critical concept see Stedman Jones, *Durkheim Reconsidered*, pp. 144-46.

⁴¹⁴ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 412.

between labour and capital, Durkheim noted, was due to the fact that very often the working classes did ‘not really desire the status assigned to them and too often accepted it only under force, not having any means of gaining any other status’.⁴¹⁵ Society should be progressing towards a state where all individuals would be equal and free to develop their own human potential, and a situation in which workers from specific sections of society were condemned to the execution of meaningless, repetitive tasks contradicted the modern ideal.⁴¹⁶

Durkheim believed that both prejudices more appropriate to mechanical solidarity, whereby certain individuals are believed to be ‘superior’ by virtue of their birth, and the continued existence of socio-economic equality impeded the realisation of organic solidarity.⁴¹⁷ Far from saying that what existed was necessarily right, his point was that there was a difference between what was morally right and the current situation where workers were oppressed by employers and only accepted their situation under abnormal constraint or force that did not have any real ‘moral foundation’.⁴¹⁸ At the same time, aspirations of these workers towards change were moral and collective action in pursuit of the ideal of justice and did not ‘represent a deviation from the normal state’ but rather was an ‘anticipation of the normal state to come’.⁴¹⁹

In short, sociological moral science did not imply an uncritical acceptance of the status quo and the concept of normality was elaborated as part of what Durkheim considered to be a new, more scientific approach to moral life and a way of passing

⁴¹⁵ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, p. 398; trans, p. 293.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid, p. 416.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid, p. 424.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid, p. 422; trans, p. 312.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid, p. 434; trans, p. 321.

judgement on social facts without however falling back on psychological introspection or a priori assumptions. Rather than deriving the social ideal from human nature Durkheim sought to derive it from the nature of society. It was however precisely this point that proved particularly contentious.

3.3.4 Sociology and Philosophy

Although the *Division of Labour* as Durkheim's doctoral thesis was generally well received by both the jury and the audience at the Sorbonne in 1893, there seems to have been a point during the session when the debate stalled, and the issue was precisely with the author's claims to be doing 'moral science'.⁴²⁰ It is not that the university did not recognise social science as a valid science. In his philosophy teaching manual Janet had fully recognised social science as an 'exterior moral science', like political science, which studied institutions and laws, past and present. Indeed, if Durkheim had simply stuck to the observation of law codes and their evolution, there would have probably been little for the jury to react against.⁴²¹ However the problem was that sociology did not confine itself to analysing legal codes and 'external' facts but addressed the more fundamental question of the moral ideal for society, of what contemporary 'man' ought to desire. Indeed, it is almost as if Janet wished Durkheim hadn't presented his work as a treatise on ethics and asked, 'Pourquoi M. Durkheim a-t-il donné son livre comme un livre de morale?'⁴²²

This reaction of the jury is wholly understandable, once we consider that 'interior moral science' (which derived the moral ideal from introspection, as distinct from the 'exterior moral science' or the study of laws and institutions) was the territory of philosophy; in asking a question about the nature of the moral law and the ideal to which modern individuals ought to aspire Durkheim crossed the line between exterior and interior moral science and explicitly set foot on the domain of moral philosophy. In this

⁴²⁰ Mulfield, pp. 441-2.

⁴²¹ Janet, *Traité élémentaire de philosophie*, pp. 5-8.

⁴²² Mulfield, p. 441.

Durkheim was challenging the claims to scientificity of philosophical moral science, and questioning its scientific validity. He was, as John Brooks has put it, initiating a battle over the legitimate definition of moral science.⁴²³ To derive the ideal not from a timeless human nature but from the nature of society was anathema to the spiritualists, and for this reason, the jury refused to recognise the thesis as ‘moral science’. As Marion commented, the work was not ‘assez fin pour atteindre la morale’; it was a work in the ‘physique de mœurs’, meaning that while it dealt merely with external rules, customs and laws, it could not access the higher echelons of ‘theoretical morality’.⁴²⁴ Waddington explicitly stated that he considered such a ‘physique de mœurs’ to be inferior to the morality of the inner man saying that with sociology one was in the ‘régions inférieures de la morale’.⁴²⁵

Of course, this was no longer an era, as in Cousin’s time, when the university was largely closed to different schools of thought in philosophy. In spite of these objections the scientific value of Durkheim’s work was recognised and the thesis was unanimously approved. At the same time however the objections to the idea of a sociological moral science bear witness to the attachment of the philosophers to the logical primacy of the individual subject and a refusal to contemplate any sociological explanation of the ideals and value held by this subject. Ultimately this opposition would spill out into the wider field to form the first formidable barrier to the acceptance of Durkheimian sociology within the circles of academic philosophy, and indeed perhaps the greatest barrier to achieving the consecration he so valued.

⁴²³ Brooks, *The Eclectic Legacy*, pp. 43-46.

⁴²⁴ Mulfield, p. 441.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 442.

3.4 The Response from the Field

Nothing testifies better to the embeddedness of Durkheimian sociology within the field of philosophy than the fact that the publication of the *Division of Labour* and the methodological treatise of the following year, the *Rules of Sociological Method*, than the fact that these publications seem to have become *the* talking point within philosophy in 1894 and 1895. If the thesis defence had caused quite a sensation at the Sorbonne, the commotion did not subside in the aftermath and the debate quickly spilled over into the two main philosophical journals, the *Revue philosophique* and the recently founded *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*.⁴²⁶ Indeed, as Georges Sorel remarked, the *Division of Labour* ‘made a lot of noise in the philosophical world’, while Paul Lapie also informs us that in 1894 the sociological method was the ‘object of all discussions’.⁴²⁷

Although these publications also attracted the attention of other sociologists in France my aim here is look at Durkheim’s position within philosophy.⁴²⁸ For this reason I shall discuss only his reception in the pages of the two main philosophical journals and deal with his position within the field of sociology in the following chapter. While these reviews show up again the tension between sociology and philosophy, we also see that Durkheim was far from indifferent to the response of the philosophers but highly valued the capacity of their journals to endow his sociology with scientific legitimacy.

⁴²⁶ On the commotion at the Sorbonne see Bouglé, ‘L’oeuvre sociologique d’ Émile Durkheim’, p. 281, the reports of M. Perreux and M. Himley in Durkheim’s file, and Mulfield.

⁴²⁷ Georges Sorel, ‘Les theories de M. Durkheim’, *Le Devenir Social*, 1 (1895), 1-26, 148-80 (p. 1) and Paul Lapie, ‘L’année sociologique 1895: La morale sociale’, *RMM*, 4 (1896), 338-61 (p. 338).

⁴²⁸ For a more complete account of the reception of Durkheim’s sociology see Giovanni Paoletti, ‘La réception des *Règles* en France du vivant de Durkheim’, in *La Sociologie et sa méthode: les Règles de Durkheim un siècle après*, ed. by Massimo Borlandi and Laurent Mucchielli (Paris: Harmattan, 1995), pp. 247-83.

3.4.1 Objectivity and Democracy

Between the two principal philosophical journals which existed in France in the mid-1890s, the *Division of Labour* and the *Rules of Sociological Method* combined received eight critical reviews or commentaries within more general articles on sociology between 1894 and 1896. While two articles appeared in the *Revue philosophique*, it was, perhaps rather unexpectedly, in the pages of the newly founded *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, where Durkheim received most attention.⁴²⁹ If this may be surprising it is because, unlike the *Revue philosophique* which had opened up its pages to scientific psychology and sociology, the *Revue de métaphysique et morale*, was founded with the explicit aim of doing something different. The journal, founded in 1893, aimed to take the lead in a return to ‘philosophy strictly speaking’, leaving aside the neighbouring sciences of experimental psychology and sociology, to focus once again on ‘the general theories of human thought and action’.⁴³⁰ This did not necessarily mean that it was to keep silent and ignore developments in these sciences however. Invoking a conception of philosophy as the ‘science of sciences’, the trunk, as Adolphe Franck had put it, out of which all other branches of science grew, the review acted in part as a forum where judgement was passed on sociology and its underlying principles.

⁴²⁹ These were : Gabriel Tarde, ‘Criminalité et santé sociale’, *RP*, 39 (1895),148-62 and Marcel Bernés, ‘Sur la méthode en sociologie’, *RP*, 39 (1895), 233-57, 372-99. Also see: Gustave Belot, ‘L’utilitarisme et ses nouveaux critiques’, *RMM*, 2(1894), 404-64; Léon Brunschvicg and Elie Halévy, ‘L’année philosophique, 1893’, *RMM*, 2 (1894), 563-90; Paul Lapie, ‘L’année sociologique, 1894’, *RMM*, 3 (1895), 308-39; Marcel Bernés, ‘La sociologie: ses conditions d’existence, son importance scientifique et philosophique’, *RMM*, 3(1895),149-83; Charles Andler, ‘Sociologie et démocratie’, *RMM*, 4 (1896), 243-56; Célestin Bouglé, ‘Sociologie, Psychologie et Histoire’, *RMM*, 4 (1896), 362-71.

⁴³⁰ Alphonse Darlu, ‘Introduction’, *RMM*, 1 (1893), 1-5 (p. 2). Also see Louis Pinto, ‘Le détail et la nuance. La sociologie vue par les philosophes dans la *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*’, *RMM*, 98 (1993), 141-74 (pp. 141-2).

Given the self-identification of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* as a return to pure philosophy, it is not surprising that the reception of Durkheim's work, in particular of his methodological principles, was generally reserved if not decidedly hostile. In their reviews, the philosophers invariably echoed the fundamental assumptions of their discipline regarding the logical primacy of the autonomous subject. Although for Durkheim 'objectivism' was a point relating to methodology and was not an ontological statement about the nature of social facts, his reviewers invariably understood 'objective' as implying the denial of all subjective and individual ends in the definition of social facts.

Gustave Belot, for example, argued that Durkheim's theory excluded individual consciousness and finality from moral life and sacrificed the ideas and desires of the individual to the sole concern of uncovering the 'natural laws' to which society is subject.⁴³¹ Similarly, Marcel Bernès, who wrote for both the *Revue philosophique* and the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, declared the insufficiency of objective sociology as a guide to moral practice.⁴³² While he saluted the *Rules* as an effort to initiate a reflection on the question of method in sociology, he again repeated Belot's interpretation of 'objectivity' as implying the exclusion of all psychological elements from sociology. A purely 'objective', that is non-psychological, definition of social facts would always be 'insufficient' since social facts themselves, he argued, hard facts such as institutions and laws, had their roots in ideas.⁴³³ For Bernès it was better to work from the

⁴³¹ Belot, 'L'utilitarisme et ses nouveaux critiques', p. 410, p. 413, p. 430.

⁴³² Bernès, 'Sur la méthode en sociologie' and 'La sociologie'.

⁴³³ Bernès, 'Sur la méthode en sociologie', pp. 236-37.

internal to the external, not to just describe how social institutions constrain individuals but to show how these institutions grow up from a milieu of ideas.⁴³⁴

Perhaps the most damning critique of Durkheimian sociology however came from precisely those who were most in a position to consecrate the new science. According to Louis Pinto, Léon Brunschvicg and Elie Halévy, can be considered two of the dominant figures among the new philosophical avant-garde in the 1890s: educated at the *École normale*, they were in close contact with the editor of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, Xavier Léon, and Halévy indeed had helped found the journal with Léon.⁴³⁵ While they manoeuvred in the elevated theoretical domain of epistemology and questioned the validity of Durkheimian sociology as science, ultimately their issue with it again came down to the place accorded to the individual subject. Labelling the causal explanation furnished in the *Division of Labour* - the 'increase in the social mass and density' - as 'materialist' and 'anti-psychological', they rejected Durkheim's claim to have brought society and morality within the 'unity of nature'.⁴³⁶ The exclusion of psychological facts, they wrote, 'sterilises and paralyses' science since the unique focus on material, quantifiable facts such as volume and density ignored the role of the individual in social causation, and barred all the possible 'perturbations' or 'accidents' of which the individual was the source.⁴³⁷ However, they argued, this was an illegitimate interpretation of mechanical explanation since for it, nothing is insignificant: even the 'slightest movement of the foot can cause an avalanche'.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁴ Bernès, 'Sur la méthode en sociologie', p. 245.

⁴³⁵ Louis Pinto, 'Le détail et la nuance', p. 156.

⁴³⁶ Brunschvicg and Halévy, p. 565.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 567.

⁴³⁸ Brunschvicg and Halévy, pp. 567-68.

Such an anti-individualist, social deterministic reading of Durkheim's sociology was seen not only to have consequences for its validity as science, but also for politics. This aspect was drawn out by Charles Andler, who in more aggressive terms denounced the 'so-called science' sociology for fetishising the social and setting it up as a 'thing' distinct from individuals.⁴³⁹ On Andler's interpretation, the claim that there were ways of acting, thinking and feeling external to the individual was like setting up in the place of individual psychology a collective or group mind.⁴⁴⁰ The deterministic and anti-democratic bent of sociology consisted in the fact that it turned society into the absolute and 'generalised the Marxist error', by generalising the 'economic *thingism* of Marx in making it a sociological thingism'.⁴⁴¹ In short, the initial reception of the *Division of Labour* and the *Rules* was reserved, and from whatever angle the critics were coming (applied moral philosophy, the philosophy of science, democratic politics) the understanding of 'objective science of society' was that it meant the exclusion of ideals and values held by individuals from sociological explanation.

⁴³⁹ Andler, pp. 245-47; Pinto, 'Le détail et la nuance', p. 161.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 246.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid, p. 255, footnote 1, Alexander, p. 144.

3.4.2 A Triumph for Gabriel Tarde

It has therefore been right from the earliest reception of Durkheim in France that his work was discussed in terms of those sets of mutually exclusive oppositions - objectivism/subjectivism, materialism/idealism, individual/social - that now seem to be so antithetical to the understanding of his sociology.⁴⁴² Yet, beyond the problem of interpretation, the very fact that Durkheim felt it was important to respond to his philosopher critics is in itself significant. In clear recognition of the power of philosophy to consecrate and the right of philosophers to pass judgement on science, acceptance of his sociology within this wider field of academic philosophy mattered to Durkheim. So over the course of the following years, through his own review writing and second editions of books he went to great lengths to address their criticisms and to clarify his position.

However, out of all of the critiques two in particular were deemed sufficiently urgent as to require immediate clarification. The first was Charles Andler's claim that objective sociology meant anti-democratic politics, and although Durkheim considered replying directly to Andler himself, he opted to leave the matter in the hands of the younger Célestin Bouglé, another 'normalien, agrégé de philosophie', who was also a personal friend of Elie Halévy. Responding to Andler's interpretation of Durkheim with an article in the *Revue* Bouglé showed how Andler had mis-understood the work he had criticised, and pointed out that objective sociology neither excluded psychology nor defined social facts as material things. Indeed, he continued, although social facts were ultimately different in nature to the facts of individual psychology they still had

⁴⁴² On this point see Stedman Jones, 'Reflections on the Interpretation of Durkheim in the Sociological Tradition'.

individuals associating together as a substratum, and a sociological perspective could perhaps improve and add to psychology.⁴⁴³ It is clear from the letters received by Bouglé that Durkheim felt that a good enough job had been done with this article and rather than himself also publishing a long article in response simply sent a letter to Xavier Léon in protest at the mis-representation of his ideas in the pages of the review.⁴⁴⁴

The second article that Durkheim responded to immediately was a particularly harsh review of the *Rules* by the sociologist Gabriel Tarde, which appeared in the *Revue philosophique*.⁴⁴⁵ At first it may not be immediately apparent why Durkheim should have felt it more urgent to respond to Tarde and not to Marcel Bernès or Brunschvicg and Halévy for example. However if we consider who Tarde was and what his position was in relation to philosophy, the issue makes more sense. Gabriel Tarde was a sociologist and contemporary of Durkheim, known for his theory of imitation, which explained social facts psychologically in terms of imitation between individuals. In his review of the *Rules* he ridiculed what he described as Durkheim's attempt to construct 'a sort of sociology... purged of all psychological considerations'.⁴⁴⁶ A judge and specialist in criminology, Tarde took issue with Durkheim's concept of normality and in particular his argument that both crime and punishment were socially normal, in the sense that wherever we have society we necessarily have both.⁴⁴⁷ What Durkheim meant by the normality of crime and punishment, was that there was not an absolute definition of right, which will one

⁴⁴³ Bouglé, 'Sociologie, Psychologie et Histoire'.

⁴⁴⁴ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Célestin Bouglé, 24 March 1896, and Letter to Xavier Léon in Émile Durkheim, *Textes*, ed. by Karady, ii: *Religion, morale, anomie*, pp. 390-91 and p. 462.

⁴⁴⁵ On Tarde see Terry N. Clark, 'Gabriel Tarde', *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1968).

⁴⁴⁶ Tarde, 'Criminalité et santé sociale', p. 148.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 149-51.

day reign and not an absolute wrong, which will one day be abolished, but that wherever there is society there is a socially conditioned idea of right and there will always be those who deviate from this who are considered criminal.⁴⁴⁸ Tarde however, took the argument differently, as meaning that the present elevated crime rates were normal, and that we should not want to try and improve the situation.⁴⁴⁹ Deemed serious enough to merit a direct response, Durkheim offered a point-by-point rebuttal of each of Tarde's arguments in the *Revue philosophique*.⁴⁵⁰ His own argument, Durkheim emphasised, had not been that the rise in the crime rates, nor even the rise of the suicide rates for that matter was normal, but that there can never be a society in which there would be no cases at all of divergence from the collective type. Indeed, Durkheim took Tarde's critique so seriously that, as he pointed out, he was currently preparing a book dealing with the rise in suicide rates, which would show that his sociology could in fact deal with and judge such 'abnormal' phenomena.

Yet to understand the issue with Tarde we need to go beyond the content of the articles and consider the contrasting reception of both figures from the elite of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*. In the mid-1890s Gabriel Tarde was the most significant competitor of Durkheim in the effort to gain the acceptance he so valued for his sociology by the philosophers. As a social theorist, Tarde was a staunch opponent of the various forms of organicism and social realism, and had developed his own system of sociology, founded entirely on psychology, an 'interpsychology', based on a theory of

⁴⁴⁸ Durkheim, *Les Règles de la méthode sociologique*, pp. 80-93.

⁴⁴⁹ Tarde, 'Criminalité et santé sociale', p.156.

⁴⁵⁰ Émile Durkheim, 'Crime et santé sociale', *RP*, 39 (1895), 518-23.

imitation.⁴⁵¹ Now it was precisely this individualist and psychological theory of society, which explained social facts as a product of imitation between individuals, that Léon Brunschvicg and Elie Halévy at the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* endorsed in the same breath as they rejected the Durkheimian theory.⁴⁵² Indeed, this endorsement must have been particularly hard to swallow given that Tarde did not even have a background in philosophy but in law, and was by profession not a professional academic but a magistrate, a criminologist and a statistician.⁴⁵³

At the same time the preference of Brunschvicg and Halévy for Tarde's theory of imitation itself tells us something about the tension between philosophy and Durkheimian sociology. Just as the dissertation jury took issue with the idea of sociology as 'moral science', the philosophers who responded to his work, as Louis Pinto has shown, refused to recognise any 'inferior', external explanation of the moral law and the thinking subject. While Durkheim sought to explain the collective representations held by the thinking subject, Tarde, on the other hand, in positing the logical primacy of this subject simply echoed back to the philosophers the fundamental assumptions of their discipline, where scientific explanation stopped with the individual subject. Almost repeating the comments of Henri Marion on the *Division of Labour*, that as moral science the thesis was not 'refined enough', Durkheim complained, in a letter to Bouglé, of the philosophers who say that there are things that are 'too refined' and 'too complex' to be grasped by the 'vulgar procedures of science', things which only 'sentiment' and 'intuition' can grasp. Durkheim, of course, had his own equally valid response to this: the

⁴⁵¹ On the Tarde/Durkheim debate see Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 302-13.

⁴⁵² Brunschvicg and Halévy, pp. 572-75.

⁴⁵³ Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 302-13.

refusal of any external explanation of the thinking subject and the placing of ‘individual instinct’ at the basis of explanation was anti-scientific, was the excuse of those who ‘do not want to think’.⁴⁵⁴ With this argument he continued to defend his case before the philosophers. Tarde’s theory, which placed instinct at the root of sociological explanation, Durkheim insisted, implied irrationalism in that it elevated ‘sensation, instinct, passion - all the base and darker parts of ourselves’ above reason and so made science impossible.⁴⁵⁵ While he situated his own sociology square within French rationalism he referred to Tarde’s method as the very ‘negation of science’.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁴ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Célestin Bouglé, in Durkheim, *Textes*, ii, p. 420. Pinto, ‘Le détail et la nuance’, p. 173.

⁴⁵⁵ Durkheim, ‘Crime et santé sociale’, p. 523. Also see the English translation, ‘Crime and Social Health’, in Durkheim, *On Institutional Analysis*, ed. and trans. by Traugott, pp. 181-88 (p. 188).

⁴⁵⁶ Durkheim, ‘L’état actuel des études sociologiques en France’, pp. 85-86.

Conclusion

Although there was a growing enthusiasm for sociological studies in the mid-1890s, the period directly after the publication of the *Division of Labour* and the *Rules of Sociological Method* seems to have been a low-point for Durkheim and one of triumph for Gabriel Tarde. While Durkheimian sociology grew out of philosophy and in many ways retained its stamp, the reaction against his sociology also had to do with its tight relationship to philosophy. Not only was sociology as ‘moral science’ treading on the territory of philosophy, but Durkheim’s effort to overcome what he called the ‘intellectualist’ bias of moral philosophy also seemed to undermine one of the fundamental assumptions of the discipline regarding the primacy of the individual subject. Over the course of the following decade, the situation would change somewhat and for reasons both intellectual and political Durkheim would eventually succeed in gaining acceptance for his sociology within this universe of elite academic philosophy. Beyond seeking to clarify his position and discredit the theories of Tarde as anti-rationalist and anti-scientific, perhaps the most decisive strategy in the constitution and consolidation of what has come to be known as the ‘French school of sociology’ was one that grew out of the collaboration with Bouglé in the response to Charles Andler. In the space of two years what emerged from this initial collaboration was the foundation of the journal, the *Année sociologique*, and this shall be the topic of my next chapter.

Chapter 4

The Foundation of the *Année Sociologique*

Although Durkheim may today be recognised as the founder of the ‘French school of sociology’, in the mid-1890s in France he had numerous rivals in the new field and his intellectual authority was by no means assured. Indeed, one of the questions this thesis seeks to address is precisely how Durkheim did in the end actually come to be recognised as the main representative of the new discipline in France, and why so many once prominent names (Gabriel Tarde, Jean Izoulet, René Worms...) have since faded into oblivion. In the previous chapter, I have indicated that Durkheim’s background in philosophy and place within the university arts faculty would ultimately be decisive factors in the establishment of a hegemonic position in the field, even if his work did initially receive some lively criticism from his fellow academics.

In this chapter, I shall focus on the latter part of the 1890s, roughly from 1896/97 to 1900, a period that was decisive in the establishment and consolidation of Durkheim’s scientific authority. In these years there were two main additions to his ‘scientific titles’ – the publication of *Suicide* in 1897 and the foundation of the journal the *Année sociologique* the following year.⁴⁵⁷ While Durkheim himself had hoped that *Suicide* would clear up some of the ‘mis-understandings’ generated by his previous work and win

⁴⁵⁷ See Émile Durkheim, Letter to Louis Liard, 14 July 1897, ‘Lettres de Durkheim’, *RFS*, 20.1(1979), 113-121 (pp. 114-15), where he lists *Suicide* and the *Année sociologique* among his ‘scientific titles’.

over the academic community to his sociology, I shall suggest here that the foundation of the *Année sociologique* was in fact far more effective towards this end.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁸ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Célestin Bouglé of December 1896, in Durkheim, *Textes*, ii, pp. 393-94. In his biography, Marcel Fournier also put great emphasis on the importance of this move. See Fournier, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 259-84.

4.1 Durkheim's Position in 1897

If the decade of the 1890s, brought with it a veritable explosion of interest in sociology, this new popularity and enthusiasm for the discipline was something of a mixed blessing for Durkheim.⁴⁵⁹ While various teaching institutions and journals now existed for the communication of sociological research, Durkheim was not at all convinced as to the scientific value of much the work being produced. At the same time however, his own capacity to turn this new popularity of the discipline to his advantage seemed to be rather limited: while on the one hand his own publications had not received the reception he would have perhaps hoped for, openings for sociology within the important Parisian institutions of the intellectual field ended up benefiting one or other of his competitors. It is to this situation, immediately prior to the first issue of the *Année sociologique* that I shall now turn, starting first with the appointments of two of his rivals to two newly created sociological chairs, one at the Sorbonne and the other at the Collège de France.

⁴⁵⁹ Durkheim, 'L'état actuel des études sociologiques en France', pp. 73-74.

4.1.1 Two Parisian Chairs

Symbolic capital, as I explained in chapter one, can come in two forms: scientific or intellectual capital (deriving from publications or involvement with journals and professional societies) and institutional capital (appointments to posts within institutions such as the Institut, the Collège de France and the Sorbonne). On both fronts, in terms of the reception of his publications received and in terms of appointments to newly created chairs in sociology, the period immediately prior to the first issue of the *Année sociologique* seems to be one of frustration and disappointment of legitimate expectations. From 1887, with his appointment as ‘chargé de cours’ in social science and pedagogy at Bordeaux (which became a permanent chair in social science in 1895) Durkheim held the only teaching post of its kind in any French University.⁴⁶⁰ However, over the course of the 1890s his institutional position weakened somewhat with the creation of two new, more prestigious Parisian chairs - one in the history of ‘économie sociale’ at the Sorbonne in 1894, and one in ‘philosophie sociale’ at the Collège de France - and the appointment of two of his competitors to these new posts.

The idea of sociology as a means to tackle some of the problems of modern industrial society had long been cited to support the introduction of the new discipline into the university curriculum, with Durkheim himself arguing in his inaugural lecture at Bordeaux that scientific sociology had a ‘social mission’ of ‘re-kindling’ solidarity.⁴⁶¹ Once again, as George Weisz has documented, it was precisely such concerns about

⁴⁶⁰ Weisz, ‘L’idéologie républicaine et les sciences sociales’, p. 86. Also see Marcel Bernès, ‘L’enseignement des sciences sociales’, *Revue internationale de sociologie* (hereafter *RIS*), 3 (1895), 629-43 (p. 629).

⁴⁶¹ Weisz, ‘L’idéologie républicaine et les sciences sociales’, p. 84. Weisz also quotes Durkheim’s ‘Cours de science sociale’, pp. 47-48.

social unrest, augmented by a series of anarchist attacks and strikes in the early 1890s, which led to calls for the further integration of social science within the university. When the wealthy philanthropist and patron of the social sciences, the Comte de Chambrun, offered to provide funds for a new chair, the course in the history of 'économie sociale' at the Sorbonne was created in 1894.⁴⁶² Having been in charge of the course in social science at Bordeaux since 1887, Durkheim could certainly consider himself as being in a prime position to be nominated and put himself forward as a candidate in a carefully worded letter to Louis Liard.⁴⁶³ Indeed even Alfred Espinas seems to have recognised that on a purely scientific level, Durkheim would have been the most suitable candidate and promised that, if the new course at the Sorbonne were to be in 'pure sociology', then he would not present himself for consideration but leave the position open to his younger colleague.⁴⁶⁴ In the end however Espinas did put himself forward and was nominated to the chair, telling Durkheim that the proposed teaching was actually to have more historical than sociological character. If Durkheim had hitherto pursued a strategy of alliance with Espinas, their relations cooled considerably over this issue. Sensing that Espinas was not being entirely honest about the nature of the proposed teaching, he was dismayed to hear that, once settled in Paris, Espinas had indeed begun teaching a 'vague sort of sociology'.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶² Weisz, 'L'idéologie républicaine et les sciences sociales', pp. 92-94 and Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, p. 177.

⁴⁶³ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Louis Liard, 5 December 1893, 'Lettres de Durkheim', pp. 113-14.

⁴⁶⁴ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, 15 May 1894, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, ed. by Besnard and Forunier, pp. 31-32.

⁴⁶⁵ Durkheim, Letter Marcel Mauss, 15 May 1894.

However much an achievement the foundation of the course in social science at Bordeaux had been, Durkheim certainly felt that a chair at one of the main Parisian institutions was of huge strategic value. Yet the next possible opening in Paris, the creation of the chair of 'philosophie sociale' at the Collège de France in 1897 also brought disappointment.⁴⁶⁶ On this occasion external political considerations blatantly trumped intellectual merit as Jean Izoulet, a contemporary of Durkheim who had in 1894 published his doctoral thesis *La Cité moderne et la métaphysique de la sociologie*, was the chosen candidate.⁴⁶⁷ Izoulet, a normalien and philosophy agrégé, had close political connections to centres of republican political power, having once been the personal secretary of Paul Bert, the minister of education in Gambetta's cabinet. Recounting to Mauss information received from Théodule Ribot, Durkheim told of how the latter had written to him to warn him that a new chair at the Collège de France was being created by a 'group of politicians', specifically for Izoulet and that the Collège was 'disarmed'.⁴⁶⁸ Not wanting to oppose the creation of the new chair, all Durkheim could do was to apply for the position, leaving it up to the minister 'to weigh up Izoulet's and my own qualifications and works'.⁴⁶⁹ Yet with little chance of being judged on the basis of strict intellectual merit, the affair put Durkheim in a difficult position: while, he wrote to Liard, he had ten years ago been given the task of establishing sociological instruction in the

⁴⁶⁶ Charle, *La Naissance des 'intellectuels'*, p. 79. On Izoulet see Logue, *From Philosophy to Sociology*, pp. 111-16, Daniel Essertier, *Philosophes et savants français du xxème siècle: la sociologie* (Paris: Alcan, 1930), chapter 1 and Émile Bocquillon, *Izoulet et son œuvre* (Paris, Baidinière, 1943). On the creation of this chair see the file in the national archives F/17/13556.

⁴⁶⁷ Jean Izoulet, *La Cité moderne et la métaphysique de la sociologie*, 2nd edn (Paris: Alcan, 1895).

⁴⁶⁸ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, 3 July 1897, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 74-76.

⁴⁶⁹ Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, 3 July 1897, pp. 74-76.

university, it would seem like a failure on his part if ‘such a chair were to be created at the Collège de France and given to someone else, it would be ... a diminution and a sort of disgrace’.⁴⁷⁰

Seeking to re-assure his uncle after the appointment of Izoulet, Mauss wrote that Durkheim was at least the ‘university’ representative in sociology.⁴⁷¹ Little comfort at the time perhaps, and while the creation of these two Parisian chairs did indicate on the one hand the growing enthusiasm for sociological studies and the official recognition of the relevance of such studies, these were not only two big missed opportunities for the institutional consecration of Durkheim and his sociology, but also a weakening of his position.

⁴⁷⁰ Durkheim, Letter to Louis Liard, 14 July 1897.

⁴⁷¹ Durkheim, Letters to Marcel Mauss 3 July 1897 and July 1897, pp. 74-76 and pp. 80-82.

4.1.2 *Suicide* and its Reception

Appointments such as these - a chair at the Sorbonne or the Collège de France - are of huge strategic importance in the establishment of intellectual legitimacy, and yet if Durkheim could write to Mauss that he had put up with the Izoulet affair ‘fort allégrement’, it was because he hoped to at least be able to exercise scientific authority independently of his institutional position.⁴⁷² While it certainly would have helped to be based in Paris, what, he told Mauss, he really cared about was not ‘administrative success’ but to ‘exercise some intellectual influence’.⁴⁷³ What he seems to have had in mind here was the type of intellectual legitimacy deriving from his research and publications and the esteem of the scientific community more generally. Yet, even in this regard Durkheim again met with disappointment. As we have seen in the last chapter, his previous two books had already received a rather reserved reception, with critics opposing what they interpreted as Durkheim’s materialist, anti-psychological formulation of sociology.

In the years that followed he repeatedly sought to clarify what he meant by objectivism in sociology, an effort, he told Célestin Bouglé, he intended to continue with his next book *Suicide*.⁴⁷⁴ In response to Gabriel Tarde’s interpretation of the concept of normality, as we have seen, Durkheim had indicated that he was already preparing a book which would demonstrate that his sociology was not a ‘science’ incapable of forming value judgments or guiding action, but could indeed help understand and tackle problems

⁴⁷² Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, July 1897, pp. 76-78.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Durkheim, Letter to Célestin Bouglé of December 1896.

in contemporary society.⁴⁷⁵ This book would be *Suicide*, and would deal with the rising suicide rates in modern industrial society amply documented by moral statisticians, a question which had already grabbed his attention in 1888 and which he had cited in the *Division of Labour* in his argument against Spencer's 'happiness thesis'.⁴⁷⁶ While, according to Durkheim's theory of organic solidarity, modern society should be just as good a moral environment as traditional society, these rising suicide rates would indicate not that the passage from traditional to modern society inevitably brought such problems but that difficulties had arisen in the realisation of organic solidarity. With sociology however, one could hope to gain correct understanding of the problem and to put things right. *Suicide* was, therefore, one of those books which, wrote Gaston Richard, 'justified all the hopes which enlightened spectators of the present crisis place in social science'.⁴⁷⁷

Beyond this however, Durkheim also wanted to use *Suicide* to clarify what he meant by 'objective', 'scientific' sociology, and in the process question the scientific value of Gabriel Tarde's theory of imitation, the psychological explanation of society which had proved popular with philosophers. Interpreting the book as essentially a demonstration of the methodological principles laid out in the *Rules of Sociological Method*, Paul Fauconnet concluded that the variation of suicide rates from one society to the next offered a powerful indication of the fundamental proposition, the essential condition of a scientific sociology, that social facts have an objective existence, a 'reality

⁴⁷⁵ Tarde, p. 156 and Durkheim, 'Crime et santé sociale'.

⁴⁷⁶ See Durkheim, 'Suicide et natalité' and *De la division du travail social*, pp. 270-76.

⁴⁷⁷ Gaston Richard, 'Durkheim E, *Le Suicide: étude de sociologie*', *Année sociologique* (hereafter AS), 1 (1898), 397-406 (pp. 403-404).

of their own'.⁴⁷⁸ What Durkheim was interested in was not individual cases of suicide but in the suicidal tendencies of social groups. However, more than simply noting how these suicide rates varied with society, he set out to prove that the social-suicide rate was not the sum of individual cases but the result of social forces 'sui generis'. The first book of *Suicide* was therefore primarily concerned with demonstrating the insufficiency of existing individualist and non-social explanations of the social suicide rate, (madness, alcoholism, hereditary inclinations or the instinct of imitation on the one hand, cosmic forces like climate or temperature on the other), with an entire chapter devoted to the refutation Gabriel Tarde's imitation theory.⁴⁷⁹

Having demonstrated the explanatory insufficiency of competing theories, Durkheim then presented his own theory of the social causes of suicide in the next part of the book and individuated four types of suicide each one resulting from a different social cause: suicide deriving from either insufficient or excessive social integration (egoistic or altruistic suicide respectively) or from insufficient or excessive social regulation (anomic or fatalistic suicide respectively).⁴⁸⁰ Reflecting his theory that the problem with modern European societies was more the weakness of rather than the excessive strength of the social tie, and the difficulties of modern society in performing its function as a source of ideals, values and moral regulation in individual lives, Durkheim gave far more space to the problem of egoism (weakness of social integration) and anomie (weakness of social regulation), than he did to altruism or fatalism. To ease the modern malaise, individuals

⁴⁷⁸ Paul Fauconnet, 'Durkheim E, *Le Suicide: étude de sociologie*', *RP*, 45 (1898), 422-31 (pp. 429-31). Also see François Simiand, 'L'année sociologique, 1897', *RMM*, 6 (1898), 608-53 (p. 649).

⁴⁷⁹ Durkheim, *Le Suicide*, book 1, chapter 4.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid*, book 2, chapters 2-6.

needed to be more closely integrated into social groups, but since neither religion nor the family nor political society would be appropriate, Durkheim suggested that a certain sort of professional society could more readily become the source of new ideals, values and rules to live by.⁴⁸¹

Such was the argument of *Suicide*, a book intended to prove to critics first that his sociology could deal with and offer a solution to the problems of modern society, second that ‘objective’ sociology did not exclude psychology and finally that his sociological method was more valid as science than that of his closest rival Gabriel Tarde. However, although it would later go on to become a sociological classic, *Suicide* did not immediately have the desired effect of winning over the academic public. As Durkheim lamented in a letter to Mauss the ‘proofs’ that seemed to him the most ‘convincing’ did not seem to have any effect.⁴⁸² In short, he felt that *Suicide* was going to be like a ‘slash of a sword in water’ and that the ‘doctrinal resistance’ to his work had not diminished.⁴⁸³

Far from Durkheim being already recognised at this point as the triumphant founder of a new discipline, his personal letters to Mauss betray a sense of profound disillusionment with events and with the reception of his work, to the extent that the year before the appearance of the first issue of the *Année sociologique*, he was even questioning the point of founding a journal at all. If, in spite of the Izoulet affair, he had hoped to be able to exercise a certain intellectual and scientific authority, after the reception of *Suicide* he wrote, ‘I see I must renounce this’.⁴⁸⁴ The aim of the new journal

⁴⁸¹ Durkheim, *Le Suicide*, pp. 425-442.

⁴⁸² Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, July 1897, pp. 76-78.

⁴⁸³ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, 15 July 1897, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 78-79.

⁴⁸⁴ Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, July 1897, pp. 76-78.

would be to ‘orientate sociology in a more objective direction’, but given the resistance his work had received he asked ‘what was the point of an *Année sociologique*...?’⁴⁸⁵ Of course, we know that he did in the end go ahead with the journal, which furthermore turned out to be a great success. What I hope to show however was that it was not any one of Durkheim’s individual works that did most to help build and consolidate what would become the ‘French school of sociology’: more so than the publication *Suicide*, it was the foundation of the *Année sociologique* that did most to turn the situation around.

⁴⁸⁵ Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, 15 July 1897.

4.2 Sociology and Sociological Journals

If the identification of Durkheim and his collaborators as the ‘French school’ of sociology was therefore not automatic but an end-result, we can certainly say that the *Année sociologique* was an important instrument in this process.⁴⁸⁶ Since the early 1880s, there had been various individual figures competing for intellectual authority in sociology (Alfred Espinas, Gabriel Tarde and Durkheim himself to name just a few), but it was only by the mid to late 1890s that it became possible to identify a number of collective positions or schools of thought, each with their own organs of diffusion (journals, teaching institutions and/or professional societies).⁴⁸⁷ The foundation of the *Année* in a sense responded to this tendency towards sociological collaboration and brought together a group of scholars with a common purpose, facilitating the process by which a recognisable ‘Durkheimian’ school established itself as distinct from its competitors in the developing field. In order to understand the relative strength of the Durkheimian position in sociology however, it is first necessary to consider its relationship to these other schools of thought. This is what I aim to address here, starting with the school of Frédéric Le Play.

⁴⁸⁶ Berthelot, *L’Avènement de la sociologie scientifique*, p. 135 and Charle, *La Naissance des ‘intellectuels’*, p. 52. Also see the special issues of the *Revue française de sociologie*, ‘Les durkheimiens’, 20.1 (1979) and ‘Sociologues français au tournant du siècle’ 22.3 (1981).

⁴⁸⁷ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*.

4.2.1 The Disciples of Le Play

Although Frédéric Le Play's work represents one of the earliest efforts to develop empirical social science in France, Le Play, unlike Espinas, can in no way be classed among Durkheim's scientific predecessors. Educated at the École polytechnique (graduating in 1827) and the École des mines (graduating in 1832) and with professional expertise in mining Le Play had an entirely different intellectual background to Durkheim. It was, as Terry Clark argued, largely through his travels in Europe and Asia as an authority on mining that Le Play began to write on society, and over the course of some twenty years he filled notebooks with his observations of social life in the various places he visited. Taking the family as the basic cell of society, his method, known as the monographic method, involved the direct observation of individual working-class families; the notes he took during fieldwork would then be organised around a budget for each family, which was meant to be a quantification of the total activity of each family.⁴⁸⁸

Imbued with an enthusiasm for science and its capacity to solve all kinds of social problems, Le Play's main concern was social stability and he proposed social science as a 'way of healing', a society in a state of agitation or 'suffering'.⁴⁸⁹ He was at his most influential during the Second Empire, enjoying the financial support of the Académie des sciences, as well as personal contact with and the political favour of Napoleon III.⁴⁹⁰ With the fall of the Empire however he did not fade into insignificance and within the

⁴⁸⁸ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, p. 105, and also see Pitirim Sorokin, *Contemporary Sociological Theories* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1928), p. 64.

⁴⁸⁹ Frédéric Le Play, *Les Ouvriers européens: étude sur les travaux, la vie domestique et la condition morale des populations ouvrières de l'Europe*, 2nd edn (Tours: Mame, 1877-79). pp. 1-3, first publ. 1855.

⁴⁹⁰ Antoine Savoye, 'Les continuateurs de Le Play au tournant du siècle', *RFS*, 22.3 (1981), 315-44 (p. 328).

contours of the Third Republic found other ways of continuing his work, particularly among reform-minded Catholics.⁴⁹¹ Believing that it was the ‘social mission’ of the ‘superior classes’ to reform society, he founded in 1872 the ‘Unions de la paix sociale’, a largely Catholic network of groups which met to discuss ‘social problems’ and ways of restoring ‘social peace after the disaster’ of 1870-71.⁴⁹²

When Le Play died in 1882, he left behind him an impressive network of organs for the communication and diffusion of his thought - the Société d'économie sociale and its journal, *La Réforme sociale* (published by the Catholic house Mame), the Unions de la paix sociale, and a number of dedicated younger associates. Soon after his death however the group split in two, with the ‘reformists’ more interested in social and political action, and the ‘social scientists’, more interested in developing the scientific method.⁴⁹³ In practical terms the split occurred in 1885, and when Edmond Demolins (of the ‘social science’ tendency) was deposed as editor of *La Réforme sociale*, another leading Leplayist, the abbé Henri de Tourville, provided funds for a new journal to be entitled *La Science sociale suivant la méthode de Le Play* (later to become *La Science sociale suivant la méthode d'observation*). Demolins was made editor of this new journal and the new group gathered around de Tourville and this journal.⁴⁹⁴ Some twenty years later, looking back on the scission, Demolins characterised the innovations pursued by the ‘science sociale’ group not so much as a break with Le Play but as a continuation and perfection of his methods by Henri de Tourville, who went beyond simply compiling

⁴⁹¹ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, p. 105.

⁴⁹² Frédéric Le Play, *Le Paix social après le désastre*, 2nd edn (Tours: Mame, 1876), p. 31, first publ. in 1871.

⁴⁹³ On this split see Edmond Demolins and others, ‘La méthode sociale, ses procédés et ses applications’, *La Science sociale*, 19 (1904), 1- 92 (p. 18).

⁴⁹⁴ Savoye, pp. 319-20.

monographs on individual family life, and with his ‘nomenclature of social facts’ developed a means of studying the individual family in its relation to the rest of society.⁴⁹⁵ In terms of doctrine, the ‘social science’ tendency continued to accept Le Play’s assumption that stable social organisation derived from stable family organisation, however De Tourville contested the argument that the patriarchal form of family organisation family alone best guaranteed social stability. Arguing that while the modern ‘particularist’ family type may instil children with a strong sense of individuality and personal initiative rather than respect for authority and tradition, this, he emphasised was not the same as the ‘unstable’ family type (the real problem) which instilled neither respect for authority nor a taste for individual initiative.⁴⁹⁶

Although the ‘réforme sociale’ tendency did hold onto the main institutions founded by Le Play and continued to be concerned with practical social issues (‘social peace’ and ‘family stability’) the group did not exactly stick unimaginatively to Le Play’s doctrine. Here too, there were innovations in method with Émile Cheysson developing a way of combining case studies with statistical methods, while also encouraging monographs on social units other than the family, like the workshop and the commune.⁴⁹⁷ At the same time, the difference between the two groups in terms of methods and doctrines masked a more fundamental affinity between their leading representatives, a similar mix of wealthy, conservative Catholics and industrialists.

⁴⁹⁵ For a description of the method see again Demolins, Also see Sorokin’s chapter on the ‘science sociale’ group, pp. 63-98 and Savoye, 320.

⁴⁹⁶ Terry N. Clark, ‘Henri de Tourville’, in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*. There is also an account of the new form of family classification by Robert Pinot in the third part of the 1904 article, ‘La méthode sociale’. On both the ‘social science’ and ‘réforme sociale’ groups see Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 104-11.

⁴⁹⁷ See for example Paul du Maroussem, *Les Enquêtes: pratique et théorie* (Paris: Alcan, 1900). On Cheysson see Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 110-11 and Savoye, p. 336.

While the Leplayists may not have been influential within the state arts faculties, it is not the case that the group had in general become irrelevant by the late 1890s. On the one hand they retained credibility in other fields (such as business and the administration), with Cheysson and Pierre du Maroussem involved in the Office du Travail, which would later evolve into the Ministry of Labour.⁴⁹⁸ At the same time, many of the Leplayists were active in the various teaching institutions outside the official university that were clustering in Paris. As Dick May (the pen name of Jeanne Weill) wrote in her overview of ‘enseignement social’ in Paris, although the ‘réforme sociale’ teaching may have been, by 1896, some forty years old, many of the new organisations, such as the ‘Musée social’ and the ‘Défense sociale’, had their roots in Le Play’s movement.⁴⁹⁹ The ‘Comité de Défense et de Progrès social’ wrote May, was full of men from the ‘réforme sociale’ group, who gathered together with the explicit aim of combating socialism and the ‘false ideas’ being preached to the youth by the ‘adversaries of family, of property, of propriety and of society’.⁵⁰⁰ The ‘Musée social’, founded from the union of the Société d’économie politique with the Société d’économie sociale and endowed by the wealthy philanthropist the Comte de Chambrun also included many Leplayists (Pinot, who was the director, du Maroussen, Cheysson, de Roussiers).⁵⁰¹ Similarly, the École libre des sciences politiques, founded in 1871/72, which by the mid-1890s had opened its doors to social science, also recruited a number of prominent Leplayists: Émile Cheysson, having previously taught at the École des mines, held the

⁴⁹⁸ Savoye, p. 340.

⁴⁹⁹ Dick May, *L’Enseignement social à Paris* (Paris: A. Rousseau, 1896), pp. 3-5.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 43-44.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 37, Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 114.

chair of political economy from 1887, which became 'social economy' in 1901; Paul De Roussières, also held a chair here from 1908, as did Pierre du Maroussem, from 1912.⁵⁰²

Although the Leplayist organisations continued to function up until the end of the nineteenth century, their activities gradually petered out and its members were absorbed into new societies, schools and state structures. With their mix of Catholic affiliations and anti-interventionist ideology, they nevertheless remained marginal within the state university and arts faculties, so important for the establishment of the specific type of intellectual legitimacy that Durkheim sought. The same however cannot be so readily said for the 'international sociologists'.

⁵⁰² Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 109-13.

4.2.2 The International Sociologists

The term ‘international sociologists’ can be taken to refer to all those involved with the institutions founded by René Worms in 1893, a journal, the *Revue internationale de sociologie* and the association or discussion forum the ‘Institut International de Sociologie’.⁵⁰³ A dynamic figure, conscious that the time was opportune for the foundation of such structures, Worms managed to gather together some of the most distinguished names in sociology and neighbouring disciplines from both France and abroad. Among the names listed on the front page of the journal over the years we find the French sociologists, Alfred Espinas, Alfred Fouillée, Gabriel Tarde, Charles Letourneau, Marcel Bernès, with Louis Gumplowicz, Ferdinand Tönnies, Albert Schaeffle, Georg Simmel figuring among the foreign contributors. There was also an equally impressive list of representatives from neighbouring disciplines, including the social economist Charles Gide, the social statisticians Jacques Bertillon and Le Playists Cheysson and du Maroussem, the historian Gabriel Monod (editor of the *Revue historique* and professor at the École normale) and Théodule Ribot (editor of the *Revue philosophique* and titular of the chair of experimental psychology at the Collège de France). Alongside the journal and the Institut, Worms also set up the *Société de Sociologie de Paris* for members based near Paris and, for the publication of work by

⁵⁰³ For information on Worms see: Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 147-61, ‘René Worms’, *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* and ‘Marginality, Eclecticism and Innovation’, *RIS*, 2nd Ser, 3 (1968): 12-27; Sorokin, pp. 195-218 and Roger Geiger, ‘René Worms, l’organicisme et l’organisation de la sociologie’, *RFS*, 22.3 (1981), 345-360.

members of the group, founded the 'Bibliothèque des Sciences Sociales' series, which, like the journal, appeared with the law-orientated publisher, Giard and Brière.⁵⁰⁴

One of the dominant characteristics of the 'international sociologists' was what Célestin Bouglé has called 'sociological eclecticism', as both the *Revue* and the Institut brought together a number of very different theoretical perspectives.⁵⁰⁵ Worms himself, in the mid-1890s, precisely when the scientific value of the doctrine was most under fire from professional academics in France, espoused a type of organicist social theory, and in his *Organisme et société* developed an approach to the science of human society from the analogy with biology and the biological organism.⁵⁰⁶ Within the group organicist social theory also had a number of adherents including Schaeffle, Fouillée, and various members of the Russian 'immigré' contingent, including Maxime Kovalevsky, Paul de Lilienfeld and Jacques Novicow, well-known figures in Parisian positivist circles.⁵⁰⁷ However, it is not the case that organicism functioned as the theoretical line of the group, and there was at the same time also considerable internal opposition to the theory, not least from Gabriel Tarde, the theorist of imitation, best known for his opposition to precisely such biological theories of society.⁵⁰⁸

Although in his opening statement of the *Revue internationale de sociologie* Worms sought to defend this 'sociological eclecticism', as 'non-dogmatic', 'non-judgemental science', with the journal being open to 'all those of good will', to 'all science and to all schools', the group nevertheless appeared like a rather incoherent

⁵⁰⁴ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 152-54.

⁵⁰⁵ Célestin Bouglé, 'Brentano, F, *La Science sociale*', *AS*, 1 (1898), 123-24 (p. 124).

⁵⁰⁶ René Worms, *Organisme et société* (Paris: Giard & Brière, 1896). On Worms and organicism see Clark, 'René Worms' and Sorokin, pp. 196-97.

⁵⁰⁷ Sorokin, pp. 200-207. Also see Geiger, pp. 350-351.

⁵⁰⁸ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, p. 151.

mix.⁵⁰⁹ ‘Sociological eclecticism’ was also reflected in a new teaching institution, the Collège libre des sciences sociales, intended as a sort of faculty for social science, which had been founded, in quick succession after the *Revue* and the Institut, by Dick May, the private secretary of the Comte de Chambrun. Defending it against the accusation of doctrinal incoherency, Dick May argued that the school sought to avoid becoming the fiefdom of any particular school, be it ‘political economy, socialism, social Catholicism, the school of Le Play, the school of Comte’. The undertaking, May claimed, proved successful, with the Collège attracting conscientious students from various prestigious institutions and had the support of both the influential Comte de Chambrun and Alfred Croiset, the Dean of the Paris arts faculty (with whom May was also in close personal contact).⁵¹⁰

Given the impressive list of names that Worms attracted to his journal, the organs that the ‘international sociologists’ had at their disposal for the diffusion of their work and the apparent success of the group, the question remains as to why Durkheim avoided association with them. It is, as Clark has pointed out, unlikely that he did not receive an invitation to work on the journal.⁵¹¹ Indeed, at one point in 1894 Worms seems to have solicited a contribution from Durkheim, who refused, and sent his articles on the sociological method to the *Revue philosophique* instead, a move which further provoked the animosity of Espinas, who suggested that it was motivated by jealousy.⁵¹² Incensed, Durkheim explained to Mauss that what put him off this journal was Worms’s ‘reputation

⁵⁰⁹ René Worms, ‘Notre programme’, *RIS*, 1 (1893), 1-3.

⁵¹⁰ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 155-56 and Dick May, pp. 62-65.

⁵¹¹ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 152-54.

⁵¹² Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, 18 June 1894, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 34-36.

as a joker' and furthermore that he was not prepared to collaborate on a review 'of which the director has no scientific title'.⁵¹³ A doctor of law in 1894, without much published sociological research to his name or any official teaching position in sociology in the university faculties, Durkheim refused to recognise the scientific authority of Worms.

Beyond objections to Worms himself, and strained personal relations with Espinas and Tarde, another factor which could explain Durkheim's aversion to the group, would be the intellectually amateurish impression it gave. While there were many scholars of national and international renown attached to it, the fact is that unlike the *Revue philosophique* or the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, the *Revue internationale de sociologie* was not principally a review for professional academics from the French university or even for aspiring specialists in sociology. As Clark's analysis of the biographical details of the 'international sociologists' indicates, the group was made up of a mix of professors (the majority of whom taught either at the law faculties or at other institutions of higher education outside the university such as the Collège libre des sciences sociales or École libre des sciences politiques) of government officials, civil servants and some representatives from other liberal professions.⁵¹⁴ Furthermore, the organicist theories of Worms and his Russian collaborators, criticised by the future Durkheimian François Simiand as 'insufficient and scientifically useless', combined with the theoretical incoherence of the rest of the group would have contributed to this perception of amateurism.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹³ Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, 18 juin 1894.

⁵¹⁴ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 251-52 and 'Marginality, Eclecticism and Innovation', pp. 21-22.

⁵¹⁵ François Simiand, 'L'année sociologique, 1896', *RMM*, 5 (1897), 489-519 (p. 517).

In short, behind Worms's call to 'all those of good will' from 'all science' and 'all schools', there seems to be a mis-conception about what 'intellectual freedom' would have meant to the community of professional academics in the late nineteenth century. As Durkheim well understood, scientific freedom did not mean 'anything goes', regardless of how facts have been observed or regardless of the training of an author. The idea was more of a freedom practiced within the boundaries of a tacit understanding of what it meant to actually do science, with the entitlement to offer a scientific assessment of given phenomena and be taken seriously by the scientific community pertaining to those with the recognised training and academic credentials. While Clark suggested that Worms's project benefited in the long term from its sociological eclecticism, I would argue to the contrary that in an epoch when the intellectual field was tending towards professionalism, the semblance of intellectual amateurism, the theoretical incoherence and apparent lack of rigour of Worms's project would have been damaging.⁵¹⁶ At the very least this perception can explain Durkheim's aversion to the 'international sociologists' and why, rather than combining his effort with theirs, he decided, in the mid to late 1890s, to opt for the far more laborious route of founding his own journal.

⁵¹⁶ Clark, 'Marginality, Eclecticism and Innovation', p. 14.

4.2.3 Objective Affinities of the Durkheimians

Although he was the one who, by the mid-1890s, had done most for the organisation of structures for the promotion and communication of sociological research, there was, significantly, no mention at all of René Worms in Durkheim's 1895 overview of the field of sociology in France. Outlining three principal schools of thought and their representatives - the *École d'Anthropologie* where Charles Letourneau held the chair of sociology, the criminologists represented by Gabriel Tarde, and the sociology of the university beginning with Alfred Fouillée and Alfred Espinas, and continued by himself - Durkheim failed not only to include a reference to Worms but also to mention that all of the other names he cited were actually involved with the institutions founded by Worms.⁵¹⁷ Not only did he not recognise the scientific authority of Worms, he wanted to emphasise that the type of sociology represented by himself, which had developed within the arts faculties and out of philosophy, was something entirely distinct. Thus he avoided association with the *Revue internationale de sociologie* or the 'Institut', finding the *Revue philosophique* or even the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* more appropriate journals in which to publish his articles on sociology.

If Worms's journal was not deemed to be adequate, the implication would be that there was space for the foundation of yet another specialised sociological journal, a move indeed necessary if Durkheim was not to be outdone by the former. It was however, not only the aversion on Durkheim's part to Worms's project that brought this issue into focus; there was also a wider demand from the field for an alternative journal. To begin with, there were a number of recent philosophy agrégés, figures such as Célestin Bouglé

⁵¹⁷ Durkheim, 'L'état actuel des études sociologiques en France', pp. 73-108.

and Paul Lapie who both wrote for the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, beginning to orientate themselves towards sociological studies, but who seemed to have little inclination to get involved with Worms. Neither Bouglé nor Lapie were particularly enamoured with what they had read of Durkheim either: Lapie had already been rather critical of the latter in his ‘année sociologique’ column for the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* and defining sociology as the science of ‘désirs suggérés’ seemed to be closer to the social theory of Tarde; although Bouglé had defended Durkheim against Charles Andler, he nevertheless also had his reservations about the *Rules of Sociological Method*, which he expressed in his conclusion to his book on German social science.⁵¹⁸ Yet, when Bouglé had the idea that there would be room for another sociological journal, it was to Durkheim, a fellow ‘universitaire’ and ‘normalien agrégé de philosophie’ that he spoke.⁵¹⁹ After an initial exchange of ideas between Bouglé and Durkheim, the idea for a new sociological journal took shape between 1896 and 1897, and after some negotiations, the university publishing house Felix Alcan (already responsible for the two main philosophy journals and for the publication of all of Durkheim’s books) agreed to publish yearly the new sociological review, the *Année sociologique*.

Appearing with Alcan, and with a title recalling the ‘année sociologique’ column of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, the new journal attracted a very definite type of figure. As Clark has shown, almost all of those recruited to the new journal, had traditional academic backgrounds: they were agrégés and professional academics, many

⁵¹⁸ Lapie, ‘L’année sociologique, 1894’ and Célestin Bouglé, *Les Sciences sociales en Allemagne: les méthodes actuelles* (Paris: Alcan, 1896). Philippe Besnard, ‘La formation de l’équipe de l’*Année sociologique*’, *RFS*, 20.1 (1979), 7-31 (p.12).

⁵¹⁹ Philippe Besnard, ‘Le centenaire d’une entreprise fondatrice’, in Philippe Besnard, *Études durkheimiennes* (Geneva: Droz, 2003), pp. 283-297 (p. 288).

seeking to pursue a career if not in national education then as professional researchers.⁵²⁰ The group that assembled for the first issue were mostly all philosophy agrégés, with a number having also come through the *École normale*. Between Bouglé, Lapie and Dominique Parodi (introduced to the journal by Bouglé and Lapie) all had backgrounds in philosophy with Bouglé and Parodi being also being normaliens. The group that assembled around Durkheim's nephew, Marcel Mauss, also a philosophy graduate, was made up of individuals with the same sort of qualifications (with both François Simiand and Paul Fauconnet having come through philosophy, the former having studied at the *École normale*). This pole however also had an added association to the *École pratique des hautes études* in Paris where Mauss was a student, and Henri Hubert, a normalien, agrégé d'histoire, was the most prominent of Mauss's fellow students here to be introduced to the journal. With an average age significantly younger than that of the international sociologists (29 as opposed to 45 in 1898) the *Année* in the pre-war period tended to attract young agrégés, in the early stages of their career.⁵²¹ Unlike the international sociologists, many of whom had already made a name for themselves professionally, only Durkheim (a professor at Bordeaux), Bouglé (a lecturer at Montpellier) and the jurist Emmanuel Lévy (who taught at the law faculty in Aix) were somewhat professionally established.⁵²²

In Clark's view, the main difference between the *Année* group and Worms's one was the dogmatic character of the former, and while the international sociologists harboured far more intellectual diversity, Durkheim sought to 'dominate a cohesive and

⁵²⁰ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 251-54, appendix 1.

⁵²¹ *Ibid*, pp. 251-52.

⁵²² Besnard, 'La formation de l'équipe de l'*Année sociologique*', table II.

obedient ‘school’.⁵²³ Yet although the group that assembled around the latter did, as we shall see, give a greater impression of coherence and common purpose, it would be mistaken to overstate its intellectual homogeneity.⁵²⁴ For example, two important collaborators of the journal, François Simiand and Gaston Richard both voiced criticisms of Durkheim’s *Suicide*, with the harshest critique (by Richard) appearing in the pages of the *Année* itself. Furthermore, as I have already mentioned, both Bouglé and Lapie initially expressed grave reservations about Durkheim’s conception of objective sociology and its relationship to psychology.⁵²⁵ Added to this, in the first issue of the *Année*, among the two opening original contributions we have one from Durkheim and alongside it one from a German sociologist particularly admired by Bouglé, Georg Simmel.⁵²⁶ Although he was ‘far from being an enthusiast’ of Simmel, Durkheim was nevertheless aware of the need not to appear dogmatic, the need not to place himself in a situation of ‘proud isolation’ or to ‘only publish my own manuscript’ and with Simmel being a professor of philosophy at the University of Berlin, it was this illustrious foreigner he felt he could most readily approach.⁵²⁷ None of this escaped contemporaries, and Gustave Belot, in his review of the first issue of the *Année* for the *Revue philosophique*, praised Durkheim for not seeking to produce a ‘doctrinal work’ or present a ‘manifesto of a school’.⁵²⁸ What drew the team together I suggest, were affinities of a more objective nature such as shared educational backgrounds, institutional attachments

⁵²³ Clark, ‘Marginality, Eclecticism and Innovation’, p. 14.

⁵²⁴ Besnard, ‘La formation de l’équipe de l’*Année sociologique*’, p. 12.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 12-13.

⁵²⁶ Émile Durkheim, ‘La prohibition de l’inceste et ses origines’, 1-70 and Georg Simmel, ‘Comment les formes sociales se maintiennent’, *AS*, 1(1898), 1-70 and 71-109.

⁵²⁷ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, June 1897 in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 57-60.

⁵²⁸ Gustave Belot, ‘L’*Année sociologique*’, *RP*, 45(1898), 649-57 (p. 650).

and similar career aspirations. Unlike the *Revue internationale de sociologie*, the *Année sociologique* was a journal for professional academics, more like the *Revue philosophie* and the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, with its identity deriving from this fact and not from the imposition of a particular theoretical line.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁹ Fabiani, pp. 34-36.

4.3 The *Année*, its Aims and its Programme

While the *Année sociologique* managed to avoid the ‘sociological eclecticism’ typical of Worms’s organisations, it does not exactly seem correct to say that, at the other extreme, the Durkheimian school was dogmatic and intellectually homogenous. Conscious of the contemporary hostility to theoretical dogmatism and to the demand for intellectual freedom, what, I suggest, Durkheim tried to do with the *Année* was to create a setting for scientific freedom, practiced within certain boundaries. The first, most obvious, common denominator among the individual group members was not primarily a common theoretical position, but similar academic training and professional trajectories. In terms of doctrine, as we shall see, the only agreement that Durkheim required from his collaborators was that sociology should be done scientifically. However, given their shared academic backgrounds, the group had a very specific conception of what it meant to do science in the first place, and thus from Durkheim’s apparently very minimal initial requirement the group managed to elaborate a distinct and coherent position on what a scientific sociology should look like.

4.3.1 The ‘Scientific’ Common Denominator

If readers in the late nineteenth would have expected from the typical ‘année’ type of journal an annual account of the literature published over the course of the previous year in a given discipline, Durkheim, in the preface to the first issue of the *Année sociologique*, was quick to warn his audience that this was not in fact to be the aim of the new journal. Such an endeavour would not anyway have been possible, he argued, since ‘properly sociological literature’ was still in too short supply: sociology was a science still to be made.⁵³⁰ Yet, we may retort, had Durkheim himself not been doing sociology for the past decade, and had there not also been just recently an explosion of activity in the discipline? His apparent modesty was of course strategic, and through presenting sociology as a science still to be made he was able to take a step back from the most contested aspects of his own methodological treatise, while implicitly questioning the scientific legitimacy of rival sociological journals and institutions. Depicting sociology as a science of discovery, to be constructed piece by piece from the advances in specialised branches of research, Durkheim took the offensive against those ‘sociologists’ - no doubt meaning here his rivals such as Gabriel Tarde or René Worms - who ‘dogmatise every day on law, morality or religion’.⁵³¹ The aim of the *Année* was, by contrast, more to keep sociologists informed of the research underway in the specialised social sciences, which was the basic material out of which sociology would be constructed.⁵³²

⁵³⁰ Émile Durkheim, ‘Preface’, *AS*, I (1898), i-vii (p. i). For the English translation see ‘Prefaces to *L’Année sociologique*’, in *Émile Durkheim*, ed. by Wolff, pp. 341-53, (p. 341). Also see Besnard, ‘La formation de l’équipe de l’*Année sociologique*’, p. 10.

⁵³¹ Durkheim, ‘Preface’, *AS*, 1, p. i; trans, p. 341.

⁵³² *Ibid.*

An expression of the basic agreement achieved between Durkheim and his collaborators as to the aims and programme of the *Année*, the preface to the first issue depicted the group as defined only by their common acceptance of the fundamental rationalist tenet that social facts were indeed explainable, that they were characterised by intelligible relations and accessible to scientific investigation. Yet the Durkheimians also shared a common conception of what ‘science’ meant, and if scientific sociology must draw on empirical research to avoid abstract dialectics, they also agreed that it could not be just empirical and descriptive, but must combine reason and observation.⁵³³ The sociologist as a scientist must undertake specialist empirical work as historians do, but to elaborate a genuine scientific explanation, to avoid the extremes of both dogmatism and empiricism, it would be necessary to introduce the comparative method, as it is only when one begins to form types, to compare how facts vary from one type to the next and seek out laws that facts gain ‘significance for the intelligence’.⁵³⁴ As I have argued in chapter three, this definition of science as the combination of reason and observation was typical of the academic philosophical tradition in which many of the Durkheimians were trained.

Thus it was not exactly the case that sociology was to be built out of empirical work in the individual social sciences and in the preface of the following year Durkheim stated the point more explicitly: the aim of the *Année* was to introduce the new scientific spirit into what he considered to be the specialised branches of sociology, to go beyond mere erudition and description of facts, to ‘constitute types and to establish relations’. However, he added this time, one of the fundamental conditions of the comparative

⁵³³ Durkheim, ‘Preface’, *AS*, 1, p. i, p. iv.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid*, pp. ii-iv; trans, p. 344.

method was that all of these different facts, which specialists have hitherto studied independently of each other were taken as being related and of the same nature, that is, as social facts. So, be it to describe or to explain ‘religious, legal, moral or economic facts’ it was necessary to ‘relate these to a particular social milieu’ or ‘social type’ and it is in ‘constituent characteristics of this type that one must seek out the determining causes of the phenomenon under consideration’.⁵³⁵ With this we already have Durkheim’s controversial but fundamental principle that social facts must be explained sociologically, and the assumption that for a science of society to be possible it must have its own distinct set of facts, different to those studied by individual psychology.

It was working on these fundamental axioms, based on a shared conception of science, that Durkheim was thus able to elaborate an immensely coherent programme, while still avoiding dogmatism. Unlike Worms’s journal, the *Année sociologique* was distinguished by the fact that its collaborators were all professionally trained academics, a background reflected in their shared conception of science which was voiced by Durkheim in the first two issues of the journal. If sociology has, wrote François Simiand, carried the weight of ‘too much bad work published in its name’, it is nevertheless ‘unfair to judge a science on the basis of what the “amateurs” have made of it’.⁵³⁶ The aim of the *Année sociologique* was therefore to show what a genuinely scientific sociology, practiced by specialists and professional academics, could be and to distance itself from work of the ‘amateurs’ who had, in their view, so far only served to discredit the discipline.

⁵³⁵ Émile Durkheim, ‘Preface’, *AS*, 2 (1899), i-vi (pp. i-ii); trans, p, 348.

⁵³⁶ Simiand, ‘L’année sociologique, 1897’, p. 608.

4.3.2 Durkheim on the Family

In contrast to the typical ‘année’ journal, as I have indicated above, the *Année sociologique* aimed from the start to be more than just a bibliographic work: it had an opening section with two or three original memoirs, followed by the review articles organised into various sections (in the first issue we have ‘religious sociology’, ‘legal and moral sociology’, ‘criminal sociology’ and ‘economic sociology’) with each branch representing a sub-division of the subject-matter of the same science, sociology. The idea of starting with original studies was to offer concrete examples of research in sociology, but also to increase the journal’s appeal. There was, as Durkheim told Mauss, already a ‘tradition’ established by other journals, of publishing such original memoirs, a tradition typical not of the standard ‘année’ journal, but of other university journals (both the *Revue philosophique* and the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* contained original articles followed by reviews), and of the recently founded *Année psychologique* (1895), attached to Charles Binet’s laboratory at the Sorbonne.⁵³⁷

Each section was to be the responsibility of one or more collaborators who compiled a list of books they planned to review for a given issue, sending it to Durkheim who then procured and distributed the books accordingly. Durkheim himself contributed numerous original articles over the years, while as a book critic he developed a sub-branch of the section ‘sociologie morale et juridique’, reviewing works every year on the topic of the family, (though from 1899 he also took charge of a new section entitled ‘social morphology’). If Durkheim had set very broad parameters in the preface - the minimum requirement that sociology be done scientifically - he was nevertheless able to

⁵³⁷ See Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, June 1897 and Besnard, ‘La formation de l’équipe de l’*Année sociologique*’, p. 10.

continue to pursue his interest into an area that had been one of his 'subjects of predilection' since his lecture course at Bordeaux of 1888.⁵³⁸

Not only was the sociology of the family at the centre of his focus for the *Année*, but these contributions offer, as Mauss later confirmed, a complement to his 1888 and 1892 lectures on the subject.⁵³⁹ And here, as in his earlier work, Durkheim's interest was in understanding specific elements of contemporary morality - for example in his article on incest, the question was why most societies have prohibited incest and classed it as among the 'most immoral of all practices' - by tracing such moral sentiments and rules back to their earliest social origins.⁵⁴⁰ In the *Division of Labour* domestic morality had been cited by Durkheim to demonstrate the extreme complexity of moral life and the insufficiency of abstract rationalism where a single principle is offered as the explanation for all our contemporary, practical moral maxims: sociology, he suggested here and elsewhere, could indeed provide welcome relief to what he had described as a sort of rationalist closed-circle where everything is explained in advance.⁵⁴¹ In 1888, he had described the sociological method as historical and comparative, as the introduction of the experimental method of Claude Bernard into the human sciences. The first step in the sociology of the family was thus to observe the organisation of family life throughout history, after which family types could be established; only then could one examine the variation of domestic morality through history according to family types, and finally

⁵³⁸ Davy, *Sociologues d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*. See also Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, p. 625.

⁵³⁹ Durkheim, *Textes*, iii, p. 35. Durkheim, 'Introduction à la sociologie de la famille' and 'La famille conjugale', in Durkheim, *Textes*, iii, pp. 35-49, first publ in the *RP*, 90 (1921), 2-14.

⁵⁴⁰ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, pp. 15-16 and Durkheim, 'La prohibition de l'inceste et ses origines', p.1.

⁵⁴¹ See chapter 3 and Durkheim, 'Introduction à la sociologie de la famille', p. 26.

explain our contemporary domestic morality.⁵⁴² Of course, this required the preliminary specialist historical research in order to be able to establish types at all, a job which he proposed to do over the course of the year, work which continued in the pages of the *Année* where his reviews focussed on research on the family in tribal society (the totemic clan), the Slavic or ‘zadruga’ family type and the patriarchal family.⁵⁴³

Perhaps the most notable difference between the reviews for the *Année* and the early lectures however was a new and preponderant focus on so-called ‘primitive’ societies and the totemic clan. Whereas before Durkheim had questioned the scientific value of ethnographical fieldwork, in the pages of the *Année* such empirical work became a crucial support of his social theory.⁵⁴⁴ If anything however, this turn to totemism and tribal society simply helped labour an old point, to insist on the family as a social institution. According to the first ‘rule of sociological method’, to treat social facts as things, it would be incorrect to start out from one’s own already socially conditioned assumptions about given institutions. Specifically, on the subject of the family, he argued that we cannot assume that marriage in its original form was monogamous nor that the nuclear family we know today was universal and he had already criticised contemporary authors such as Westermarck for such an ‘erroneous’ starting point.⁵⁴⁵ Through his reviews in the *Année*, he continued to argue against the prevalent idea of kinship as defined by blood relations resulting from monogamous marriage, while at the same time rejecting the opposing theory that there was an original state where domestic morality

⁵⁴² Durkheim, ‘Introduction à la sociologie de la famille’, pp. 13-14.

⁵⁴³ Davy, *Sociologues d’hier et d’aujourd’hui*, pp. 91 -121.

⁵⁴⁴ Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 180-81. Also see section 4.4.4 below.

⁵⁴⁵ Émile Durkheim, ‘L’origine du mariage dans l’espèce humaine’ *RP*, 40 (1895), 606-23; Davy, *Sociologues d’hier et d’aujourd’hui*, p. 89.

was completely unknown.⁵⁴⁶ Defining kinship ‘objectively’ as the rights and duties that family members have towards each other, he argued that consanguinity was not the essential thing and that in tribal society it was the clan’s totem that defined the family tie. The totemic clan was thus the family ‘par excellence’, since although the clan members were not literally blood relations they still considered each other as descendant from the same totem and as therefore having definite rights and duties towards each other. In short the very things which, in contemporary society, are assumed to be essential traits of the family were not in fact essential at all; cohabitation, for example, was not necessary for a family to exist, nor was consanguinity sufficient to establish kinship: the essential thing was that there were ‘rights and duties, sanctioned by Society and which unite the individuals that make up the family. In other words, the family only exists as a social institution’.⁵⁴⁷ Marriage may produce actual blood relations, but whether or not these become relations of kin depends on how the family is conceived of in a given society.⁵⁴⁸

So, in the pages of the *Année*, Durkheim continued his effort to develop an ‘objective’, ‘scientific’ way of thinking about domestic morality and the family. This did not mean literally starting out from ‘material’ things such as the state of the economy or the environment, and he was careful to also criticise the methods of economic materialism in discussing the family.⁵⁴⁹ If he had been rather unsuccessful with *Suicide* in his effort to clarify matters concerning the meaning of objectivity in sociology, he seems

⁵⁴⁶ Émile Durkheim, ‘Kohler, Prof J., *Zur Urgeschichte der Ehe. Totemismus, Gruppenehe, Mutterrecht.*’, *AS*, 1 (1898), 306-319 and ‘Grosse, E., *Die Formen der Familie und die Formen der Wirthschaft*’, *AS*, 1 (1898), 319-32 (p. 332).

⁵⁴⁷ Durkheim, ‘Grosse’, pp. 329-30; Davy, *Sociologues d’hier et d’aujourd’hui*, p. 92.

⁵⁴⁸ Durkheim, ‘Kohler’, pp. 316-17.

⁵⁴⁹ Durkheim, ‘Grosse’, pp. 327-28 and Émile Durkheim, Cunow H., *Die ökonomischen Grundlagen der Mutterherrschaft*, *AS*, 2 (1899), 315-18.

to have made a better impression here. The only risk now - with Gustave Belot insisting on the 'essentially psychological' character of the demonstration in Durkheim's article on the prohibition of incest - was of being perceived as having gone over to the other extreme of subjectivism, perhaps why from 1899 an extra section of reviews dealing with works on social morphology was added.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁵⁰ Belot, '*L'Année sociologique*', p. 655.

4.3.3 Sociology and the Social Sciences

If, by the late nineteenth century the term ‘social science’ had long been in use and considered intellectually legitimate, the same cannot be said for Auguste Comte’s neologism ‘sociology’, understood as a general and over-reaching theory of society.⁵⁵¹ Indeed, wrote Mauss, some ‘purists’ refused to even recognise the term itself, formed as it was, out a Latin root and a Greek ending.⁵⁵² Part of Durkheim’s strategy therefore, in an effort to overcome the opposition that his *Rules of Sociological Method* had met was now to place the emphasis almost entirely on the individual social sciences, to present sociology as if it were simply the synthesis of empirical work in these branches. Avoiding further programmatic statements on the nature of sociology, Durkheim, in the prefaces to the first two issues of the *Année*, took the offensive against the tendency to see sociology as a ‘purely philosophical discipline, or metaphysics of the social sciences’.⁵⁵³ In his ‘general sociology’ section of the *Année* Célestin Bouglé (joined by Dominique Parodi in later issues) continued this negative critique of sociology as an ‘unscientific’ general philosophy of society, with his critical comments on the organicist theories or Tarde’s theory of imitation.⁵⁵⁴

However, it is not exactly the case that Durkheim had abandoned the theoretical principles he had earlier set out; it is just that for further explicit statements from both

⁵⁵¹ See Janet, *Traité élémentaire de philosophie*, pp. 5-8, where social science is listed among the ‘external moral sciences’ and where there is no reference to sociology.

⁵⁵² Paul Fauconnet and Marcel Mauss, ‘Sociologie’, in Marcel Mauss, *Œuvres*, ed. by Victor Karady, 3 Vols (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1968-74) iii: Cohésion sociale et divisions de la sociologie (1969), p. 139.

⁵⁵³ Durkheim, ‘Preface’, *AS*, 2, p. i; trans, p, 347.

⁵⁵⁴ Célestin Bouglé, ‘Tarde, G, *L’Opposition universelle: essai d’une théorie des contraires*’ and ‘Novicow J, *Conscience et volonté sociale*’ *AS*, 1 (1898), 111- 116 and 126-35.

himself and other members of the group we need to look outside the *Année*.⁵⁵⁵ In the first of a series of such articles published in France in this period, Durkheim still avoided references to the most contested parts of his earlier definition of sociology and presented his methodological precepts as fully within the French rationalist tradition. It was, he wrote, the important insight of Saint-Simon and Comte, that society was not an artificial creation or product of individual action but a part of nature - a reality *sui generis* governed by its own laws and accessible to the intelligence - that made scientific sociology possible in the first place. However, distinguishing himself from these early positivists, he added that since then sociology had remained at a metaphysical phase, as a general theory of society and failed to become genuinely scientific. It was, he wrote, with the view of undertaking the specialised empirical work necessary to constitute sociology as a science that the *Année sociologique* had been founded.⁵⁵⁶ Without mentioning the words exteriority, generality or constraint, he argued that for a science to exist at all, it must have its own object distinct from that of other sciences, from which it logically followed that the facts studied by a scientific sociology could not simply be traced to individual, psychological facts.⁵⁵⁷ So the empirical social facts of various sorts which made up the subject-matter of sociology, must not be taken as the expression of

⁵⁵⁵ Émile Durkheim, 'La sociologie en France au XIXe siècle', in Durkheim, *La Science sociale et l'action*, ed. by Filloux, pp. 118-141, first publ. in the *Revue bleue*, 4th ser, 12 (1900), 609-13, 647-52; 'La sociologie et son domaine scientifique', in Durkheim, *Textes*, i, pp. 13-36, first publ. in Italian in the *Rivista italiana di sociologia*, 4 (1900), 127-48, trans. to French by Armand Cuvillier in *Où va la sociologie française?* (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1953), pp. 177-208 ; Émile Durkheim and Paul Fauconnet, 'Sociologie et sciences sociales', *RP*, 55 (1903): 465-97.

⁵⁵⁶ Durkheim, 'La sociologie en France au XIXe siècle', p. 132.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 137.

individual sentiments but as the product of profound forces in the nature of society that are not immediately apparent.⁵⁵⁸

In another article written this time for an Italian audience, he again emphasised that the fundamental axiom of sociology was that social facts did indeed exist as a distinct reality, being the specific phenomena which would not exist without society and were what they were because society was how it was. As such, he continued, social facts could not be traced to individual psychology, adding this time that the ‘constraint’ exerted on the individual could act as a criterion by which to recognise a social fact (something which cannot be violated with impunity), though making sure to emphasise that ‘constraint’ was meant in the sense of a moral authority generated spontaneously from collective life and not a coercive external force.⁵⁵⁹

When it came to another effort to define sociology for the French audience, it was not Durkheim but his two collaborators, Mauss and Fauconnet in their article for the *Grande Encyclopédie*, who presented their group’s position. Here again however we find many of Durkheim’s earlier postulates re-stated, though in a more nuanced and less extreme form. Repeating the ‘necessary’ axiom for sociology to exist as a science (ie that there are indeed social facts, distinct from the facts of other sciences, which are logically related to each other and are intelligible) they again rejected Gariel Tarde’s ‘anti-scientific’, individualist explanation of society.⁵⁶⁰ The point was, they insisted, not to exclude psychology, nor reduce social life to a material substratum, but that there was indeed a whole category of things, existing externally to the individual, which imposed

⁵⁵⁸ Durkheim, ‘La sociologie en France au XIXe siècle’, pp. 135-36.

⁵⁵⁹ Durkheim, ‘La sociologie et son domaine scientifique’, pp. 24-25.

⁵⁶⁰ Fauconnet and Mauss, pp. 140-41.

themselves upon the latter, and that there were beliefs, ways of acting and doing which individuals owed to collective life, which would be incomprehensible without society. There were, they argued, many things in economic life, in language and in religion, which individual sentiments could not explain, and which were manifestations of the life of the group.⁵⁶¹ Social facts came from outside the individual and the best way of recognising social ways of acting and thinking was by their 'obligatory character', with violation being met with a sanction.⁵⁶² What Mauss and Fauconnet added however was their recognition that there were also cases where 'social pressure did not make itself felt under the explicit form of obligation', and their definition of social facts as 'institutions', understood not just as 'political constitutions' and 'legal organisations', but also as 'customs and fashions, prejudices and superstitions', which are in constant process of becoming. The 'science of society' is the 'science of institutions', the 'social ways of acting and thinking...that the individual finds pre-established, and that are generally transmitted by education'.⁵⁶³

While Mauss and Fauconnet formulated the definition of sociology, it was Durkheim and Fauconnet who defined the relationship of sociology to the social sciences. Highly polemical in tone, and echoing the preface to the first *Année sociologique*, the article opened lamenting the fact that sociology, conceived of as a general theory of society, was still immersed in philosophy, that the discipline had stagnated since the time of Comte.⁵⁶⁴ While there may have been an explosion of sociological literature over the past twenty years, Durkheim and Fauconnet warned their readers as to the scientific value

⁵⁶¹ Fauconnet and Mauss , pp. 141-44.

⁵⁶² Ibid, p. 144

⁵⁶³ Ibid, p. 150

⁵⁶⁴ Durkheim and Fauconnet, p. 466, p. 469.

of much of this work. They argued that almost always what was given the name sociology was just another philosophical system where, like with Comte and Spencer, everything is reduced to a single problem of discovering the 'law which governs social evolution as a whole': while for some it is the 'law of imitation', elsewhere it is the 'law of adaptation or struggle for survival'.⁵⁶⁵ Rather than trying to furnish the 'key to open all locks', a genuinely scientific perspective in sociology would, they argued, realise that there were many doors and many keys to be found, that science was made up of various branches, each asking a multitude of specific questions.⁵⁶⁶

Durkheim and Fauconnet on the one hand presented sociology as if it were the synthesis, constituted from collaborative empirical work in the specialised branches of the social sciences.⁵⁶⁷ And yet in reality what they really were proposing was the introduction of a pre-established sociological method (the method of the Durkheimians, stated earlier by Durkheim himself, and more recently in a more up to date form by Mauss and Fauconnet) into the different social sciences. While one problem, they argued, was the persistence of the philosophical viewpoint in sociology, another was that the specialised, empirical social sciences in fact pre-dated sociology and had hitherto been pursued independently of each other and of general sociology.⁵⁶⁸ The challenge the Durkheimian school set for itself was thus to integrate these particular sciences, which all dealt with social facts - economics, the science of religion, the study of law and morality -

⁵⁶⁵ Durkheim and Fauconnet, pp. 471-72. For the English translation see Émile Durkheim and Paul Fauconnet, 'Sociology and the Social Sciences', in Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, ed. by Lukes, trans by Halls, pp. 175-208 (p. 182).

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid, pp. 482-84.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 472.

within the natural sciences, that is to make them into ‘positive sciences’, by adopting the Durkheimian method.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁹ Durkheim and Fauconnet , p. 485.

4.3.4 Law, Economics, History

What Durkheim proposed to do with the *Année sociologique* was therefore not exactly, as he claimed, to constitute sociology out of the synthesis of empirical research in the social sciences, but rather to introduce his method of sociological enquiry into these disciplines as the only genuinely scientific method. Working on the fundamental assumption that the religious, moral, legal and economic sciences all dealt with facts of a social nature, he held that the phenomena studied by these various sciences needed to be explained sociologically and formed part of the subject-matter of sociology. This conception of the relationship between sociology and the social sciences had the advantage of making possible an intellectual division of labour, which was reflected in the internal organisation of the *Année*, and formed the basis of a coherent interdisciplinary project. Every year, in each of their specialised fields, reviewers produced a series of critical articles of what they considered to be the most relevant recent publications, reviews which, more than just neutral summaries, were critiques from the perspective of Durkheimian sociology.

Paul Fauconnet for example, had, every year from 1899 a substantial column within the section on the sociology of morals and law, where he dealt with a very specific question, ‘responsibility’. If, unlike the *Revue internationale de sociologie*, the *Année* had few actual international contributors, its authors nevertheless sought to address the most important debates at an international level in their given field. Fauconnet was no exception and in his reviews he sought to present the position of French sociology in relation to the main European schools of thought in legal theory on the question of penal and civil responsibility. Thus in the early issues of the *Année sociologique* his attention

was drawn to the Italian, ‘positivist’, school of criminology and the then current debate between it and the ‘neo-rationalist’ school.⁵⁷⁰ Both schools of thought, he explained, had grown out of a problem with the classical, rationalist conception of punishment and responsibility, which considered the sanction as an objectively defined compensation paid by an offender for the violation of the established law, and considered each person as equally endowed with the freedom to choose between possible courses of action. The problem with this theory was that it took no account of the individual offender, so while some criminals convicted for minor crimes were actually dangerous and likely to re-offend, those who were actually harmless could be made worse by too harsh a sanction. The neo-rationalist school therefore proposed to derive the sanction then from the degree of responsibility of the criminal, while the Italian school focused entirely on the greater or lesser propensity of individuals to harm society and on putting them out of a position to do so.

In a sense, Fauconnet argued, both schools actually ignored the real point, which would be to explain why in given social contexts punishment takes the form it does, and why responsibility is conceived of in a certain way. What he found valuable in one particular work he reviewed, a study on the individuation of punishment, was precisely the emphasis on the sanction as a *social* reaction against crime, to be traced to a collective idea of justice.⁵⁷¹ Elsewhere he praised the same author’s effort to socialise the notion of responsibility, to show that it was the ‘conscience collective’, which called for

⁵⁷⁰ He brings this debate up indirectly through his review of a French author, R. Saleilles, as this debate provided the context for the work in question, a study on the individuation of punishment. This was by far the longest review in his ‘droit pénal’ section in 1899. See, Paul Fauconnet, ‘Saleilles, R, *L’Individuation de la peine*’, *AS*, 2 (1899), 358-64.

⁵⁷¹ Fauconnet, ‘Saleilles’.

the punishment of the person responsible and judged as responsible ‘every man who seemed normal from a physiological point of view’.⁵⁷² This work, argued Fauconnet, optimistically, was an expression of the new historical and sociological trend in criminology, towards the rejection of the idea of crime as a timeless, universal thing; there was a new tendency towards the consideration for how crime and related notions of punishment and responsibility change throughout history and towards accepting that they cannot be studied apart from their social representations.⁵⁷³ With regards to his own specific subject of interest, he argued that the objective study of responsibility would involve the search for the origin of this notion and ‘the causes of the changes that it has gone through up to our time’.⁵⁷⁴

In his section on economic sociology, in the first issue of the *Année*, François Simiand was also drawn to the debates at a European level about the new theory of value, the theory of ‘utilité-limite’. In Simiand’s reviews we see an approach similar to Fauconnet’s as he distinguished two opposing schools of thought on the specific question of value, demonstrated the insufficiency of either to provide a scientific account of value and proposed a sociological approach as a better alternative.⁵⁷⁵ While the ‘utilité-limite’ theory (which defined value in terms of a thing’s capacity to satisfy human needs, though also taking into account the relative difficulty in satisfying such needs) tended to

⁵⁷² Also see Paul Fauconnet, ‘Alimena, *I limiti e I modificatori dell’imputabilità*’ *AS*, 3 (1900), 428-37 where we find a summary of the Italian school and the difference between it and the new Italian school.

⁵⁷³ Fauconnet, ‘Saleilles’, p. 363.

⁵⁷⁴ Paul Fauconnet ‘Hamon, A., *Déterminisme et responsabilité*’, *AS*, 2 (1899), 367-69 (p. 369).

⁵⁷⁵ See for example François Simiand, ‘Berardi, *La legge del Valore secondo la dottrina della Utilità-Limite*’, *AS*, 1(1898), 458-64 and ‘Buch, Leo von, *Intensitaet der Arbeit, Wert und Preis der Waren*’, *AS*, 1 (1898), 464-67.

be labelled the subjective or psychological explanation (as opposed to an ‘objective’ theory that derived value from the work involved in the creation of goods) Simiand argued that ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ should not be taken to refer to the nature of the economic facts themselves but to the method used in accounting for such facts. Echoing the Durkheimian conception of objectivity, he argued that objectivity was not a distinction between a psychological or non-psychological explanation of value; it was more the recognition that economic phenomena such as value were part of nature and subject to laws that were intelligible and could not be derived from individual psychology.⁵⁷⁶ Value and price, he argued, existed outside of and imposed themselves upon the individuals, but the purely economic factors of production (natural resources, the work-force, technology) were not the only things to be considered: varying social factors (socially generated needs, the distribution of wealth, working conditions, social and political development) were just as important.⁵⁷⁷ Like Fauconnet, Simiand also optimistically noted a tendency at an international level towards the historical and sociological perspective, and an increasing concern in economics to emphasise the ‘social factor’. This he argued could indeed provide the way out of the constant shuttling between the so-called psychological (‘subjective’) and materialist (‘objective’) theories.⁵⁷⁸

Durkheim’s broad definition of the aims and programme of the *Année*, his basic requirement that sociology and the social sciences be conducted ‘scientifically’, thus

⁵⁷⁶ François Simiand, ‘Wernicke, Dr J, *Der objective Wert und Preis*’, *AS*, 1 (1898), 467-72 (p. 467).

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 470-71 and François Simiand, ‘Stolzmann, R., *Die Soziale Kategorie in der Volkswirtschaftslehre*’, *AS*, 1(1898), 472-75 (p. 475).

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 475.

made possible an intellectual division of labour between specialists in different branches of social science, who shared a conception of what it meant to pursue objective, scientific research in their related fields. There was a drawback however, and, as we shall see in chapter six, it led to accusations, from scholars outside the *Année* group, who were working in neighbouring disciplines such as history, of ‘sociological imperialism’.⁵⁷⁹ I shall discuss this question further in chapter six. While this reaction might lead one to retort that Durkheim’s strategy in defining the aims and programme of the *Année* was not therefore very logical in that it alienated a section of the French academic community from his project, it also brings up an important point about the meaning of ‘strategy’ as I am using it throughout this thesis. Whatever the overall end-result of Durkheim’s approach, his course of action was bound up with the objective affinities of the group. While Durkheim’s strategies in defining the aims and programme of the *Année sociologique* did have definite advantages, such strategies need to be seen not so much as the result of a rational means-ends calculation but more as choices made which were themselves informed by an intellectual habitus shaped within nineteenth-century French academic philosophy.

⁵⁷⁹ See Philippe Besnard, ‘L’impérialisme sociologique face à l’histoire’, in Besnard, *Études durkheimiennes*, pp. 299-310, who takes issue with Victor Karady’s argument in ‘Stratégies de réussite et modes de faire-valoir de la sociologie’. Also, Henri Hauser, *L’Enseignement des sciences sociales* (Paris: Chevalier-Maresq, 1903), Charles Seignobos, *La Méthode historique appliquée aux sciences sociales* (Paris: Alcan, 1901).

4.4 The Accumulation of Symbolic Capital

It may have been the last of the sociological journals mentioned here to be founded, but the *Année sociologique* certainly tapped into a specific type of intellectual demand and within the space of a year or two it had established itself as a successful publication. While all bode well for its continuation, the biggest problem that began to present itself seems to have been the workload. Such was the effort that just one issue required that it became, as Durkheim lamented to Mauss, impossible to produce anything else and he feared that rather than producing new work, his collaborators would become immobilised in ‘this bibliographic work’.⁵⁸⁰ Yet if he was encouraged by all those involved to continue with the *Année* it was because it really was not *just* bibliographic work. The journal, in the first instance, served as a point around which a recognisable school of thought in sociology was formed and consolidated. Although perhaps less tangible and immediate than the symbolic capital deriving from individual book production, this impersonal and collective project itself had its returns. Through a collective accumulation of both institutional and scientific capital, the continuity of the Durkheimian school of thought seemed guaranteed at least into the next generation. Two points are particularly significant in this regard: the gradual establishment of the Durkheimians within the university and the re-investment of scientific capital into the new and expanding domain of religious science.

⁵⁸⁰ Émile Durkheim, Letters to Marcel Mauss, February 1902 and February-March, 1901, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 315-17 and pp. 276-77.

4.4.1 Institutions and Appointments

In response to the Izoulet affair, Durkheim, as we have seen, had written to Mauss, that what he cared about was not so much ‘administrative success’ but more to be able to exercise some scientific influence, regardless of his institutional position, and, in many ways, through founding the *Année*, he managed to do precisely this. Yet while institutional and scientific legitimacy can be treated as distinct things, they are nevertheless not totally separate. Just as Durkheim’s own position as the university representative in the field of sociology had initially helped to attract future collaborators to his project, the appointment of central members of the group to various strategic teaching posts could only enhance the group’s intellectual authority. What had, as I have already indicated, distinguished the *Année* group in 1898 was the relative lack of professional titles: only Durkheim, with his chair at Bordeaux, Emmanuel Lévy and Célestin Bouglé with teaching posts in the faculty of law at Aix and the faculty of arts at Montpellier respectively already had university positions.⁵⁸¹ Very soon however, this situation changed and in the space of four years the combined institutional capital of the group increased considerably, the first important appointment being that of Bouglé to a newly created chair of ‘social philosophy’ at Toulouse in 1901. With the Durkheimians now occupying two of only three existing sociological chairs (alongside the new Toulouse chair, there was Durkheim’s chair at Bordeaux and Espinas’s one at the Sorbonne) this appointment in a way made up for the Izoulet affair.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸¹ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, p. 180; Besnard, ‘La formation de l’équipe de l’Année sociologique’, table II.

⁵⁸² On Bouglé’s career see Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, p. 178, Weisz, ‘L’idéologie républicaine et les sciences sociales’, p. 104 and W. Paul Vogt, ‘Un durkheimien ambivalent: Célestin Bouglé, 1870-1940’, *RFS*, 20.1 (1979), 123-39.

Whatever disdain he expressed for ‘administrative success’, Durkheim recognised the value of such appointments and did what he could to keep these assets within the group. When, for example, he himself would later move on from Bordeaux to a chair in the science of education at Paris, he made sure that one of the members of the *Année* team should replace him, and manoeuvred in support of Gaston Richard.⁵⁸³ Likewise, in 1907 when Bouglé was promoted to Espinas’s chair at the Sorbonne, Durkheim manoeuvred in favour of Paul Fauconnet so as not to lose the Toulouse chair. Writing to Louis Liard, he reassured the latter that although ‘M. Fauconnet was not yet a doctor’, he was still more than qualified for the post given his years of immersion in specialised historical and statistical work and involvement with the collective and ‘impersonal’ scientific enterprise that was the *Année sociologique*.⁵⁸⁴ While on the one hand, these promotions were important in establishing and consolidating the intellectual authority of the Durkheimian group as a whole, in the case of Fauconnet, we also see how association with the journal could confer scientific authority in an individual capacity, which could then be converted into individual institutional gains.

However, not all of the central members of the *Année* group had, like Bouglé, Richard and Lapie, mainstream university careers, and Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert pursued careers, not at the arts faculties but at the more marginal *École pratique des hautes études*. In a sense ‘marginal’ is the wrong word, since the capacity of this institution to confer scientific legitimacy was just as powerful as that of the mainstream arts faculties. One of the earliest concrete results of the pressure for university reform and

⁵⁸³ On Richard see W.S.F. Pickering, ‘Gaston Richard: collaborator et adversaire’, *RFS*, 20.1 (1979), 163-82 (pp. 165-66, and footnote 1, p. 166).

⁵⁸⁴ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Louis Liard, 4 December 1907 in ‘Lettres de Durkheim’, 115-116.

the promotion of scientific research, it was indeed, as we have seen in chapter one, the very embodiment of scientific legitimacy, and this was particularly true in the fields of history and the science of religion.⁵⁸⁵ Now it was in this religious sciences section of the *École pratique* that, after his philosophy agrégation in 1895, Marcel Mauss enrolled; it was also here that he met Henri Hubert, who, after his history agrégation in 1895, also took courses at the school.⁵⁸⁶ Rather than pressing his nephew to take a more traditional academic route beginning with lycée teaching, Durkheim seems to have had a high regard for the school, and continually advised his nephew to continue on with his studies here.

The eventual appointment in 1901 of both Hubert and Mauss to teaching posts at this school after the deaths of Auguste Sabatier and of Léon Marillier was greeted enthusiastically by Durkheim. Writing to congratulate Hubert, he said, that it was ‘not without interest’ that sociology had gained entry to the school and that if it was not exactly on the programme, it was there in the choice of person, which was, at least ‘something to be pleased about’.⁵⁸⁷ Not a bad year for the group, and all seemed to be finally falling into place as Durkheim wrote in a letter to Mauss: ‘Enfin, d’une manière ou d’une autre tout s’arrange’.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁵ Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 42-44. See chapter one above, section 1.3.2.

⁵⁸⁶ On Hubert see François A. Isambert, ‘Henri Hubert et la sociologie du temps’, *RFS*, 20.1 (1979), 183-204 (184).

⁵⁸⁷ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Henri Hubert, June 1901, ‘Lettres de Émile Durkheim à Henri Hubert’, *RFS*, 28.3 (1987), 483-534 (p. 519).

⁵⁸⁸ Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, December 1901, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 298-99.

4.4.2 English Anthropology and Scientific Legitimacy

Not only did Durkheim welcome his nephew's and Hubert's involvement with the religious section of the *École pratique*, but it was precisely around this time, in the mid-1890s that he himself also began to take far more of an interest in developing the sociology of religion than he ever had done before. Looking back on the period, he referred to the academic year of 1894-95 when he delivered a lecture course on the topic of religion at Bordeaux for the first time, as 'a watershed in my thinking'. It was only then, he wrote, that he developed a 'clear view of the capital role played by religion in social life' and 'found a means of tackling sociologically the study of religion'.⁵⁸⁹ Such was Durkheim's own enthusiasm for the new field of religious science that was opening up that he accorded the section on religious sociology, of which Mauss and Hubert were in charge, a dominant place in the overall organisation of the *Année*. Indeed, as he wrote in a letter to Mauss, he hoped that from the journal a new theory of society would emerge, which would be the 'exact opposite of historical materialism, so vulgar and simplistic, in spite of its objectivist leanings'. This new theory, he stated, would see religion, rather than the economy, as the 'matrix of social facts'.⁵⁹⁰ So as to 'emphasise' as clearly as possible this 'orientation', the second issue in 1899 opened with two original

⁵⁸⁹ Durkheim, 'Deux lettres sur l'influence allemande dans la sociologie française', p. 404. For the English translation see Émile Durkheim, 'Influences upon Durkheim's View of Sociology', in Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, ed. by Lukes, trans. by Halls, pp. 259-60. For the list of Durkheim's lecture courses again see Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, p. 618

⁵⁹⁰ Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss June 1897.

articles on religion: a definition of religious phenomena written by Durkheim followed by Hubert's and Mauss's essay on the theory of sacrifice.⁵⁹¹

The exact nature of this religious turn has been the object of considerable debate ever since Talcott Parson's argument that it marked a decisive point in the development of Durkheim's thought from an early empiricism and materialism towards later idealism and voluntarism, which would cumulate in the *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.⁵⁹² Yet Durkheim himself never accepted the description of his early work as 'materialist' or 'empiricist', a perspective indeed entirely at odds with his philosophical education, and while he did seek to subsequently address such criticisms, to clarify the meaning of 'objectivism' in sociology he never re-wrote a new *Rules of Sociological Method*. For this reason I find more convincing Warren Schmaus's argument that if the content of Durkheim's original research programme did evolve into something quite different, as he re-orientated his perspective towards the new 'niche' of religion, his philosophy of science was characterised by overall continuity. However, while Schmaus thought it unnecessary to refer to the wider context to account for this turn, it is difficult, without reference to the intellectual climate and the connections between the *Année* group and the *École pratique*, to understand why Durkheim would have been so enthusiastic about developing the sociology of religion or to explain the symbolic returns his enterprise gained from this.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹¹ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, February 1898, Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 107-109. Émile Durkheim, 'De la définition des phénomènes religieux', *AS*, 2 (1899), 1-28, and Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, 'Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice', *AS*, 2 (1899), 29-138.

⁵⁹² Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action*.

⁵⁹³ Schmaus, *Durkheim's Philosophy of Science*, p. 33 and p. 247.

One of the most significant contemporary developments in the human sciences, the science of religion could not have been more popular. Demand from the field had led in the 1880s not only to the foundation the religious section of the *École pratique*, but also to a new journal, the *Revue de l'histoire des religions*. Again, the stated aim of this new journal was to cut between religious 'fanaticism' or 'dogmatism' on the one hand and a type of 'rationalism' which ridiculed all religious beliefs as useless superstition, in order to develop a genuinely scientific explanation of religious phenomena. And it was in this journal that Marcel Mauss's first articles were published in 1896, before the foundation of the *Année*.⁵⁹⁴ Yet not only was the idea of submitting religious facts to the rigours of the historical and critical method intellectually legitimate, there was also an increasing interest developing in non-European religions, with the founders of the *Revue de l'histoire des religions* declaring that the aim was to explore with equal rigour religions of the East and the West, ancient and modern.⁵⁹⁵ The major intellectual turn to 'primitive' religion in France was marked, as Mauss told his audience at his inaugural lecture at the *École pratique* in 1901, by the nomination in 1890 of his predecessor Léon Marillier as lecturer in what was then called the 'history of the religions of non-civilised peoples'.⁵⁹⁶

Whereas in the 1880s Germany stood as the embodiment of scientific legitimacy and had been the place to which Durkheim was drawn, now, in the field of religious history, it was the so-called English anthropological school that was perceived in France

⁵⁹⁴ Maurice Vernès, 'Introduction', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 1 (1880), 1-17 (p. 10).

⁵⁹⁵ Vernès, 'Introduction', p. 10.

⁵⁹⁶ Marcel Mauss, 'Léon Marillier et la Science des Religions', in Mauss, *Œuvres*, iii, p. 460.

as the most advanced in this new domain. Mauss recounted the interest generated by the translation of E.B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* into French, of Andrew Lang's article on 'Mythology' in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and 'definitive works' such as William Robertson Smith's the *Religion of the Semites* or James Frazer's the *Golden Bough* that highlighted the importance of 'primitive' religions as one of the 'foundations of the comparative science of religions'. It was precisely these publications and translations, recalled Mauss, which convinced those in charge of the *École pratique* to create a course of studies in this field and to appoint Marillier.⁵⁹⁷ Unlike Durkheim or Bouglé, who had previously travelled to Germany, when Mauss requested a scholarship to study abroad for the year 1896-97, it was to Holland and then to England that he was led. And Durkheim himself was also drawn to the English anthropological school, writing that his turn to religion was due to his studies of 'the works of Robertson Smith and his school'.⁵⁹⁸

After 1895 there was in short a definite re-orientation of focus on Durkheim's part, and whereas before he had paid very little attention to non-Western societies and had questioned the scientific value of much ethnographical work, now this became his principal focus, as he came to value the potential of ethnography for constructing a sociological perspective in religion.⁵⁹⁹ More than of an extreme theoretical nature however, I suggest that this re-direction was more a re-conversion of symbolic capital and re-investment in the new, thriving field of religious science.

⁵⁹⁷ Mauss, 'Léon Marillier', pp. 460-61.

⁵⁹⁸ Durkheim 'Deux lettres sur l'influence allemande dans la sociologie française', p. 404; trans, p. 260. On Mauss's trip to England see Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, pp. 123-33.

⁵⁹⁹ W.S.F. Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion: Themes and Theories*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: James Clark, 2009), pp. 68-69; Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 180-81.

4.4.3 Taboo and Sacrifice

If Durkheim could write to his nephew Marcel Mauss to tell him that his participation was central to the success of the *Année* it was not just because, being based in Paris, Mauss was able to attract a number of fellow philosophy graduates and students from the *École pratique* to the review.⁶⁰⁰ His specialisation in religious studies, in non-European religions, and his position within the religious section of the *École pratique* meant that, through him, the *Année* would be in a good position to gain from new and relatively unexplored territory that was opening up in the science of religion. And it was indeed clear from Mauss's first published articles that he intended not only to introduce the Durkheimian sociological perspective into the study of religion, but also to develop from this work on religion a perspective on the religious origins of social facts more generally.

In his 1896 review of Steinmetz's work on the 'religious' origins of penal law, Mauss had drawn out insights important for developing a sociology of religion, and simultaneously proposed to 'rectify' the explanation, to give it a genuinely 'sociological character'.⁶⁰¹ On the one hand Mauss welcomed Steinmetz's insight into the 'lack of finality' of the vendetta in tribal society, his description of it as a passionate reaction where the 'first one to come along' could become the victim without even being the one actually responsible for the offence, and his general argument as to the 'religious' origin of punishment. What Mauss contested however was Steinmetz's individualist, psychological understanding of religion, which assumed that 'primitive' man was vindictive by nature,

⁶⁰⁰ Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, June 1897.

⁶⁰¹ Émile Durkheim, 'Marcel Mauss, "La Religion et les Origines du droit pénal"', *AS*, 1 (1898), 353-58 (pp. 353-54). Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, p. 122.

which attributed to the dead murder victim a ‘great thirst for revenge’, and then considered the vendetta to be part of a religious cult of the dead as an act which provided the victim necessary to pacify the spirit of the deceased.

It is no wonder that Durkheim himself in the pages of the *Année* drew attention to Mauss’s analysis of Stenimetz: drawing on the concepts of mechanical solidarity and *conscience collective*, Mauss had proposed to explain punishment by the collective sentiments of the clan, the desire to stay in communion with the deceased and the desire to restore the vitality of the group after the death of a relative.⁶⁰² While Steinmetz considered the private vendetta as the origin of the penal system, Mauss retorted that there were a whole series of offences in primitive society sanctioned by the death penalty. Any man, animal or thing wrote Mauss, which has ‘any kind of intimate relationship with the cult...is sacred or...*tabooed*’, and any unsanctioned contact with these sacred things is strictly forbidden, and the violation of the taboo being ‘severely punished’.⁶⁰³ The vendetta he suggested was thus best seen as part of a whole system of prohibitions and punishments, with its origins in the religious institution of the taboo, the breaker of which is considered a ‘dangerous being, a threat to those around him’, one who must be ‘kept at a distance’, or ‘killed’ or ‘made inoffensive’. Whereas Mauss had indicated here his debt to the *Division of Labour* and the concept of collective consciousness Durkheim himself preferred to emphasise the originality of this proposal and singled out the argument concerning the origins of penal law in the primitive taboo as a ‘fertile idea’.⁶⁰⁴

It was through the column of the *Année sociologique* on religious sociology

⁶⁰² Durkheim, ‘Mauss’, pp. 354-55.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid*, pp. 356-57.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 357.

shared with Henri Hubert that Mauss not only sought to introduce the principal figures and main discoveries of the English anthropological school to France, but also to draw on the school's work to develop a sociological perspective on the origins of religious phenomena.⁶⁰⁵ Identifiable by its evolutionary perspective on religion, its search for the common 'human principle' behind all religious practices, the English anthropological school proposed the 'fundamental identity' of 'primitive religion', the 'religions of ancient civilised peoples' and the 'survival of beliefs and rites in local practices and traditions of Europe and Asia'.⁶⁰⁶ This was precisely the sort of lens through which the Scottish theologian William Robertson Smith viewed the Old Testament and in his *Religion of the Semites* (the work that influenced Durkheim so much) he had argued that, like all the major religions, the religion of the Hebrews did not develop in isolation but had grown out of other earlier religions. Beyond the evolutionary perspective however, Robertson Smith's emphasis on the practical element of religion, on the ritual over the belief component and in particular his work on sacrifice, especially influenced both Mauss and Durkheim.⁶⁰⁷ Unlike E. B. Tylor, who, in his *Primitive Culture*, interpreted sacrifice as a gift to pacify the gods or win their favour, Smith concluded that sacrifice was originally not an interested gift, but a communal meal between kin, traces of which were to be found in later religions more familiar to contemporaries. Presenting totemic sacrifice as the first phase of religious evolution, he argued that the communal meal,

⁶⁰⁵ See for example: Marcel Mauss, 'Jevons, F. B., *An Introduction to the History of Religions*', *AS*, 1 (1898): 160-7; 'Frazer, J.G, *Le Totémisme*', *AS*, 2 (1899): 201-202 ; 'Spencer and Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*', 'Tylor, E. B., *Totem Post from the Haida Village of Masset*' and 'Frazer, J. G, *The Origin of Totemism*', *AS*, 3 (1900), 205-215, 215-17 and 217-20.

⁶⁰⁶ Mauss, 'Jevons', p. 161.

⁶⁰⁷ Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion*, pp. 63-65.

where the clan members eat some of the usually forbidden totem, consecrated the unity of the clan and guaranteed the well being of its members.⁶⁰⁸

Yet the English school proposed that totemism was not only the earliest form of religion but also the oldest form of social organisation, the clan, and that the totem functioned as the symbol of the clan's kinship system. In totemism a certain species of animal or plant, taken as the totem, was considered holy, and religious respect was due to all those beings who were believed to be part of the totemic species; thus within a clan, whose members considered themselves to originate from the same totemic ancestor, individual clan-members were considered sacred to a greater or lesser degree. For the English anthropological school, the totem was therefore also at the centre of moral life, with the notion of sin and punishment deriving from offences against the totem, considered dangerous for the life of the clan, while totemic sacrifice was a means through which the clan communicated with its gods through eating one of the totemic beings.⁶⁰⁹ Yet however influential the English anthropological school was on Durkheimian sociology, Mauss nevertheless noted in their work a 'certain intellectualism' in that religious practices were always traced to individual psychology, and the actions of individuals were assumed to depend on their view of the world. Thus, he regretted, the 'method was not sociological'.⁶¹⁰

In their 'Essay on the Nature and Function of Sacrifice' Mauss and Hubert, setting out from the work of the English school (Tylor, Frazer and Robertson Smith) sought to develop a sociological theory of sacrifice. While they saw the work of Robertson Smith

⁶⁰⁸ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, pp. 153-54.

⁶⁰⁹ Mauss, 'Jevons', p. 164.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid*, 161-62.

as the most advanced on the question so far, and welcomed his conception of sacrifice as a communal meal amongst kin, a meal that guaranteed and re-vitalised the communal bond, they disagreed with the chronological priority he accorded it.⁶¹¹ There were, they wrote, many different types of sacrificial acts to be found alongside communion, which could not be reduced to or derived from the latter, and so the ‘unity’ of the sacrificial system ‘must be sought elsewhere’.⁶¹²

At the root of sacrifice was, for Mauss and Hubert, the division of space into the worlds of the sacred and the profane, the desirability of contact with the sacred but also danger of such direct contact with it. While on the one hand the sacred things were normally the objects of taboo, contact with them could also have beneficial effects for the individual and for the life of the clan. The aim of sacrifice was thus to make such communication between the profane and the sacred possible.⁶¹³ Mauss and Hubert defined sacrifice as a religious act through which an object is consecrated, through which it passed from the ‘domain of the common’, to acquire either a ‘religious character it did not have before’ or to be ‘rid of an unfavourable character with which it is afflicted’. Through sacrifice an object is either ‘elevated to a state of grace or brought out of a state of sin’.⁶¹⁴ The point of the rite was however for the consecrated thing to serve as an intermediary between a ‘sacrifiant’, or the subject who benefits from the sacrificial rite - a subject which can be an ‘individual or collective’, a ‘family, clan tribe, nation or secret society’ - and the gods. As the consecrating effects spread out from the sacrificial victim to the ‘sacrifiant’, the rite is a way of making the sacrifiant holy in a moderate and

⁶¹¹ Hubert and Mauss, ‘Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice’, *AS*, 2, 29-33.

⁶¹² *Ibid*, p. 34.

⁶¹³ *Ibid*, p. 133.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 37; Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, p. 160.

mediated fashion and sacrifice is in essence the ‘means for the profane to communicate with the sacred by the intermediary of a victim’.⁶¹⁵ Rather than reducing the whole sacrificial system to the communal meal as Robertson Smith did, Mauss and Hubert argued that there were a whole range of sacrificial rites which mediated contact between the profane and sacred - rites of entrance, which served to progressively purify the sacrificiant in order to gradually approach the sacred, to prepare the ascent towards the divine, and rites of exit to make it possible for the sacrificiant to return to the common life, to prepare the descent towards the profane.⁶¹⁶

Whereas for Robertson Smith the sacrificial victim came to the rite with a religious character already defined, for Mauss and Hubert the very purpose of the rite conceived of as a collective practice was to consecrate the victim. The communal meal where the sacrificiants ate the consecrated totem was part of a whole vast system of consecration and de-consecration.⁶¹⁷ The sacred things were social things, the product of collective beliefs and practices; sacrifice served to bring individuals into contact with the sacred, while it also re-affirmed and consolidated collective belief. This was an explicit affirmation of the social function of religious rites and was indeed what was so new about Mauss and Hubert’s work.⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁵ Hubert and Mauss, ‘Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice’, p. 31, pp. 38-41, p. 133.

⁶¹⁶ François A. Isambert, ‘L’ Élaboration de la notion de sacré dans l’ “école” durkheimienne, *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 35-36 (1976), 35-56 (pp. 41-43); Hubert and Mauss, ‘Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice’, p. 52, pp. 94-95.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid, p. 133.

⁶¹⁸ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, p. 161.

4.4.4 From Religion to Morals and Knowledge

With Mauss being abroad in England for most of the time work on the essay on sacrifice seems to have been slow and difficult.⁶¹⁹ Yet, from the beginning Durkheim was particularly enthusiastic about the planned essay, which, he wrote, was ‘absolutely important’, and even advised his nephew not to worry for a while about his doctoral thesis but to devote himself entirely to the essay on sacrifice.⁶²⁰ Whatever difficulties arose, he wrote that he really wanted to see this work completed and in other letters we find evidence of a ‘hidden collaboration’ from Durkheim on the project, from a suggested definition of sacrifice, to advice relating to the actual production of the work and organisation of the workload.⁶²¹ No doubt the importance Durkheim attached to this essay resided in the fact that, through their critique of the English school and their stress on the social nature and social function of sacrifice, Mauss and Hubert provided a concrete example of how and with what results the sociological perspective could be introduced into religious science. While, they argued, the gods to whom the sacrificial acts were addressed may seem like ‘vain and costly illusions’ these ‘religious notions’ do exist objectively because they are collectively believed. The sacred things were social things, which existed outside the ‘sacrifiant’, but which were also close enough for believers to enter in and out of contact with, to find the strength and re-assurance they expected from the rites - the relationship of ‘immanence and transcendence’ which was

⁶¹⁹ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, p. 156.

⁶²⁰ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, January 1898, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 99-102.

⁶²¹ Émile Durkheim, Letters to Marcel Mauss, 19 March 1898, 15 June 1898 and 4 May, 1898 in *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 115-20, pp. 143-46 and pp. 133-36.

distinctive of social things.⁶²² Addressed to the sacred things, the function of sacrifice was also social as through individual acts of abnegation, collective representations were re-vitalised and social authority conferred on the things the participants hold dear.⁶²³

Lest anyone miss the point that religious facts were social facts and as such part of the subject matter of sociology, Durkheim supplied an opening ‘note on the definition of religion’ to accompany Mauss and Hubert’s essay, so as to mark out ‘as strongly as possible’ the *Année*’s orientation and really highlight ‘the social character of religious phenomena’.⁶²⁴ Echoing his first ‘rule of sociological method’, Durkheim insisted that to study religion scientifically, one’s definition of religious facts could not derive from pre-conceived ideas about religion, the ‘confessional prejudices’, which very often have led scholars to miss the religious character of primitive beliefs and practices: seeing ‘only gross superstition in the religions of primitive peoples’ they ‘refuse to compare them too closely to the idealised cults of civilised peoples’.⁶²⁵ Citing the example of Albert Réville (the founder of the religious section of the *École pratique*) who defined religion as an ethic which regulated man’s conduct towards superior, god-like beings, Durkheim argued that such a modern European perspective, which saw God as essential to religion immediately excluded from view religions such as Buddhism which did not have gods at all.⁶²⁶ Rather than defining religion on the basis of the content of beliefs, Durkheim proposed to start out from the religious cult, from ritual practices and argued that prior to

⁶²² Hubert and Mauss, ‘Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice’, pp. 136-37.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁶²⁴ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, February 1898, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 107-109.

⁶²⁵ Durkheim, ‘De la définition des phénomènes religieux’, p. 3; Émile Durkheim, ‘Concerning the Definition of Religious Phenomena’, in *Durkheim on Religion*, ed. by Pickering, trans. by Redding and Pickering, pp. 74-99 (p. 75).

⁶²⁶ Durkheim, ‘De la définition des phénomènes religieux’, pp. 5-13.

the idea of God, the distinction between the sacred and the profane was more fundamental and that the religious cult was the 'totality of practices concerning *sacred things*'.⁶²⁷ While in this emphasis on ritual practice we see an expression of the new direction developed out of English anthropology, Durkheim also sought here to incorporate religious facts into his earlier definition of social facts. Religious communities, he argued, were characterised by an obligatory set of beliefs about sacred things and by pre-established and defined ways of acting in relation to these sacred things: religious facts consisted of 'obligatory beliefs, connected with clearly defined practices which are related to given objects of those beliefs', with religion itself being a more or less organised ensemble of phenomena of this type.⁶²⁸ Given that society was the only thing that surpassed the individual so as to impose a rule and to inspire respect then religious facts must be of social origin and required, in short, a social explanation. Religious science was therefore part of sociology.⁶²⁹

Beyond simply annexing the science of religion to sociology, Durkheim, as we have seen, hoped that from religious sociology an alternative, objective theory of society would emerge to replace historical materialism.⁶³⁰ Given that the 'sacred things', were 'those whose representation society itself has fashioned' and 'profane things...those which each of us constructs from our own sense data and experience', he could suggest that everything resulting from social life and surpassing the empirical individual - morals,

⁶²⁷ Durkheim, 'De la définition des phénomènes religieux', pp. 15-17; trans, p. 88.

⁶²⁸ Ibid, pp. 17-20, pp. 22-23; trans, p. 93.

⁶²⁹ Ibid, p. 23.

⁶³⁰ Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, June 1897.

laws, political institutions - was originally of religious origin.⁶³¹ Hence the immense interest he now showed in ethnographical research on the totemism of native Australian and American tribes and in the English anthropological school, which considered totemism as both a religion and a form of social organisation. Not only did totemism come to inform his sociology of the family, of morals and the law, it also prepared the ground for developing the sociology of knowledge. If Durkheim had already written about his wish to tackle from a 'new point of view' the 'traditional questions' in philosophy, and had sought to introduce a new approach to the study of morality, in his 1903 essay with Mauss on 'primitive classification', they offered a social explanation of the categories of thought.⁶³² While the turn to religion and primitive society allowed Durkheim to re-convert symbolic capital into a new and expanding field of studies, to annex the science of religion to sociology, it also offered a way of tackling sociologically traditional questions in both moral philosophy and logic, which would cumulate, some 15 years after *Suicide*, in his masterpiece *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*. This however will be discussed further in chapter six.

⁶³¹Durkheim, 'De la définition des phénomènes religieux', pp. 25-26; trans, p. 95. Isambert, 'L'Élaboration de la notion de sacré dans l' "école" durkheimienne', p. 40.

⁶³²Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, 22 December 1897, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 96-99; Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, 'De quelques formes primitives de classification: contribution à l'étude des représentations collectives', *AS*, 6 (1903), 1-72.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to show that although Durkheim had been writing on sociology since the 1880s, with many published articles and three books to his name, his authority in the new field of studies was by no means assured. Through bringing together, around a new journal the *Année sociologique*, a group of academics with an interest in sociology and a similar intellectual world-view he managed to establish a coherent, collaborative research programme in sociology, which very much helped to turn the situation around. As I have tried to show, the great success of this journal was that, unlike the Leplayists or the International Sociologists, the Durkheimians managed to meet the growing demand for intellectual specialisation and professionalisation in sociology, while they were at the same time at the forefront of the new developments in the human sciences such as the development of the science of religion. Although in this chapter I have focussed purely on the intellectual basis of Durkheim's future consecration at the pinnacle of the academic edifice, politics also had a role to play. It is to this question of the relationship between the Durkheimians and the field of political power that I shall now turn.

Chapter 5

Sociology and the Republic: Between Legitimation and Contestation

Although Durkheim often drew on the science/art opposition to describe what he was trying to do in developing sociology it is not the case, as I have indicated in chapter two and three, that social ‘science’ disregarded all questions relating to social ‘art’, questions, that is, of politics and social reform.⁶³³ He may have presented sociology as an objective science that limited itself to observing how societies are or have been, but at the same time Durkheim also made it perfectly clear that this science would also be of practical use.⁶³⁴ The aim of this chapter therefore is to look more closely at Durkheim’s conception of this social role of sociology and how his thinking on this matter evolved. More so than in previous chapters, I hope to emphasise here the political context, and Durkheim’s conceptualisation of the role of the sociologist in politics. Furthermore, alongside specifically intellectual factors, politics also counts in explaining the ultimate success of the Durkheimian school in establishing itself over other schools of thought as *the* French school of sociology, and this is another issue that I want to address here. With these aims in mind it is to the early period of sociology and Durkheim’s relationship to the new republican regime that I shall first turn.

⁶³³ See above 2.4, 3.3.3 and 3.4.2

⁶³⁴ Durkheim, *Les Règles de la méthode sociologique*, p. 60.

5.1 The Politics of Moral Education

Although Talcott Parsons's interpretation of Durkheim as a theorist of modern social order has had its various critics, it is difficult not to concede that the question of order did occupy at least an important place in Durkheim's thinking.⁶³⁵ More debatable is however the conclusion that his work therefore had conservative political implications. To begin with, the ahistorical definition of political right and left that these conservative interpretations suppose, one independent of context and reduced to a binary opposition between for example order and change, liberty and equality, community and individual, would seem to be an inadequate base on which to build an assessment of Durkheim's politics. In the context of the 1880s in France, as we shall see, the concern for order was not exactly the principal characteristic of the conservative coalition, and before considering Durkheim's politics it is first necessary to look at the historical context and the shifting conceptions of right and left in this period.

⁶³⁵ For an interpretation of Durkheim as a theorist of order see Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action*. For a critique of this reading see Giddens, 'Durkheim's Political Sociology'.

5.1.1 The ‘Opportunist’ Republic

In 1879, when Durkheim entered the *École normale supérieure*, the Third Republic may have been the political regime of France for some nine years, but it was only in this year that the new regime finally came to be firmly in the hands of republicans. Although, as Maurice Agulhon has pointed out, the country was declared to be a ‘Republic’ from the 4 September 1870, it did not constitutionally become so until 1875, and it was not until 1879 that the republicans actually came to really hold power.⁶³⁶ Indeed, in 1871, and particularly after the general elections of the 8 February which returned a large monarchist majority, it must have seemed to the Catholics of France, who tended to be ‘conservative’ (meaning here monarchist and anti-republican) that salvation was nigh.⁶³⁷ The restoration of the legitimist heir to the throne, the Comte de Chambord, looked imminent and with it a return to ‘religious principles’ or ‘moral order’ in the near future. The problem with the moral order however was that it soon came to seem anything but orderly, and just as a general desire for peace and stability among the population can explain the conservative victory in February 1871, it could also work against the right. The intransigence of Chambord in insisting on replacing the tri-colour with the Bourbon flag put off the more liberal Orléanist monarchists and made a united monarchist cause difficult, while Pius IX’s continued calls for French Catholics to support the independence of the Holy See risked stirring up a confrontation with Italy and Germany. While the anti-republican groups were busy plotting to overthrow the regime

⁶³⁶ Maurice Agulhon, *The French Republic, 1879-1992*, trans by Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 1; Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, pp. 103-105.

⁶³⁷ On the Catholic revival see Owen Chadwick, *A History of the Popes, 1830-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 96-131.

and seemed out of touch with reality, the Republic came for many people to represent the best chance for peace.⁶³⁸

On paper it may have looked more like a constitutional monarchy, with a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate, whose combined vote elected a President with a seven year term and eligible for re-election, but in these constitutional laws of 1875 the country found lasting political institutions. Meanwhile, over the course of the decade continuous electoral gains by the republicans in both chambers and the strategy of republican unity, or ‘no enemies on the left’, first employed in response to the political crisis of the 16th May 1877 served to further consolidate the Republic.⁶³⁹ Displaying a united front, in contrast to the divided right, the republican majority returned stronger and more confident after 1877, and with the President’s power to dissolve the Chamber discredited and the monarchist vote decimated, we can say that by 1879 the Republic was firmly in the hands of the republicans.

While republicanism itself did indeed have its own internal divisions between, broadly speaking, the government ‘opportunists’ and more ‘radical’ republicans to their left (groups which can be differentiated on questions such as the nature of the constitution, on social reform, colonial policy or Alsace-Lorraine) the need to defend the Republic against clericalism and monarchism meant that it was still difficult at this point to clearly appreciate these divisions.⁶⁴⁰ For most of the 1880s the ‘opportunists’ who

⁶³⁸ Jean-Marie Mayeur and Madeleine Rebérioux, *The Third Republic from its Origins to the Great War, 1871-1914*, trans. by J.B. Foster (Cambridge and Paris: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 30.

⁶³⁹ Winock, chapter 2, on the crisis of the 16th May 1877.

⁶⁴⁰ On the various trends within republicanism see Zeldin, *France 1848-1945*, i: *Ambition, Love and Politics* (1973), where there are chapters on opportunism, radicalism and socialism.

counted the politicians Léon Gambetta and Jules Ferry among their leading representatives, were the dominant political group in parliament. Having dropped the bellicose language of the ‘levée en masse’ and the theme of revenge against Germany, the opportunists believed in the gradual implementation of republican reforms, prioritising stability and seeking to build a solid social edifice less exposed to the wind of revolution. Grossly underestimating the problem of poverty and economic inequality, the actions of the government were largely of a moral nature: through the reform and secularisation of education, and through the generation of a new national symbolism (the ‘Marseillaise’ as the national anthem, the 14 July as the national festival, the state funerals of important scientists and writers) the opportunists sought to build the moral basis of unity.⁶⁴¹ However conservative this may seem to us today, at the time, to be on the parliamentary left was to be a republican, in favour of the consolidation of democratic institutions and secular society, against a traditionalist conservatism that opposed everything this new order stood for.⁶⁴²

A central tenet of republican ideology before 1890, which can perhaps help us understand this underestimation of the social question was the idea, first expressed by Léon Gambetta in 1872, that society was witnessing the arrival in positions of power

⁶⁴¹ On the concern for stability and the underestimation of the social question see Jean-Pierre Azéma and Michel Winock, *La IIIème République, 1870-1940* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1970), p. 111, p. 145. On republican symbolism see Agulhon, *The French Republic*, pp. 16-19 and *Marianne into Battle: Republican Imagery and Symbolism in France, 1789-1880*, trans. by Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Also see James R. Lehning, *To be a Citizen: The Political Culture of the French Third Republic* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001) and Ben Amos.

⁶⁴² Azéma and Winock, pp.134-39.

once reserved for men of birth and fortune, of the ‘new social strata’.⁶⁴³ A diffuse social group, often defined as neither proletarians nor upper middle class, the label ‘new men’ was generally taken to refer to all those who had managed, in spite of ‘humble’ origins, to take advantage of universal suffrage, economic development and educational reform to climb the social ladder, or at least envision a place, if not for themselves then for their offspring, in the higher echelons of society.⁶⁴⁴ Nowhere was this optimism and faith in the capacity of a secular Republic to solve the problems of social inequality by virtue of its political consolidation alone more marked than within the teaching professions, where education was seen as the key to this ideal society of the future.⁶⁴⁵ Having studied at the École normale precisely in these optimistic early years it is hardly surprising, as we shall see, that Durkheim in the 1880s was an enthusiastic supporter of the new regime.

⁶⁴³ Charle, *La Naissance des ‘intellectuels’*, pp. 66-72; Azéma and Winock, p. 112. On the ‘nouvelles couches sociales’ also see Zeldin, *France 1848-1945*, i, pp. 613-17, pp. 625-27.

⁶⁴⁴ Azéma and Winock, p. 112.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 145.

5.1.2 Secularisation and Education

As we have seen in chapter one, it would not be entirely correct to take the regime's ideology at face value and say that the elite sphere of political, administrative, economic or intellectual life had, with the advent of the Republic, finally become accessible to those most deprived of economic, cultural and social capital.⁶⁴⁶ And yet, we have also seen how developments in the intellectual field allowed, in exceptional cases, for outstanding students of 'humble' origins (students such as Durkheim) to reach the pinnacle of the academic edifice.⁶⁴⁷ It is thus not surprising to find that Durkheim, like many of his fellow students at the *École normale* in the 1880s, was a supporter of the Republic and hoped to be able to contribute something in his future career as an academic to its political consolidation.⁶⁴⁸

It was in education that the republican government, once firmly established in power, took most decisive action and between 1879 and 1886 a series of laws initiated by the opportunist Minister of Education Jules Ferry were promulgated. Conceived of as a way of providing the new regime with a positivist inspired moral unity, to replace that which Catholicism had given to previous regimes, these laws can be interpreted as a reversal of a trend, underway for much of the nineteenth century, towards increasing Church power in education. From the Guizot law of 1833 declaring religious instruction to be a fundamental part of primary education and guaranteeing the Catholic Church's 'freedom to teach' in primary education', to the Falloux law of 1850 again declaring

⁶⁴⁶ Charle, *Les Élités des la République* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1987). Also see point 1.3.1 above.

⁶⁴⁷ Charle, 'Le champ universitaire parisien à la fin dix-neuvième siècle', p. 83.

⁶⁴⁸ Davy, 'Émile Durkheim: l'homme', p. 189; Charle, *La Naissance des 'intellectuels'*, pp. 83-84 and 'Les Normaliens et le socialisme', pp. 135-36. Also see Lacroix, 'La vocation originelle d'Émile Durkheim', pp. 218-19.

religious instruction to be primordial and further extending the Church's 'freedom to teach' to secondary education, the educational ideals of the French Revolution had been progressively buried.⁶⁴⁹ This trend had continued right into the 1870s, with one of the last victories of the 'moral order' coming in 1875 when the Church's 'freedom to teach' was extended to higher education.⁶⁵⁰ Motivated by a desire to consolidate republican democracy, Ferry responded in presenting to the Chamber, on a highly significant date, 15 March 1879 (exactly 29 years after the voting of the Falloux law) his first two proposed reforms.⁶⁵¹ His intention seems to have been very much what his supporters bid him on the day of his nomination to office, to give the country a new 'Ferry law to erase the Falloux law', to curtail the activity of the Church which was undermining the regime and to assert the right of the state in education.⁶⁵² The best-known of these laws concerned the extension of free primary education to all public schools, obligatory school attendance between six and thirteen years, the deletion of religious instruction from the school curriculum and secularisation of the school building, though the law concerning the secularisation of teaching staff had to wait until October 1886. In a similar spirit the

⁶⁴⁹ On these ideals see Judith N. Shklar, *After Utopia: The Decline of Political Faith* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 7-11 and Mayeur, *Histoire générale de l'enseignement et de l'éducation*, iii, pp. 23-84. John E. Talbott, *The Politics of Educational Reform in France, 1918-1940* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 21-23 describes the Guizot and Falloux laws as the undoing of the revolutionary project in education.

⁶⁵⁰ Mona Ozouf, *L'École, l'Église et la République* (Paris: Editions Cana/Jean Offredo, 1982), p. 35. The Church was permitted to set up its own Catholic third level institutions largely independent of the University. Crucially it was agreed that students of Catholic institutions would have their theses judged by mixed juries composed half and half of members representing the Catholic universities and representative of the state.

⁶⁵¹ Gaillard, *Jules Ferry*, pp. 119-20. Here we read that Ferry's aim was to finish with the eternal vacillation between various types of regime and to see the Republic finally consolidated

⁶⁵² Pierre Chevallier, *La Séparation de l'Église et de l'école: Jules Ferry et Léon XIII* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), p. 117

complete reversal of the 1875 law was pursued, as was the denial of the permission to teach to any non-authorised religious congregations.⁶⁵³

There can be little doubt that Durkheim, a student at the *École normale* between 1879 and 1882, and many of his co-students would have seen these reforms as part of the realisation of the ideals of the French Revolution. Their attitude would have been one of optimism and faith as to the prospects for the future transformation or egalitarian ‘opening up’ of society. With his first university appointment being that of ‘chargé de cours’ in social science and pedagogy at Bordeaux, Durkheim was thus in a prime position to be involved in all this activity.⁶⁵⁴ And the area into which he first intervened with sociology was on the controversial issue of moral education.

⁶⁵³ Chevalier, chapter 3.

⁶⁵⁴ Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, p. 109-11.

5.1.3 Discipline, Ideals and Autonomy

With no explicit reference to the term 'laïcité', Ferry's law on the secularisation of primary education simply stated that primary education involved moral and civic instruction, where the word 'civic' replaced what had previously been 'religious'.⁶⁵⁵ The idea was clearly not to banish the teaching of morality from public schools, and yet this was enough to create a confrontation with the Church, for whom the idea of a moral education without religion was impossible. Indeed the Church condemned the very concept as the first and most fundamental 'error' contained in the new teaching manuals for moral and civic instruction in public schools.⁶⁵⁶ Secular education, its opponents argued, would lead the country to 'moral anarchy'.⁶⁵⁷ However, education for the secularising republicans just as much as for their Catholic opponents, was not simply about learning how to read and write or about learning objective facts about the world; the teaching of duties and values was believed to be an integral part of schooling. While the fundamental assumption was that a morality independent of revealed religion was indeed possible, what exactly this consisted of and how it could be taught to children was less easy to pinpoint. Defined negatively as 'not Catholic' as the conservative press put it, or at the other extreme, as not a 'new gospel' either, secular morality could seem a rather pale and lifeless concept.⁶⁵⁸ In terms of positive content, it merely consisted, according to Ferry, of age-old, almost self-evident principles common to all people in society, that

⁶⁵⁵ Chevallier, p. 309.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 456.

⁶⁵⁷ Yves Déloye, *École et citoyenneté: l'individualisme républicain de Jules Ferry à Vichy* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1994), p. 142.

⁶⁵⁸ Jules Ferry, 'Lettre aux instituteurs, 17 novembre 1883', in François Guizot and others, *Lettres aux instituteurs* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2007), pp. 36-38. On the reaction of the conservative press see Ozouf, p. 110.

have been handed down from generation to generation: it was the ‘good and old moral code we have received from our fathers and mothers’ generally believed to have something to do with honesty, hard-work, discipline, respect for property, love of one’s family and country.⁶⁵⁹

In his pedagogy lecture course on ‘moral education’ given in numerous years at Bordeaux and Paris, Durkheim clearly situated himself within the republican camp, arguing that it was indeed possible to formulate ‘a purely secular moral education’, a moral education derived not from ‘revealed religion’, but one that rests ‘exclusively on ideas, sentiments and practices accountable to reason only’.⁶⁶⁰ In fact, he argued, there was no sphere of reality at all that was ‘fundamentally beyond the scope of human reason’, or ‘irrational in its essence’, and morality was no exception.⁶⁶¹ When it came to determining what this rational morality actually consisted of Durkheim was, not surprisingly, highly critical of the method of moral philosophers who sought to derive practical moral maxims from one guiding, supposedly universal principle such as utility or human dignity. The starting point of any scientific approach to morality had to be, he argued, an examination of the empirical reality, and this meant treating morality itself objectively as a ‘social fact’. Proceeding in this manner, he argued, one can see that the common trait of all behaviour ordinarily called moral is that it ‘conforms to pre-

⁶⁵⁹ Ferry, p. 36.

⁶⁶⁰ Émile Durkheim, *L’Éducation morale* (Paris: Alcan, 1925), pp. 3-4. Also see the English translation, *Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education*, trans. by E.K. Wilson and H. Schnurer, ed. by E. K. Wilson (New York: Free Press, 1961), p. 3. This final published version is from 1902-3, but the course was developed over the years at Bordeaux. It was delivered in 1889-90, 1898-99 at Bordeaux then at the Sorbonne in 1902-3, 1906-7 and 1911-12. Also see Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 617-20.

⁶⁶¹ Émile Durkheim, *L’Éducation morale*, pp. 4-5; trans, pp. 4-5.

established rules'.⁶⁶² There may not be one single moral law valid for all of humanity and the content of moral maxims may vary with time and place, but morality can be said to consist of 'a system of rules of action that predetermine conduct', 'an infinity of special rules fixed and specific, which order man's conduct in those different situations in which he finds himself'.⁶⁶³ Imparting a spirit of discipline, a capacity for regular conduct, more so than inculcating specific rules or ideas was, for Durkheim, an essential part of moral education for children.

This was not all however, and if people acted in accordance with given rules it was not out of habit or fear but because certain maxims were genuinely felt to have an aura of authority. Deference to moral rules was not about utility, as when one followed the doctor's advice, nor fear of the consequences of failing to do so, but resulted from a genuine respect or attachment to something beyond ourselves. However, outside or beyond individuals, there was, Durkheim argued, nothing other than groups formed by the union of individuals and so distinctly moral goals were those which took as their object *society*, and 'to act morally' was 'to act in terms of collective interest'. The moral action, for Durkheim, was that which had 'impersonal aims', which necessarily concerned 'something other than individuals', which was in short 'supra-individual'.⁶⁶⁴

So alongside the spirit of discipline we have attachment to the social group to which one belonged as two of the defining characteristics of moral behaviour. Morality and society thus went together, with society being the source of the rules we live by and the ideals we are attached to, rules and ideals which themselves varied according to the

⁶⁶² Durkheim, *L'Éducation morale*, p. 26; trans, p. 23.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 28; trans, p. 25.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 68; trans, p. 59.

social milieu.⁶⁶⁵ There could not conceivably be a society without a morality, and furthermore since it was impossible to live in isolation from others, since the social milieu ‘pervades us’ and ‘blends with us’ morality was both outside us and within us, transcendent and immanent. So there was, argued Durkheim, always in us ‘something other than ourselves’. When we ‘hold to ourselves’ we also ‘hold to something other than ourselves’ and to live a completely amoral life would be ‘quite as impossible as escaping our shadows’.⁶⁶⁶

In annexing his sociology to the legitimation of republican educational policies, in arguing that a rational moral education was entirely possible, Durkheim’s position cannot, in context, be considered conservative. However, also at a more fundamental level the argument he made about discipline and collective ideals was not exactly anti-individualist in the sense of a call for the indoctrination of values in view of guaranteeing social unity. Durkheim’s point was that it is only through life in society that individuals become moral beings, with a capacity for self-mastery and commitment to impersonal ends, and that gradually as the ‘animal we are at birth’ incorporated its surrounding culture, ‘the human being’ emerged.⁶⁶⁷ Moral education was not about the inculcation of specific doctrines on how to live a good life, or of specific articles of faith, but involved developing in children a general capacity for self-discipline and for devotion to ideals that stretched beyond themselves, things Durkheim believed necessary if one was to become capable of acting in the world as a free and rational subject. For Durkheim, the classroom, as a sort of mini-society, provided a moral milieu governed by a set of rules,

⁶⁶⁵ Durkheim, *L’Éducation morale*, pp. 96-99.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 81; trans, pp. 71-72.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 100; trans, p. 88.

where children could develop these capacities. Unlike in the family, authority here must not be too narrowly attached to one person, to the person of the teacher, but derived from a respect and attachment to an impersonal law of which the teacher was merely the interpreter. At school, Durkheim argued, more so than in the family, children could develop that respect for legality, so important in modern democratic societies, where one fulfilled their duty not out of fear of punishment but out of genuine respect for and understanding of the ‘impersonal law’ governing social life.⁶⁶⁸ For Durkheim individual freedom did not mean a complete lack of moral boundaries, going blindly about the world wherever instinct led; true freedom was about living consciously in accordance with a moral law, about developing a capacity for self-mastery and for the pursuit of one’s ideals.

In this regard, the third and last element of morality, autonomy, also merits attention as we see that Durkheim was not disputing the right of the individual moral conscience to any claims to autonomy, nor saying that we are the passive products of our social environment, but simply rejecting the other extreme where ‘any kind of restriction on our interior being seems immoral as it does violence to our personal autonomy’.⁶⁶⁹ Autonomy, Durkheim argued, was however essential to moral behaviour. Indeed, he continued, Immanuel Kant, who, more than any other philosopher felt ‘the imperative quality of the moral law’, and also refused to acknowledge that the will could be completely moral when it deferred ‘passively to a law of which it is not the maker’.⁶⁷⁰ However, whereas Kant argued that one became free through gaining understanding of

⁶⁶⁸ Durkheim, *L’Éducation morale*, pp. 165-66, pp. 169-71.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 123; trans, p. 107.

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 124; trans, pp. 108-9.

the rational basis of moral precepts, Durkheim argued on the contrary that our faculty of reason itself was not a transcendent faculty outside the human world, but actually developed within bounded or constraining social contexts. Reason itself was deeply ‘implicated in society’, and the autonomy that our modern moral conscience demanded was not an absolute autonomy but one that had grown as society had changed, one which was ‘progressively becoming’ and evolving through history.⁶⁷¹ Individuals do not receive this autonomy ready-made from birth but fashion it ‘to the extent that we achieve a more complete knowledge of things’. And since morality was a social fact it would be through the development of correct knowledge about the society in which we live, that one can understand what values and what rules are worthy of respect. Sociology could therefore make this moral autonomy possible, since through it we gain greater knowledge of our society: science was, in short, the ‘wellspring of autonomy’.⁶⁷²

So not only did a purely secular education not mean the disintegration of morality. the development of a rational morality was on Durkheim’s analysis, part of the general progress of social transformation, stretching back through history: ‘the secularisation of education’, he wrote, ‘has been in process for centuries’.⁶⁷³ This rational morality was not however, a timeless, universal moral code, valid for man in general, nor was it, as in Ferry’s letter, the same moral precepts that have been handed down from generation to generation. For Durkheim social life was the ultimate source of moral rules and ideals, and given that social arrangements were never fixed once and for all but were in a process of continuous becoming, one could not be content with ‘complacent possession

⁶⁷¹ Durkheim, *L’Éducation morale*, p. 126, p. 130; trans, p. 110, p. 114. Also see Cladis, p. 205.

⁶⁷² Durkheim, *L’Éducation morale*, pp. 130-32; trans, p. 116.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 6; trans. p. 6.

of acquired moral results'. The teacher must 'guard against transmitting the moral gospel of our elders as a sort of closed book', must encourage in children 'a desire to add a few lines of their own, and give them the necessary tools to satisfy this legitimate ambition'.⁶⁷⁴ Here we seem far from a conservative moral theory, which would inculcate in children a respect for pre-established rules and values, one with an over-riding emphasis on social order. Yet, while Durkheim's contribution to the legitimation and political consolidation of the new regime cannot in the 1880s be labelled conservative, traditionalist or anti-individualist, in a changed political context of the following decade, his politics become less clear-cut.

⁶⁷⁴ Durkheim, *L'Éducation morale*, p. 15; trans, pp. 13-14.

5.2 Solidarity and Social Peace

While in the 1880s, the actions of successive governments testified to a belief in the efficacy of political and educational measures to solve problems of inequality and the material and moral issues that industrialisation brought in its wake, it was from around 1890 that the ‘social question’ began to make its way more forcibly onto the main political agenda.⁶⁷⁵ In this next decade, the consolidation of republican power and the electoral destruction of traditionalist conservatism led to the re-organisation of the political landscape, its polarisation around the social question and the emergence of a republican conservatism (to be distinguished from the earlier traditionalist conservatism), which dominated parliament for most of this period.⁶⁷⁶ In the intellectual field this re-direction of attention towards the social question fuelled the growing interest in sociology, leading to the creation of new academic chairs in a discipline, which was quickly coming to be seen as a means of dealing with the social question and the ‘threat’ of socialism.⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷⁵ Judith Stone, *The Search for Social Peace: Reform Legislation in France, 1890-1914* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985), p. 55 and Zeldin, *France 1848-1945*, i, pp. 640-41.

⁶⁷⁶ Mayeur and Rebérioux, pp. 147-173.

⁶⁷⁷ See George Weisz, ‘L’idéologie républicaine et les sciences sociales’, p. 86.

5.2.1 The Social Question

The rise in labour militancy in France in the period continuing up to the eve of the First World War was nothing of a 'French exception'. As Judith Stone has pointed out, all over the industrialising world, the combination of democracy and increasing political awareness among workers led to the growth of organisations such as trade unions and political parties with the aim of getting workers' demands onto the political agenda. While the number of labour disputes was increasing at an international level, in France specifically trade union membership rose from 139 000 in 1890 to just over one million in 1913 and the number of strikes not only multiplied but since 1870 had also become unionised.⁶⁷⁸ Historical landmarks such as the first national May Day protests in 1890, the shooting of nine workers by government troops at Fourmies in 1891 or the long strike at Carmaux the following year all bore witness to a labour movement that was progressively gathering force. This meant not only increasing trade union activism and strikes, but also the growth of and electoral gains for a variety of socialist political groups representing workers in the political arena.⁶⁷⁹

It is worth noting first that in this period the term 'socialism' did not refer to any one specific, united movement but to a number of diffuse positions. The main groups included: the Blanquists, with Edouard Vaillant as a central figure, who traced their roots back to the revolutionary tradition, 1848 and the Commune; the Parti ouvrier français led by Jules Guesde with a Marxist ideology of economic determinism and class struggle; there were the Allemanists, of the Parti ouvrier socialiste révolutionnaire, which was anti-

⁶⁷⁸ Stone, pp. 1-4; Michelle Perrot, *Workers on Strike: France 1871-1890*, trans. by Chris Turner (Leamington Spa, Hamburg, New York: Berg, 1987), pp. 26-27.

⁶⁷⁹ Agulhon, *The French Republic*, pp. 51-55, pp. 72-73 and Stone, pp. 15-16.

parliamentary and anti-militarist, emphasised above politics the role of workers' organisations such as the trade unions and attracted a number of intellectuals; and finally a number of 'independent' socialists who were not in any party but who espoused broadly socialist aims and sought to represent these in parliament.⁶⁸⁰

Of course, this is necessarily a very brief and inadequate sketch. But the point is simply that in terms of the nature of the movement's aims (economic change or also the generation of new ideals), the type of action it prioritised (economic or political) and in terms of means (gradual reforms or revolutionary action) as well as its view of the French Revolution and republican institutions, 'socialism' could, in practice, mean various different things. However, in the context of mounting social unrest and the fear of disorder, aggravated by a series of anarchist bombs that exploded in a number of public locations in Paris in the early 1890s, 'socialism' in the dominant discourse came to be depicted as a threat to society and equated with a doctrine of violent, international class struggle to overthrow property and 'bourgeois' political institutions. It was not, in short, to be seen as the logical development of the ideals of the revolution, or the left wing of republicanism. Adopting a 'new spirit', an attitude most closely associated with Jules Méline, the prime minister between 1896 and 1898, the conservative republicans, or 'progressists' as they were called, no longer saw the old religious right as the main opponent, but situated the danger squarely on the left. They used the horror provoked by the anarchist attacks to insist on resolute opposition to socialism and argue in favour of a strategy of alliance with those members of the old traditionalist right who had 'rallied' to

⁶⁸⁰ Mayeur and Reberieux, pp. 137-46; Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, pp. 390-407.

the Republic.⁶⁸¹ The strategy of ‘no enemies on the left’ of republican defence had, for the moment, clearly come to an end. With an increasing number of independent socialist deputies in parliament and the development of a branch of radical republicanism (left-radicals and solidarists), in favour of social reform legislation, a new right-left division began to emerge not around education and the religion as before but around the social question.⁶⁸²

In sociology, this political state of affairs also had its repercussions. Up until this point Leplayist social economy had been, since the fall of the Second Empire, a marginal movement preaching paternalism and had always been associated with Catholic traditionalism. While the school of Le Play itself did not come back to life as a scientific and institutional power to be reckoned with, its conception of social economy as a tool for dealing with the social question while also maintaining the existing power structure came to be annexed to republican ideology and adopted by more modern social scientists. In this transformation, one of Le Play’s disciples, Émile Cheysson, was particularly influential and it is to his conception of sociology that I shall turn next.

⁶⁸¹ Zeldin, *France 1848-1945*, i, p. 645, p. 652.

⁶⁸² Stone, p. 57. On ‘solidarsme’ see Scott, pp. 157-86, J.E.S. Hayward, ‘Solidarity: The Social History of an Idea in Nineteenth Century France’, *International Review of Social History*, 4 (1959): 260-84 and ‘The Official Social Philosophy of the French Third Republic’, *ibid*, 6 (1961): 19-48. Léon Bourgeois, *La Solidarité* (Paris: Colin, 1896).

5.2.2 Émile Cheysson's 'Social Engineer'

In 1882, when the social question was still very much a marginal political issue, the Leplayist Émile Cheysson was employed to teach political economy at the *École libre des sciences politiques*. In his opening lecture he anticipated intellectual developments of the following decade. Defining 'sociology', as synonymous with 'social economy', that 'vast synthesis embracing all sciences with man in society as their object', he stated that the changes in the nature of production and work relations that accompanied industrialisation had made such studies particularly relevant.⁶⁸³ His own century, the 'age of steam and electricity' was one of great material progress, and yet the de-stabilisation of the 'moral order', of the internal organisation of societies, had thrown a shadow on this very progress. The century had in short become 'the century of social questions'.⁶⁸⁴ While the term 'social economy', appearing in France in the 1830s and appropriated as it was by Frédéric Le Play certainly did have traditionalist connotations, Leplayists such as Cheysson were actually ahead of their time in that they had already recognised the socially de-stabilising effect of industrial development, the emerging antagonism between workers and capitalists. Long before the 1890s they had had already founded organisations for the specific purpose of monitoring working-class activism and solving the 'social question' within the existing framework of industrial society.⁶⁸⁵

However much Le Play had stressed the moral benefits of the patriarchal family and of religion, however much he lamented the threats to traditional social stability,

⁶⁸³ Émile Cheysson, 'Le cadre, l'objet et la méthode de l'économie politique', in Émile Cheysson, *Œuvres choisies*, 2 Vols (Paris: A. Rousseau, 1911), ii, pp. 39-65 (p. 50, p. 64).

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁵ Elwitt, pp. 26-27.

neither he nor Cheysson would have wished to revert to a pre-industrial era.⁶⁸⁶ Cheysson insisted on the benefits of industrial expansion and of the capitalist mode of production, and argued that having once been ‘dominated by nature’, mankind has been able to make ‘the animals, water, the wind, the sun, steam, electricity’ work in its service towards the ‘blossoming of material progress, which is the legitimate pride of our time’.⁶⁸⁷ Although one may not always clearly see its advantages, he argued that the tendency of production towards concentration in large factories was the condition of the ‘productive boom of human activity’.⁶⁸⁸ Pauperism and extreme poverty may throw ‘shadows’ on this ‘brilliant picture’ but the ‘socialist’ claim that the tendency of industrial society was to make ‘the rich even richer and the poor even poorer’, he argued, was simply not true: there was no necessary antagonism between ‘moral progress’ and ‘material progress’.⁶⁸⁹

Never questioning the rightness of the hierarchical division of modern society into industrialists and manual labourers, Cheysson called on the socially ‘superior’ classes, the economic, political and intellectual elites, to take up the rich man’s burden: ‘*Supériorité oblige!* To be forgiven for it, we must fulfil the duties that it imposes. It puts into our hands a force that we have no right to leave inert and sterile. Devotion to others must be the price we pay for this privilege. Too often hatred from the people is merely the response from below to indifference from above, of the egoism of those who suffer to the egoism of those who live well and the former is far more excusable than the latter!’⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁶ Elwitt, pp. 19-21.

⁶⁸⁷ Cheysson, ‘Le cadre, l’objet et la méthode de l’économie politique’, p. 41.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid, pp. 42-43.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 45.

⁶⁹⁰ Émile Cheysson, ‘Mon testament social’, in Cheysson, *Œuvres choisies*, ii, pp. 1-17 (p. 6).

Speaking here, in 1909, on the occasion of his own nomination as president of the Ligue nationale contre l'alcoolisme, what Chyesson meant was that the 'social duty' of those of wealth and 'superior' birth required them to undertake charitable work through reform associations such as this one (other examples were the Ligue nationale de la prévoyance et de la mutualité, the Alliance d'hygiène sociale or the Société française des habitations à bon marché). When it came to factory management, the 'social duty' of enlightened company bosses was paternalistic reform for the material and moral improvement of workers (involving wage incentives, healthier working conditions, employer-sponsored housing programmes, company shops with cheap food and clothing, industrial training). This, on the one hand could promote social peace and prevent strikes, while the prospect of higher wages, better housing and promotion could also generate competition between workers for the favour of their employers. Against the socialist language of class struggle, Chyesson depicted industrialists and workers combined as a large family, involving both relations of power and authority but also mutual respect and solidarity.⁶⁹¹ In this sense the term 'solidarity' had a definite conservative, anti-socialist, connotation.

Among Chyesson's various audiences were the charitable reform associations mentioned above, large industrialists (whom he reminded of their 'social duty'), and workers (whom he told that capital was not their enemy). To the intellectual elite, his message was that through the dispassionate study of modern social conditions, social economy could give political economy a tool to guarantee social peace. While he told bosses that they had an important role in generating the conditions for peace, it was, he

⁶⁹¹ Elwitt, pp. 51-59.

added, the role of the social economist to study problems such as unemployment, strike patterns, wages, poverty, housing and alcoholism, to investigate the source of disorder and propose reforms to restore the peace.

Having himself, like Le Play, trained as an engineer at the *École polytechnique* and at the *École des ponts et chaussées*, and practiced as an engineer, Cheysson lectured at institutions such as the *École des mines* and the *École des ponts et chaussées*, as well as at the *École libre des sciences politiques*. He seemed to conceive of ‘social economy’ as a sort of ‘social engineering’ and of the social economist/sociologist as a social engineer.⁶⁹² If, as Cheysson told his listeners in the *Société des ingénieurs civils*, the industrialist needed in a sense to ‘double as a *social engineer*’, to develop the paternalistic institutions necessary for the prosperity of his business and the good of his workers, good intentions on the part of the bosses were not enough. This is because, he argued, very often ‘the distance between the workers and management is considerable’ and what may have been intended as a ‘generous measure’ is not always appreciated when it reaches its destination.⁶⁹³ So, just as ‘one would not place the control of some technical operation... in the hands of an engineer with good intentions but without the professional know-how’ it would be ‘imprudent to abandon to someone with little knowledge of social science the organisation and maintenance of these social mechanisms which require much tact and experience’.⁶⁹⁴ Although in this speech Cheysson’s message to real engineers was that they could contribute to the creation of social peace through acting as a middle force between the boss and the workers (with the

⁶⁹²Elwitt’s chapter 2 is entitled ‘Émile Cheysson and the Ideology of Social Engineering’.

⁶⁹³Émile Cheysson, ‘Le rôle social de l’ingénieur’, in Cheysson, *Œuvres choisies*, ii, pp. 19-35 (p. 33).

⁶⁹⁴Ibid, p. 32.

day to day running of the mine, the hiring and firing of workers, the establishment and distribution of prizes and promotions), we can, I suggest, also interpret the idea of a ‘social engineer’ as more in line with the work Cheysson himself, did, a civil engineer by training who became an expert in social science, an advisor to industrialists with the task of building the social machinery of modern industrial integration.⁶⁹⁵

In the 1870s and 1880s, the social economists were alone in their insistence on the urgency of, and the potentially catastrophic consequences of ignoring, the social question. However, after the ‘ralliement’ and the political re-alignment that occurred within republicanism in the same decade around the social question, they became respectable among conservative republican politicians, bureaucrats and intellectuals. At the same time, through the figure of Cheysson Leplayist social reform detached itself from religious and partisan politics and its themes could become part of the dominant framework for the discussion of the social question in the 1890s.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁵ Cheysson, ‘Le rôle social de l’ingénieur’, pp. 34-35.

⁶⁹⁶ Elwitt, p. 13, p. 51.

5.2.3 Social Economy and Republican Ideology

Nothing better testifies to the entry of Leplayist inspired social economy within the realm of the political respectability in the 1890s than the return of the social economy exhibit to the Universal Expositions in Paris. Having appeared at the first Universal Exposition in 1867 under the direction of Le Play (assisted by Cheysson), it had been excluded in 1878 only to be back to much acclaim in 1889 and 1900 under the direction of Cheysson.⁶⁹⁷ In a book describing the full range of the social economy initiatives on display in the 1900 Exposition, Charles Gide, a professor of social economy at the Paris faculty of law, proclaimed what the Leplayist social economists had been saying for decades, that there was no opposition between political economy and social economy: if the ‘science of wealth’ can tell us nothing about the social difficulties arising from economic development, it was the achievement of Le Play to have first proposed social economy as a tool to help society reap the full benefit of industrial progress.⁶⁹⁸ On show at the Exposition were a whole range of initiatives undertaken to promote ‘social peace’ within the existing socio-economic framework, the various institutions for the elevation of the material and moral condition of workers from the promotion of healthier working and housing conditions, healthier diets and pastimes to the eradication of drunkenness and debt.⁶⁹⁹

In all of this activity, the various initiatives of the philanthropist, the Comte de Chambrun merit particular attention. It was he who endowed the Musée social in 1894,

⁶⁹⁷ A re-edition of the report on the 1900 exhibit can be found in Charles Gide, *Économie sociale: les institutions du progrès social au début du XXe siècle* (Paris: Larose & Tenin, 1905), p. V, p. 8. Elwitt, p. 13.

⁶⁹⁸ Gide, *Économie sociale*, pp. 1-4.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 4, p. 7.

which was to house resources for the study of the social question and where part of the 1889 social economy exhibit went on permanent display.⁷⁰⁰ It was also he who had endowed Cheysson's chair at the *École libre des sciences politiques* (becoming a chair of social economy in 1887), as well as Espinas's chair in the history of social economy at the Sorbonne and Charles Gide's chair in social economy at the Paris faculty of law created in 1898. The figure of Chambrun himself is indicative of the passage of social economy to political respectability, and however much he himself may have been drawn to the Leplayist ideas, he also saw, perhaps influenced by his personal secretary Dick May, the importance of adapting social economy to the new political context, of dissociating it from traditionalism so as to prioritise the goal of 'social peace'.⁷⁰¹

Ignoring the fact that socialism was not a homogenous movement, that many French socialists were idealists who saw their movement as the logical extension of the republican ideal, the initiatives of Chambrun were aimed at creating a barrier against socialism. In an article for René Worms's *Revue internationale de sociologie* Cheysson could argue that socialism was anti-republican, since it preached international class solidarity above national solidarity, and the abolition of private property above the extension of property-ownership to all individuals.⁷⁰² The critique of *laissez faire* economics, co-operation versus class antagonism, the reciprocal social duties of workers and bosses...all these were dominant themes of the 1890s, which formed part of the

⁷⁰⁰ Gide, *Économie sociale*, p. 10. On the 'Musée social' also see Dick May, pp. 37-41 and Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*. p. 114.

⁷⁰¹ On Chambrun also see Weisz, 93-94.

⁷⁰² Émile Cheysson, 'La lutte des classes', *RIS*, 1 (1893), 473-95 (p. 476). On Herr see Andler, pp. 92-93.

justification for the promotion of sociological studies.⁷⁰³ If Charles Gide had earlier on distinguished between the traditionalist school (that emphasised the importance of the traditional forms of moral authority, church and patriarchal family) a collectivist school (that emphasised the need for greater equality) and the ‘new school’ of solidarity (that emphasised co-operation and reciprocal duties), by the mid-1890s he was able to correct himself: these three schools were no longer all that distinct but were increasingly coming together around the idea of social solidarity.⁷⁰⁴

Whereas Durkheim sought to avoid contact with the International Sociologists, Émile Cheysson, Charles Gide and Alfred Espinas all had in common their collaboration with this group and the fact that their academic chairs were all endowed by Chambrun. It was in the *Revue internationale de sociologie* that Espinas’s opening lecture at the Sorbonne was published, a lecture in which he defined the aim of social economy in completely practical terms, as the effort to alleviate the ills arising from problems with modern social organisation.⁷⁰⁵ Here, his message was that although one cannot remake the world in accordance with an abstract ideal, social economy could help work out principles of action that would be valid for modern European societies where all individuals, from the most humble workers and the most powerful industrialists, were inter-dependent. Social economy had shown the modern division of labour to be the source of national unity and that in order to deal with the social question one did not need

⁷⁰³ Dick May, pp. 43-44; Weisz, p. 100.

⁷⁰⁴ Charles Gide, *L’Idée de solidarité en tant que programme économique* (Paris: Giard & Brière, 1893), pp. 1-2 and Charles Gide, ‘L’École nouvelle’, in Claudio Jannet and others, *Quatre écoles d’économie sociale: conférences données à l’aula de l’université de Genève sous les auspices de la Société chrétienne Suisse d’Économie sociale* (Genève & Paris: Stapelmohr & Fischbacher, 1890), pp. 99-156.

⁷⁰⁵ Alfred Espinas, ‘Leçon d’ouverture d’un cours d’histoire de l’économie sociale’, *RIS*, 2 (1894), 321-51, (p. 322).

to rid society of all relations of subordination but nurture a new respect for discipline.⁷⁰⁶ Praising the ‘œuvres de secours’ of industrialists, he called for laws to protect workers, while at the same time arguing that the methods of ‘radical socialism’ were the ‘worst of all’, and followed this up with a lengthy critique of Marx.⁷⁰⁷

If Espinas had begun with an opening statement on the practical aims of social economy, it soon became clear over the following months that his lectures actually were developing more of a historical focus, not exactly, it seems, what his backers had hoped for.⁷⁰⁸ This was not to be the case with Charles Gide however who, in his opening lecture in 1898, stated that his course would have a far more practical focus. Publicly thanking the Minister for Public Instruction Léon Bourgeois and the initiative’s financial backer Chambrun, he described his course as a foretaste of what was to come in eighteen months time at the 1900 Universal Exposition.⁷⁰⁹ References to Le Play, Cheysson, to the Universal Expositions, the Musée social abound and again we have the standard declaration of opposition to laissez-faire capitalism and praise for reform initiatives to fight problems such as alcoholism and unemployment. He recognised that some liberal economists were still against social economy, but reassured his audience that social economy stood opposed to socialism and excessive state intervention, and that its ultimate aim was to create the conditions of industrial peace.

However well intentioned, there were nevertheless definite assumptions as to the hierarchical nature of society behind these efforts on the part of this ‘small group of men

⁷⁰⁶ Espinas, ‘Leçon d’ouverture’, pp. 334-38, p. 341, p. 344.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 344, pp. 347-49.

⁷⁰⁸ Weisz, ‘L’idéologie républicaine et les sciences sociales’, pp. 99-100.

⁷⁰⁹ Charles Gide, *Si les institutions sociales sont un mal social? leçon d’ouverture du cours d’économie sociale comparée* (Paris: Larose, 1899), pp. 1-3.

from the elite' to encourage manual workers to live 'healthy', 'moral' lives.⁷¹⁰ The case was however stated more explicitly by Jean Izoulet in his opening lecture in 1897 at the Collège de France, and with this new chair of social philosophy directly created by government initiative, we can say that Izoulet perhaps best represented the established government position. The concern again was to block the advance of socialism and to legitimate a conception of the social hierarchy adapted to industrial and democratic society.⁷¹¹ Already in his doctoral thesis, Izoulet had proposed his 'bio-social' theory of society, where he drew on the organic metaphor to depict society as a structured body characterised by hierarchy and interdependence, and to present egalitarianism and disrespect for authority as a threat to 'civilisation'.⁷¹²

Intellectually progressive in the 1870s and 1880s, when it had challenged the intellectual hegemony of spiritualism, now the biological metaphor had become distinctly conservative in that it served to legitimise the existing order and discredit egalitarian demands. In short Jean Izoulet saw the elite as responsible for all the higher order things in society (spiritual life, science, government, industry), while he described manual workers and colonised people as having intellectual capacities closer to those of animals and as hardly capable of higher thinking or action at all. For this reason, he argued, they were like children, in need of guidance and discipline from the elite, an elite, which Izoulet warned, must also become aware of its social duties. While the 'elite' Izoulet referred to may in theory be, as Charle has argued, an 'open elite' where positions of

⁷¹⁰ Gide, *Si les institutions sociales sont un mal social*, p. 17 and *Économie sociale: les institutions du progrès social au début du 20ème siècle* (Paris: Larose & Tenin, 1905), p. 7.

⁷¹¹ Charle, *La Naissance des 'intellectuels'*, pp. 78-79.

⁷¹² Izoulet, *La Cité moderne*, p. 305.

power would potentially be accessible to all regardless of birth, in a world where access to education already presupposed privilege, to depict social hierarchy as merely reflecting fundamental intellectual inequalities seems a rather cynical manipulation of Gambetta's argument about the 'new social strata'.⁷¹³

In his opening lecture of 1897 Jean Izoulet paid homage to both Raymond Poincaré and Léon Bourgeois who 'by common agreement asked the government to create this chair of social philosophy', though for reasons primarily to do with practical concerns about the social question rather than any disinterested concern for new science.⁷¹⁴ Indeed, the course would be occupied with the four problems to which social transformation in modern Europe had, in Izoulet's view, given rise: the revolution in religious society (the relationship between God and nature), in political society (between the government and the governed) in economic society (between property owners and the propertyless, the rich and the poor, bosses and labourers) and in domestic society (man and woman).⁷¹⁵ The whole point of the course Izoulet told his 'elite audience' would be to inquire into the nature and cause of the transformation occurring in each of these spheres.⁷¹⁶ His suggestion was that although 'many people imagine that the four subordinate terms...were going to take their revenge and negate the four hitherto dominant terms', this would actually be to go completely against 'nature'; the revolt of woman against man, the worker against the boss, the people against the prince, would be

⁷¹³ Charle, *La Naissance des 'intellectuels'*, pp. 76-81 and see Izoulet, *La Cité moderne*, pp. 122-23.

⁷¹⁴ Jean Izoulet, *Les Quatre problèmes sociaux*, 2nd edn (Paris: Colin, 1898), pp. 5-6.

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 9.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 10-11.

like the ‘revolt of nature against God’.⁷¹⁷ His aim therefore would be to show how, in the transformed social context, these ‘natural’ relations of authority could be re-established on a more legitimate footing.

While this model of sociology was dominant in the 1890s, the question we now need to ask is whether it is the one that Durkheim’s sociology can easily fit. While in political terms his work in the 1880s did certainly aim to contribute to the consolidation of the opportunist republic, in the 1890s, his position seems to have been slightly more ambiguous. Indeed it was just around this time that we see a passage, on the part of numerous figures among the intellectual avant-garde, away from a position of solid support for the Republic to a more critical stance.⁷¹⁸ The next question is therefore how to read Durkheim’s sociology in the 1890s, starting with his *Division of Labour*: was it, in line with the social economy model, a call for scientific social management, or was it more a departure from his effort to contribute to the legitimation of the Republic, the beginning of a sociology of social critique?

⁷¹⁷ Izoulet, *Les Quatre problèmes sociaux*, p. 26.

⁷¹⁸ Charle, *La Naissance des ‘intellectuels’*, pp. 82-86 and ‘Les Normaliens et le socialisme’, pp. 133-68; Ahearne, p. 11.

5.3 The Sociologist as Social Critic

Since its beginnings in the 1850s therefore, social economy or ‘sociology’ had a very definite political orientation. Welcoming economic development and industrialisation, while at the same time regretting the dissolution of traditional morality, it sought new ways to maintain and legitimate hierarchy and authority within the changed context. Once the social question had become a pressing enough issue in the 1890s and once the Leplayists could be dissociated from reactionary partisan politics this conception of sociology could become one aspect of republican ideology. Critics such as Robert Nisbet who have interpreted sociology as more modern re-formulation of the traditionalist argument against the French Revolution, have long been opposed by writers who point out that *Durkheim* was in fact in fact a republican who embraced the ideals of 1789, who was not hostile to socialism. Yet, although the mere fact of being a republican did not necessarily mean that (by the 1890s) one was not conservative, if Nisbet had based his argument on long forgotten figures such as Jean Izoulet rather than Durkheim we would perhaps not be so quick to criticise his reading. Sociology, in one sense of the term, was certainly conservative in orientation. Yet while I have so far looked at this idea of sociology as social engineering, I suggest that there is also another conception of sociology, one that we can indeed find Durkheim’s work, that of sociology as a form of social critique.

5.3.1 Durkheimian Sociology and Social Economy

There is of course much in Durkheim's work, his work before 1898 in particular, that would allow us to classify his sociology within the social engineering model. Indeed, writers such as Judith Stone and Sanford Elwitt have cited Durkheim in their wider, historical discussion of social science as an ideological defence of the modern social order.⁷¹⁹ In terms of vocabulary, arguments about mutual dependence and the need for co-operation, the concept of 'organic solidarity' would seem to resonate with the language of Charles Gide who, for his part, cited Durkheim's *Division of Labour* as one of the key works marking the turn away from the idea of liberty and competition to that of solidarity and co-operation.⁷²⁰

In his description of the 'new school', of social economy, the school of solidarity, Charles Gide listed five defining characteristics: firstly, the rejection of classical liberalism and its idea of social harmony being produced spontaneously from the free play of individual interests; secondly a concern with social change and what new problems this may give rise to; thirdly the linkage between 'science' and 'art', and a concern to deal with modern social problems through basing reforms on empirical social research; fourthly, the belief that the individual and the collectivity were not opposed, and that co-operation rather than competition was the condition of individual fulfilment; finally, its position as equally opposed to classical political economy (the school of freedom), to the conservatives who lamented the decline of the patriarchal family and religious moral authority (the school of authority) and to the collectivists or 'socialists' who preferred a revolutionary overhaul of the existing unequal and hierarchical property

⁷¹⁹ Elwitt, pp. 46-50 and Stone, pp. 27-32.

⁷²⁰ Gide, *L'Idée de solidarité*, p. 1, footnote 1.

regime (the school of equality). As such the new school could be described by Gide as the 'school of solidarity'.⁷²¹

There is much in Durkheim's work that would fit perfectly with Gide's description here. In terms of his appreciation of modern industrial society, we have already seen that in the *Division of Labour* he did not display the unreserved optimism of classical liberalism, yet neither did he hold a pessimistic view of social change. Modern society, he argued, could become just as cohesive as traditional society, although this would not result from the free play of individual exchange but needed to be nurtured through laws and institutions. Insisting on the importance of developing a historical perspective on our own beliefs and values, and in particular the modern ideal of individual freedom, Durkheim also sought not to take such ideals as absolute truths but to try to develop a 'scientific' understanding of them, which meant asking what they expressed about the nature of society and its course of development.⁷²² It is on the basis of this 'science' that one can begin to discern what reforms needed to be made, and just as with Gide, 'social art' (reform) for Durkheim was to be guided by 'science'.

Using terms like solidarity, normality and pathology, art and science, Durkheim did employ the vocabulary of social economy, and as a sociologist of his time there is every reason to expect to find in his work traces of this model of sociology, which was after all the dominant one in the 1890s. However, there are also a number of reasons for questioning the classification of his sociology under 'social engineering'. To begin with from as early as 1885, in his first published review article, Durkheim always criticised as

⁷²¹ Gide, 'L'École nouvelle', p. 154.

⁷²² See Zeldin, *France 1848-1945*, i, p. 655, who refers to Durkheim's review article 'Les Principes de 1789 et la sociologie', *RIE*, 19(1890), 450-56.

an over-simplified caricature the common depiction of socialism as a doctrine of international class struggle for the abolition of private property.⁷²³ He had a far more positive view of socialism and was far more knowledgeable about its various forms than Cheysson, Espinas, Izoulet or Gide seemed to be. In contrast to Cheysson who depicted socialism as being in opposition to the patriotism and solidarity of the French Revolution, Durkheim understood socialism as having grown out of the ideals this same Revolution, whose very existence as a social movement reflected the fact that a more equal and just society was still something to be created in the future. Socialism was, in Durkheim's view, not a threat to society, but rather presented legitimate demands for change in the nature of social relations. The condition of a future social solidarity was not teaching workers to happily accept their subordinate condition, but to respond to their demands for greater equality. Durkheim did agree with the argument of Gaston Richard, that as a scientific assessment of the modern industrial society, historical materialism was mistaken, but, he continued, against Richard, this did not mean that socialism itself was wrong: its ideals rather were the legitimate expression of the needs of nineteenth century society, just as the ideals of the French Revolution had been in the previous century.⁷²⁴

Durkheim may have criticised abstract philosophies about how society ought to be that had no basis in empirical observation, but he was in fact more the rationalist philosopher than any of the social economists. While the focus of the social economists was entirely with practical industrial questions (dealing with strikes, the education of workers, factory management) Durkheim was more concerned with explaining

⁷²³ See Durkheim, 'Fouillée', pp. 551-52.

⁷²⁴ Émile Durkheim, 'Socialisme et science sociale', in Durkheim, *La Science sociale et l'action*, pp. 237-45, first publ. in *RP*, 44 (1897), 200-205; Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, pp. 408-09. Also see above point 3.3.3 and below point 5.4.4.

consciousness. He wanted, as we have seen in chapter 3, to make the ‘moral science’ of the philosophers more rigorously scientific. He aimed to *explain* collective beliefs and ideals, and then pose the question of what society ought to aspire to. In spite of the organic metaphors in his early work and concept of organic solidarity, a term he never systematically used again after the *Division of Labour*, the similarity between his vocabulary and that of the social engineers is deceptive. Although writers such as Charles Gide started out from a philosophy of co-operation, they actually continued to hold onto a rather individualist and idealist conception of the intellectual elite as the ‘brain’ of society, implementing reform in accordance with a pre-conceived idea. In fact, Durkheim criticised Alfred Fouillée’s abstract dialectical reconciliation of individualism and socialism and his simplistic view that democratisation and the expansion of education, in short political action pursued by an enlightened elite, would suffice.⁷²⁵

In any case, if the institutionalisation of sociology in the 1890s had conservative aims behind it, conceived of as it was as a barrier against socialism, the same discipline, but in another guise could also be perceived as being synonymous with socialism. Indeed, when the appointment to the new chair of at the Collège de France was being made, politicians were warned that attention was needed lest one ended up actually nominating a partisan of socialism, rather than someone who opposed it.⁷²⁶ According to Christophe Charle it was precisely for these ideological reasons that Durkheim, who, although on scientific merit alone would have been a better candidate than Izoulet, was passed over in the nomination to the Collège de France in 1897: in the ideological climate of the 1890s Durkheim was perceived as being too radical, whereas the ideas of Izoulet better

⁷²⁵ See Émile Durkheim, ‘Fouillée’, p. 453.

⁷²⁶ See the file on the creation of this chair in the National Archives F/17/13556.

expressed the government position.⁷²⁷ Worthy of note too is also the fact that Durkheim made only extremely rare references to Leplayist sociology, and where he did he dismissed it as ‘apologetic’, hardly worthy of consideration as science at all. He also did his best to avoid association with the international sociologists gathered around René Worms and the teaching institutions of Dick May.⁷²⁸

Yet Durkheim was neither a complacent positivist who envisioned sociology as pure scientific observation with no further reformist aims. When he criticised those social philosophers who practiced ‘social art’ rather than ‘social science’, the point was not that science excluded social action altogether but simply that one must start from the observation of the empirical facts of social life rather than from an abstract ideal of how a society ought to be. In this sense, as I have already suggested, his subsidiary thesis on Montesquieu offers a good window onto what Durkheim understood himself to be doing with sociology: developing a way of answering questions on how his own society ought to be, but one which would also allow for the diversity of human institutions and ways of life.⁷²⁹ In this, he retained a view of intellectual work rather similar to that of his philosophical predecessors such as Paul Janet who saw their ‘moral science’ as meditation on the higher principles governing civilisation. Durkheim’s primary concern in his sociological analysis and discussion of the modern division of labour was not the day-to-day practical questions of industrial management. His point was to modernise, to make more rigorously scientific the ‘moral science’ of the philosophers, arguing first that

⁷²⁷ Charle, *La Naissance des ‘intellectuels’*, pp. 79-80.

⁷²⁸ Weisz, ‘L’idéologie républicaine et les sciences sociales’, p. 101. Émile Durkheim, ‘Sociologie’, in Durkheim, *Textes*, i, pp. 109-18 (p. 116).

⁷²⁹ Durkheim, ‘Montesquieu’s Contribution to the Rise of Social Science’, pp. 3-7; See above section 3.2.2. Also Watts Miller, *Durkheim, Morals and Modernity*, chapter 2.

morality was not a universal but a historically specific, social thing and second that empirical observation meant not psychological introspection, but observation of the moral facts (which he argued were social facts) which were external to the individual. This rather exalted conception of sociology, as a means of inquiring into the historically specific principles governing a society is something different to Cheysson's conception of sociology as social engineering. If, apart from his work on education, Durkheim had still very much remained outside politics, it was during the Dreyfus Affair that we see how this conception of sociology would express itself in practical political terms.

5.3.2 The Dreyfusard Turning Point

One of the most famous miscarriages of justice in modern European history, the condemnation in 1894 of Alfred Dreyfus for high treason would in the space of a few years turn into a major affair enveloping fin-de-siècle French society. The upheaval to come was hardly expected and when Dreyfus was initially sentenced to life in the penal colony of Devil's Island the verdict was widely accepted, the only lament being that he had not been given the death penalty.⁷³⁰ Yet the prosecution's case had been flimsy, based as it was on a resemblance between Dreyfus's handwriting and that of the 'bordereau' found in the German embassy in Paris, while evidence ultimately decisive in the guilty verdict had not been shown to the defence for 'reasons of state'. Starting out on his campaign to free his innocent brother Mathieu Dreyfus initially met with considerable hostility from politicians and journalists. Gradually however, especially after he found out about the illegally used 'secret evidence', a small band of supporters including the Jewish literary critic Bernard-Lazare and the vice-president of the Senate, Scheurer-Kestner, began to gather around him.⁷³¹ After Colonel Picquart at the War Ministry stumbled upon the real culprit, Major Esterhazy, the growing Dreyfusard camp was confident that all that was needed was to present the new evidence for a review to be obtained and Dreyfus exonerated. This was not to be the case, however as the government stood by the verdict of 1894 and in December 1897 Esterhazy, the real author of the 'bordereau' was tried by court-martial and acquitted.

⁷³⁰ Eric Cahm, *The Dreyfus Affair in French Society and Politics* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), pp. 29-30.

⁷³¹ *Ibid*, pp. 47-48.

Putting order above fundamental principles the government would have preferred to simply bury the affair, to avoid any unnecessary tension with the army and continued to insist up until mid 1898 that the case was a *chose jugée*, that there was ‘no Dreyfus Affair’. Indeed, it must have seemed to contemporaries that the conservative republican government led by Jules Méline, had completely broken with the old idealism of previous decades.⁷³² Shocked by this attitude, by the acquittal of the real culprit, and concerned by the increasing virulence of the anti-Semitic mobs on the streets, many intellectuals began to raise their voices in defence of the principles of truth and justice. It was in this context that Émile Zola, in his famous open letter to the President of the Republic, accused the military officials, judges and handwriting expert of condemning an innocent man and seeking to cover up their mistake. Indeed Zola was just the most famous of a massive mobilisation of writers, artists, philosophers and scientists who signed petitions, wrote articles, demonstrated in the streets and formed leagues to defend fundamental principles and demand revision.⁷³³ A firm supporter of the regime in the 1880s and attached to the ideals of the French Revolution, Durkheim too was immensely saddened and disillusioned by political events. What was most worrying he wrote to Marcel Mauss, was the reaction against ‘all sorts of principles we believed acquired’ and the ‘profound moral dis-organisation’ that he believed lay beneath the outbreak anti-Semitism.⁷³⁴

⁷³² Cahm, pp. 56-57, 86-87; Jacques Chastenet, *Histoire de la Troisième République*, 7 Vols (Paris: Hachette, 1952-63) iii: *La République Triomphante, 1893-1906* (1955), p. 120.

⁷³³ Lucien Mercier, *Les Universités populaires, 1899-1914: éducation populaire et mouvement ouvrier au début du siècle* (Paris: Éditions ouvrières, 1986), pp. 32-38.

⁷³⁴ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, Sunday, February 1898, in Durkheim. *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 110-112.

Against this situation it was necessary to ‘fight back’, to force the government and society to return to its moral principles.⁷³⁵

A Dreyfusard from early on, at the time when only a handful of ‘troublemakers’ dared to question the judgement of seven honourable officer judges and a founding member of the Ligue des droits de l’homme, Durkheim, in his article, ‘Individualism and the Intellectuals’ took direct aim at one of the main intellectual representatives of anti-Dreyfusism, the literary historian and member of the Académie française Ferdinand Brunetière.⁷³⁶ Brunetière’s argument was the classic anti-revisionist one: the army was an age-old institution, vital for the well-being of the country and above question; the intellectuals, who persisted in questioning its judgement were bringing the country towards ‘anarchy’; ‘individualism’, which valued individual reason above authority, was therefore the source of division and disorder in society. In reply Durkheim wrote, that this anti-revisionism was actually based on a complete caricature of individualism, which he wrote, should not be confused with egoism.

Incorporating the conclusions of his sociological work, Durkheim argued that there was ‘another individualism’, that which ‘the Declaration of the Rights of Man sought...to translate into formulae’, which has ‘become the basis of our moral catechism’; far from making ‘personal interest the object of moral behaviour’ it stressed that the only ways of acting that were truly moral were those that were fitting for all individuals

⁷³⁵ Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, Sunday, February, 1898.

⁷³⁶ Robert L. Hoffman, *More than a Trial. The Struggle Over Captain Dreyfus* (New York: The Free Press, 1980), p. 6. On Durkheim’s involvement in the Dreyfus Affair see Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 332-49, Fournier, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 285-308 or Cladis, pp. 13-14.

equally.⁷³⁷ Rather than attaching us to our empirical selves this individualism impels us to seek out that which we hold in common with others, our common humanity, which goes ‘so far beyond utilitarian ends that the individual appears to be marked with a religious character’ and is ‘considered sacred’.⁷³⁸ This individualism, the dignity and rights with which each individual is endowed does not pre-exist history and society, but has emerged progressively from communal life. As society has developed and grown more ideologically diverse, he wrote, the bond that remained as a source of unity was that of common humanity.⁷³⁹ Not only was individualism not anarchy, but the concern for all that is human soared ‘far above private goals’, and was itself of a ‘religious character’. As such this individualism was the only ‘system of beliefs capable of assuring the moral unity of the country’.⁷⁴⁰ In Durkheim’s view the people who were outraged by the assault on individual rights in the Dreyfus case were therefore not ‘troublemakers’ threatening national unity but the true patriots who understood that the miscarriage of justice risked putting the entire national existence in jeopardy.

⁷³⁷Durkheim, ‘L’individualisme et les intellectuels’, pp. 265-66. For the English translation see Lukes, ‘Durkheim’s “Individualism and the Intellectuals”’, pp. 20-21.

⁷³⁸ Ibid, p. 266; trans, p. 21.

⁷³⁹ Ibid, pp. 272-74.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 272; trans, p. 25.

5.3.3 Collective Effervescence

The Dreyfus Affair gave rise to much ‘cowardice’ and ‘lies’, wrote Durkheim in another letter to Marcel Mauss, but however ‘heart-breaking’ the situation it nevertheless had a positive aspect in that it brought together a group of like-minded people, who would support each other in the fight for justice, truth and democracy.⁷⁴¹ The ‘taste for combat’ that had lain dormant for some while had been re-kindled and if the ‘sad story of Dreyfus’ had divided many people, it also had the advantage of bringing others together.⁷⁴² In this, in his belief in the importance of the mobilisation and unity of intellectuals in defending moral principles there was also a parallel with the direction Durkheim’s scientific work was taking. It was around this time that he began to direct his attention towards totemism and the sociology of religion, and what, as we have seen, distinguished the new Durkheimian sociology of religion from the English anthropological school was the idea that the sacredness of a religious thing was generated and re-vitalised through collective practice. Applying this idea to modern society Durkheim argued, it was the human person that, as the source of social unity, was ‘considered sacred’, and endowed with ‘something of the transcendental majesty which Churches of all times have given their Gods’.⁷⁴³ In France the principles of 1789 ‘have

⁷⁴¹ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, early August 1898, in Durkheim. *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 166-67.

⁷⁴² Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, 4 May 1898, in Durkheim. *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 133-36.

⁷⁴³ Durkheim, ‘L’individualisme et les intellectuels’, p. 266; trans, p. 21.

been a religion which had had its martyrs and apostles, which has profoundly moved the masses and which...has given birth to great things'.⁷⁴⁴

Yet, what the sociology of religion indicated to Durkheim was that, just as with the totem in clan-based society, the modern belief in the sacredness of the individual derived from social life and that this sacred character could only be re-affirmed and made stronger through collective practice. Far from holding a naively optimistic faith in the goodness of social life, from being incapable of foreseeing the triumph of authoritarian ideologies later in the twentieth century as Zygmunt Baumann has argued, I would suggest on the contrary that Durkheim's sociology of religion and reading of the Dreyfus Affair contained a warning as to the fragility of the human ideal.⁷⁴⁵ If individual rights and dignity are modern collective representations, made stronger when people come together to re-affirm them, they also risk growing weak and dying out if people do not mobilise to defend them when they are threatened, if people compromise too often on fundamental principles. For this reason the Dreyfus case was not just about justice for one man, and the whole fate of modern French society was in question.

The Dreyfus Affair, in Durkheim's view, showed that these values should not be taken for granted and if it had a positive side it was that it did bring people out of isolation to re-affirm their beliefs through collective action and the moral principles at the source of modern social life were for the meantime renewed. If modern individualist society had been suffering from a lack of ideals or 'moral coldness' since the last great

⁷⁴⁴ Durkheim, 'Les principes de 1789 et la sociologie', p. 451. For the English translation see Émile Durkheim, 'Review of Ferneuil, *The Principles of 1789 and Sociology*', trans. by M. Traugott, in Durkheim, *On Morality and Society*, ed. by Bellah, pp. 34-42 (p. 35).

⁷⁴⁵For the opposite point of view see Zygmunt Baumann, 'Durkheim's Society Revisited', in *The Cambridge Companion to Durkheim*, ed. by Alexander and Smith, pp. 360-82 (p. 372).

period of collective effervescence in 1870-71, Durkheim hoped that the stirring of passions during the Dreyfus Affair would finally bring this period of moral stagnation to a close.⁷⁴⁶ Times such as these were in his view, were ones of great moral vitality, a rather positive view of collective fervent for a writer commonly known as a ‘theorist of order’.

⁷⁴⁶ Émile Durkheim, ‘L’élite intellectuelle et la démocratie’, in Émile Durkheim, *La Science sociale et l’action*, pp. 280-82 (p. 282), first publ in the *Revue bleue*, 5th ser, 1. 23 (1904), 705-6.

5.3.4 Two Conceptions of Sociology and Social Action

What should at least be clear from the argument so far is that, to overturn the reading of Durkheim as a conservative sociologist it is not enough to simply point out that he was an enthusiastic supporter of the Republic from early on, that he identified with the ideals of the Revolution, or that through his scientific and pedagogical work he contributed to the elaboration and teaching of the new, secular morality. While it might suffice in relation to the 1870s and 1880s, where to be a conservative was to support the ‘moral order’ coalition against the opportunists, in the following decades, where the political landscape was becoming increasingly polarised around the social question, it was not so clear-cut. If we interpret conservative to mean an anti-socialist response to the social question, which saw socialism as a threat to society, we can say that as a form of social action the type of sociology practiced by the social economists, aimed at maintaining and legitimising rather than questioning the status quo, was indeed conservative. Detached from its old imperialist and religious associations in the 1890s, this Leplayist conception of sociology became annexed to republicanism, and sociology’s capacity to defend the new order became one of the strongest arguments in favour of the institutionalisation of the new discipline in French academia.

Durkheim himself understood well enough the demands of the field to be concerned to show that his sociology too could be a form of social action, which was indeed what he had tried to do with *Suicide*.⁷⁴⁷ However, it also seems that he was not totally comfortable with the type of sociology labelled here as social engineering. In fact, we can, I have argued, trace another idea of social action where sociology would be a

⁷⁴⁷ On this point see my chapter 4.

form of social critique, most clearly at work during the Dreyfus Affair. In this Durkheim's role as a public intellectual was closer to that of the Enlightenment *philosophe* calling for change in accordance with an ideal, rather than as an engineer seeking to build a fortress against challenges to the status quo.

In this sense, we also see, in the discipline of sociology, Edward Saïd's distinction between two alternative forms of action for the public intellectual: on the one hand, action directed towards the generation of critical awareness, intellectual commitment as a form of dissent, and on the other one which serves merely to reinforce the theses of power already in place. The difference here however is that we can see how, as Christophe Charle has argued, the type of action Durkheim and indeed other Dreyfusard professors pursued as public intellectuals also had much to do with their intellectual habitus, their educational and professional trajectories and positions within the reformed university.⁷⁴⁸ In any case, in the post-Dreyfus Affair context with the electoral victories of radical republicanism, a political agenda far less hostile to socialism, far more favourable to Durkheim's sociology would come to be established. Having already laid the scientific foundations with the *Année sociologique* from 1898, in the changed political context of the early 1900s the Durkheimian school would flourish.

⁷⁴⁸ Charle, *La Naissance des 'intellectuels'*, pp. 183-200.

5.4 Towards Consecration

Among the factors which can help explain how Durkheimian sociology came to be established as the French school of sociology and how Durkheim himself arrived at a hegemonic position in the French intellectual field, I have already referred to the university reform movement and the new scientific ideal, the relationship of sociology to academic philosophy and the foundation of the *Année sociologique* journal. In this I have tried to avoid directly deriving Durkheim's intellectual success from a correspondence between his political sympathies and the political situation, and indeed his rise to prominence was, as we have seen, far from assured by the mere consolidation of the Republic. Yet the political context was also important and just as the dominant political consensus of the 1890s worked against the Durkheimians in the years after the Dreyfus Affair a new political climate would seem to have worked in their favour. The aim of this final section is to discuss the general political sympathies of the *Année sociologique*, the correspondence between these and the political situation of the early 1900s and how this may have contributed to the school's ever increasing intellectual prestige.

5.4.1 A New Consensus?

Both in the intellectual and political fields the Dreyfus Affair had its victors and its vanquished, with a triumph for the intellectuals who had recalled state and society to fundamental principles and of the political groups that had supported them.⁷⁴⁹ In the university, it was a victory for the avant-garde of the reformed university, the ‘New Sorbonne’, over the more traditional academics and faculties.⁷⁵⁰ And many of those who had mobilised in support of revision remained convinced of the continued importance of their social role of spreading the critical spirit and defending society against injustice, ignorance and reaction. In this way, initiatives such as the Ligue des droits de l’homme or the shorter-lived Universités populaires outlived the specific circumstances of their creation.⁷⁵¹ Gabriel Séailles, the Dreyfusard professor of philosophy at the Sorbonne and president of the Société des universités populaires, in his inaugural address to the ‘Coopération des Idées’ of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine in Paris, expressed well the prevailing spirit: events had highlighted the necessity for intellectuals to come out of their ivory tower, to spread knowledge and give instruction, to prevent people being misguided by reactionary ideas; it was time for the ‘cooperation of ideas’ or mutual exchange between manual workers and intellectuals for the benefit of society.⁷⁵²

Meanwhile, the continued disorder on the streets and the belligerency of nationalist groups such as the Ligue des patriotes had brought politicians back to the

⁷⁴⁹ Mayeur and Rebérioux, pp. 204-06.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid and Charle, *La Naissance des ‘intellectuels’*, pp. 185-200.

⁷⁵¹ Mayeur and Rebérioux, pp. 210-214. On the ‘Universités populaires’ and their relationship to the Dreyfus Affair see Mercier, pp. 32-38.

⁷⁵² Gabriel Séailles, *La Coopération des idées. Éducation et Révolution: conférence faite à l’inauguration de l’Université Populaire* (Paris: Société des Universités Populaires, 1899), pp. 2-3, p. 5.

strategy of 'republican defence'.⁷⁵³ In parliament it was a victory for the republican groups to the left of the progressists, the radicals, most of whom had eventually come to support revision, while Méline's conservative coalition was driven from power. In July 1899 a new ministry was formed with the main purpose of closing the Affair and, led by René Waldeck-Rousseau, had a core majority of radicals, the support of half the socialist deputies and some ex-progressists who had supported revision over concerns about rising clericalism.⁷⁵⁴ Seeking as broad an appeal as possible, the new government included a socialist minister for the first time, with Alexandre Millerand as the Minister for Commerce, but also, at the other extreme, General Galliffet, remembered for his brutal repression of the Paris Commune, as Minister for War. It was an arrangement that provoked much debate among socialists, with the question of ministerial participation one of the biggest obstacles to founding a unified socialist party.⁷⁵⁵ Yet this government nevertheless stood as testimony to a changing political consensus, a departure from the paranoid anti-socialism of the 1890s with its tendency to equate all of socialism with class struggle and economic determinism, and a recognition that the reforms called for by socialists could be seen as coherent with radical republican principles, that the aims of radical republicanism and those of a certain form of socialism were in fact not all that different.⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵³ Agulhon, *The French Third Republic*, p. 93.

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid*

⁷⁵⁵ Goldberg, pp. 322-42.

⁷⁵⁶ Such was the conception of radicalism presented by Ferdinand Buisson, *La Politique radicale: étude sur les doctrines du parti radical et radical-socialiste* (Paris: Giard & Brière, 1908). On the crisis the Millerand affair and the question of ministerial participation caused on the socialist left see Goldberg, pp. 249-59.

Of course, even after the official organisation of the party in June 1901, what ‘radicalism’ actually meant, beyond republican defence, anti-clericalism and the extension of individual rights, including that of property, to all individuals equally, is, as most historians point out, rather difficult to pin down.⁷⁵⁷ In the 1890s, radicalism had been very generally speaking, to the left of the dominant position; it had only once been in power during this decade, for a short period during this in 1895-96, with a ministry led by Léon Bourgeois and with the collaboration of some independent socialists such as Millerand.

An important part of radical ideology was the concept of solidarism theorised by Léon Bourgeois, who argued that society was characterised by interdependence rather than conflict and that its strong and successful members owed a social debt to the less well off. While the solidarists like the more conservative republicans, rejected class ideology and never questioned the legitimacy of existing economic regime, they differed from conservatives in that they called for state intervention and legislation to attenuate the injustices of the current system. If in the 1890s, the idea of solidarity had been annexed to the ideological opposition to socialism, for the solidaristes and the left wing of radicalism the idea was more of a hand outstretched towards the working class and collaboration or coalition with the parliamentary socialists.⁷⁵⁸ And yet, while this type of ‘radical-socialism’ was presented by Ferdinand Buisson as the essence of radicalism, it was in fact actually just one strand within a broader and more diffuse movement, just as the humanistic parliamentary socialism represented by Jean Jaurès was itself just one

⁷⁵⁷ Robert Gildea, *France, 1870-1914*, 2nd edn (London and New York, 1996), pp. 60-63, Mayeur and Reberieux, pp. 214-18, and Zeldin, *France 1848-1945*, i, pp. 683.

⁷⁵⁸ Stone, pp. 27-31 and pp. 55-72 and Zeldin, *France 1848-1945*, i, pp. 686-87

strand within a broader movement. To describe the situation between around 1899 and 1904, we might say that it was a period in which these strands within radicalism and within socialism were closest together, when one could be most optimistic about the possibility of joint action in parliament.⁷⁵⁹ If the effort to bring them together in a 'bloc des gauches' would itself flounder after 1905, it is nevertheless important in understanding the political identity of the Durkheimian group and how the different political poles within the group cohered.

⁷⁵⁹ On this coalition see Mayeur and Rebérioux, pp. 220-40.

5.4.2 Politics and the *Année*: Célestin Bouglé's Radicalism

In the period under consideration here, stretching from around 1880 to 1914, what the intellectual field demanded of its successful academic journals - from the *Revue philosophique* to more specialised publications like the *Année sociologique* - was a commitment to intellectual freedom within the boundaries of science. And when members of the *Année* group (Durkheim, Bouglé and Mauss all provide examples) had something explicit to say about politics they tended to do it elsewhere. When, for example, the possibility of a merger was brought up between the *Année sociologique* and the far more politically orientated, *Notes critiques. Sciences sociales*, to which most of the Durkheimians apart from Bouglé, Paul Lapie and Dominique Parodi contributed anyway, it was decided that the two reviews should keep to their separate paths: the aims of the *Année sociologique*, explained Paul Fauconnet, were first and foremost scientific, theoretical, and not strictly speaking political.⁷⁶⁰ Yet politics also had its part in the success of the *Année sociologique* and while shared social trajectories, institutional ties and a common understanding of what it meant to do scientific work combined to forge a coherent programme, so did shared political ideals help consolidate a sense of common purpose.

Just as it is possible to distinguish two intellectual poles within the *Année* team - one personified by Marcel Mauss, a relatively marginal figure institutionally, but with high scientific capital, embodying the figure of the professional researcher, the other centred around Célestin Bouglé, a more traditional university academic with high

⁷⁶⁰ On this point see Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, pp. 222-24.

institutional capital - we can also distinguish two political poles.⁷⁶¹ Célestin Bouglé, to begin with, having all the right credentials (studies at the École normale with first place in the philosophy agrégation in 1893, travel scholarship to Germany the following year, lycée teaching until 1898, publications in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* and personal friendships with its founders) became a dominant university figure in the early 1900s, moving from his chair in Toulouse to take over from Alfred Espinas at the Sorbonne in 1908.⁷⁶² And out of all of the Durkheimians, it was perhaps he who was closest to the political ideas that had come to dominate after the Dreyfus Affair.

A Dreyfusard, an early member of the Ligue des droits de l'homme of which he would later become vice-president, he also joined the radical party and even stood for election on several occasions as a representative of its radical-socialist wing.⁷⁶³ Fully embracing the ideology of cooperation and mutual education characteristic of the Universités populaires, Bouglé took an active interest in the effort to bring intellectuals and manual workers into closer contact.⁷⁶⁴ His collection of public lectures on contemporary political themes, *Pour la démocratie française*, was prefaced by Gabriel Séailles, who situated them directly within the context of the Universités populaires movement. Bouglé's effort, wrote Séailles, was part of the wider response to the Dreyfus Affair, which had reminded intellectuals of their social mission to work towards the consolidation of democratic principles among the people and to demonstrate why such

⁷⁶¹ On the intellectual poles within the *Année sociologique* team see Philippe Besnard, 'La formation de l'équipe de l'*Année sociologique*', p. 22.

⁷⁶² Vogt, 123-24.

⁷⁶³ Ibid

⁷⁶⁴ Célestin Bouglé, *Pour la démocratie française: conférences populaires* (Paris: Cornély 1900). See in particular his lecture 'Intellectuels et Manuels', pp. 93-118.

ideals were worthy of respect by all free and rational beings.⁷⁶⁵ In this vein, in one of his lectures Bouglé took direct aim at the well-known anti-Dreyfusards Maurice Barrès and Ferdinand Brunetière who argued that national sentiment was instinctual and in contradiction with critical thought. On the contrary, Bouglé argued, it was only when one did reflect rationally on the sentiment of national identity that one could see what it truly involved: cooperation, justice, humanitarianism, the rule of law, and the principles of 1789, which were themselves a product of a long process of historical development. It was these principles, he told his audience, that were the true expression of the French national tradition and what made France respected abroad.⁷⁶⁶ In another lecture on the army and democracy he was careful to emphasise that the Dreyfusism did not mean ‘anti-nationalist’ nor stand for general dis-order and indiscipline; what it called for was more an order and an army that reflected and defended the real values of the nation, that was in harmony with its conception of justice and respected individual rights.⁷⁶⁷

In public lectures to audiences of a more academic composition, in the university faculties and to groups such as the Ligue des droits de l’homme or the Ligue de l’enseignement Bouglé again brought up explicit political themes: the need to continue to oppose nationalism and nurture a tradition of respect for reason and legality, to defend the right of the state in education, its role in spreading a culture of critical reason among all citizens, while avoiding the extreme anti-clericalism in education where the state alone would control all schools.⁷⁶⁸ What is most clear from this collection of public

⁷⁶⁵ Gabriel Séailles, ‘Preface’, in Bouglé, *Pour la démocratie française*, pp. i-ix.

⁷⁶⁶ Bouglé, *Pour la démocratie française*, pp. 1-39.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid, pp. 73-91.

⁷⁶⁸ Célestin Bouglé, *Solidarisme et libéralisme: réflexions sur le mouvement politique et l’éducation morale* (Paris: Cornély, [1904]). See, for example, in this collection, ‘Le

lectures is not only his support for radicalism in a broad sense, but his precise understanding of both radicalism and of socialism as two political philosophies with very little dividing them, which, in theory, should not have too much difficulty in joining together to pursue common political aims. Embracing Léon Bourgeois's idea of solidarity, Bouglé however argued that a society characterised by harmonious relations had not yet come into being, that great changes were still needed: increased intervention of the state into economic life for the benefit of all members of society, the introduction of a minimum wage to guarantee everyone a humane standard of living, free education at all levels and the limitation of the working day so that everyone would have an equal chance to develop their human potential. From the idea of solidarity, according to Bouglé, we can derive this entitlement of each individual to the 'right to life', the 'right to work', the 'right to education' and the 'right to leisure time', demands which, he claimed, also echoed those of socialism.⁷⁶⁹ Criticising class struggle and collectivism, which destroyed solidarity within society and subordinated the individual to the state, Bouglé stressed the closeness of his idea of solidarism, which took justice as its starting point and individual freedom as its aim, to a more humanistic, idealistic and democratic form of socialism.⁷⁷⁰ Just as classical liberalism, in its opposition to social intervention, presented a very restricted understanding of individual freedom, so too did historical materialism present a very restricted vision of justice.⁷⁷¹

Bilan du nationalisme', pp. 49-79 or 'Pour et contre le monopole de l'enseignement', pp. 100-44.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 23-26.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 36.

⁷⁷¹ Bouglé, *Solidarisme et libéralisme*, pp. 34-47.

Even in his scientific work, as Vogt has noted, Bouglé's primary concern seemed to be politics and the defence of democracy, over and above scientific research for its own sake.⁷⁷² His doctoral thesis, for example, was a sociological study of the morphological factors that contributed the emergence of egalitarian ideas in the modern democratic nations, with egalitarianism meaning for Bouglé the equality of all individuals before the law, the recognition of both individual difference and common humanity.⁷⁷³ And when he took an interest in the Indian caste system, it was purposely constructed as the opposite pole of modern democracy. After a very unflattering description of Hindu society as the best example of a society of this type (that is, one characterised by a rigid social hierarchy based on biological inheritance, a horror of people from outside one's own caste and specialisation in social roles according to caste) he concluded that it was a society where there had been a 'stoppage of sociological development'.⁷⁷⁴ It was one in which the 'unifying levelling of modern society' had met with strong resistance and where what had long been 'dissolved' in modern Europe had become 'ossified'.⁷⁷⁵

Another one of his targets was the use of 'science' (or what he depicted as 'pseudo-science') to legitimise an anti-egalitarian modern social order. In this, he explicitly recognised that the development of science, which had initially been emancipatory, could and did become in the 1890s annexed to an anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian political agenda. Attacking overtly racist theories that derived arguments about society from inherited biological characteristics of individuals or groups, he sought

⁷⁷² Vogt, p. 135. Célestin Bouglé, *Les Idées égalitaires: étude sociologique* (Paris: Alcan, 1899).

⁷⁷³ Vogt, pp. 130-31. For Bouglé's definition of egalitarian ideas see Bouglé, *Les Idées égalitaires*, p. 19, p. 28.

⁷⁷⁴ Célestin Bouglé, 'Remarques sur le régime des castes', *AS* 4(1901), 1-64 (p. 4, p. 63).

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 63.

to rescue science for progressive politics.⁷⁷⁶ He seemed to find more mainstream theories such as organicism particularly dangerous, precisely because the argument was actually half true. While society does actually become more differentiated with social development, organicist theory suggested a movement towards a scientifically managed caste system, within which liberty and equality would be lost.⁷⁷⁷ Indeed, argued Bouglé, the very fact that the theory was still the object of discussion every year at the annual congress of the Institut International de Sociologie bore testament to its mainstream credibility.⁷⁷⁸

The problem with biological theories of society was however that they were not, according to Bouglé, genuinely scientific. The question of whether or not we believe society to be governed by the same laws as the biological organism was, he argued, a pre-determined metaphysical position. Biology and sociology studied two different orders of facts; genuine social science involved starting out from empirical observation of the social reality, and not importing laws and concepts ready made from biology, interpreting them and their relevance for social research in accordance with one's own pre-conceived ideas about society. When one does undertake a genuinely scientific sociological study of social development, he argued, one finds on the contrary that specialisation is indeed increasing, but that this liberates individuals from the grip of a caste-like social structure

⁷⁷⁶ Vogt, pp. 134-35. Vogt directs us to Célestin Bouglé, *La Démocratie devant la science. études critiques sur l'hérédité, la concurrence et la différenciation* (Paris: Alcan, 1903).

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid, pp. 340-41.

⁷⁷⁸ Célestin Bouglé, 'La sociologie biologique et le régime des castes', *RP*, 49(1900), 337-52 (p. 337).

as the traditional barriers between individuals from different groups come down and we come to belief in equality before the law.⁷⁷⁹

Apparently unconcerned about the problem posed by his own political opinions for the scientific status of his own work, we can say that Bouglé, the sociologist and university professor was also very close to the radical-socialist political views that came to prominence in France in the first few years of the twentieth century. A more marginal figure in the academic establishment, less integrated in the national education system and closer to the model of the professional scientific researcher, Marcel Mauss as we shall see next also presented another type of politics.

⁷⁷⁹ Bouglé, 'La sociologie biologique et le régime des castes', p. 342, p. 346; Vogt, pp. 133-34.

5.4.3 Politics and the *Année*: Marcel Mauss, Socialism and Cooperation

Having been away on a travel scholarship in Holland and England during 1897-98, it was only when he was back in Paris in the summer of 1898 that Marcel Mauss established contact with the Dreyfusard organisers, Lucien Herr and Charles Péguy. From this point he became, as his biographer tells us, one of the most dedicated followers of the librairie Bellais, the bookshop recently bought by Péguy and one of the centres of the revisionist movement in the Latin Quarter.⁷⁸⁰

Of the Durkheimians Mauss was not however the only one to be close to Lucien Herr and in an account of a Dreyfusard march at Longchamps on the 11 June 1899 we find François Simiand, Herr and some other friends at the head of one contingent. In spite of confrontations with political opponents and with the police, the day was described by one witness as a great success, ending with a march down the Champs Elysée to cries of ‘Vive Loubet! Vive Picquart! Vive Dreyfus!’⁷⁸¹ We also find Simiand on the administrative council of the Société nouvelle de librairie et d’édition created after the near bankruptcy of the librairie Bellais, the publishing house behind another new review the *Notes critiques* which had Paul Fauconnet as editor.⁷⁸² If Lucien Herr had earlier been critical of Durkheim’s *Division of Labour*, there nevertheless seems to have been much mutual respect between the two.⁷⁸³ This would explain how, in addition to the scientific and institutional credentials of the individual members of group, the *Année sociologique*

⁷⁸⁰ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, pp. 201-02.

⁷⁸¹ Andler, p. 145.

⁷⁸² Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, p. 205, p. 220.

⁷⁸³ See Karady, ‘Durkheim, les sciences sociales et l’Université’, p. 269, on Herr’s hostile remarks about sociology in 1894.

was able to attract the new generation of graduates from the *École normale*, where Herr was librarian and held in much esteem by students.⁷⁸⁴

Going back to the relationship between Lucien Herr and Mauss however we can say that Herr himself was known for his socialist political views and that one of the distinguishing ideological features of the group around him was a conception of socialism as stretching beyond the workers movement to embrace universal and humanistic ideals. Whereas other groups within the socialist movement had argued that the Dreyfus Affair was a bourgeois matter and had refused involvement, these ‘intellectual’ socialists, (among whom Jean Jaurès, after his initial hesitation and decision to join the Dreyfusards, was perhaps the most well-known) were active revisionists.⁷⁸⁵ Far from socialism being anti-republican, as in Cheysson’s blanket description, this group identified itself as both republican and socialist. On the march with Herr from Longchamps in June 1899, for example, we are told that songs from 1789 and 1848 could be heard together with the International. Indeed, the following day in parliament when the confrontation with the police was brought up by Edouard Vaillant, to exclamations from the right that the marchers had formed a ‘*colonne de manifestants*’, the extreme-left shouted back in defence that it was a ‘*colonne de républicains*’.⁷⁸⁶ These intellectuals associated with the *Société nouvelle de librairie et d’édition* were, on the one hand, motivated by the same spirit as the *Universités populaires*, the desire to put intellectual

⁷⁸⁴ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, pp. 202-204. See Besnard, ‘La formation de l’équipe de l’*Année sociologique*’, table II, pp. 28-29, where we can find information on the educational qualifications and professional nominations of all the collaborators of the *Année*.

⁷⁸⁵ On Jaurès’s decision to support the revisionists and on the opposition he met with among socialists see Goldberg, pp. 213-31. I take the expression ‘socialism of the intellectuals from Georges Lefranc’s *Jaurès et le socialisme des intellectuels*.

⁷⁸⁶ Andler, *Vie de Lucien Herr*, pp. 144-46.

work at the service of social change, of ‘justice and truth’ of the ‘education of the people’. However with its series called the ‘bibliothèque socialiste’, publishing works on socialist themes and with its links to the ‘École socialiste’ which gave courses on socialist theory, history and organisations, it also clearly anchored itself in the socialist movement.⁷⁸⁷

As both Marcel Mauss’s biographer Marcel Fournier and Henri Desroche have highlighted, it was as a journalist for Hubert Lergardelle’s paper, *Le Mouvement socialiste* (also closely associated with Herr’s group) that Mauss made an important contribution to the theorisation of this humanistic socialism.⁷⁸⁸ Coherent with the principles guiding his sociological work, Mauss’s socialism was neither materialist nor idealist, and he criticised the tendency within the socialist movement towards economic determinism, the tendency to read Marx’s work as if it were a closed book.⁷⁸⁹ Social facts were, he argued, objective or ‘real’ in that they corresponded to given social structures, but this did not mean that they were literally material facts, as they only really existed to the extent that they were represented in the consciousness of people in society.⁷⁹⁰ Now socialism was itself a collective movement that took the present bourgeois society as a ruinous entity and aimed at the general transformation of this society, so that it would be one day governed in the collective interest.⁷⁹¹ However since social facts were also psychological in nature, this transformative action must necessarily work on

⁷⁸⁷ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, p. 205.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid, pp. 209-14 and Desroche, p. 224. Both authors point us towards the article Marcel Mauss, ‘L’action socialiste’, *Le Mouvement socialiste*, 15 October 1899, pp. 449-62

⁷⁸⁹ Mauss, ‘L’action socialiste’, p. 453.

⁷⁹⁰ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, p. 210, Desroche, p. 224; Mauss, ‘L’action socialiste’, p. 455.

⁷⁹¹ Mauss, ‘L’action socialiste’, pp. 450-51.

consciousness to bring about a ‘new way of seeing, thinking and acting’, a ‘new law’, a ‘new social hierarchy’, ‘a new system of values’, a ‘new moral system’.⁷⁹²

Political action (parliamentary or otherwise) was always secondary for Mauss, a viewpoint which perhaps led him to underestimate, in another article, the major question dividing socialists (the issue of parliamentary participation) as a secondary question of tactics.⁷⁹³ For Mauss the revolution in consciousness required by socialism began not with the seizure of political power and the imposition of a new order from above by a new socialist lawmaker; it grew up gradually from within the contours of existing society, from workers’ associations such as trade unions and cooperatives. These, he argued, did not just have the economic goal of material improvements, but prepared the society of the future and gave political action a firm base.⁷⁹⁴ Since its foundation in the 1880s the cooperative movement of Charles Gide and the *École des Nîmes* had been conceived of as a barrier to class antagonism, which purported to avoid political position taking and to simply unite workers and the bourgeoisie for their mutual material benefit as consumers.⁷⁹⁵ While socialists had been up until now generally hostile to the idea of cooperation, Mauss’s argument reflected a change in ideas that occurred in the mid-1890s, when cooperatives, if controlled by class-conscious workers and joined to the political movement, came to be seen as potential instruments of social revolution.⁷⁹⁶

In terms of his political activities, we know that Mauss, who attended the Japy congress of 1899 where the prospect of founding a united socialist party was on the cards,

⁷⁹² Mauss, ‘L’action socialiste’, p. 455.

⁷⁹³ Marcel Mauss, ‘Le congrès. Ses travaux: l’union et la question ministérielle’, *Le Mouvement socialiste*, 1 December 1899, pp. 641-43.

⁷⁹⁴ Mauss, ‘L’action socialiste’, p. 456

⁷⁹⁵ Charles Gide, *L’École de Nîmes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947).

⁷⁹⁶ Desroche, p. 223.

was also in favour of unity. Unity, he wrote in Largardelle's paper, was all the more important at this particular point in time, when the movement had 'heavy responsibilities'.⁷⁹⁷ This reflected his belief that socialism went far beyond the workers' question, that it had an important role in defending democracy and in preparing the society of the future.⁷⁹⁸ Socialism was never just about material, economic gains for workers but was itself 'moulded by justice, right and freedom'. As such it represented the 'true interest of humanity'.⁷⁹⁹

In his attachment to such ideals and in his belief that one could begin working from within existing society towards the future, Mauss could well agree with the position of Bouglé. Where the two differed most clearly was perhaps on the role they accorded to political action, and whereas Bouglé placed his faith in reforms enacted by parliament, Mauss believed that a new moral system needed first to grow up from below, hence his attachment to the socialist cooperatives. So within the *Année sociologique* group itself we can see a correspondence with the political rapprochement between radicalism and socialism in the early 1900s, with a radical pole around Bouglé and socialist pole around Marcel Mauss.

⁷⁹⁷ Mauss, 'Le congrès. Ses travaux', pp. 642-43.

⁷⁹⁸ Mauss, 'L'action socialiste', pp. 451-52.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 461-62.

5.4.4 Durkheim between Science and Politics

In terms of the political sympathies that show through in Durkheim's own work, the ideal of a future society characterised by both individual difference and social unity and critique of classical liberalism would seem to resonate well with the position of Célestin Bouglé. However, like Mauss, Durkheim considered parliamentary political action to be secondary, and although he was a supporter of educational reform, he would have differed from the solidaristes and from Bouglé in that he did not believe that reforms enacted by politicians in parliament would suffice to solve the problems of society.⁸⁰⁰ New ideals and moral values came, in his view, from below, from associations engaged in collective action, and in the modern industrial world he saw, as Mauss did, workers groups such as cooperatives as the generative source of a new morality.⁸⁰¹ In addition, he also considered socialism to be a social fact stretching beyond the workers question, and with the 'new aspirations' having developed out of the ideals of 1789 he argued that 'socialism had its beginning in the French Revolution'.⁸⁰² Of the two main branches of socialism that existed in these years before the foundation of the SFIO in 1905 - the humanistic, parliamentary socialism represented by Jean Jaurès and the

⁸⁰⁰ Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 353-54.

⁸⁰¹ The role of workers' associations in solving problems of the forced and anomic division of labour in industry, and in protecting individuals against anomie and egoism was developed in his lecture course entitled, 'Physique générale des mœurs et du droit. This was first delivered at Bordeaux in 1896-97 and for the following three years, then again in Paris in 1902, 1903. See Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 617-20. These lectures were later published in French as *Leçons de sociologie: Physique des mœurs et du droit* foreward by H.N. Kubali and introduction by Georges Davy (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1950). The argument also appeared in *Suicide* and in the preface to the second edition of the *Division of Labour: Émile Durkheim, Le Suicide*, pp. 434-42 and Émile Durkheim, 'Quelques remarques sur les groupements professionnels', in *De la division du travail social*, 2nd edn, pp. i-xxxvi.

⁸⁰² Émile Durkheim, 'Internationalisme et lutte des classes', Durkheim, *La Science sociale et l'action*, pp. 283-93 (p. 290), first publ. in *Libres entretiens*, 2nd ser (1906).

economic determinist, class-based socialism represented by Jules Guesde - it is not surprising to find that Durkheim sided with Jaurès.⁸⁰³ At the same time he seems to have been far more critical of the prospect of a united socialist party that would bring together the Jaurès, Guesde and the revolutionary blanquist strand represented by Edouard Vaillant, than Mauss or the other socialist Durkheimians were. Describing the socialism of Guesde as a socialism of ‘uncultivated and hate-filled people’, he wrote to Mauss in 1899 he couldn’t fathom why Fauconnet was saddened by the scission between the three groups, that it was actually a positive thing for ‘Jaurès and his friends’ to distinguish themselves from the ‘class-based socialism that reduced the social question to the workers’ question’. Although, he wrote, he could ‘understand it and support it as far as it is legitimate’ he could not ‘accept its principle’.⁸⁰⁴

Overall we can say that the changed political context aided Durkheim and his school in its path towards consecration in three principal ways: firstly, shared political ideals gave the group further internal cohesion and a sense of common purpose in addition to its shared scientific goals, without such unity being imposed from above by Durkheim himself; secondly the connections to Lucien Herr and avant-garde intellectual politics meant that the *Année sociologique* continued to be able to attract the new generation of graduates from the École normale before 1914; and thirdly more established academics, such as Bouglé who took over Espinas’s Parisian chair in 1908

⁸⁰³ For the main points of contention between in the debate between these two positions see Jules Guesde and Jean Jaurès, *Les Deux méthodes: conférence à l’Hippodrome Lillois* (Lille: Bibliothèque du Parti ouvrier française, 1900).

⁸⁰⁴ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, July, 1899, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 224-26.

and Durkheim himself who moved to the Sorbonne in 1902 to take over the course in the science of education, acceded to dominant institutional positions.⁸⁰⁵

However, having himself (with the Izoulet affair in 1897) been on the receiving end of being politically out of favour, Durkheim was, I suggest, wary about the subordination of scientific aims to political aims, whatever the political implications of his own social theory. He expressed distaste for the day-to-day business of politics and called ‘Guesde and *tutti quanti*....miserable politicians, the first in a line of opportunists’.⁸⁰⁶ When it came to actual involvement in practical political activities, Durkheim was not involved in initiatives such as the Universités populaires, and indeed severely reprimanded his nephew for investing time and money in a short-lived cooperative bakery in Paris.⁸⁰⁷ He was, it is true, involved in some solidariste inspired initiatives, such as the Congrès international de l’éducation sociale in 1900, where Léon Bourgeois, Alexandre Millerand and Charles Gide also gave speeches.⁸⁰⁸ However, such interventions were rare and Durkheim seems to have been far less involved in the daily business of politics than is sometimes suggested.⁸⁰⁹ Unlike Bouglé furthermore, Durkheim did not prioritise the defence of specific political values over his scientific work, and whereas Bouglé chose to study caste society and depict it in unfavourable terms, as the very antithesis of the modern ideal, Durkheim’s priority was always the scientific one of explaining consciousness.⁸¹⁰ If this was congruent with democracy it

⁸⁰⁵ Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, p. 360.

⁸⁰⁶ Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, July, 1899.

⁸⁰⁷ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, p. 233; Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, June 1902, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 332-35.

⁸⁰⁸ Scott, pp. 179-81 and Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, p. 350-51.

⁸⁰⁹ Kaylor, pp. 166-67 is an example.

⁸¹⁰ Vogt, pp. 123-39.

was in the sense that democracy required not the inculcation of specific values but the capacity for individuals to critically reflect on, to debate and to rationally articulate the moral values of the society in which they lived. The distinguishing feature of modern democracy was for Durkheim, not so much the election of the sovereign authority by universal suffrage, nor the direct reflection of mass opinion, but more its reflective and communicative capacity.⁸¹¹ Democracy, in his view, involved reciprocal communication, with ideals worked out from below becoming the object of rational reflection then more clearly articulated and upheld by the state.⁸¹² The political role of the sociologist was that already expressed in his lectures on moral education, one of rational reflection on the nature of society. The aim of sociology was therefore ‘to determine what morality ought to be at a certain point in time’ and to be able to distinguish between ‘what is moral and what is not’.⁸¹³

Intellectuals were not in Durkheim’s view made for direct involvement in daily political life. His priority as a sociologist was first the development of the new science and the explanation of consciousness, and then as an educator, ‘enlightening’ society as to the rational moral principles underlying its existence.⁸¹⁴ There may be times, as in the Dreyfus Affair when the urgency would be such as to require more direct political action but the next question of such proportions would however not arise until 1914.

⁸¹¹ Irving L. Horowitz, ‘Socialization without Politicization: Émile Durkheim’s Theory of the Modern State’, *Political Theory*, 10.3 (1982), 353-77 (pp. 369-70). Durkheim, *Leçons de sociologie*, chapters 7-9 for Durkheim’s theory of the democratic state.

⁸¹² Horowitz, pp. 368-69.

⁸¹³ Émile Durkheim, ‘Deploige, S, *Le conflit de la morale et de la sociologie*’, *AS*, 12 (1913), 326-28 (p. 327).

⁸¹⁴ Durkheim, ‘L’élite intellectuelle et la démocratie’, pp. 280-82. Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 333-32.

Conclusion

In terms of his overt political sympathies therefore we can say that Durkheim was a republican, who supported the opportunists and their secularising policy in the 1880s, and through his academic work sought to contribute to the consolidation of the new regime. While in the following decade of increasing social unrest his sociology could seem to take the form of a conservative effort to deal with the social question, I suggest that it would be more correct to see his position in this period as one critical of the existing state of affairs. There can be little doubt that politics also mediated the fortunes of the Durkheimian school, and if the more conservative context of the 1890s could hinder Durkheim's own professional advancement, the political triumph of the radicals and radical-socialists after the Dreyfus Affair created a more favourable situation within which the school could flourish. Yet, for all this Durkheim never considered his work to be any less scientific or that his political sympathies necessarily diminished his work's scientific status. Rather than being directly involved in day-to-day practical political matters, Durkheim saw his role as an intellectual as one of explaining morality and consciousness. He believed that sociology should serve to further knowledge about a society and to help develop the critical, collective self-awareness, necessary for autonomy and democratic government. While during the Dreyfus Affair his still rather marginal institutional position made it possible for him to play the role of social critic, by 1914 as we shall see, consecrated at the Sorbonne, this work of critique would be far more difficult.

Chapter 6

Durkheim at the Sorbonne: The Hegemonic Period

In 1887 with his appointment as chargé de cours in social science and pedagogy Durkheim had made a breakthrough for sociology, gaining an initial foothold for the discipline within the French university system. If the creation of this position was one of the early results of the university reforms, we can in a sense say that Durkheim's nomination to the Sorbonne in 1902 marked both the completion of these reforms and the beginning of the hegemonic period of French sociology. The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed therefore both the political consolidation of radical republicanism after the Dreyfus Affair and the intellectual consolidation of a whole generation of scholars who had, since the 1870s sought to transform higher education in France.⁸¹⁵

Yet although this political and intellectual re-configuration laid the conditions for the success of Durkheimian sociology and although Durkheim was often singled out as the 'chef de file' of the New Sorbonne, it is not the case that his position within the reformed university was without tension.⁸¹⁶ On the contrary, the relationship between sociology and the neighbouring discipline of history was a rather ambiguous one and it is to this question of disciplinary rivalry that I shall first turn.

⁸¹⁵ Rebérioux, pp. 204-206. Also see section 5.4.1 above.

⁸¹⁶ See for example Pierre Lasserre, *La Doctrine officielle de l'Université: critique du haut enseignement de l'état, défense et théorie des humanités* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1913), where Durkheim alongside the Sorbonne historians is one of the author's prime targets in this attack on the reformed university. Also see Bourdieu, *Homo academicus*, p. 155.

6.1 The Durkheimians and the Historians

Perhaps one of the most striking points of contrast in the field of philosophy as one moves from the mid-nineteenth century towards the latter part of the century was its failure to re-produce another figure of the stature and influence of Victor Cousin. Although within the discipline itself the legacy of Cousin was largely continued by Paul Janet, from a wider perspective, it was, by the turn of the century, a historian who had become the dominant figure in French academic and intellectual life. One of the principal representatives of a new, scientific school of historical scholarship, Ernest Lavissee is remembered as someone who sought to change both the face of historical studies and of higher education in France, and as an academic who ended up wielding an influence that extended far beyond his discipline and academia to political and social life as a whole.⁸¹⁷

The rise to power of Lavissee can be taken as reflective of the final success of the republican reform of higher education and the consolidation of the new school of thought in history, the 'École méthodique'.⁸¹⁸ Given the parallel rise of sociology and the social sciences within the same setting, it is understandable why Durkheim is often placed alongside Lavissee as one of the figureheads of the New Sorbonne.

⁸¹⁷On Lavissee see Christian Amalvi, 'Ernest Lavissee', in *Dictionnaire biographique des historiens française et francophones*, ed. by Amalvi, pp. 181-83.

⁸¹⁸The term 'école méthodique' is the one chosen by Isabel Noronha-DiVanna in *Writing History in the Third Republic* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), although terms such as 'positivistic' or 'scientific-nominalist' have also been used. See Keylor, pp. 8-9.

6.1.1 The Rise of the ‘Méthodiques’

Having begun his professional career under the Second Empire and as someone who, according to Pierre Nora, seemed rather half-hearted about the Republic in its early period, the position of Ernest Lavisse within the academic institutions of the Third Republic has something paradoxical about it.⁸¹⁹ Graduating from the *École normale supérieure* in 1865 with an *agrégation* in history, Lavisse like most ‘normaliens agrégés’ began by teaching for a number of years in various lycées, before being appointed as private tutor to the son of Napoleon III, with whom he remained in correspondence until the latter’s death in 1879. Yet it was under the Republic that Lavisse really rose to prominence both within his own discipline of history and within the academic edifice more generally. In 1880 he gained his first university position as substitute to Fustel de Coulanges in medieval history at the Sorbonne, going on to be chosen by Jules Ferry as the first director of historical studies again at the Sorbonne and, in 1888, was made professor of modern history at the same institution. By 1892 he had been nominated to the Académie française and in 1904 became the director of the *École normale*.⁸²⁰ In addition to these official positions, Lavisse was also a founding member and lifetime general secretary of the powerful reform-orientated pressure group the Société de l’Enseignement Supérieur, which published the *Revue internationale de l’enseignement* and a lifetime member on the advisory board to the Minister of Public Instruction, the

⁸¹⁹ Pierre Nora, ‘Lavisse, intituteur national. Le *Petit Lavisse*, évangile de la République’, in *Les lieux de mémoire*, 2nd edn, 3 Vols (Paris: Gallimard/Quarto, 1997) i, pp. 239-75(pp. 240-44); Noronha-DiVanna, pp. 139-40.

⁸²⁰ Ibid, pp. 141-42, Keylor, pp. 66-67 and Jacques and Mona Ozouf, ‘Preface’, Ernest Lavisse, *Souvenirs*, ed. by Jacques and Mona Ozouf, 2nd edn (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1988), pp. vii-xxvii, (p. vii).

Conseil supérieur de l'instruction publique.⁸²¹ By the turn of the century Lavissee was, all agree, the 'uncrowned king of the Sorbonne', a historian who presided over everything from history students to the publishing houses of the rue des Écoles, who had contacts and influence at the Ministry of Public Instruction.⁸²²

With the consolidation of the Republic Lavissee seems to have become, in the manner of the politician Adolphe Theirs, a republican by default, seeing this regime as the best possible guarantor of stability and national unity. Yet, it is also likely that he considered the new regime as an opportunity to introduce the types of changes he wished to see in history and in French higher education.⁸²³ Critical of the type of education that he himself had received - one heavily focussed on the Greek and Roman classics and aimed at developing the 'general culture' of the young gentleman - Lavissee just like Durkheim, was known for his opposition to this 'abstract' and 'colourless' learning that offered little contact with concrete historical facts, people and places.⁸²⁴ Even at the École normale, he recalled, students were back then never 'trained in research methods', or ever called upon to explain a given historical text in a seminar, and one never heard lectures start off with 'this lesson is based on such-and-such documents and this is the degree of confidence they deserve'.⁸²⁵

Although tentative steps had been taken towards the promotion of historical studies in the late 1860s with the foundation of the École pratique des hautes études, it was really only with the university reforms that got underway during the Third Republic

⁸²¹ Keylor, p. 61.

⁸²² Nora, pp. 245-46 and Amalvi, pp. 181-83.

⁸²³ Garcia, p. 68.

⁸²⁴ Lavissee 'Souvenirs d'une éducation manquée', pp. 4-10.

⁸²⁵ Ibid, p. 19 and Keylor, pp. 38-39. Also see above 2.2.1.

that a programme of proper training for historians could be developed.⁸²⁶ In this context Lavisse became one of the pioneers of the professionalisation of his discipline. Not surprisingly, when he arrived at the Sorbonne in 1880 one of his first points of attack was the practice of the public lecture, which he likened to a form of entertainment for an audience of curious amateurs, and he insisted on the importance of constituting a body of serious students in history. He may not have been able to completely bar the general public from attending his own lectures in medieval history, but through organising student registration lists and identification cards, and reserving the front rows of the lecture theatre for regular students he did what he could to prioritise the ‘real students’ and discourage the ‘amateurs’.⁸²⁷

That this tactic was at all possible, however, depended on wider changes occurring in the university, where the creation of scholarships and the introduction of disciplinary specialisations in 1880 (history, literature and philosophy) at degree level meant that for the first time there was actually a body of potential history students for Lavisse to appeal to in the first place. Thus, he could promote the first four-year course of specialised historical study in France, with the first two years devoted to completing the history ‘licence’ and the second two to the agrégation. As part of the wider university reform programme small seminar rooms, offices and specialised libraries were constructed which again served the double purpose of discouraging the curious public and permitting an apprentice-like relationship between students and the teachers who

⁸²⁶ On the ‘prelude to reform’ see Keylor, pp. 20-21.

⁸²⁷ Ernest Lavisse, ‘Le concours pour l’agrégation d’histoire’, *RIE*, 1(1881), 137-51 (pp. 150-51). Also see Keylor, pp. 70-71.

offered the technical training necessary for the specialised scientific research of a professional historian.

In this drive towards professionalisation Lavissee however was just one of the leading figures of a wider movement, a new school of thought in history which we can call the 'École méthodique', and which the foundation of the *Revue historique* in 1876 provided its first manifesto. In his introduction to the first issue of this new journal, Gabriel Monod (another normalien, graduating in history with Lavissee in 1865) in fact anticipated Lavissee's effort at the Sorbonne by some four years, as he emphasised the importance of scientific method in history and of developing structures for the training of future historians in these methods. Like Durkheim, Monod was also impressed by the advances of German science and after his agrégation spent some time studying in Germany. On his return he was nominated to the history and philology section of the new École pratique des hautes études and it was from this base that he sought to introduce to France the methods of German historical scholarship.⁸²⁸ In his 1876 introduction to the newly founded journal this admiration for German scholarship was again apparent, as Monod praised the taste for 'patient research and erudition' that predominated in Germany. With their well-organised universities imbued with the spirit of 'libre examen', the Germans, in Monod's view, had made the greatest contribution to the progress of the historical sciences in the nineteenth century, and indeed to the progression of science more generally.⁸²⁹

What was distinctive about German historical writing was not however an exclusive focus on the minute details of empirical research and it was not pure erudition

⁸²⁸ Carbonell, pp. 228-29 and Keylor, pp. 36-37.

⁸²⁹ Monod, pp. 27-28.

devoid of any unifying theory; the German historians did generalise, but the point Monod emphasised was that these theoretical generalisations were slowly and rigorously established on the basis of concrete evidence.⁸³⁰ Monod was thus not exactly calling for a break with a ‘literary’ type of history characteristic of the French romantic historians, nor was he praising the virtues of erudite, empirical scholarship. What he wanted to see was a synthesis of two hitherto separate traditions in French historical writing, a synthesis of the patient erudition that had flourished in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries joined with the philosophical spirit of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁸³¹ He hoped that the promotion of ‘healthy methods of work and of critique’ would help reduce the perceived antagonism between literature and erudition and that a ‘more adequate conception of historical science’ would take root. Having understood the ‘danger of premature generalisations, of vast a priori systems that aimed to embrace everything and explain everything’, but also the ‘slight interest presented by research of pure curiosity guided by no overriding idea’ historians in France, he argued, were gradually coming to see their work as a process of ‘slow and methodical investigation, advancing gradually from the particular to the general, from the detail to the whole’.⁸³²

The biggest obstacle to the development of scientific history Monod lamented, was, again in contrast to Germany, the complete absence of any ‘effective form of higher education’, any ‘general scientific training’ or ‘directing authority’.⁸³³ If it was through the reform of the education system that this new scientific spirit could take root, in the meantime Monod saw his journal as an alternative way of developing a sense of

⁸³⁰ Monod, p. 28.

⁸³¹ Ibid, pp. 32-33.

⁸³² Ibid, p. 33.

⁸³³ Ibid, p. 29, p. 34.

professional solidarity among historians. The *Revue historique*, would in this way not only promote the publication of ‘original and serious’ historical work on specific subjects, but also to act as a link between all those working in the multi-faceted field of history and offer ‘precise information on everything that is being accomplished at the present time in the various domains of the historical sciences’. Thus the journal aimed to contribute to the training of ‘young people who want to pursue a career in history’ and to serve as a ‘rallying point and a centre of information’ for all.⁸³⁴

In short, the new school of thought in history which crystallised around the twin figures of Gabriel Monod and Ernest Lavisse in the late 1870s and early 1880s, can be summed up in the two terms methodological and professional. Rather than seeking to ‘defend certain religious and political ideas’, Monod claimed that the aim was to remain ‘independent of all political and religious opinion’, to promote ‘disinterested and scientific research’ and study ‘history...for its own sake’. In this way the *Revue historique* could be described as a journal of ‘positive science and free discussion’, closed off to overreaching ‘political and philosophical theories’.⁸³⁵ Methodological, professional, the new type of historical scholarship would also therefore be impartial. In an era when the scientist was represented as the main figure capable of a disinterested public role, not only did Monod and his journal’s eminent patrons believe impartiality to be entirely possible, but the idea that ‘scientific’ history should also serve the cause of national regeneration did not seem to strike anyone as a contradiction. Here again we find a resonance with the one of the central themes of Durkheim’s scientific sociology.

⁸³⁴ Monod, p. 35.

⁸³⁵ Ibid, p. 36 and Noronha-DiVanna, pp. 110-11.

6.1.2 History and the Promotion of Social Science

There are two senses in which these historians saw their effort to develop a ‘scientific’, ‘impartial’ approach to their subject as having a social role, as making a contribution to the society in which they lived. In the first place, in a time when scientific achievement was just one indicator of a nation’s prestige and when the advances of German science stood as an only too clear reminder of French concerns about decline, the effort to develop the historical sciences in France also formed part of an effort to rebuild national prestige after the defeat of 1870.⁸³⁶ Both Monod and Lavissee had, at different times, studied in Germany, and whereas the former sought to introduce the methods of German historical scholarship to France, the latter devoted much of his own historical research to exploring the sources of Prussian and German strength.⁸³⁷

In another sense, an ‘impartial’ ‘scientific’ history presented as independent of the political ideologies and religious doctrines that had hitherto divided the nation could also, they claimed, help forge a sense of national unity and stabilise politics. For Monod, impartiality meant not letting history become the weapon of any one religious or political tradition, and trying ‘to explain and to understand’ the different traditions which have divided people. Instead of being ‘the defender of one side against the other’, the historian’s job was to ‘disentangle’ the causes, to ‘define’ the character and ‘determine’ the nature of contested institutions and events in French history.⁸³⁸ Unlike the divisive histories that ‘mutilated national unity’ this kind of impartial and accurate account of the

⁸³⁶ See Ernest Renan, *La Réforme intellectuelle et morale* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1871) and Émile Boutmy, *Quelques idées sur la création d’une Faculté libre d’enseignement supérieur: lettres et programme* (Paris: Adolphe Lainé, 1871).

⁸³⁷ Noronha-DiVanna, p. 142.

⁸³⁸ Monod, p. 37.

past could in fact help re-awaken the ‘soul of the nation’. This would allow people to see the links between all the different periods of French historical development and understand their shared heritage as ‘all sons of old France, and at the same time all citizens...of modern France’.⁸³⁹ Indeed it was precisely in this spirit that the history of the revolution itself became for the first time an object of scientific study, with Alphonse Aulard being nominated to teach a new course in the subject at the Sorbonne in 1886, a position which would in 1891 become the chair in the history of the French revolution⁸⁴⁰ As Aulard stated in his opening lecture, the aim of the new course would be to approach this divisive period of French history with a ‘critical method’, founded on solid documentary evidence and rather than becoming the apologist of one or the other side the historian would seek to judge the revolution with the ‘spirit of modern science’.⁸⁴¹

In terms of the language they used and themes they broached - the emphasis on methodology, on professional specialisation and on the social role of ‘scientific’ history - these historians seemed to be speaking in very much the same terms as the Durkheimians and we can say the ascent of the ‘méthodiques’ was certainly advantageous to sociology. Prominent historians such as Lavissee and Alfred Croiset, who became the Dean of the Sorbonne in 1898, indeed used their influence to promote the social sciences and it was after all, on the call of Lavissee that the Comte de Chambrun had offered to endow the chair in the history of social economy at the Sorbonne.⁸⁴² As Terry Clark has also pointed out, it was Dick May’s contacts with Croiset that facilitated the foundation of a new

⁸³⁹ Monod, p. 38.

⁸⁴⁰ Alphonse Aulard, ‘Leçon d’ouverture du cours d’histoire de la Révolution française à la faculté de lettres’, in Alphonse Aulard, *Études et leçons sur la révolution française* (Paris: Alcan, 1893-1926), pp. 3-40 (pp. 3-4).

⁸⁴¹ *Ibid*, pp. 7-9, p. 18.

⁸⁴² See above section 4.1.1.

school for the social sciences, the *École des hautes études sociales* which had grown out of an internal disagreement within the *Collège libre des sciences sociales* during the Dreyfus Affair. Not only did the patronage of Croiset help the school to secure official state approval almost immediately, but he also lent his name to the institution by lecturing there, as did Lavissee and another Sorbonne historian, Charles Seignobos.⁸⁴³

At the same time, these historians were also involved in the explosion of activity and government-sponsored initiatives to promote ‘social education’ that followed the Dreyfus Affair and the political victory of radical republicanism. The two international congresses organised in 1900 as part of the Universal Exposition alongside the impressive ‘social economy’ exhibit are a case in point. While the one held in July dealt with the teaching of the social sciences in France and abroad, the other one held in September aimed to promote the diffusion of solidariste ideas in the education system, and the radical politician Léon Bougeois presided this second congress and numerous discussions. Almost echoing the combined aim of both of these congresses the declared aim of the new *École des hautes études sociales* was to promote the teaching of social science in higher education and to spread solidarism as a source of moral unity.⁸⁴⁴

Not only did the new historical school help to promote the social sciences taken as a whole, but we can also say that Durkheim himself directly benefited from the political and intellectual reconfiguration that occurred after the Dreyfus Affair which had placed the historians, already to the forefront of the university reform movement and influential on the governing councils of universities throughout the country, in a position of pre-

⁸⁴³ On the split in the *Collège libre des sciences sociales* and the influence of Alfred Croiset see Clark, *Prophets and Patrons*, pp. 159-60. These lectures are gathered together in Croiset and others, *L'Éducation de la démocratie*.

⁸⁴⁴ Scott, pp. 180-181 and Keylor, pp. 166-69.

eminence. It was through the efforts of Croiset and Lavisie, now Dean of the Sorbonne and director of the *École normale* respectively, that the latter institutions became linked to the University of Paris. As an offspring of this initiative it was decided in 1902 to organise a theoretical course in pedagogy, to be delivered by a Sorbonne professor, a course that would be obligatory for all *agrégation* candidates regardless of their specialism. Having been recently promoted from Bordeaux to substitute Ferdinand Buisson in the chair in the science of education in Paris it was to Durkheim that this new task fell. Within two years of his arrival at the Sorbonne, Durkheim thus found himself in a situation of immense institutional power in that his sociologically informed pedagogy course was the only one that all *agrégation* candidates took regardless of whether their actual specialism was in history, literature, philosophy or modern languages.

It was in this context, as Maurice Halbwachs tells us, that Durkheim put together his lecture course on the history of pedagogy in France first delivered in 1904-05.⁸⁴⁵ In his opening lecture to this course it is not surprising, therefore, to find that the aims outlined here resonated with those of the New Sorbonne historians and with reformist principles more generally. As someone who had himself come from within the folds of the *École normale*, Durkheim had first hand experience of the educational ideals and assumptions that permeated this elite milieu, where the classical humanist ideal dating from the Renaissance period and centred on the study of Latin and Greek was, up until quite recently, held up as the hallmark of a truly ‘human’, ‘universal’ education. The whole purpose of the new course, Durkheim argued, was to help give future teachers a more ‘complete awareness of their role’, and it was for this reason that the chosen object

⁸⁴⁵ Émile Durkheim, *L'Évolution pédagogique en France*, introduction by Maurice Halbwachs, 2 Vols (Paris: Alcan, 1938), i: *Des origines à la renaissance*.

of study was the evolution of pedagogical ideals over the course of history.⁸⁴⁶ His point, in doing this, was to encourage his listeners begin to think critically about the classical humanist ideal itself and understand how it too had emerged as an expression of underlying social needs. Anticipating the objection that agrégation candidates with their higher level of ‘general culture’ already had this capacity for critical reflection, Durkheim pointed out that while all areas of social life - the ‘political, economic and moral regimes’ - had transformed over the past few centuries, the pedagogical ideal that emerged during the Renaissance period, ‘that which inspired the Jesuit colleges’ in the 1600s had in fact resisted all change. This immobility, he argued, would indicate that the critical spirit had not in fact played such a considerable role in education as one might imagine, given that the whole point of critical reflection was to prevent ‘habits taking on an immutable, rigid form’.⁸⁴⁷

Implicitly referring to the wider context and the reform of French higher education set in motion during the Third Republic, Durkheim admitted that by this point most people had indeed come to agree that education could not permanently remain the same. And yet, the question of what it ought to become, he pointed out, was still unclear. While in other periods of history, in the Middle Ages or in the Renaissance, the ideal in accordance with which educators worked was always clearly definable, the worrying

⁸⁴⁶ Émile Durkheim, ‘L’évolution et le rôle de l’enseignement secondaire en France’, in Émile Durkheim, *Éducation et sociologie*, introduction by Paul Fauconnet (Paris: Alcan, 1922), pp. 134-58 (p. 135), first publ. in *Revue bleue*, 5th ser, 5 (1906), 549-54. For the English translations see ‘The Evolution and Role of Secondary Education in France’, in Émile Durkheim, *Education and Sociology*, trans. by Sherwood D. Fox (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1956), pp. 135-53 (p. 135).

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 137; trans, p. 137.

thing about contemporary society was, he argued, that ideal towards which education was tending, the ideal that teachers ought to pursue, could only be seen very confusedly.

So if Durkheim's first aim was to subject the classical ideal to scientific critique, his second aim was to explore the nature of the 'new system' in the process of formation.⁸⁴⁸ In this he presented the sociological point of view as the key. While a common response to the question would be to make students into 'men', in reality he argued this was no solution at all since every society 'at every moment of its history' has 'its own conception of man'. The point was rather to work out, based on an awareness of the nature of one's own society, 'what idea we ought to have of man, us Europeans, or more specifically still, us French in the twentieth century'.⁸⁴⁹ Rather than making an argument against classical humanism Durkheim's point seems more that the meaning of a truly 'human education' could not be taken for granted, and to encourage his listeners to engage in a critical reflection on the human ideal implicated in the nature of their own society. Ultimately over the course of lectures to follow Durkheim's own suggestion would be that in the contemporary context it was the scientific and educational ideals of the French Revolution, and the reforms pursued during the Third Republic that were perhaps most faithful to the spirit of a 'truly human' education, more so than the aristocratic classical ideal dominant in the seventeenth century.⁸⁵⁰

The crowning achievement of the university reforms, Durkheimian sociology was gradually introduced to the Sorbonne, as his position as chargé de cours in the science of

⁸⁴⁸ Durkheim, 'L'évolution et le rôle de l'enseignement secondaire en France', pp. 142-43.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 143; trans, p. 141.

⁸⁵⁰ See Émile Durkheim, *L'Évolution pédagogique en France*, ii: *De la Renaissance à nos jours*, chapters 10, 12 and 13.

education became a permanent chair in 1906, and by 1913 he had gained enough influence to have the word ‘sociology’ finally added to the title of his chair.⁸⁵¹ While it is certainly for this reason that he has been cited alongside the Sorbonne historians as embodying the spirit of the new university, it is however not the case that the relationship between the sociologists and the ‘École méthodique’ was seamless. As we shall see next, when it came to the question of methodology in the social sciences it was in fact with these historians that the Durkheimians vied for influence.

⁸⁵¹ Giddens, *Durkheim*, p. 19 and Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, p. 360, pp. 365-66.

6.1.3 Simiand and Seignobos on Method

If the Durkheimians and the historians of the 'École méthodique' echoed each other in their concern for method and if both schools rose to prominence within the contours of the reformed university, it was however precisely on the question of methodology in the social sciences and the role of history therein that the rivalry between the two came into the open. In a sense the debate can be traced back to 1898, to the opening statement of the *Année sociologique*, where the Durkheimians assigned to history an essential but nevertheless secondary role as a tool in establishing sociology as a positive science.⁸⁵² Whereas for the Durkheimians, it was a common historical and comparative sociological method that guaranteed the unity of the social sciences the historians of the 'École méthodique' argued the opposite, that there was no such thing as a 'scientific' sociology and that thing uniting the various social sciences was the application of a common historical method, or the same procedures in the study of social facts that the historians applied when studying historical facts. With the publication of Charles Seignobos's *La Méthode historique et son application aux sciences sociales* in 1901, which had incidentally first been presented as a series of lectures at the École des hautes études sociales, and Durkheim's reply in the *Année sociologique* followed by the more developed response of François Simiand of 1903 in Henri Berr's *Revue de synthèse historique*, the issue came fully to the surface.⁸⁵³

In partnership with Charles-Victor Langlois, Seignobos had already written part of a methodological treatise (a first of its kind in French historical scholarship), originally

⁸⁵² See Durkheim's prefaces to the first two issues of the *Année sociologique*.

⁸⁵³ Émile Durkheim, 'Seignobos, Ch, *La Méthode historique appliqué aux sciences sociales*', *AS*, 5 (1902), 123-27 and François Simiand, 'Méthode historique et science sociale', *Revue de synthèse historique* (1903), 1-22, 129-57. Also see Garcia, pp. 100-101.

intended as a university textbook on historical methodology.⁸⁵⁴ Both were leading Sorbonne academics - Langlois having being nominated professor of methodology (the first chair of its kind) in 1896, while Seignobos, who was described as Lavissee's 'right-hand man at the Sorbonne', taught historical pedagogy from 1890, and substituted Lavissee in chair of modern history from 1898. Both Langlois and Seignobos had a zeal for correct method, and sought to ensure that the proper ways of locating, identifying and handling historical sources were taught to university students, as a way of guaranteeing the accuracy of historical work.⁸⁵⁵

In its relationship to sociology however, their manual was important not so much for its discussion of the task of the historian in locating documents and the techniques of analysis and synthesis that went into the creation of a work of scholarship, but primarily its conception of evidence. A discipline built on 'indirect' evidence, 'traces' of the past left behind in documents, history, they claimed, could never be of the same scientific status as the natural sciences, however carefully and accurately one worked.⁸⁵⁶ For this reason history, according to Langlois and Seignobos, could never be truly 'objective'. At the same time however, if an element of subjectivity was always inevitable, through the careful application of the historical method - the techniques of identification of sources, of criticism, analysis and synthesis they outlined in their manual - the historian could

⁸⁵⁴ Charles-Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos, *Introduction aux études historiques* (Paris: Hachette, 1898).

⁸⁵⁵ Garcia, p. 77, Noronha-DiVanna, p.209, pp. 217-220 and Antoine Prost, 'Charles Seignobos', in *Dictionnaire biographique des historiens française et francophones*, ed. by Amalvi, pp. 288-89.

⁸⁵⁶ Langlois and Seignobos, pp. 1-2 and chapter 2.

give, if not the whole truth, at least an accurate account of past events.⁸⁵⁷ Whereas the Durkheimians, in line with a conception of science drawn from French academic philosophy, defined sociology as that which studied a given set of facts (social facts) distinct to those studied by all other sciences, Seignobos in his 1901 treatise argued by contrast that historical facts were not historical ‘by their nature’.⁸⁵⁸ Again insisting on the difference between history and the natural sciences, he repeated that historical facts were defined by their ‘position’, as those facts which could not be observed directly because they no longer existed: there was no ‘historical character inherent in facts’ and history was ‘not a science, but a procedure of knowledge’, studying not the events themselves, but the ‘traces’ left behind by those who did experience them, traces which usually consisted of written documents.⁸⁵⁹

Yet it was not so much Seignobos’s argument about the nature of historical scholarship that the Durkheimians had a problem with but more his attempt to reduce the social sciences to this type of history. According to Seignobos, the historical method was ‘indispensable’ to the social sciences since, like history, these disciplines did ‘not directly observe the facts’ but worked from the subjective accounts or documents left behind by observers, which is why he concluded that the social sciences also needed to incorporate the historical method. In this way, Durkheim complained, Seignobos had made the social sciences ‘disappear into history’.⁸⁶⁰ Beyond this assault on the independent status of social science, what Durkheim most objected to was the ‘imprecision, the conjectural and

⁸⁵⁷ Langlois and Seignobos, p. 44 and Seignobos, pp. 2-5. Also see Noronha-DiVanna, pp. 217-20 and Garcia, p. 78-79.

⁸⁵⁸ On how the French academic philosophers defined science see above sections 3.1.2, 3.3.1 and Brooks, *The Eclectic Legacy*, pp. 43-46.

⁸⁵⁹ Seignobos, pp. 3-4

⁸⁶⁰ Durkheim, ‘Seignobos’, pp. 123-25.

subjective nature' that Seignobos held to be the distinctive trait of the human sciences. Whereas Durkheim could not disagree with Seignobos when he described social life as 'made up of representations' he could only but protest at the conclusion drawn from this that social facts could not therefore be studied objectively.⁸⁶¹ As we have seen in chapter four, objectivity, for the Durkheimians, was defined not by the nature of the facts studied but by the rigour of the method employed, and facts of an immaterial or psychological nature could indeed, they held, be studied in an objective and scientific manner. If we can accept the claims of 'contemporary psychology' to treat individual representations objectively, why, Durkheim asked, 'should it be otherwise for collective representations'?'⁸⁶²

It was a point that Simiand had long emphasised in his writings for the *Année* and as if almost exasperated from repeating himself he again emphasised '*OBJECTIF signifie et ne signifie pas autre chose que indépendant de notre spontanéité individuelle*'.⁸⁶³ For Durkheim and for Simiand sociology was not essentially different to any other science and the materiality or immateriality of things did not fundamentally change the nature or aims of science.⁸⁶⁴ Indeed, wrote Simiand, if psychological and subjective meant the same thing one would have to declare that the subject-matter of physics, for example, was subjective, just like the subject-matter of social science: 'are not' he asked, 'sounds, colours, impressions of heat and cold, by nature, sensations, psychological phenomena, subjective phenomena'?' The difference here however is that we have become used to

⁸⁶¹ Durkheim, 'Seignobos', p. 125, p. 127.

⁸⁶² Ibid, p. 127 and Simiand, 'Méthode historique et science sociale', pp. 3-4 where Simiand made a similar point that 'psychological' did not mean 'subjective'.

⁸⁶³ Ibid, p. 6.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 8.

recognising what is objective in these phenomena and tend to forget 'the subjective element that exists and subsists in all sensations'. The role of positive science, he argued, was to 'draw out the objective from the subjective in order to study it' and to make it possible to discuss, analyse and express in terms of laws these tastes, colours and sounds.⁸⁶⁵ Like all other sciences this was also what sociology sought to do and, he continued, thus sociology also had its own object, with a '*sui generis* character', that was independent of individual sensation: 'it is a *reality*, in the same sense that, for positive knowledge, the so-called material world is a reality; it is an *object* just like the so-called exterior world is an object'.⁸⁶⁶

If this debate between Seignobos on the one hand and Durkheim and Simiand on the other is worthy of attention within this effort to explain Durkheim's intellectual ascent before 1914, it is because it shows that, although Durkheim in part owed his success at the Sorbonne to a more congenial political and intellectual context, we also need to look beyond the general enthusiasm for the social sciences and the triumph of the university reform movement. Indeed, this enthusiasm for the social sciences, manifest in the Universal Exposition and the two congresses of 1900, could just have easily benefited the competitors of the *Année sociologique* pole.⁸⁶⁷ While Durkheim, Célestin Bouglé and François Simiand were involved in the initiatives of 1900, they were not the dominant figures. On the contrary, it seemed to be Durkheim's sociological rivals - Alfred Espinas, Emile Cheysson, Charles Gide and Gabriel Tarde, all figures associated with either the 'international sociologists' or the Leplayists - who shared the limelight. Whereas

⁸⁶⁵ Simiand, 'Méthode historique et science sociale', p. 6.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 7.

⁸⁶⁷ See again Scott, pp. 180-81 and Keylor, pp. 166-69.

Cheysson and Gide, as we have seen, were the main figures responsible for the social economy exhibit, it was Dick May who acted as secretary for the congress on the teaching of the social sciences, while the task of presenting the outline of the situation of the social sciences in French higher education fell to Gide.⁸⁶⁸ In fact what is striking about Gide's outline was its almost complete silence on the teaching activities of any of the Durkheimians, apart from one very short reference to Durkheim and Bouglé under the heading 'sociology'. Minimising the importance of the Durkheimian idea of a general sociology and sociological method as a unifying fulcrum for the different branches of social science, Gide was perhaps implicitly announcing his opposition to the *Année* school of thought and siding with Seignobos on the question of method.

However, according to William Keylor, it was just at the point where historians of the 'École méthodique' had reached the height of its institutional power in the first decade of the twentieth century, that they began to be criticised for their incapacity to bring together researchers in different disciplines, to create a synthesis of knowledge and to create a new foundation for higher culture and learning.⁸⁶⁹ It was in this context, as Keylor tells us, that Durkheimian sociology could come to replace the 'École méthodique' as the dominant force in the new university. And in order to explain the process by which Durkheim and his school could come into this very position, I suggest that we need to go back again to the relationship of his sociology to the 'crowning discipline' of philosophy.

⁸⁶⁸ Charles Gide, 'L'enseignement des science sociales en France: l'enseignement supérieur', in *Le Premier Congrès de l'enseignement des sciences sociales* (Paris: Alcan, 1901), pp. 76-84 (p. 83). For a list of those involved and the roles they had in the organisation of the congress see pp. 3-4 of the same document.

⁸⁶⁹ Keylor, pp. 184-85, referring to Alfred Fouillée, *La Réforme de l'enseignement par la philosophie* (Paris: Colin, 1901).

6.2 Philosophical Distinction

As I proposed near the beginning of this thesis, Durkheim's capacity to move with the newest intellectual trends while still being able to draw on more traditional sources of intellectual legitimacy, can go a long way towards explaining his success in founding sociology. Here again we see how, although the university reform certainly worked to his advantage, Durkheim would continue to cultivate his roots in philosophy, even after the foundation of the *Année sociologique*. If the social sciences - described in 1903 as 'tarte à la crème de toutes les réunions mondaines' - had become so 'terribly fashionable', it was through this continued association with the elite world of philosophy that Durkheim distinguished his scientific enterprise from the efforts of competing schools in the social sciences.⁸⁷⁰ At the same time the field of philosophy was itself changing and although Durkheimian sociology had initially been met with a rather reserved reception from philosophers it would gradually, I shall show here, gain the acceptance or even the endorsement of leading figures both at the Sorbonne and at the avant-garde journal the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*.⁸⁷¹

⁸⁷⁰ Hauser, pp. 16-18.

⁸⁷¹ Célestin Bouglé, *Les Maîtres de la philosophie universitaire en France* (Paris: Librairie Maloine, 1938), pp. 85-86.

6.2.1 The Bankruptcy of Science

There is little to disagree with in Célestin Bouglé's remarks that Durkheim's first two books, the *Division of Labour* and methodological treatise, the *Rules of Sociological Method*, initially kindled up quite a lively chorus of disapproval among philosophers who considered sociology to be 'a new form of empiricism just as powerless to explain reason as to guide conscience'.⁸⁷² In the pages of the new avant-garde philosophy journal the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* - whose stated aim was to return to 'the general theories of thought and action' - Durkheim's positive moral science met with little enthusiasm, while the individualist sociology of his main competitor Gabriel Tarde was welcomed.⁸⁷³ With a distinct 'feel for the game' however, Durkheim recognised the capacity of this organ of avant-garde philosophy to consecrate, and rather than cultivating links with other groups of sociologists, with the Institut International de Sociologie for example or even with the Leplayists, he felt that it was more important to gain acceptance within the discussion forum represented by this new journal.

Defined by its founders as an 'organ of free thought', the new journal would be open to anyone who 'drew inspiration from reason', and it was precisely on this question of reason that Durkheim took aim at Tarde.⁸⁷⁴ Insisting over and over again that his own effort to study social facts in a genuinely scientific manner was neither materialist nor empiricist but essentially rationalist, he characterised Tarde's method, which placed

⁸⁷² Bouglé, *Les Maîtres de la philosophie universitaires*, p. x. Also see above 3.4.2.

⁸⁷³ Darlu, p. 2. Brunschvicg and Halévy, pp. 572-75.

⁸⁷⁴ Darlu, pp. 4-5.

individual instinct at the root of sociological explanation, as, on the contrary, the very negation of science⁸⁷⁵

The year was however 1895 and if any one factor can be said to have given weight to Durkheim's effort to return to this fold of elite philosophy it was not primarily his political involvement in the Dreyfus Affair, which was yet to reach its culminating point, but the debate over the 'bankruptcy of science'.⁸⁷⁶ In a way this debate can be traced back to the very philosopher from whom Durkheim drew inspiration, the neo-criticist Émile Boutroux. Nominated to the Sorbonne in 1885 as professor of the history of philosophy and one of the most authoritative representatives of philosophy by the end of the century, Boutroux himself is generally remembered for two principal theses: one, which we know influenced Durkheim, that each science dealt with a distinct order of reality and was therefore governed by its own principles and methods, the other, that each order of reality was autonomous and irreducible to any other, and that as one moved from physical matter to the body and to consciousness, the more contingency increased.⁸⁷⁷ Yet it is not so much the critique of scientism and mechanical reductionism in Boutroux's work that is of most interest here, but the suggestion that no scientific knowledge was ever completely adequate to the phenomena it studied. For Boutroux, the natural world was characterised by complexity and incompleteness. Nature was living and constantly

⁸⁷⁵ Durkheim, 'Crime et santé sociale', p. 523 and 'L'état actuel des études sociologique en France', pp. 85-86.

⁸⁷⁶ Harry W. Paul, 'The Debate over the Bankruptcy of Science', *French Historical Studies*, 5.3 (1968), 299-327.

⁸⁷⁷ Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 57-58.

changing, and scientific laws were imperfect human creations, representations neither absolute nor logically necessary, but only valid under specifically defined conditions.⁸⁷⁸

Although Boutroux's thesis was not meant as a negation of reason or a denial of the very possibility of scientific knowledge, it nevertheless helped point certain authors in the direction of anti-rationalism and anti-intellectualism. In this regard it is interesting to read that the anti-positivist novelist Paul Bourget was present at Boutroux's defence of his doctoral thesis, *De la contingence des lois de la nature* in 1874, as it was precisely Bourget's book *Le Disciple* published in 1889 that would ignite a controversy about the moral influence of positivistic ideas and set the context for the debate over the 'bankruptcy of science'.⁸⁷⁹ The main character of Bourget's novel, Adrien Sixte, provided an unfavourable caricature of the modern 'savant' and enthusiast of positive science. Influenced by the likes of Hippolyte Taine, Théodule Ribot and Herbert Spencer, Sixte, we are told, sought to apply the law of evolution to the various facts of the human heart and taught that everything, even the things of the soul, was bound up in the most complete determinism, that there was 'neither crime nor virtue', that our 'desires are simply facts of a certain order governed by certain laws'.⁸⁸⁰

Telling of the romantic seduction of a girl for a psychological experiment by one of Sixte's students and of the subsequent suicide of the girl, Bourget's novel had generated a literary debate as to the moral responsibility of Sixte and his teaching. From

⁸⁷⁸ Mary Jo Nye, 'The Boutroux Circle and Poincaré's Conventionalism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 40.1 (1979), 107-20 (pp. 113-16). For more on Boutroux see Parodi, chapter 6.

⁸⁷⁹ Paul, p. 302. Paul Bourget, *Le Disciple*, (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1901), pp. 21-23, first publ, Paris A. Lemerre, 1889. Mary Jo Nye, 'The Boutroux Circle and Poincaré's Conventionalism', pp. 112-13.

⁸⁸⁰ Bourget, p. 36, p. 65.

his authoritative chair at the Académie française the critic Ferdinand Brunetière had taken the lead, denouncing the morally and socially pernicious influence of positivism.⁸⁸¹ Then, in 1895, having already drawn up the battle lines, Brunetière intensified his assault and publicly declared the ‘bankruptcy of science’ as a source of knowledge about human nature and of human progress, its failure to live up to the elaborate promises that had been made in its name.⁸⁸² Even before becoming, with Maurice Barrès, the ‘chef de file’ of intellectual anti-Dreyfusism, Brunetière was already the figurehead behind whom the opponents of science and reason lined up.

Yet as Durkheim well understood, this anti-rationalist attack on science would have posed something of a dilemma for philosophers. If certain philosophers had begun to elaborate a critique of scientific mechanism, to consider the limitations of reason in its capacity to grasp the essence of things and see concepts and laws as human creations subject to change, this by no means implied a complete departure from the rationalist paradigm, nor an admission of the ‘bankruptcy of science’.⁸⁸³ On the contrary, as Boutroux himself wrote in 1908, philosophy involved a constant effort to understand the creative activity of the mind in its search for the ‘laws of nature or rules of action’ and the conditions permitting the ‘reduction of things to clear ideas’. It may have lost its taste for dogmatism, and Boutroux admitted that the day may never actually arrive when ‘all of nature and all of what ought to be will be condensed once and for all in adequate

⁸⁸¹ Paul, p. 302.

⁸⁸² Ferdinand Brunetière, *La Science et la religion: réponse à quelques objections* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1895), p. v, pp. 15-25, p. 36, first publ. as ‘Après une visite au vatican’, *Revue des deux mondes*, 127 (Jan 1895), 97-118. See Paul, pp. 303-306.

⁸⁸³ Parodi, chapter 7.

formulae', but the discipline nevertheless remained true to the tradition of Descartes.⁸⁸⁴

Durkheim realised that what his critics in the world of philosophy had a problem with was not the idea of a science of society itself but more with materialism and empiricism. In an era characterised by a mounting offensive against rationalism, Durkheim understood how to convince philosophers of the legitimacy of his project. Directly referring to the Brunetière controversy and presenting himself as defender of reason and science, he situated his own work square within the rationalist tradition and argued that when it came to social facts, the only way of seriously refuting the thesis of the 'bankruptcy of science' was to accept his own point that social things existed as a distinct set of facts governed by their own laws, and not to trace them to an ultimately unexplainable work of individual creation.⁸⁸⁵

This strategy seemed to have worked and within the space of a few years Durkheim had managed to attract a number of younger philosophers who were already writing for the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* - Célestin Bouglé, Dominique Parodi, Paul Lapie and François Simiand - to his project of founding the *Année sociologique*. At the same time, the avant-garde philosophy review very soon began to solicit the odd contribution from Durkheim and from 1898 if he published his original articles anywhere else other than in the *Année*, it was no longer in the *Revue philosophique* and but in this newest organ of rationalist philosophy.

⁸⁸⁴ Émile Boutroux, 'La philosophie en France depuis 1867', *RMM* 16(1908), 683-716 (p. 711, pp. 715-16).

⁸⁸⁵ See in particular Émile Durkheim, 'Crime et santé sociale'.

6.2.2 Durkheim, Metaphysics and Morals

A landmark year at the height of the Dreyfus Affair, the year of the foundation of the *Année sociologique* and of Durkheim's turn towards the sociology of religion, the year 1898 was also signposted by Durkheim's first article in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, where he proclaimed the study of 'collective representations' to be at the centre of the sociological focus. Seeking to present sociology in the most congenial terms possible to his philosopher-readers, he started off with an analogy to psychology.⁸⁸⁶ Just as, Durkheim argued, the individual representations studied by philosophers resulted from a fusion of elements which then became a distinct reality governed by their own laws and independent of any underlying base, he argued that the collective representations out of which social life was made up, also developed out of a "fusion" of individual representations, which then recombined to form new representations and which in turn formed a distinct set of facts governed by their own laws, independent of any material base.⁸⁸⁷ Thus he could depict sociology as a science in the philosophically legitimate sense of the term in that it had as its object, a set of facts distinct from those studied by all other sciences, which were not reducible to a material, empirically quantifiable substructure, but were collectively generated ideas, representations owing their existence to the fact of association.

As well as contributing this article to the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, Durkheim also attended the sessions of the scholarly society associated with the journal,

⁸⁸⁶ Émile Durkheim, 'Représentations individuelles et représentations collectives', in Émile Durkheim, *Sociologie et philosophie*, preface by Célestin Bouglé (Paris: Alcan, 1924), pp. 1-48 (pp. 1-2), first publ in *RMM*, 6(1898), 273-302.

⁸⁸⁷ Durkheim, 'Représentations individuelles et représentations collectives', pp. 32-35, pp. 41-43.

the Société française de philosophie, which met regularly from 1900, and he also delivered a paper at the international congress of philosophy in Bologna in 1911. In an effort to emphasise the ties between Durkheimian sociology and French academic philosophy Célestin Bouglé brought together in a collection published after Durkheim's death the 1898 article on collective representations, one of Durkheim's papers delivered to the Société française de philosophie in 1906 and his presentation at the Bologna congress.⁸⁸⁸

Both the 1906 and 1911 papers may seem to deal with rather different subjects: one, starting out from the definition of moral facts as phenomena characterised by the obligation and desirability, the other proposing a discussion of value judgements and judgements of reality.⁸⁸⁹ And yet if Bouglé brought these papers together alongside the 1898 article it was that they had the shared common denominator of seeking to elaborate a justification for sociology from a base that French philosophers could easily identify with. The philosophical argument made in both presentations was that neither moral judgements nor indeed any judgements of value were empirically given in the act or object concerned itself. In both cases what one was dealing with were 'synthetic judgements', which unlike 'analytical judgements', could not be explained on the basis of any mechanical effect or tangible property of the act or thing itself. Demonstrating his own distance from the empiricist and utilitarian point of view, Durkheim's point in both

⁸⁸⁸ Émile Durkheim, 'Détermination du fait moral', in Durkheim, *Sociologie et philosophie*, pp. 49-90, first publ. in the *Bulletin de la société française de philosophie* (hereafter *BSFP*), 6 (1906), 113-38, 170-200, 205-9, 212; Émile Durkheim, 'Jugements de valeur et jugements de réalité', in Durkheim, *Sociologie et philosophie*, pp. 117-42, first publ. in the *RMM*, 19 (1911), 437-53.

⁸⁸⁹ Durkheim, 'Détermination du fait moral', pp. 50-55 and 'Jugements de valeur', pp. 117-20.

papers was that mankind had the capacity to find something else in things that were not empirically there, to represent the material reality in ideal form.⁸⁹⁰

Yet, far from being an original postulate of Durkheimian sociology, his definition of the moral fact as characterised by the Kantian notion of duty (the moral act as the fulfilment of one's duty) combined with that of 'desirability' (that we gain a certain satisfaction out of doing our duty) can be traced back to the eclectic-spiritualist tradition, where although central to Paul Janet's definition of the moral good, the harsh Kantian morality of duty was mitigated by the spiritual 'joy' that living a good moral life brought. Typical of the eclectic tradition which sought to distil and combine the element of 'truth' contained in different philosophical systems, Paul Janet had admitted - making a concession to utilitarianism - that doing one's duty was a source of happiness while at the same time rejected actually founding morality in the notion of interest, be it individual or social.⁸⁹¹ Acting in accordance with the moral law may ultimately make us happy but it is not *because* something makes us happy that it can be defined as good; the good and indeed the true and the beautiful, for the eclectic-spiritualists, existed outside the individual and independently of utility, as a sort of higher or transcendent spiritual realm.

It is, I suggest, this culture that resonated in Durkheim's effort to answer the question as to how certain value judgements could take on an objective character: it was not because these things had some empirical qualities making them of use to the individual or even to society that they could come to be judged as objectively good, beautiful or true; certain things, he argued, were indeed adored or venerated regardless of

⁸⁹⁰ Durkheim, 'Détermination du fait moral', pp. 60-61 and 'Jugements de valeur', pp. 128-29.

⁸⁹¹ Janet, *La Morale*, pp. ix-xii and chapter 1. Also see above section 3.2.3.

their practical advantages.⁸⁹² Moral facts, like all judgements of value expressed, for Durkheim, a relationship of things to an ideal realm that was transcendental and impersonal in relation to individuals.⁸⁹³ However, he continued, now making the case for sociology, if such judgements of value were not be put outside the boundaries of science and reason, one could not explain them as part of an order written into the universe by God before all time. And yet, the only thing beyond the individual, that would explain the immanent and transcendent character of value judgements, as well as the fact that they varied with time and place, Durkheim suggested, would be society.⁸⁹⁴ For this reason he argued that sociology could help to answer a philosophical question concerning the nature of value judgements, providing a solution that would avoid both the reduction of the ideal to the empirical but also the other extreme where the ideal would be placed outside the boundaries of critical reason.

Beyond these articles and papers it is worth noting that Durkheim corresponded occasionally with the editor of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* Xavier Léon, who was also the organiser of the Société française de philosophie and of the first international congress of philosophy held in Paris in 1900.⁸⁹⁵ If some of this correspondence dealt simply with the presence and reception of sociology in the pages of the *Revue*, other letters reveal a relationship of mutual respect between the two figures. After the Izoulet affair for example Durkheim seems to have received an expression of support from Léon, support which, Durkheim replied was ‘particularly precious’, coming

⁸⁹² Durkheim, ‘Jugements de valeur’, pp. 120-27.

⁸⁹³ Ibid, p. 137 and Durkheim, ‘Détermination du fait moral’, pp. 77-78.

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 74, p. 77-78 and Durkheim, ‘Jugements de valeur’, pp. 130-37.

⁸⁹⁵ On Xavier Léon’s initiatives see Bouglé, *Les Maîtres de la philosophie universitaire*, p. 71.

as it did from ‘a disinterested friend of philosophy’.⁸⁹⁶ After the nomination of Gabriel Tarde to the chair of modern philosophy at the Collège de France in 1900 Durkheim again also seems to have received an expression of support from Léon. In his reply to the second letter, Durkheim demonstrated his own adherence to the basic principles of the philosophical field, and echoed the opening statement of the *Revue* where philosophy was declared to be, although not a ‘stranger to science’, nevertheless a ‘domain... distinct from all others’ and ‘sufficient unto itself’.⁸⁹⁷ Thanking Léon for his letter, Durkheim wrote that he never imagined that this nomination could have concerned him anyway, ‘not being a philosopher, in the professional sense of the word’ and that he regretted as much as Léon did both for ‘sociology and for philosophy which have every interest in remaining distinct’, the confusion of the two disciplines manifested in the election of Tarde.⁸⁹⁸

In this way, Célestin Bouglé could look back on the period and tell us that the ‘metaphysicians grouped around Xavier Léon’ did not haughtily refuse to entertain sociology as the old ‘spiritualist tradition’ had, ‘for a long time’, done. Indeed, suggested Bouglé, Durkheim perhaps managed not only to persuade philosophers that his sociological approach to morality was neither materialist nor empiricist, but even convinced some that in the ‘struggle that they saw themselves engaged in, against a

⁸⁹⁶ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Xavier Léon, 19 August, 1897, in Durkheim, *Textes* ii, pp. 462-63. On the Izoulet affair see above 4.1.1.

⁸⁹⁷ Darlu, 2-4.

⁸⁹⁸ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Xavier Léon, 7 February, 1900, Durkheim, *Textes* ii, p. 464.

narrow positivism on the one hand and a vague mysticism on the other, sociological rationalism could be useful, from some points of view even a precious ally'.⁸⁹⁹

⁸⁹⁹ Bouglé, *Les Maîtres de la philosophie universitaire*, p. 86.

6.2.3 An Ally at the Sorbonne

Having come himself from within academic philosophy, having managed to convince philosophers as to the essentially rationalist character of his sociology and having proved his left-leaning republican political credentials during the Dreyfus Affair, it is not surprising to read that it was with the backing of the philosophers Émile Boutroux, Victor Brochard and Ferdinand Buisson that Durkheim was nominated to the Sorbonne by the council of the arts faculty.⁹⁰⁰ In the interval between 1893, when he had presented his doctoral thesis, and 1902 there had indeed been something of a changeover in philosophy at the Sorbonne, as the last two representatives of the Cousinian orthodoxy, Paul Janet and Charles Waddington, had since passed away, while the neo-criticists Boutroux and Brochard reigned supreme in the chairs of the history of philosophy and ancient philosophy respectively.⁹⁰¹ In a field that now prided itself on its open and non-dogmatic character, on the fact that it no longer supported any ‘official doctrine’, philosophers of other persuasions such as neo-spiritualism, neo-criticism or positivism could certainly find a place.⁹⁰² We know from the letters to Mauss that the holder of the science of education chair before Durkheim, Ferdinand Buisson, approved of the idea of basing the pedagogy course on ‘a sociological teaching’ from which, according to Durkheim, it was ‘inseparable’.⁹⁰³ If the chair had been up until this point been held by philosophers (first by Henri Marion from 1882, followed by Buisson from 1896) with the

⁹⁰⁰ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, July 1902, Émile Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, p. 345. Also see Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, p. 360, p. 366.

⁹⁰¹ Charle, *Les Professeurs de la faculté des lettres*, i, pp. 34-37.

⁹⁰² Parodi, p. 7.

⁹⁰³ Émile Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, June 1902, Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 340-41.

appointment of Durkheim, the university now officially recognised the legitimacy of a sociologically informed pedagogy.

Not only this but soon after his arrival in Paris Durkheim also had the support of another Sorbonne philosopher, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, who actually endorsed and sought to give a more solid philosophical foundation to the postulate that sociological moral science was the only way towards a genuinely scientific morality. Indeed such was the theoretical crossover between Lévy-Bruhl - who became maître de conférences and director of studies in philosophy at the Sorbonne in 1899, associate professor in 1904 and full professor in the history of modern philosophy 1908 - and Durkheim that Jean Cazeneuve referred to the former as the 'future sociologist'.⁹⁰⁴ If Lévy-Bruhl's main sphere of teaching was in the history of ideas, it was through his work on the history of French philosophy that he came to the work of Auguste Comte, whose *Cours de philosophie positive*, reinforced, according to one witness, his doubts as to the 'value of traditional metaphysics'.⁹⁰⁵ Having already published a collection of letters exchanged between Comte and John Stuart Mill Lévy-Bruhl produced in 1900 a biography of Comte in which he drew out those parts of Comte's doctrine that deserved to be retained and those better-off discarded.⁹⁰⁶ What resulted was a non-authoritarian, non-dogmatic Comte whose methodological insights deserved to be retained, but whose later religious-like cult of science needed to be discarded.⁹⁰⁷

⁹⁰⁴ Jean Cazeneuve, *Lucien Lévy-Bruhl*, trans. Peter Rivière (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), p. ix and Charle, *Les Professeurs de la faculté des lettres*, i, pp. 124-25.

⁹⁰⁵ Cazeneuve, p. ix.

⁹⁰⁶ Albert Rivaud, *Notice sur la vie et les travaux de M. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl* (Paris: Frimin-Didot, Institut de France, 1950), p. 4.

⁹⁰⁷ Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien, La Philosophie de August Comte*, 6th edn (Paris: Alcan, 1921-25), first publ. in 1900 and *Lettres inédites de John Stuart Mill à*

This however was only the first initial step in a path towards the sociological perspective, and in 1903, Lévy-Bruhl published a book on the question of ‘moral science’ in which he expressed a position very close to that of Durkheim.⁹⁰⁸ Starting out from the distinction that philosophers made between the ‘practical morality’ that guides our everyday behaviour and a purer, disinterested meditation or ‘theoretical morality’ set apart from practical concerns - again the distinction between ‘art’ and ‘science’ - Lévy-Bruhl, very much as Durkheim had sought to do in the original introduction to his doctoral thesis, raised a question mark over the claims to scientificity of existing theoretical moral systems.⁹⁰⁹ Whether a moral system was derived from a general biological, psychological or sociological theory, or whether it was presented as the result of metaphysical reflection, neither could be genuinely scientific. While in ‘theoretical morality’ philosophers saw themselves as seeking out moral truth, as inquiring into the higher moral principles governing civilisation, they then sought in their work on ‘practical morality’ to prescribe moral behaviour on the basis of such ‘true’ knowledge of the moral law. For Lévy-Bruhl however, it was impossible to combine these pure theoretical and practical aims, and rather than practical moral rules being derived from a ‘true’ principle, he argued that all ethical systems tended, on the contrary, to reflect current accepted moral practice, customs and rules of behaviour.⁹¹⁰ So, he continued, if theoretical morality was to become genuinely scientific then it needed to limit itself to studying the moral systems that exist or have existed.

Auguste Comte, ed by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (Paris: Alcan 1899). Also see Cazeneuve, pp. ix-xi.

⁹⁰⁸ Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *La Morale et la science des mœurs* (Paris: Alcan, 1903).

⁹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, chapter 1.

⁹¹⁰ Lévy-Bruhl, *La Morale et la science des mœurs*, p. 40.

Against a moral philosophy that started out from a universal and timeless human nature, and after having undermined the claims to scientificity of existing ‘theoretical’ moral systems Lévy-Bruhl went on to argue that the only genuinely scientific morality was one that stuck to the observation of positive moral facts and sought to establish their laws. The aim of moral science ought not to be to found a universally valid morality but to analyse and explain different moral realities, and the laws it established would be valid only in given social and historical contexts.⁹¹¹ So for moral science to become genuinely scientific one must recognise that human nature was not fixed and unchanging, that it varied from one civilization to the next and that sociological analysis was therefore a necessary part of a rational moral science.⁹¹² A point that Durkheim had sought to make in the early 1890s to much resistance from the philosophical establishment, it is hardly surprising that he highlighted Lévy-Bruhl’s book as an important work and praised it in the pages of the *Année sociologique*.⁹¹³

Involved with the avant-garde philosophy journal and proceedings of its professional society, Durkheim now also had his position on the question of moral science vindicated by one of the leading philosophers at the Sorbonne. Beyond the study of morality however, Durkheim’s effort to expand his sociological research programme into the exploration of the nature of human reason would also, as we shall see, resonate with demands from the field of philosophy.

⁹¹¹ Lévy-Bruhl, *La Morale et la science des mœurs*, pp. 97-100 and chapter 7;

⁹¹² Cazeneuve, pp. 2-3 and Rivaud, p. 5.

⁹¹³ Émile Durkheim, ‘Lévy-Bruhl, L., *La Morale et la science des mœurs*’, *AS*, 7 (1904), 380-84.

6.3 Sociology and the Renovation of Rationalism

As an indication of the scientific legitimacy that the disciplines of experimental psychology and sociology, new and controversial in the 1870s and 1880s, had come to be accorded, Émile Boutroux now made space for both of these in his outline of the evolution of the field of philosophy during the second half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, not only was sociology recognised as scientifically legitimate, but Durkheim and the *Année* were now given by far the most space under the heading sociology, in contrast to the one-line references that Tarde, Fouillée and Worms received.⁹¹⁴ Yet, not only did Boutroux's outline tell of an expanded disciplinary field, but the appearance of a new sub-division, the philosophy of science, among the branches of philosophy also reflected a transformation of, though not a complete departure from, the classical rationalist tradition. Having moved away from a dogmatic conception of truth and lost its taste for the construction of exclusive systems, it was, wrote Boutroux, through the enquiry into the nature and conditions of scientific knowledge that philosophers actually remained true to the Cartesian tradition of critical thought. In this, he argued, the positive sciences could actually provide 'the point of departure for philosophical reflections' on how the human mind created science, and on the nature and degree of certainty of scientific knowledge.⁹¹⁵

Written in 1908, Boutroux's account was contemporary with the expansion of the *Année sociologique* research programme into the new area of the sociology of knowledge. Seeking to bring sociological research to bear on the philosophical debate concerning the nature of human reason and science, Durkheim here, beyond simply

⁹¹⁴ Boutroux, 'La philosophie en France', pp. 690-97.

⁹¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 698-99, p. 701, pp. 715-16.

having a place within philosophical establishment, also sought to present his sociology as having an important contribution to make to this effort to re-new the French rationalist tradition.

6.3.1 Durkheim and Mauss on Classification

In his final article on sociology dating from 1915, Durkheim located his discipline directly within the Cartesian tradition characterised by its 'passion for distinct ideas' and taste for critical reflection. Recognising the excessive 'simplisme' of traditional rationalism, he suggested like Boutroux that it was actually by recognising the extreme complexity of reality that the 'fundamental principle' of Cartesianism - the effort to subject this reality to critical reflection - would be retained. If sociology was of the Cartesian spirit it was in the sense that its guiding aim was to open up complex social realities to critical thought and the procedures of science.⁹¹⁶ Indeed in his doctoral thesis and first published book Durkheim had already insisted that the only way for 'moral science' (hitherto a branch of philosophy) to approach a more adequate understanding of a very complex reality was if the practical scientific work of sociologists were to inform philosophical reflection on the question of how society ought to be. It thus makes sense that in the early 1900s, when philosophers had begun to explore the nature of scientific knowledge and its relationship to things, that Durkheim and other members of the *Année* group should also seek to expand the sociological programme into this area through pursuing the sociology of knowledge.

The first major statement from the Durkheimians on this question came in the form of an article signed by Durkheim and Mauss in the 1903 issue of the *Année sociologique* on 'primitive classification', which they described in their subtitle as a 'contribution to the study of collective representations'. If the theory of collective representations had been pursued up until this point mostly in relation to morality and its

⁹¹⁶ Durkheim, 'La sociologie', p. 117.

social variability, in a manner completely in tune with the direction philosophy was taking, Durkheim and Mauss now extended it into the sphere of knowledge. Building their argument from ethnographic work on Australian and North American tribes, they started by pointing out the ‘complexity’ of logical operations such as the capacity to define, deduct, induct and to classify. Developing specifically the case of classification - the human ability to classify ‘beings, events, facts about the world into kinds and species, subsuming them one under the other, and determining their relations of inclusion or exclusion’ - they argued that the way in which Western civilisation had come to classify things was far from being the only way, and that in different types of societies one finds very different classificatory systems.⁹¹⁷ While we tend to assume that our way of classifying things, of organising things in distinct groups with clearly defined lines of demarcation, either derives from an inherent property of the things classified themselves or is a necessary result of individual mental activity, the way in which we classify is actually ‘relatively recent’, not extending back much further than Aristotle. So, not only, they argued, does our current mode of classification have a history but ‘this history itself supposes a considerable prehistory’.⁹¹⁸ Their contribution to the study of collective representations was thus intended as an exploration of a philosophical question, being an enquiry into the nature of the categories of understanding, though one built on scientific research in sociology.

Things, Durkheim and Mauss argued, neither presented themselves for observation already grouped nor were they subsequently grouped by an inherent faculty,

⁹¹⁷ Durkheim and Mauss, pp. 1-2. For the English translation see Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, *Primitive Classification*, ed. and trans. by Rodney Needham (London: Cohen and West, 1963), pp. 3-4.

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 2-3; trans, pp. 4-5.

an ‘elementary framework’ of classification built into the individual mind. So the question of how we have come to bring these things together in ideal space and why the form of this logical operation has varied throughout history, was one that needed to be answered. Towards this end Durkheim and Mauss begin by examining the most ‘rudimentary’ classificatory systems observed by ethnographers.⁹¹⁹ Summarising the findings of this first sociological incursion into the ‘problem of reason’ Mauss and Henri Hubert would later write that the study of the idea of classification in various societies showed that the category of genus had for its model human social groupings, that is was ‘following the manner in which men organise themselves in their societies that they order and classify things according to species and genus’.⁹²⁰ For the native Australians, their tribe provided the model for the idea of totality, and every object and being in the universe belonged to the tribe. Just as the members of the tribe were divided into two groups or ‘phratries’, which were in turn subdivided into clans, each thing in nature, living and non-living also had its place in this hierarchy of phratries and clans.⁹²¹

So the ‘framework’ of society, they argued, served as the ‘framework of the system’: the first ‘logical categories were social categories’, the first ‘classes of things’ were ‘classes of men in which things were integrated’ and it was because people were ‘grouped, and thought of themselves in the form of groups, that in their ideas they grouped other things, and in the beginning the two modes of grouping were merged to the

⁹¹⁹ Durkheim and Mauss, pp. 6-7.

⁹²⁰ Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, ‘Introduction’ in Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Mélanges d’histoire des religions* (Paris: Alcan, 1909), pp. i-xl (p. xxx). Also see Durkheim and Mauss, p. 8.

⁹²¹ Schmaus, *Rethinking Durkheim*, pp. 2-3.

point of being indistinct'.⁹²² It was thus their nature as collective representations that can explain how classificatory concepts could be culturally variable but also universal, communicable and transcendent in relation to the individual. More than an isolated excursion into the question of reason, this essay marked the opening up of a whole new area of sociological research that would be pursued in the pages of the *Année sociologique* in the years to follow, where, having begun with genus and species, the theory of collective representations would be developed in relation to other categories of reason such as causality and time. And it was, as Durkheim pointed out in his introduction to another new sub-section of the *Année* later added specifically for the discussion of works on the sociology of knowledge, the 1903 essay that marked the turn of the *Année* group towards original research in this domain.⁹²³

⁹²² Durkheim and Mauss, p. 67; trans, pp. 82-83.

⁹²³ Émile Durkheim and Célestin Bouglé, 'Les conditions sociologiques de la connaissance', *AS*, 11 (1910), 41-42.

6.3.2 Space, Causality and Time

If Durkheim and Mauss had begun their article by stressing the difference between the classificatory systems familiar to the modern European mind and those one encounters in non-Western societies, in the end however they came back to an argument of a more universalist nature. The form that modern European reason takes was, they argued, a product of history, and while we may not at all recognise as 'rational' the classificatory systems of the tribal societies described, ultimately both systems shared the same speculative end. Just like scientific classification, argued Mauss and Durkheim, the systems of 'primitive classification' they had met with in researching this article had as their principal goal not to 'facilitate action' but to 'advance understanding' and to 'make intelligible the relations that exist between beings'.⁹²⁴

At a more fundamental level too, modern European reason and all of the other systems of classification they described, shared a similar basic structure in that all were built on the fact of polarity, with the totality of the universe divided into two complementary but mutually exclusive halves. The systems of classification encountered among the Australian tribes, they had argued, were built on the division of the tribe into two phratries, with everything in the universe belonging to one or other of these. While this fact of polarity was of a religious nature - with everything in one's own phratry considered sacred and forbidden, and everything in the other phratry considered profane - it continued to act as the foundation stone of modern reason. As Robert Hertz, Mauss's student at the *École pratique*, would argue most explicitly, it was this fundamental fact of religious polarity, the religious division of the world into two mutually exclusive but

⁹²⁴ Durkheim and Mauss, p. 66; trans, p. 81.

complementary halves, the profane and the sacred, that continued to be expressed in the modern day dualism between right and left, and indeed all the binary oppositions of nature such as light and dark, day and night, east and west, high and low, right and left.⁹²⁵ Pushing this argument further, the Durkheimians close to Mauss at the *École pratique* would also develop it beyond the division of space to consider the religious origins of other categories of understanding such as causality and time. Developing a fundamental point that the forms of modern reason neither derived from the nature of things themselves, nor from any inherent property of the mind, the Durkheimian position was that the categories of understanding - the fact that everything had a cause or that everything existed in space and time - were permeated by the idea of the sacred. As Mauss and Hubert had argued in their essay on sacrifice, it was the collective practice of sacrificial rites that gave life to ideas of the sacred and the categories could therefore take on different forms in different social contexts.

In his study of the seasonal variations in Eskimo societies, completed in partial collaboration with Henri Beuchat, another of his students at the *École pratique*, Mauss most clearly proved the point.⁹²⁶ What was characteristic about the Eskimo societies Mauss and Beuchat took as their object was the fact that their social morphology did not remain the same throughout the year, but changed drastically from winter to summer, which is what made them the perfect test case for the theory of collective representations.⁹²⁷ Here, Mauss observed, it was as social life moved from one extreme of

⁹²⁵ Robert Hertz, 'La prééminence de la main droite: étude sur la polarité religieuse', *RP*, 63 (1909), 553-80 (pp. 557-63). Fournier, p. 298.

⁹²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁷ Marcel Mauss, 'Essai sur les variations saisonnières des sociétés eskimos: étude de morphologie sociale', *AS*, 9 (1904), pp. 39-132 (pp. 129-30), with Henri Beuchat.

concentration during the winter months, to dispersion and isolation in the summer, that there was a corresponding change in collective representations. While in winter religious life could reach a feverish point, in summer society was 'almost secularised'; in winter domestic morality was communal, with a family type more similar to the slav 'zadruga', while in summer the family took on a form closer to that of the nuclear family typical of modern European societies; similarly property believed to be held in common in winter, became individualised during the summer.⁹²⁸ This opposition between 'the life of winter and the life of summer', between high and low levels of social density and intensity of collective life, profoundly affected 'collective representations, the whole mentality of the group', translating not only into variations in religious practice, morals and laws from summer to winter, but into a division of the whole universe into things and beings of the summer, and things and beings of the winter.⁹²⁹

Going beyond the question of religious polarity and classification, the year after the essay on primitive classification, Mauss and Hubert pushed their analysis of sacrificial rites further, in an attempt to account also for magical rites, which although related to the sacred tended more to be 'practiced by individuals, isolated from the social group, acting in their own interest or in the interest of other individuals'.⁹³⁰ As an essay in the sociology of religion, their aim was to show that however 'individual' magic may seem, the very fact that the magician was endowed with 'mana' (an extraordinary position and ability to influence the course of things) and that magical rites had an

⁹²⁸ Mauss, 'Essai sur les variations saisonnières', p. 96, p. 103, p. 116. On the different family types established by Durkheim see above 4.3.2.

⁹²⁹ Ibid, p. 100, pp. 128-29.

⁹³⁰ Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert, 'Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie', *AS*, 7 (1904), 1-146 (pp. 1-3).

efficacious power itself depended on beliefs which were of collective origin. This collective origin was, they argued, what magic and religion had in common.⁹³¹

As another chapter in the sociology of knowledge however, a contribution to the discussion of the 'problem of reason', this essay was also a study of the category of causality as a collective representation. Opposing their theory of 'mana' to James Frazer's reduction of magic to certain natural processes of the mind, they argued that to present magic as Frazer did, as an imperfect primitive application of the laws of sympathy (the ideas that the similar produces the similar) and the laws of contiguity (the idea that things in contact are or stay united) could not justify the absolute belief in the efficacious power of the magician.⁹³² This, they argued, derived from a belief in 'mana' - a word Mauss and Hubert took from the Australian tribes - which was a collectively generated principle permeating the whole universe, a principle that the magician is an expert at manipulating. It was the 'force par excellence, the real efficacy of things'. It was, in short, what gave things the power they had, what made the house solid, the field fertile, gave medicines their healing power, the arrow its killing power and so on.⁹³³

While Mauss in his essay on Eskimo societies, had made a reference to the idea of time as a collective representation, it was however his colleague at the *École pratique* Henri Hubert, who pursued further work on this subject. Like the essay on magic, this article dealt again with a question straddling both the sociology of religion and the theory

⁹³¹ Mauss and Hubert, 'Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie', pp. 124-26.

⁹³² Ibid, pp. 6-12; Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, pp. 289-91.

⁹³³ Mauss and Hubert, 'Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie', p. 111. Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, p. 293 and Isambert, 'L'Élaboration de la notion de sacré dans l'école durkheimienne', pp. 44-47.

of collective representations in relation to the question of reason.⁹³⁴ Beginning with the observation that in other epochs and in other places, time is not conceived of in the same way as modern science conceives of it, Hubert argued that in other cultures we can find an idea of time consisting of ‘quantitatively and qualitatively dissimilar periods which cannot be superposed and which sometimes even succeed each other in no particular order’.⁹³⁵ Having situated his essay within the parameters established by the *Année sociologique*, which assumed that the ‘acts and representations of religions and...of magic entail ideas of time and space that are quite different from the usual ones’, Hubert then made a direct connection between his work and that of the philosopher Henri Bergson famous for his critique of the scientific idea of time as a uniform succession of moments and durations.⁹³⁶ Whereas Bergson had sought to prove that time had not only a quantitative aspect (length, position and succession) but was also qualitative, Hubert, by contrast aimed not to ‘push the analysis of time towards the metaphysical’, but simply to know how time had been represented in other epochs and only then in relation to its permeation with religious and magical thought.⁹³⁷

In this essay Hubert’s point was therefore to show how the representation of time was affected by the presence of mana, and condensing the knowledge gained from the study of Greek and Roman civilizations and Western folklore, he outlined a general form

⁹³⁴Mauss, ‘Essai sur les variations saisonnières’, pp. 128-29; Henri Hubert, ‘Étude sommaire de la représentation du temps dans la religion et la magie’, in Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Mélanges d’histoire des religions* (Paris: Alcan, 1909), pp. 189-229.

⁹³⁵ Marcel Mauss, ‘Hubert, H, “Étude sommaire de la représentation du temps dans la religion et la magie”’, *AS*, 10(1907), 302-04.

⁹³⁶ On Bergson and his reception in France and internationally before 1914 see Pierre Soulez and Frédéric Worms, *Bergson: biographie* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997), chapters 3-6.

⁹³⁷Hubert, p. 189, pp. 190-91, pp. 210-11; Henri Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, (Paris: Alcan, 1889). On Bergson see Parodi, chapter 8.

of this 'primitive representation' of time, one which preceded the 'scientific notion'. This he argued could be reduced to the five following propositions: 'critical dates interrupt the continuity of time'; 'intervals bounded by two associated critical dates are, in themselves, continuous and indivisible' (ie festivals interrupt time but festival time itself has perfect continuity and unity); 'critical dates are equivalent to the intervals they limit' (ie these critical dates represent an entire period); 'similar parts are equivalent' (unlike the modern scientific notion of time whose parts cannot be superimposed on one another, or considered equivalent, for magic and religion one festival is worth another, a week can be equivalent to a year); 'some quantitatively unequal durations are equalised and vice versa'.⁹³⁸ Given how its rhythms varied with social contexts and the intensity of social life, given its conventional character, this representation of time could not be derived from individual experience and did not fall within psychology, but being of social origin must be placed in the domain of sociology.⁹³⁹ Like the polar division of space, Hubert concluded that this division of time originated in 'mana', and had as its primary function to make religious practice possible.⁹⁴⁰

It was through these series of essays the Durkheimians expanded their sociological programme to confront the 'problem of reason'. While these various members of the *Année* group explored different and particular aspects of the question in the form of essays it was Durkheim who, with the publication of *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, sought to build all of this work into a systematic

⁹³⁸ Mauss, 'Hubert', pp. 302-04 ; Hubert, pp. 198-208.

⁹³⁹ Ibid, p. 224.

⁹⁴⁰ Mauss, 'Hubert', pp. 302-04.

theory.⁹⁴¹

⁹⁴¹ Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, p. 253 and Isambert, 'L'Élaboration de la notion de sacré dans l'école durkheimienne', p. 56.

6.3.3 The *Elementary Forms* and Philosophy

Published in 1912, *Les Elementary Formes of Religious Life* was Durkheim's first book in fifteen years. Since the appearance of *Suicide* in 1897 and the somewhat disappointing reception it had received, Durkheim had, during the intervening years, invested most of his time and energy into producing the *Année* and into establishing a distinct school of thought in sociology around this journal.⁹⁴² Although his own specific interests were multi-faceted, ranging from the question of methodology in the social sciences, to the topic of the family and morality, in the overall programme of the *Année* Durkheim came, as we have seen, to prioritise the sociology of religion. If this, on the one hand, allowed him to keep up with scientific developments at the *École pratique des hautes études*, the route taken from the sociology of religion to the sociology of knowledge also allowed him to draw on a more traditional source of intellectual legitimacy by continuing at the same time to be involved in contemporary philosophical discussions.

Nothing better indicates Durkheim's conception of his own work as being of relevance to contemporary debates in philosophy than the way in which he presented his new book to the intellectual field both before and after its publication. Rather than any sociological journal Durkheim chose the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* in 1909 as the privileged forum to explain, in what would become the introduction to his long awaited and final book, the relevance of his work on religion. And here, if this research was described as having a double focus, as being both a contribution to religious sociology and to the sociology of knowledge, the problem of reason was presented as a

⁹⁴² See above chapter 4.

central one.⁹⁴³ Beyond being concerned with what he now referred to as the ‘old problem’ of the origin of religion, his work on religion also sought to explain the ‘fundamental notions that dominate our whole intellectual life’, those which are at the root of all our judgements and which philosophers since the time of Aristotle have called the ‘categories of understanding’.⁹⁴⁴ These were the notions of time, space, cause, genus, number, substance and personality etc., which corresponded to the ‘most universal properties of things’ and which formed the ‘solid frames that confine thought’. Since it was impossible ‘think of objects that are not located in time or space, that cannot be counted’, these categories were the ‘skeleton of thought’, a framework which, although necessary to rational thought, was, as Durkheim and his team had shown, a ‘product of religious thought’.⁹⁴⁵

Time for example, ‘is not *my time* that is organised in this way; it is time as it is conceived of objectively by all people of the same civilisation, which, he continued, by itself was enough to make us see that such an organisation would have to be collective’; space, like time, was also divided and differentiated between right and left, high and low, east and west, that is in compartments, which, not existing by themselves, implied a ‘social origin’.⁹⁴⁶ So with the hypothesis of the social origins of the categories, Durkheim suggested an alternative to both the apriorist theory (which considered the categories as logically anterior to experience and inbuilt in the structure of the human mind) and the empiricist reduction of reason to sense experience. While the first could not account for

⁹⁴³ Émile Durkheim, ‘Sociologie religieuse et théorie de la connaissance’, *RMM*, 17 (1909), 733-58. The introduction to the *Elementary Forms* is contained in the first two parts of this article and my references below are to the book introduction.

⁹⁴⁴ Durkheim, *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, p. 12; trans, p. 8.

⁹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 13; trans, p. 9.

⁹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 14, p. 16; trans, pp. 10-11.

the cultural variability of the categories, the second ignored their transcendent and exterior character in relation to the individual; a sociological approach, which considered the categories as collective representations, could however account for their universality and necessity, as well as their variability.⁹⁴⁷

From what we know about French philosophy in this period, we can say that there was nothing illegitimate about putting sociology to work in shedding light on philosophical questions. On the contrary, in developing the sociology of knowledge Durkheim displayed his good sense for the opportune. He did not furthermore stop at the categories of reason, but extended his work into a whole theory of human nature. When, after the publication of the *Elementary Forms* Durkheim spoke once more to the intellectual public on the significance of his book, it was not the social scientists of the *École des hautes études sociales* that he choose to address but the philosophers of the *Société française de philosophie*. Out of the two ‘principal ideas’ he emphasised in this paper - one the theory of human reason and morality, the other being a theory of human nature - both were essentially philosophical problems. The first problem returned to the topic of his 1906 address, anticipated the 1911 paper, and dealt with the human capacity to imagine and live in an ideal world, to elevate itself above the empirically given, which, Durkheim held, had its origins in collective existence and a religious practice that set in motion ‘forces *sui generis*’. These forces elevated individuals above their empirical existence and transported them into another milieu where they lived a ‘higher and more

⁹⁴⁷ Durkheim, *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, pp. 18-25.

intense' existence and became capable of viewing the world in ideal form.⁹⁴⁸ Clarifying this point further he also spoke of the 'dynamogenic' character of the collective practice that characterised religious life, its capacity to generate the ideal.⁹⁴⁹ Tied to the concept of collective effervescence, which as I suggested earlier, Durkheim began to think about during the Dreyfus Affair, this idea refers to how ideals and values are generated during times of feverish social activity.⁹⁵⁰

The second 'principal idea' had to do with human nature and the old philosophical question of the body-soul dualism. A reasoning, moral being, with a power to act in the world, the human being had long been considered in the French philosophical tradition as invested with certain immaterial qualities, as participating in something external to its own material being. It was from this condition, wrote Durkheim, that the idea of the duality of human nature derived or the feeling that there was in ourselves, 'two beings which never completely come together, that very often are opposed to and mutually contradict one another'. In the 'order of knowledge' there was sense experience on the one hand, and on the other 'the understanding and conceptual thought', while in the sphere of action there were our 'egoistic appetites on one hand, religious and moral activity on the other'. It was this 'antithesis' between the two sides of our nature that religions translated in their conception of human nature as a double substance, a body and a soul which were 'perpetually struggling against one another' like

⁹⁴⁸ Émile Durkheim, 'Le problème religieux et la dualité de la nature humaine', in Durkheim, *Textes*, ii, pp. 23-59 (p. 23), first publ. in the *BSFP*, 13 (1913), 65-75, 80-87, 90-100, 108-11.

⁹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 26.

⁹⁵⁰ Durkheim, 'Jugements de valeur', pp. 135-36 and *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, pp. 307-14. Also see above section 5.3.3.

the holy and the profane.⁹⁵¹ Whereas empiricism (in the theory of knowledge), utilitarianism (in moral theory) and materialism (in the theory of being) simply denied or made the antagonism disappear, idealism on the other hand took this opposition as written into nature before all time. With a sociological approach however Durkheim suggested that this duality could become intelligible without being explained away: ‘collective forces have the power to elevate the individual and make live a different life to that implied in individual nature’. It was, he concluded, because the individual was social that the human being was double, and there are in reality ‘two different and almost antagonistic sources of life in which we participate simultaneously’.⁹⁵²

So while the research programme of the *Année sociologique* was gradually extended into many areas - religion, morals, methodology, economics, linguistics, knowledge - Durkheim himself very much sought to remain in the company of philosophers, using his sociological research to shed new light on old questions in philosophy. One of the principal debates his work in this period gave rise to was also, as we shall see next, conducted within the contours of the field of philosophy and concerned this question of the nature of reason and science.

⁹⁵¹ Durkheim, ‘Le problème religieux et la dualité de la nature humaine’, p. 24.

⁹⁵² Ibid, pp. 25-26.

6.3.4 The Question of Science

For a scholar known for his effort to constitute sociology as a positive science this emphasis on the religious origins of reason may seem somewhat contradictory. On this point it is interesting to return again to the parallel between Durkheim and the philosopher Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, as a way of understanding what exactly Durkheim meant by 'science'. In a similar manner to the Durkheimians, Lévy-Bruhl, after his book on moral science, had also begun to direct his attention towards the question of reason and the different ways of perceiving and knowing the world that one encounters in other cultures. Sharing a common starting point with the Durkheimians, he recognised that, just as in different societies one finds moral codes and institutions very different to the ones we are familiar with, there are also different 'mentalities'. For this reason he criticised the English anthropological school and 'certain philosophers' for postulating the 'identity of the human mind' and always trying to reduce 'mental operations to a unique type'.⁹⁵³ These efforts, he argued, always ended up just affirming the European way of thinking to be inbuilt into the nature of the mind, and assimilating representations found in non-Western cultures to our own, as simply imperfect applications of our own principles of logic.⁹⁵⁴ In a combined review of both his own *Elementary Forms* and Lévy-Bruhl's recent publication also dealing with the sociology of knowledge, Durkheim also emphasised their shared hypothesis that 'types of mentalities' varied with 'types of societies'.⁹⁵⁵

⁹⁵³ Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (Paris: Alcan, 1910), pp. 19-20.

⁹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1- 2, p. 7, p. 73, p. 76, pp. 82-83.

⁹⁵⁵ Émile Durkheim, 'Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* et Durkheim, *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*', *AS*, 12 (1913), 33-37 (p. 34).

Yet, if Lévy-Bruhl's position can act as a source of insight into the Durkheimian conception of science it is perhaps more in the contrast between the two works, a contrast that Durkheim himself highlighted. Built around two opposing mental types, one characteristic of non-Western, 'primitive' societies, the other characteristic of the modern European, or rational type, Lévy-Bruhl's argument was that these two mentalities were opposed and mutually excluded one another. In total contrast to modern logic, primitive thought was 'essentially religious or mystical', as beings and things were 'represented in the mind with very different properties to those revealed by sense experience'. Unlike modern logic, this other mentality was 'refractory to all experimental proof' and whereas modern thought obeyed the principle of contradiction, in a manner totally incomprehensible to the modern mind, primitive representations were dominated by the 'law of participation'. Thus, wrote Durkheim quoting from Lévy-Bruhl, 'objects, beings and phenomena can be...at one and the same time themselves and something other than themselves' and to this type of mentality Lévy-Bruhl gave the label 'pre-logical'.⁹⁵⁶

Where Durkheim departed from this was not so much in the characterisation of primitive collective representations as 'essentially religious', but more in the argument that there was a veritable antithesis between this religious-like thought and scientific, modern thought. For the latter, which was governed by the 'principle of identity', Lévy-Bruhl argued that the 'sovereignty of experience' was 'uncontested'; the former, by contrast, displayed an almost 'complete indifference to experimental demonstration and to contradiction'. For Durkheim however, these two mentalities were actually not all that

⁹⁵⁶ Durkheim, 'Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales*', p. 34. The quote is from Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*, p. 77.

different.⁹⁵⁷ Both were born out of collective life and modern reason he held, still retained the stamp of its religious and collective origins.⁹⁵⁸

According to Lévy-Bruhl, the principle of participation became diluted and ‘less mystical’ with social development and classifications founded on something other than the ‘articulations of the social group itself’ came into being. In this way, things could start to be classified according to ‘more objective’ properties, and thought could become ‘more permeated by experience’, ‘more sensitive to contradiction’.⁹⁵⁹ It was when sufficiently defined concepts of beings and things were formed that one could come to see the ‘absurdity’ of certain relations that ‘collective representations’ have established between ‘beings, objects and phenomena’. It is when, for example, the objective, observable characteristics of natural objects come to predominate over mystical characteristics that it becomes inconceivable that ‘stones can talk, that fire may not burn, that the dead can be alive’ or that a ‘woman can give birth to a snake or a crocodile’.⁹⁶⁰

Durkheim’s point was however that not even the concepts of modern science were totally derived from experience and devoid of all extra-rational residues, nor could they ever express the essential properties of things. The objectivity of concepts did not mean devoid of all things immaterial or unobservable, but simply impersonality relative to individual sensation. Firstly, Durkheim argued, against Lévy-Bruhl, that the principle of contradiction, implied in the fact of religious polarity, did exist in these tribal societies, albeit in a different form to what we recognise today, and human beings, animals, colours

⁹⁵⁷ Also see Émile Durkheim, *Pragmatisme et sociologie: cours inédit prononcé à la Sorbonne en 1913-14 et restitué d’après des notes d’étudiants*, preface by Armand Cuvillier (Paris: Vrin, 1955), p. 161, footnote 3.

⁹⁵⁸ Durkheim, ‘Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales*’, p. 35.

⁹⁵⁹ Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*, pp. 441-43.

⁹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 444.

and celestial objects could indeed be placed together in the same totemic classes without necessarily entailing contradiction. Added to this he argued that modern science was no stranger to law of participation, but that on the contrary our modern ideas, just like those of before ‘participate in one another’, indeed that participation was the ‘very condition of logical life’.⁹⁶¹ So there was always, in Durkheim’s view, an extra-logical component to reason conditioning our perception of the world.⁹⁶²

In line with the spirit of a renovated rationalism, this did not necessarily mean however that scientific knowledge was impossible or that modern science could promise no better knowledge of the universe than religion and Durkheim was not declaring the ‘bankruptcy of science’. The difference between religious thought and scientific thought was not that one was dominated by the law of participation and the other wasn’t but the way in which ‘participations are established’.⁹⁶³ The ultimate goal of science was not to fortify collective sentiment, but to generate correct knowledge however difficult this may be, and for this reason there was a constant concern in science to verify existing knowledge, which could always be subject to critique or revision. Dominated by emotion, religious representations by contrast ‘defy all analysis, or at least lend themselves badly to it’, while the social group did not allow ‘individuals to freely judge the notions elaborated by society’. In modern society classifications were established through a rigorous, ongoing process of conceptual analysis and experimentation, and this, he argued, had only become possible through the progressive weakening of the ‘element of social affectivity’ which had given more freedom to the ‘reflective thought of

⁹⁶¹ Durkheim, ‘Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales*’, p.37. Schmaus, *Rethinking Durkheim*, p. 8.

⁹⁶² Durkheim, ‘Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales*’, p. 37.

⁹⁶³ Ibid.

individuals'.⁹⁶⁴ For Hubert and Mauss too, the difference between magic and religion on the one hand, and science on the other was that in the former, beliefs were not subject to the demands of critical reason, while with science one can always go back to the beginnings of a theory, seek out its justification and if necessary rectify it at each step along the way.⁹⁶⁵ Unlike magic and religion therefore, which were almost wholly 'a priori', and only analytical and experimental in a very weak sense, science was 'positive and experimental', 'a posteriori', with conclusions constantly being submitted to critical examination and depending only on the power of evidence.⁹⁶⁶

In spite of the difference between the position of Lévy-Bruhl and the Durkheimians on the question of science, the imprint of the times can be clearly felt in each case. For neither one nor the other, the day would never arrive when the scientific mentality would completely take over from the mystical one. Lévy-Bruhl's 'logical mentality' seemed to describe more of an ideal type than the actual practice of modern science. He concluded that the 'prelogical mentality' continued to exist alongside the rationally organised concepts of science and that even if scientific concepts could be completely purged of their mystical elements, when it came to morals and to questions about the essence and purpose of the human world, the mystical mentality would continue to hold sway.⁹⁶⁷ For Durkheim and Mauss, however much science progressed from its magical and religious origins it could never be able to offer a wholly adequate expression of reality and, they argued, if the 'faraway influences' of primitive logic had disappeared they nevertheless left behind something that would always be present in the

⁹⁶⁴ Durkheim and Mauss, pp. 71-72; trans, p. 88.

⁹⁶⁵ Mauss and Hubert, 'Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie', p. 89.

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid, pp. 91-92.

⁹⁶⁷ Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*, pp. 450-54

‘very framework of classification’.⁹⁶⁸ With the progress of science we can begin to establish judgements rationally and a posteriori, rather than ones based on faith. Although this would never be wholly adequate knowledge, as science ‘is not and will never be complete’, it was still an ‘enlightened’ vision of the world.⁹⁶⁹

Neither a naively ‘positivistic’ conception of science, out of touch with contemporary developments in philosophy, nor an admission of the ‘bankruptcy of science’, Durkheim’s sociology of knowledge was, I suggest, firstly a call for awareness about the nature of science itself, the limits of knowledge and a warning against dogmatism. As Lévy-Bruhl also pointed out, it was when the mind shut itself off to experimentation and critical reason, when one came to accept as ‘adequate’ representations of the reality, concepts and relations, that are in fact ‘very distant’ from it, that science ceased to progress.⁹⁷⁰ In their agreement that science may only ever offer an imperfect representation of the world but yet that the unending work of experimentation and exercise of critical reason still offered the only hope of ever approaching truth, both Lévy-Bruhl and Durkheim, seemed perfectly at home within the parameters of renovated rationalism. At the same time, their emphasis on the continued existence of a mystical or religious mentality in modern times also pointed towards the huge difficulties that confronted any effort to establish sociology as a genuinely critical science of society.

⁹⁶⁸ Durkheim and Mauss, pp. 71-72.

⁹⁶⁹ Durkheim, *L’Éducation morale*, p. 132; trans, pp. 115-16.

⁹⁷⁰ Lévy-Bruhl, *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*, pp. 448.

6.4 The ‘Scientist’ and the War

Nothing better testifies to the degree of confidence of Durkheim in his sociological project and to its dominant position within the French intellectual field than the ambition he announced in his final lecture course at the Sorbonne before the outbreak of the First World War.⁹⁷¹ In this course, aimed at introducing his students to the new philosophy of pragmatism, he welcomed the pragmatist critique of classical rationalism and its ‘dogmatic’ conception of truth, while however voicing his concern over the failure to provide any other satisfactory theory of truth. If much of Durkheim’s research over the past decades had gone towards developing a sociological approach to problems hitherto discussed by philosophers, problems relating to the nature of morality and human reason, now he claimed that it was precisely the theoretical vacuum, brought to the fore by the pragmatists, that his sociology could fill.⁹⁷²

Embroiled in the world of philosophy and proposing a sociological theory of truth as the only way of defending the rationalist tradition as a whole, Durkheim in his conception of the role of the scholar in public life also embraced what Bourdieu has called the ‘scholastic point of view’, dear to philosophers since the time of Plato.⁹⁷³ An ideal of the disinterested search for truth and justice as distinct from knowledge subordinated to practical ends, it was perhaps only during the First World War that the contradiction inherent in his worldview would become explicit.

⁹⁷¹ Durkheim, *Pragmatisme et sociologie*.; Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 617-20.

⁹⁷² Durkheim, *Pragmatisme et sociologie*, pp. 141-43

⁹⁷³ Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes*, pp. 21-27.

6.4.1 Between Thought and Action

Having emerged in the United States between 1895 and 1900 through the efforts of William James, pragmatism had grown out of a similar critique of classical rationalism as characterised French philosophy of the same period. It was, Durkheim told his listeners at the Sorbonne in 1913-14, the ‘actuality of pragmatism’ that had motivated his choice of topic for his lecture course on the relationship between this new philosophy and sociology. Distilling what he considered to be the element of truth from pragmatism, Durkheim argued that it was in its ability to throw light on the ‘weaknesses of the old rationalism’, the need for it to ‘be reformed...to meet the demands of modern thought’, that pragmatism merited attention and that a parallel could be drawn between it and sociology.⁹⁷⁴ His effort to introduce his students to this body of thought was thus both a way of developing their philosophical culture and presenting sociology as being astride with avant-garde ideas at an international level.

As a theory of truth, which was the aspect of the doctrine that Durkheim was interested in, pragmatism had sought to replace the classical rationalist conception where the true idea was that which was in conformity with things, ‘an image, a *copy* of objects’, the ‘mental representation of the thing’. If Durkheim could agree that this rationalist conception was a ‘dogmatic’ conception, it was in that truth was only ever seen as a ‘transcription of an *external* reality’, which the mind had no active role in constructing: exterior, impersonal, it was a ‘completed system, a complete whole independent of time and becoming’. Truth conceived of as such was above human life and had a ‘rigid’

⁹⁷⁴ Durkheim, *Pragmatisme et sociologie*, p. 29; Émile Durkheim, *Pragmatism and Sociology*, trans. by J.C. Whitehouse, ed. by John B. Alcock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 2.

character and was unable to ‘conform to the demands of circumstances and differing temperaments’.⁹⁷⁵ Going back to Plato, it was through reason that one could gain access to truth, and thus reason itself, in classical rationalism, ‘remained unexplained and placed outside of scientific analysis’.⁹⁷⁶ It was precisely in its effort to take away this ‘absolute and sacrosanct character’ of truth, to tear it away from this ‘state of immobility that removes it from all becoming, from all change and...all explanation’ and makes reason into ‘something that can be analysed and explained’ that, Durkheim argued, there was parallel between pragmatism and sociology. Sociology applied the ‘*historical* point of view to the order of human things’, considered ‘man as a product of history, therefore of a becoming’ with ‘nothing in him...given or defined in advance’. From the sociological point of view truth and reason were also therefore products of human life whose principles and categories were ‘made over the course of history’.⁹⁷⁷

Yet not only did Durkheim present sociology in these lectures as perfectly in tune with the current state of philosophy in its opposition to dogmatism and exclusive systems, he also suggested that sociology could actually go beyond pragmatism and provide a more satisfactory theory of truth, one which would allow for the renovation of the whole rationalist tradition. The problem with pragmatism, he continued, was not the critique of the dogmatic conception of truth but the fact that it proposed to do away with the idea of necessary truth altogether. For this reason he could describe it as a threat not only to the ‘essentially rationalist’ French philosophical culture but to the ‘entire philosophical tradition’, which, from the ‘very beginning of philosophical speculation’, has been

⁹⁷⁵ Durkheim, *Pragmatisme et sociologie*, pp. 44-47, p. 141; trans, pp. 11-12, p. 66.

⁹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 141; trans, p. 66

⁹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 142; trans pp. 66-67.

‘inspired by rationalism’. Even if empiricism and idealism explained the necessary character of truth differently, both at least admitted that ‘necessary judgements’ did indeed exist; with pragmatism however this ‘obligatory force of logical judgments, this necessity of true judgments’ disappeared and the mind remained ‘free with regard to truth’.⁹⁷⁸

Asserting truth to be not a ‘copy of a given reality’ but something still to be done, thought, for the pragmatists, resulted from a feeling of ‘malaise’ about the existing reality, which in turn gave rise to the idea, and this gave rise to action.⁹⁷⁹ The ‘true idea’ for the pragmatists was that which facilitated action, the false idea that which hindered or impeded action. The moral implications of this thesis was, according to Durkheim, that the ‘good like the truth’, served our “interests” - both were just ‘different aspects of the useful’.⁹⁸⁰ No longer a ‘slave to things’ or ‘chained to reality’, thought for pragmatism could become the ‘creator of its own object’ and the ‘value of ideas’ was to be measured according to their ‘degree of utility’.⁹⁸¹

Yet, argued Durkheim, it was one thing to ‘cast doubt on the correspondence between symbols and reality’, but ‘quite another to reject, along with the symbol, the thing symbolised’. The fact was, he argued, that people have always recognised truth as something which ‘imposed itself on us’, something ‘independent of the facts of sensibility and individual impulses’, and not only, Durkheim continued, must ‘such a universally held conception of truth... correspond to something real’, but ‘this pressure that truth is seen as exercising on minds is itself a symbol that must be interpreted’.

⁹⁷⁸ Durkheim, *Pragmatisme et sociologie*, p. 28 ; trans, pp. 1-2.

⁹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 90; trans, p. 38.

⁹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 100; trans, p. 44.

⁹⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 141; trans, p. 66.

However pragmatism, in equating the true with the useful, had no means of explaining the necessary, obligatory and impersonal character of truth. Sociology, which, by contrast, recognised the *duality* between ‘the mentality which results from individual experiences and that which results from collective experiences’ tells us that the ‘*social* always possesses a higher dignity than what is individual’. The ‘sociological point of view’ thus had the advantage of allowing truth, reason and morality to keep their ‘higher value’, while still opening up that ‘*august thing, truth*’ to analysis.⁹⁸²

While, for sociology as for pragmatism, truth was subject to change, sociology held that there were types of truth that varied with social types. In the moral order sociology recognised that there was ‘no single morality’ and refused to condemn as ‘immoral the moral systems that preceded ours’. Just as it refuted the idea of ‘*one religion, one morality, one political regime*’ and established ‘different types of religion, types of morality, types of political organisation’ it also recognised this same diversity in the theoretical order. It was in short, ‘impossible’ for sociology to admit that the ‘generations which have preceded us were capable of living in total error’.⁹⁸³ In line with the theory of collective representations, sociology could account for the ‘higher’ character of truth while still allowing for its historical and social variability. Unlike pragmatism, sociology placed itself in front of recognised truths - that is, representations considered to be expressions of reality or ‘adequately conveying reality’ - and asked not whether one was right to believe them but sought to explain why they were believed.⁹⁸⁴

⁹⁸² Durkheim, *Pragmatisme et sociologie*, pp. 143-44; trans, p. 68.

⁹⁸³ *Ibid*, pp. 147-8; trans, pp. 70-71

⁹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 172; trans, p. 84.

Far from putting a question mark over the very possibility of a positive science of society as one might expect, from this critique of the ‘dogmatic conception of truth’ Durkheim actually managed to build a case in favour of his scientific sociology. On the one hand, he argued that although nowadays we may think of truth in terms of ‘scientific truth’, truth did indeed exist before modern science, in, for example, ‘mythologies’ or ‘bodies of truths which were considered to express the reality and which imposed themselves on people with an obligatory character which was just as marked as moral truths’.⁹⁸⁵ On the other hand however, these constituted two different types of truth - ‘mythological truths’ and ‘scientific truths’. Whereas the former type consisted of a ‘body of propositions accepted without verification’ and expressed the ‘ideas that society has about itself’, the latter aimed to ‘express the world as it is’.⁹⁸⁶

In social science, it was, Durkheim argued, August Comte who first sought to represent society from this type of objective standpoint, although he admitted that Comte had been overly optimistic as to the extent to which this was possible when it came to the human world, where it was necessary to ‘act’ and ‘live’, regardless of the state of scientific knowledge.⁹⁸⁷ For this reason people usually decided and acted on the basis of truths of a mythological type and political ideas such ‘democracy’ and ‘class struggle’, Durkheim argued, were all truths of this type. If there were two tendencies in the representations of the modern social reality, one towards the scientific truth and the other towards mythological truth, the force of these mythological truths was, according to Durkheim, ‘one of the greatest obstacles which obstruct the development of

⁹⁸⁵ Durkheim, *Pragmatisme et sociologie*, p. 172; trans, p. 87.

⁹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 173, p. 175; trans, pp. 87-88.

⁹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 181-84.

sociology'.⁹⁸⁸ As a sociologist Durkheim saw his role as one of a interpreting and explaining different types of truth found in different social contexts; as an intellectual, committed to the betterment of his own society, it was, he believed, the role of the sociologist to work towards the triumph of scientific truth and to stay out of day-to-day party politics.

Practical action, politics, mythology on the one hand, the disinterested search for truth on the other - on the question of the social role of the sociologist Durkheim also retained what was essential to the philosophical tradition stretching back to Plato.⁹⁸⁹ Against pragmatism which held that knowledge only existed for action Durkheim asserted that there was an '*antagonism between thought and action*', that thought and action actually worked against one another. While too much thought impeded action, so too did the demands of action paralyse thought, and from here came the 'opposition' he saw between those 'two very different human types the man of action and the intellectual'. Whereas the latter acted on the basis of strong ideas but 'almost unthinkingly', the intellectual, for whom the 'time for reflection is unlimited', 'violates his intellectual temperament' when he does decide to act. Far from knowledge having only 'practical ends', Durkheim concluded on the contrary that 'thought and action were not akin in nature'.⁹⁹⁰ Earlier on in his career, particularly in his work on suicide, Durkheim had seemed caught between social 'science' and social 'action' and toyed with a more interventionist conception of sociology closer to that of the 'international sociologists' or the Leplayist social economists, one preoccupied with aims like the

⁹⁸⁸ Durkheim, *Pragmatisme et sociologie*, p. 184; trans, p. 91.

⁹⁸⁹ Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes*, pp. 21-27.

⁹⁹⁰ Durkheim, *Pragmatisme et sociologie*, pp. 165-67.

promotion of industrial cooperation or the ‘crusade against alcoholism’.⁹⁹¹ Now however, in complete contrast to these competitors of his school of sociology - a school that had formed around the *Année sociologique*, remained closely linked to the state arts faculties and largely conditioned by academic philosophy - Durkheim insisted that the role of the sociologist as an intellectual was to seek out truth for its own sake, unconcerned about the practical utility of research.⁹⁹²

In this final lecture course at the Sorbonne before the outbreak of the First World War, Durkheim, in tune with the *fin-de-siècle* mood, thus admitted the insufficiency of classical rationalism. However while pragmatism proposed a complete departure from rationalism, sociology would on the contrary renovate classical rationalism and act as the defender not only of the French tradition but of the philosophical tradition in its entirety dating back to Plato.⁹⁹³ With this course, as Marcel Mauss tells us, Durkheim made a big impression on ‘a wide audience’, especially on a number of ‘keen young minds’.⁹⁹⁴ His sociology had by this point reached a degree of consecration that it would never again attain, at least not in France, in the post-war era.

⁹⁹¹ Hauser, p. 389. Also see above sections 2.4.2, 3.4.2, 4.1.2, 4.2 and 5.4.4.

⁹⁹² Durkheim, *Pragmatisme et sociologie*, p. 162.

⁹⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 28.

⁹⁹⁴ Armand Cuvillier quoting Mauss in his preface to Durkheim, *Pragmatisme et sociologie*, p. 7; trans, p. xi.

6.4.2 *L'Obscurantisme des lumières?*

However successful Durkheim was in Paris, the chorus of critique that had always accompanied his work since 1890s did not suddenly disappear and sociology did still manage to generate a very lively negative reaction from intellectuals. The only difference now was that rather than coming from professional academics and philosophers as before, it was more of a polemical nature coming from journalists and literary figures, many of whom - Henri Massis, Alfred de Tarde and Paul Lasserre are examples - were members of extremist political organisations such as the Action française, or were, disgruntled ex-leftists like Charles Péguy, disillusioned with the republican establishment. Directed against the reformed university and against Durkheim personally as a representative of this institution, these critics denounced what they saw as Durkheim's ties to the centres of political and administrative power and the influence he wielded within the university, over students and especially over the agrégation candidates for whom his pedagogy course was obligatory.⁹⁹⁵

Yet given the polemical nature of these texts, I would suggest, rather than seeking to weigh up the validity of their various allegations, that these writings can themselves be explained as an expression of underlying political tensions that had not gone away. Even after the Dreyfus Affair had brought the political victory of radical republicanism and the final triumph of the pro-reform agenda in the academic sphere, beneath the surface the ashes of the anti-Dreyfusard movement were smouldering, and from around 1908 began

⁹⁹⁵ Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 362-65. See among others, Lasserre, p. 180, pp. 183-84, p. 214, Agathon (Henri Massis and Alfred de Tarde), *L'Esprit de la nouvelle Sorbonne* 3rd edn (Paris: Mercure de France, 1911), pp. 97-101, Henri Massis, *Évocations: Souvenirs, 1905-1911* (Paris: Plon, 1931), p. 60, pp. 77-78 and Péguy, pp. 698-99.

to develop into a nationalist revival led by Action française.⁹⁹⁶ Lashing out wildly at its ideological opponents, without any regard for whether or not their arguments were well founded, Action française actively cultivated anti-German sentiment and gave itself the mission of rooting out ‘German spies’. In this the New Sorbonne, inspired as it had been by German advances in science and the German model of higher education, became the number one target. Indeed, it was Charles Andler who was first to experience the nationalist wrath when Action française organised a series of demonstrations at the Sorbonne in 1908 continuing right throughout the academic year in response to his organisation of a student trip to Germany.⁹⁹⁷ An ex-Dreyfusard, whose work on education had contributed to the political consolidation of republican institutions and who was now the dominant figure at the New Sorbonne, Durkheim was another one of the intellectual targets of Action française and all those who attacked the republican regime and its institutions.

Yet it was perhaps not so much this movement of reaction that marked the first turn towards the descent of sociology from a position of intellectual pre-eminence as, paradoxically, the temporary end to the antagonism between the ‘revolutionary right’ and the university academics in 1914. With many ex-Dreyfusard academics rallying to the government’s war effort and accepting Action française’s call for a truce, the outbreak of the First World War can be said to mark the end of an era, the end of the ‘heroic’ period of the Dreyfusard intellectual as a disinterested social critic recalling government and society to higher principles of truth and justice.⁹⁹⁸ Like many of his colleagues,

⁹⁹⁶ See Weber, part I: The Rise, 1899-1918, pp. 1-112.

⁹⁹⁷ Weber, p. 52, pp. 89-90

⁹⁹⁸ Weber, p. 92. Also see Ory and Sirinelli, pp. 65-66.

Durkheim, who had been a Dreyfusard in 1898, was also unyielding in his support for the government when war broke out. This almost unanimous support on the part of those who had less than twenty years previously been Dreyfusards, and who had up until quite recently considered their social role in terms of a disinterested search for truth and justice can perhaps go some way towards explaining the criticism that would be levelled at intellectuals like Durkheim after the conflict.⁹⁹⁹

Durkheim's main area of activity during the war was in the creation, publication and distribution of anti-German propaganda destined for the neutral countries. Towards this end he organised the 'Comité d'études et de documents sur la guerre' of which he himself was secretary, with Ernest Lavissee as president and in which other important academics including Andler, Bergson, Boutroux, Seignobos and the literary critic Gustave Lanson were also involved.¹⁰⁰⁰ Departing starkly from his own rigorous, sociological approach to moral questions, Durkheim's first wartime pamphlet stands out as an example of the type of work he had spent his entire career criticising. With the main aim being to boost support for the French cause and to damage the German image Durkheim, in his explanation of the immediate causes of the conflict, traced the declaration of war to the intentional actions of individual diplomats and governments, and it comes as no surprise that he laid ultimate responsibility for the outbreak of war on Germany.¹⁰⁰¹ Indeed it feels as if the documentary evidence on display simply functions to confirm this apriori truth. Of course Durkheim was under no illusions as to the nature

⁹⁹⁹ Ory and Sirinelli, pp. 66-67.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Ibid, pp. 65-66.

¹⁰⁰¹ Émile Durkheim and Ernest Denis, *Qui a voulu la guerre? les origines de la guerre d'après les documents diplomatiques* (Paris: Colin, 1915), p. 61. Also see Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, p. 550.

of his wartime tracts, which he explicitly referred to as, ‘our propaganda industry’, something he no doubt considered as entirely different to ‘disinterested’, ‘scientific’ study.¹⁰⁰²

His second pamphlet, which looked at the pan-Germanist ideas of Heinrich von Treitschke, can be viewed in two different ways. On the one hand, as a work of propaganda, Durkheim took the theories of Treitschke as representative of the type of mentality in accordance with which Germany conducted its war, and contrasted this mentality with the humanitarian and democratic type. What he found in Treitschke, Durkheim told Mauss, was ‘a monstrous theory’, which conceived of the state as above all moral concerns and considered anything that contributed to its greater glory as legitimate. It was this theory of the state, wrote Durkheim, which could explain Germany’s disregard for international law and the rights of neutral powers during the war.¹⁰⁰³ This domineering mentality was characterised by an abnormal or ‘morbid’ desire for ‘absolute independence’, for ‘universal hegemony’, and could not accept the necessary interdependence that in reality characterised human and international relations.¹⁰⁰⁴ At the same time however, this indirect reference to the idea of normality and pathology also brings to mind Durkheim’s sociological theory and could perhaps be considered as an effort to encourage his contemporaries in France to think critically about their own society and the fragility of the humanitarian and democratic type. In a normally functioning democratic society, he believed, there ought to be a system of

¹⁰⁰² See for example Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, 17 April 1915, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, p. 453.

¹⁰⁰³ Durkheim, Letters to Marcel Mauss, 13 January and 17 June 1915, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 429-31 and pp. 464-66. Émile Durkheim, *L’Allemagne au-dessus de tout: la mentalité allemande et la guerre* (Paris: Colin, 1915), p. 44.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Durkheim, *L’Allemagne au-dessus de tout*, pp. 82-87.

communication between the state and the people, each being ‘two aspects of a single reality’, with the state connected to its social base, expressing, defining and articulating a collective morality. Whereas in the modern democratic world a humanitarian morality respectful of the rights of individual citizens and of the other nations should, in a situation of ‘normality’, limit state power, in the vision of Treitschke, the state was wholly external to its citizens which it governed by coercion alone and, detached from any collective moral base, was above any moral considerations towards its own citizens or the rest of the community of nations.¹⁰⁰⁵ As such this mentality could perhaps be considered as not an essentially German trait but the product of an abnormal social state, and which could indeed develop in any modern society where the organic connection between citizens and institutions had been severed. However, the pamphlet overall leaves us in no doubt as to Durkheim’s principal ideological focus, as he continually insists on the barbarity of the recent German conduct.¹⁰⁰⁶

If nationalism and conceptions of French national identity could take different forms, in Durkheim’s wartime pamphlets France is presented as the bastion of democratic and enlightenment culture, and Durkheim seems to have genuinely believed in the humanitarian and moral mission of his country to put a halt to a barbarous German advance. As he wrote to Mauss, there had never before been a war like this one ‘posing a moral problem before the universal conscience’.¹⁰⁰⁷ Yet Durkheim’s legitimation of the French war effort in terms of a humanitarian and democratic mission would seem completely in contradiction with the sort of ideas that he had developed throughout his

¹⁰⁰⁵ Durkheim, *L’Allemagne au-dessus de tout*, p. 20, p. 44, pp. 53-54, pp. 60- 61

¹⁰⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 88 and Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 550-52.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, 24 March 1915, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 447-48.

career - his interest in German social science, his contention that the definition of the 'human' varied with time and place, his sociology of knowledge that saw reason itself as socially and historically conditioned and his insistence on the truth value of traditional forms of belief.

On the one hand, this attempt to justify the war effort in humanitarian and democratic terms may strike us as an example of what Bourdieu has referred to as the 'obscurantism of Enlightenment', a 'fetishism of reason' and a 'fanaticism of the universal' that can result from a 'scholastic point of view', blind to its own social and historical conditions of possibility.¹⁰⁰⁸ If Durkheim had described his sociological research as the disinterested study of society, the search for truth for its own sake, this very idea of scholarly work already pre-supposed institutional alignments with academic philosophy and the state university to begin with, and ties to the republican regime. On the other hand however, rather than resulting from a blind spot in Durkheim's conception of his own position as a scholar, his wartime pronouncements could perhaps also be explained in terms of the awkward situation in which he would have found himself in these years. With a number of his own family members mobilised (his son André was killed in the war while his son in law Jacques Halphen and nephew Mauss were also away, involved in the fighting), as well as students and younger colleagues from the *Année* (including Maxime David, Antoine Bianconi, Jean Reynier, Robert Hertz, who were also killed in the war) he wrote to Mauss that he simply had to do something.¹⁰⁰⁹ At the same time the anti-German and anti-Semitic campaign of Action française, which had

¹⁰⁰⁸ Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes*, p. 94.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Durkheim, Letter to Marcel Mauss, 29 septembre 1914, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, p. 418.

begun to intensify its crusade against the ‘enemy within’, may have also made Durkheim’s situation uncomfortable.¹⁰¹⁰ Himself of Jewish origin and known for his past admiration of German intellectual achievements, Durkheim was accused by a journalist for the anti-Semitic *Libre parole* of being a German spy, an accusation subsequently used in March 1916 by senator M. Gaudin de Vilaine to call for an enquiry into the situation of ‘Frenchmen of foreign descent, such as M. Durkheim’ by the parliamentary commission charged with reviewing the residence permits issued to foreigners. The incident however did end in Durkheim’s favour, who, from his letters to Mauss seemed to have been exhilarated by the support he received from Louis Liard, various politicians and the Minister of Public Instruction, Paul Painlevé, who forced the senator to withdraw his accusation.¹⁰¹¹

With most of the younger generation that had been attracted to the *Année sociologique* killed in the fighting, with Durkheim himself, who had almost single-handedly run the journal, passing away in 1917, the war decidedly marked the end of the hegemonic period of French sociology. As an increasingly critical view of the pre-war intellectuals and their role in the legitimation of the conflict emerged in the 1920s, not only did sociology fall from favour but holes were also pierced through that monopoly on disinterest the scientist had enjoyed in the early decades of the Third Republic, a representation that had up until now justified the belief in the social role of science.¹⁰¹² If,

¹⁰¹⁰ Weber, p. 89.

¹⁰¹¹ Durkheim, Letters to Marcel Mauss, 3 or 9 April and 11 April, 1916, in Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, pp. 511-15 . Also see Lukes, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 557-558, footnote 56 on Liard’s intervention and Fournier, *Émile Durkheim*, pp. 703-705. See Louis Liard’s letter to the minister in Durkheim’s file in the French national archives, F/17/25/768.

¹⁰¹² See above section 2.1.1

on a positive note, Durkheimian sociology may have come to be forever equated with the 'French school of sociology', it would not however not regain the dominant position in French intellectual life that it had established on the eve of the war.

Conclusion

The political victory of radical republicanism after the Dreyfus Affair was accompanied by the triumph of the university reform movement and Durkheim, after being held back from academic advancement throughout the 1890s, certainly owed something of his success in Paris to this changed political and intellectual climate. Yet, at the same time, the relationship of sociology and the social sciences to the reform movement and to the radical republicanism was not without tension. The Durkheimian school did flourish in this new context, but whereas the intellectually dominant New Sorbonne historians and the solidariste politicians seemed to gravitate towards the type of practical, reformist sociology more typical of the *Année*'s competitors, Durkheim himself by contrast cultivated his ties with philosophy. Accepted as a legitimate player in this disciplinary field, a field which had also evolved over the course of the past two decades, Durkheim distanced himself from practical everyday politics, to devote himself to 'science'. If we can say that part of the attraction of his sociology in this era lay in its capacity to respond to the most recent developments in the human sciences while nevertheless retaining what was essential to traditional rationalism, his adherence to the ideal of completely disinterested research also left him in an impossible position in 1914. Indeed it was perhaps his effort to reconcile his own intellectual ideal with the demands of the political situation that led him to justify his support for the war effort in terms of humanitarian and democratic ideals. It was perhaps also this that would do most to discredit Durkheimian sociology among the next generation of intellectuals.

General Conclusion

Having started out from a general interest in the role of intellectuals in the public life of the French Third Republic before 1914 and in the case of Émile Durkheim specifically, I found that the question of Durkheim's politics was indeed a topic of much debate. However, in the assortment of works on Durkheim where he is presented either as an illiberal, anti-individualist theorist of order or, on the other hand, as a left-leaning figure concerned with the consolidation of democratic ideals and institutions, I found that a more fundamental issue had been neglected. At this point my question became one of explaining how, in the context of late-nineteenth and early twentieth century France, Durkheim actually became a public figure of some importance, how he became someone with a political voice that mattered in the first place. Drawing on the sociology of intellectuals developed by Pierre Bourdieu and on Christophe Charle's historical work on intellectuals in turn-of-the-century France I sought to trace the sources of Durkheim's legitimacy as a public intellectual. From this perspective, Durkheim's educational background and career trajectory, the journals, publishers and teaching institutions he was aligned with, all became factors in my explanation of how he managed to accumulate a specific type of intellectual legitimacy. Working on the assumption that these institutional alignments also conditioned his intellectual worldview, I proposed that this line of investigation would also help to explain Durkheim's politics and his view of his own role in public life.

From my readings of both his work and of biographical information on his life, Durkheim struck me as someone with a capacity for sensing and moving with the most innovative intellectual trends but who nevertheless could continue to draw on more

traditional sources of intellectual prestige. This, I suggested, can explain his success not only in establishing himself as a prominent university academic, but also in gaining sole recognition as the founder of the French school of sociology. Graduating in philosophy from the prestigious *École normale* in 1882, Durkheim had already made a first step into the French intellectual elite, and yet in both the field of philosophy and in the wider academic field change was underway. It was, as I argued in chapter two, Durkheim's capacity to respond to the new demands that allowed him to introduce sociology into the university and present himself as the legitimate representative of this new discipline. In the first two decades of the Third Republic there was unparalleled enthusiasm for science as a source of social progress and national regeneration. At the same time however the military defeat of 1870 had also brought with it an awareness of the advances in German science and a parallel concern about French scientific decline. In this context, the promotion of scientific research and the reform of the university became pressing questions and the scientist was glorified in public discourse as a sort of national saviour. In the human sciences specifically - in history, in psychology and in philosophy - the introduction of a new more 'scientific' perspective was in demand and the rhetoric of scientificity combined with knowledge of developments in the human sciences in Germany served as a hallmark of distinction for new entrants to the field.

More than just critical reviews and overviews of the state of the field, Durkheim's first articles, written between 1885 and 1890 and published in the recently founded *Revue philosophique* and reform-orientated *Revue internationale de l'enseignement*, demonstrated that he was up to date with the most recent intellectual trends in Germany. In his very choice of journals for his early articles, the type of recognition Durkheim

sought out was already apparent: rather than kindling ties with existing Leplayist structures that dated back to the 1850s, Durkheim chose to develop his ideas in the *Revue philosophique* as one part of an expanding field of philosophy. At the same time, the reform of higher education had permitted the creation of junior positions within the university faculties, opportunities for recent agrégés outside of lycée teaching, and the expansion of the university curriculum to include new fields of study. Having laid the foundation for the scientific legitimation of sociology through his early articles, Durkheim, with his appointment as ‘chargé de cours’ in social science and pedagogy at Bordeaux gained an initial foothold for both himself and the new discipline of sociology within the arts faculty of the state university.

However, Durkheim’s early pronouncements on sociology are in a sense slightly misleading in that the opposition he often drew on between social ‘science’ and ‘art’ - that is between a scientific perspective on society involving the observation of social facts and one that started out from an abstract ideal of how society ought to be - could indeed come across as an opposition between sociology and philosophy itself. While this opposition may have been plausible within the avant-garde intellectual circles of the *Revue philosophique* where there was a thirst for innovation and where rebellion against one’s predecessors could function as a sign of distinction, it would not however have stood up in front of a jury of Sorbonne philosophers. Therefore in chapter three, as a way of gaining a more accurate picture of the relationship between sociology and philosophy, I looked at how Durkheim presented his doctoral thesis, the *Division of Labour in Society*, to his adjudicators at the Sorbonne in 1893. And in spite of his combative early rhetoric, we saw here that ‘scientific’ sociology did not literally stand opposed to an

‘unscientific’ philosophy. As Durkheim would have been well aware, philosophers in the eclectic-spiritualist tradition in which he himself had been educated also considered their discipline a science in terms of its aims (knowledge of a distinct part of reality) and methods (reason combined with observation). With his doctoral thesis Durkheim inquired into the moral value of the division of labour, and was in fact working within the contours of ‘moral science’, which had long been, in the French academic tradition, considered to be a branch of the ‘philosophical sciences’. At the same time, in his assumption that the role of the scholar was to address big moral questions of relevance to contemporary man, Durkheim shared with the philosophers on his jury a very serious conception of academic work and its role in society. Furthermore, in his critique of utilitarianism and Spencer’s perspective on social progress we can find the echo of his education in a philosophical tradition which refused to reduce moral ideals to material interests and which held up morality as higher, spiritual law.

Where the originality of Durkheim’s thesis lay was that he sought to introduce what he considered to be a more genuinely scientific perspective into the study of moral life. Whereas moral philosophy had hitherto considered psychological introspection as a form of scientific observation Durkheim argued in the introduction to the first edition of the *Division of Labour* that one needed to look outside the human psyche to external facts such as law codes or even statistics. Through the observation of such exterior moral facts Durkheim suggested, one could approach the questions of what contemporary man ought to desire in a more scientific manner than through psychological introspection. However since these type of facts varied according to social milieu, the implication he drew was

that for 'moral science' to become genuinely scientific, it would have to become a branch of sociology.

Durkheim was of course awarded his doctorate from the University of Paris and not only was his thesis unanimously approved by the jury but he also seems to have highly impressed the public who came to view the defence. However, having presented a case for the incorporation of a branch of philosophy ('moral science'), within sociology it is also not surprising that this thesis and the methodological treatise explaining the principles behind it also received a mixed reaction from the wider field of academic philosophy. Although it was a decade in which three of Durkheim's four major works were first published - the *Division of Labour in Society*, the *Rules of Sociological Method* and *Suicide* - the mid-1890s seemed to bring temporary halt to Durkheim's intellectual fortunes. Not only had viable competitors grouped around sociological journals and professional associations now emerged, but although these had, unlike Durkheim, little connection to traditional fonts of intellectual prestige (ie the *École normale*, philosophy and the arts faculty) they nevertheless managed to benefit from the wave of enthusiasm for the social sciences in this period. When increasing concern about the urgency of the social question led to calls for the further institutionalisation of the social sciences and the creation of new chairs at dominant Parisian institutions Durkheim was passed over in the choice of candidate for these new positions; at the same time, his effort in *Suicide* to demonstrate that his sociology could also tackle the problems of modern industrial society seemed at the time to have fallen on deaf ears.

It was in this context that Durkheim, in collaboration with a number of younger associates that he had managed to attract to his sociological project, founded in 1898 a

new journal, the *Année sociologique*. With a team made up of mostly recently qualified philosophy ‘agrégés’ a number of whom had come from the *École normale*, it was from the basis of these affinities of educational backgrounds and future career trajectories rather than any dogmatic imposition of a given theoretical line that a distinct school formed around this new journal. While the prestige of the journal grew as individual members of the *Année* team progressed in their careers within prestigious institutions either in the university faculties or in *École pratique des hautes études*, through investing in the expanding field of religious science and following developments in English anthropology, the journal was also at the cutting-edge of new trends in the human sciences. In chapter four I argued therefore that more than any of Durkheim’s major works of the 1890s it was the foundation of this journal that most contributed to putting the Durkheimian school back on the path towards intellectual consecration in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Chapter five moved on to another factor influencing the fortunes of the Durkheimian school, and one that is sometimes presented as if it were the only factor - the political climate of republican France. There can be little doubt that the very emergence of Durkheimian sociology, unlike Leplayist social economy, was born and flourished with the Third Republic. Political concerns - the defeat by Germany and the spectre of decline, educational reform, secularisation and the consolidation of republican power - mediated the promotion of social science. If, as we have seen in chapter two, the new science of sociology could be presented as one way of re-building national prestige, in chapter five I showed how Durkheim also contributed to the political consolidation of the Republic. Through his position as a lecturer at the University of Bordeaux Durkheim

was involved not only in the training of a whole new generation of primary school teachers but with his sociologically informed pedagogy also provided a strong case in favour of secular moral education and thus helped to legitimate the republican position against its political opponents in the 1880s.

However, when it came to the social question that surged to prominence in the following decade, the republican block, once it had consolidated power, developed a number of different strands. As a more conservative grouping came to dominate parliament, a type of interventionist sociology inspired by Leplayist social economy seemed to take the limelight. With Durkheim being perceived as too radical on the social question, it was only after the Dreyfus Affair, which momentarily discredited the conservative republican coalition and brought the victory of radical republicanism, that the political climate began again to favour the Durkheimians. If there had ever been any doubt among critics as to the democratic credentials of his sociology, Durkheim's intervention in the Dreyfus Affair confirmed his commitment to principles of justice and the ideals of moral individualism. Although other members of the *Année* team were more actively involved in radical and socialist politics, Durkheim himself, in an effort to distinguish his sociology from the practically orientated Leplayist social economy, took a step back from politics. The role of the sociologist was, he came to insist, one of seeking out scientific truth for its own sake, above the *mêlée* of day-to-day politics.

My final chapter dealt with what can be referred to as the hegemonic period of French sociology, when Durkheim became the dominant figure in French intellectual life and when his sociology enjoyed popularity as a legitimate part of the university curriculum. This rise to intellectual prominence was certainly mediated by political

factors, as the radical victory brought with it the appointment of Durkheim to the chair in the science of education at the Sorbonne. With the subsequent creation of his pedagogy course that was obligatory for all agrégation candidates, Durkheim found himself in a position of immense institutional power. From this base in Paris he could attract the most promising agrégation candidates from the École normale and the Sorbonne to his sociology, while other members of the *Année* team continued to work their influence at the École pratique des hautes études.

While Durkheim is often considered, alongside Ernest Lavisse, as one of leading figures of the ‘New Sorbonne’, I suggested in chapter six that it was his capacity to both benefit from the university reform while cultivating a more traditional source of intellectual prestige that can explain how his project continued to gather momentum, reaching the height of its popularity on the eve of the First World War. Whereas the Sorbonne historians seemed at times closer to the *Année*’s sociological competitors, Durkheim distinguished himself by insisting on the rationalist credentials of his work. Situating his sociology square within the French philosophical tradition stretching back to Descartes, he now argued that his sociology offered a way of renovating classical rationalism, of adapting it to the demands of modern science. In an era where the attack on reason and science had become associated with anti-republican and anti-democratic politics, Durkheimian sociology could thus become accepted by philosophers as an ally in the defence of this rationalist heritage. At the same time, by expanding the sociological project into another new domain, the sociology of knowledge, the *Année sociologique* again proved itself to be perfectly up to date with the most avant-garde ideas in the human sciences.

In a sense the figurehead of a whole era, an era that stretched from around 1880 to 1914, Durkheim, on the outbreak of the First World War was in a dominant position in the French intellectual field. Rather than starting out with Durkheim as the founder of the French school of sociology and as an important public figure, I have throughout this thesis sought to explain how he became so, or how he and the discipline he came to represent progressed from a position of relative scientific and institutional marginality to one of intellectual consecration. In this, I presented what I considered to be the most important factors: the early review articles and Bordeaux appointment (chapter two); the doctoral thesis and relationship to academic philosophy (chapter 3); the foundation of the *Année sociologique* (chapter 4); the political climate and intervention in politics (chapter 5); the relationship of Durkheimian sociology to the New Sorbonne historians and continued ties to academic philosophy (chapter 6).

At the same time I also sought to show how the strategies of legitimation he pursued - the journals he published in, the scholars he attracted to his project, the academic institutions his sociology became associated with - were all informed by his intellectual habitus and how this also gave the Durkheimian school a distinct identity, setting it apart from its competitors. Not only did this manifest itself theoretically in the type of sociology that Durkheim and the *Année* team produced but it also conditioned Durkheim's politics, and within the existing body of scholarship on this question, it is here I believe, that the originality of my work lies. Rather than seeking to read a certain political position directly into Durkheim's published work or relate this to a given body of political thought, I have tried to explain how his politics and conception of own role as public intellectual were guided by an intellectual habitus formed within the contours of

late nineteenth century French philosophy and academic life. If, in accordance with the Dreyfusard ideal of intellectual commitment to higher principles of truth and justice, Durkheim came to see his role as one of seeking out truth for its own sake, it was his failure and indeed the failure of a whole generation of intellectuals to live up to this ideal in 1914 that perhaps best signaled the end of an era.

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Journals and Abbreviations:

AJS American Journal of Sociology

ARSS Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales

ASSR Archives de sciences sociales de religions

AS Année sociologique

BJS British Journal of Sociology

BSFP Bulletin de la société française de philosophie

JHBS Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences

JHI Journal of the History of Ideas

RFS Revue française de sociologie

RH Revue historique

RIE Reuve internationale de l'enseignement

RIS Revue internationale de sociologie

RMM Revue de métaphysique et de morale

RP Revue philosophique

SR Sociological Review

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