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Jews have played such a prominent role in the development of sociology that sociology itself has been branded "A Jewish Science." In this essay Professor Lindenthal of the Department of Sociology at Yale University tries to show how Jewish concepts and ideals provided the matrix for the formation of some of the major categories of modern sociology.

SOME THOUGHTS REGARDING THE INFLUENCE OF TRADITIONAL JUDAISM ON THE WORK OF EMILE DURKHEIM

It is unfortunate that there is currently no complete biography of Emile Durkheim, who is regarded by many as the father of modern sociology. This dearth of biographical information is particularly evident with reference to his early life.

We do know that Durkheim was born at Epinal in the ancient province of Lorraine on April 15, 1856. A descendant of a long line of rabbinical scholars, Durkheim prepared himself for the rabbinate by studying Hebrew and the Pentateuch, the Talmud, and Hebraic lore. Harry Alpert writes that, "The author of *Les Formes Elémentaires de la Vie Religieuse* never forgot his rabbinical background. He was fully conscious of his own predominantly ethical and religious preoccupations and frequently recalled to his colleagues of the *Année Sociologique* that he was, after all, the son of a Rabbi."[1] "The rabbinate had been the calling of the famous Jewish family Durkheim in France; Durkheim's father himself was an eminent one. From Judaic family training and an intimate environment Durkheim gained a deep and permanent concern for universal moral law and the problems of ethics . . ."[2] Don Martindale opens his section on Durkheim with, "Emile Durkheim . . . the son of a Jewish rabbi . . .,"[3] and H. Stuart Hughes writes, "Durkheim was the son of a rabbi from Alsace."[4] Alpert also notes that "Durkheim . . . turned (his foundation in Judaica) into socio-

logical profit, for he was skilled in utilizing and synthesizing every bit of knowledge he acquired. Thus, references to the Bible abound not only in his works on religion, but also in his analysis of primitive law and social organization."[5] If these writers are correct in their overall assumption of the influence of Judaism on the work of Durkheim, we would do well to examine some of the more salient aspects of Judaic thought relevant to the work of this seminal theorist. This study, then, is an attempt to fill in some possible gaps in the intellectual life of Emile Durkheim and to demonstrate some parallels in his thinking with traditional Jewish ideology. This is done in an effort to further substantiate the notion of Jewish tradition as a contributing force in the work of Durkheim.

There cannot be a one-to-one relation of Judaism to Durkheimian thought, as there is no question of the importance of other influences on his work. Nor can we say that a particular proverb or mystical belief is the sole determinant of any one particular notion held by this theorist. We can only look holistically at his theory and at Jewish culture. Certainly one can trace many attributes of other religions congruent with his work. The *raison d'être* of this report is to view just where within Judaism Durkheim might have been influenced. The evidence from Judaism is meant as a contribution and marks only a beginning in what, it is hypothesized, may develop with greater evidence into a larger and more definitive study.

In his first major work, *The Division of Labor in Society,*[6] Durkheim introduces his notion of mechanical versus organic solidarity by virtue of population expansion and migration. This work is an outgrowth of his doctoral dissertation. Although the basic theory is not unique or original, a significant proportion of evidence in support of the theory is derived from the Pentateuch.[7] For example, Durkheim surveys in a fairly exhaustive manner repressive laws as they appear in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, involving such issues as laws of property, domestic relations, loans and wages, quasi-delicts, and organization of public functions.[8] It is this first major treatise, with its many Pentateuch sources, that inspired the author to look more exhaustively into the aspects of Jewish tradition in

the work of this theorist.

The religious group from which Durkheim derives is rather unique in that it has passed from a social order marked by mechanical solidarity to one of organic solidarity and has lived to tell the tale. Understandably, these two societies are ideal types. However, the Jewish group has in its history more closely approximated both ends of the continuum than perhaps any other group. One of the causes for societal change, according to Durkheim, is population growth and the attendant migration. In a number of instances of migration mentioned in the Pentateuch, the cause can be shown to have been somehow related to population growth. The index used by Durkheim to measure the transition from societies marked by mechanical solidarity to those marked by organic solidarity is the legal system. The Ten Commandments themselves were given during the height of a migration; that is, while the Jews were in the desert in a state of relative anomie. Both the great quantitative and qualitative changes in Jewish law which resulted from migration in the Diaspora are well known and were certainly recognized by Durkheim.

As a sociologist, Durkheim's primary reference point was the group or collectivity, and there can be no doubt that Durkheim was exposed to the overwhelming group philosophy of his religion. Consistent with Judaism's basic emphasis upon the group or collectivity with its power of coercion over the individual, Durkheim writes that, ". . . the individual is dominated by a moral reality greater than himself: namely, collective reality."[9] We are told that, "The group thinks, feels, and acts quite differently from the way in which its members would were they isolated . . . Every time that a social phenomenon is directly explained by a psychic phenomenon, one may be sure that the explanation is false."[10]

Religion for Durkheim is not a social phenomenon, but society for him is a religious phenomenon. This notion is central to Judaism, and many statements of this philosophy are found textually.

An official daily service cannot be undertaken without a

minyan (ten men). Jewish law explicitly states that, "In prayer ten people must be present because God's countenance rests among those who pray together, at least ten in number."[11] This is strongly reminiscent of the social theorist, George Simmel, himself of Jewish extraction, who claims significance for the number ten from the number of fingers on both hands. "In this unification of ten members for the purposes of solitary work and responsibility . . . no doubt the number of fingers was decisive . . . the fingers are relatively independent of one another . . . But . . . they are inseparable . . ."[12] Thus a *minyan* is required for the repetition of the *Kedusha,* as well as for the recitation of the mourner's *Kaddish.*[13]

There is one man who is appointed from the group of ten or more to lead the services. He needs no special ordination or training other than his ability to recite the prayers. This individual is called the *Shaliach Tzibur,* which, literally translated, means the group representative.

Since many prayers in the Jewish faith take the plural form and require the presence of a group, it is perhaps not difficult to understand how a positivist thinker like Durkheim could move from the contemplation of the individual asking for a supplication for the group to the notion of the individual worshipping the group.

The theorist claimed that religious ritual is an expression of the unity of society. It not only serves the function of expressing attitudes; it also reinforces them. By making these attitudes more conscious, ritual greatly strengthens them and as a result strengthens the moral community. It is very interesting that the keynote of Judaism, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord in One,"[14] the proclamation of the unity of God, has the latent function of coalescing people into a moral community.

Numerous ethical precepts exist within Jewish literature emphasizing the group concept. The basic group philosophy is derived from the precept, "It is not good for man to be alone."[15]

The thoroughness with which this group ethic has permeated modern Judaism is reflected in the fact that more money is given annually by American Jews alone to the State of Israel than is given by all the peoples of the world to the International Red

Cross. This group identity is evident from an empirical test made during the Rosenberg trial in 1953. A sample of Jews was overwhelmingly in favor of the decision to execute the Rosenbergs. The Rosenbergs were "one of us" and hence their guilt was "our" guilt. This reaction is interpreted as an identity crisis with the outside world. As such this attempt to preserve the group is seen as the cause for the Rosenberg condemnation from the in-group.[16]

It is a consistent part of Durkheim's conception of religion that a deity expresses in a personal form the power of the society, a power clearly felt although not so consciously defined. According to Durkheim, God is society "apothesized;" society is the real God. This is the absolute negation of Jewish precepts which strictly forbid the worship of any entity physical or social outside of a true living God. Religion is not, to the observant Jews, a system of ideas by means of which the individuals represent to themselves the society of which they are members. Theologically, there is a vast difference between the Jewish notion of God and the fact that society is in essence the God. Yet a Kantian studying his own faith, with the characteristic brilliance of a Durkheim, could not perhaps help but see his theory in action among members of his native religion.

Later writers have seized on the group character of the Jewish people. Salo Baron[17] and Mordechai Kaplan[18] are among the more outstanding proponents of this thesis. Baron goes so far as to propose that the nation overshadows the individual.

However group minded this theorist is, he also left room for the individual. This would also be true of Judaism which concerns itself to a large extent with the individual, however infrequently, if ever, giving him priority over the group. This duality is expressed by the fact, writes Durkheim, that, "In each of us, we may say, there exist two beings (êtres), which, while being unseparable, save by abstraction, are none the less distinct. One is composed of all the mental states which are related only to ourselves and to the events of our personal life. It is this that one could call the individual being."[19] The theorist's concern for the individual is exemplified by the politically active part he

played in the ultimate exoneration of Captain Dreyfus.

Consistent with his theory in the realm of religion and in one of his more esoteric writings, Durkheim writes ". . . the religious life presupposed the putting into play of forces *sui generis* which elevate the individual above himself, and which makes him live a very different life, higher and more intense."[20] That religious life is capable of elevating the individual above himself, affording him a life higher and more intense, is universally held true in Judaism.

Durkheim defines religion as a ". . . unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden — beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them."[21] There is probably no other religion which possesses as extensive a literature concerned with the dichotomization of the sacred and the secular in every sphere of human endeavor as Judaism. The notions of *Kiddush* and *Havdalah,* Kosher and unkosher, are well known. The very wording on ordination diplomas specifically refers to the privileges granted to the ordained authorizing him to rule on questions concerning what is prohibited and what is permissible. Durkheim's last major volume on religion, following the above definition is primarily a discussion of the sacred and the secular and its many behavioral ramifications.

Durkheim believed that all of logical thought is preeminently a social phenomenon: "The divisions into days, weeks, months, years, etc., correspond to the periodical recurrence of rites, feasts, and public ceremonies. A calendar expresses the rhythm of the collective activities while at the same time its function is to assure their regularity."[22] Space is similarly seen as a function of the social group. The Jewish religion has group mechanisms for setting standards for the division of time, establishing codes and ethics and laws and the perpetuation of them.

Emile Durkheim's great emphasis and prolific work in the field of education is well known. Ascribing his interest in learning *per se* to the fact that he emanates from The People of the Book would not set him off from the many others of the Jewish faith who have entered the groves of academe. What sets Durk-

heim apart from the others is that, within the field of education, he was a student of the science of education and many of his ideas on pedagogy are Judaic.

Education for this theorist is an eminently social phenomenon. "The man whom education should realize in us is not the man such as nature has made him, but as the society wished him to be," the purpose of education being to instill in the individual those states of collective thinking and canons of morals that express the group or groups of which man is a part. "These are religious beliefs, moral beliefs and practices, national and occupational traditions and collective opinions of every kind. Their totality forms the social being. To constitute this being in each of us is the end of education."[23] Durkheim believed that education, "creates in man a new man, and this man is made up of all the best in us, of all that gives value and dignity to life. This creative quality is, moreover, a special prerogative of human education."[24]

In the realm of pedagogy *per se,* Durkheim was of the opinion that,

> We shall know all the better how to shape the moral sensibility of the pupils in one or the other direction when we shall have more complete and more precise notions about the totality of phenomena that are called tendencies, habits, desires, emotions, etc., of the divers conditions on which they depend and of the form they take in the child . . . and no method can be applied in the same fashion to different children.
>
> There is a special form of psychology which has a very particular importance for the pedagogue: it is collective psychology. A class . . . must not be conducted as if it were only a simple agglomeration of subjects independent of one another. Children in class think, feel and behave otherwise than when they are alone. There are produced, in a class phenomena of contagion, collective demoralization, mutual overexcitement, and wholesome effervescence.[25]

The major vehicle for education among the Jews is the Torah. The transmission of culture which carries with it the reading of the Torah at least four times a week can be done only in the presence of the group. The "phenomenon of contagion" said to

exist in a class is one of the purposes of the required assemblage of ten men in this most basic process of culture transmission among the Jews.

The basic Judaic position with respect to education which in a number of ways is aligned with Durkheim's position is found in Proverbs and Ethics of the Fathers. Many statements in the Talmud assert the role of education in society as outlined by Durkheim. For example, one who transmits culture (in this case knowledge of the Torah) to his friend's son is likened to the one who has conceived him."[26] One interpretation of this statement is that it is culture which gives life, creating what in essence for Durkheim is man's "total being."

The role of education is exceedingly important to the perpetuation of society as outlined in Ethics of the Fathers. One who labors in learning is spoken of as a "lover of mankind . . . through him the world enjoys counsel and sound knowledge, understanding and strength."

Anyone queried as to a basic Jewish law of pedagogy would agree that the child should be educated, as Durkheim stated, in accordance with the "tendencies, habits, desires, emotions . . . that they take in the child," as is written in Proverbs, "teach the child according to his ways." In short, Durkheim's philosophy of education in very many ways is the Jewish philosophy, both with respect to its place in society and the pedagogical technique involved in its execution.

In brief, scholars claim that Emile Durkheim was influenced by his religious background, but neither the man under study nor those who make this conjecture have ever attempted to trace just where within Jewish tradition the greater majority of direct sources of inspiration may lie. It is hoped that these few lines have served somewhat to strengthen the position of Jewish tradition as a contributing force in the work of this very important social theorist.

NOTES

1. Harry Alpert, *Emile Durkheim and His Sociology* (Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, edited by the Faculty of Political Science of Columbia University, number 44, 1939), p. 15.
2. George Simpson, *Emile Durkheim* (Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1963), p. 1.
3. Don Martindale, *The Nature and Types of Sociological Theory* (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1960), p. 87.
4. Henry Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society* (New York, Knopf, 1958), p. 51.
5. *Op. Cit.,* 1.
6. Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society,* tr. George Simpson (The Free Press, New York, 1966).
7. *Op. Cit.,* see specifically pp. 75-76, 86, 92, 95, 104, 138-39, 140, 142, 156-60, 183, 185, 381.
8. *Op. Cit.,* 6, p. 139.
9. Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology,* ed. George Simpson (The Free Press, New York, 1966), p. 38.
10. Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method,* ed. George E. G. Catlin (The Free Press: New York, 1964), p. 104.
11. Talmud, Tractate, *Berakhot,* p. 6.
12. Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel,* tr. by Kurt Wolff (The Free Press: Glencoe, Illinois), p. 171.
13. Talmud, Tractate *Megillah,* p. 23.
14. Deuteronomy 6:4.
15. Genesis.
16. Aaron Antonovsky, "Like Everyone Else, Only More So: Identity, Anxiety, and the Jew," in *Identity and Anxiety,* edited by Maurice Stein, Arthur J. Vidich, and David Manning White (The Free Press of Glencoe, Illinois, 1960), pp. 428-434.
17. Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, second edition, 1952-1967).
18. Mordechai Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, enlarged edition, 1957).
19. Emile Durkheim, *Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale,* vol. XI, p. 46; tr. Charles Elmer Gehlke in Emile Durkheim's *Contributions to Sociological Theory* (New York: Columbia University, 1915), p. 43.
20. Emile Durkheim, *Bulletin de la Société francaise de philosophie,* March, 1913, p. 63 in Gehlke, p. 44.
21. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,* tr. Joseph Ward Swain (The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1965), p. 62.
22. *Ibid.,* p. 23.

23. Emile Durkheim, *Education and Sociology,* tr. Sherwood D. Fox (The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1956), p. 72.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.,* pp. 110-112.
26. *Sanhedrin,* p. 19.