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Author(s): Stephen R. Marks
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Durkheim's Theory of Anomie[1]

Stephen R. Marks
University of Maine, Orono

This paper traces Durkheim's theory of anomie as it emerges and develops throughout his career. It is argued that the major development did not occur until after the publication of *Suicide*, notwithstanding Durkheim's interpreters' persistence in treating *Suicide* as the final statement of this theory. It is also shown how Durkheim remained most comfortable dealing with microsociological levels of analysis, and how his growing recognition of anomie as a macroproblem rendered it inherently insoluble as a problem, given his practical-humanistic orientation. In this connection, Durkheim's shifting and uncertain remedial proposals—occupational, political, educational, and "creation and renewal"—are traced and critically analyzed on his own terms.

INTRODUCTION

The theme of this essay is the development of the theory of anomie throughout Durkheim's published works and posthumously published lectures. Previous considerations of this theory have been limited to the last part of *The Division of Labor* and to *Suicide*, while the main line of development of the theory, which only appears later, has been virtually ignored. *Moral Education*, which contains Durkheim's most sophisticated writing about anomie, is probably his least-known work. Its table of contents clearly announces Durkheim's concern with some elements of morality, "the attachment to social groups" and "the spirit of discipline." These "elements" turn out to be nothing more or less than the opposites of the concepts of "egoism" and "anomie" as developed in *Suicide*. And, since Durkheim claimed that both discipline and attachment to social groups were rather scarce in his France, it should become evident that *Moral Education* is best seen as a continuation of *Suicide*.

It is essential to recognize the kind of development that Durkheim's work underwent—specifically, its programmatic character, which emerges in consequence of his discovery of anomie. Durkheim's program is first found in *Suicide*, and it later ties together his political sociology, his educational sociology, and even his sociology of religion. Much of his work in all these areas may be seen as attempts to discover fruitful ways

[1] I wish to thank T. Scott Miyakawa and John Mogey for their help with earlier phases of this work and Diane MacDonald and Fran Sirois for typing the final manuscript. Parts of this article were taken from my unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University.

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to engineer the crisis of anomie out of existence. It is this programmatic character that the present essay will endeavor to follow.

Ironically, the concept of anomie that underlay the inception of Durkheim's "program" is not the concept we find in the chapter on anomie in *Suicide*. It only emerges at the end of the book, where Durkheim abandons his intraassociational analysis of suicide and speaks of the "rising flood of voluntary deaths" as "accompanying the march of *civilization*" (1951, pp. 369, 368; my emphasis). The earlier, more popular concept of anomie does not mesh with Durkheim's later works at all, and perhaps this is the reason for the widespread failure of scholars to appreciate the unifying thread that runs from *Suicide* through almost everything he did afterward.

My analysis begins with the theory of anomie as it emerges in *The Division of Labor*. I then consider this theory in Durkheim's succeeding works in the order they were published or presented as lectures. Throughout, I stay very close to the texts, since I intend this to be a reading of Durkheim as much as it is an interpretation. Then, too, much can be learned merely from the topical procedure of his works, particularly *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals,* and an appeal must therefore be made to his own order of inquiry.

ANOMIE AND *THE DIVISION OF LABOR*

It is late in *The Division of Labor* that we first encounter the concept of anomie. Earlier in that work, Durkheim concluded that modern life was revolving around occupational roles (see 1933, p. 190). The fact that these roles were becoming increasingly specialized was not particularly troublesome, because individuals who could no longer produce their entire subsistence were led to cooperate, and this interdependence would be a source of a higher, "organic" solidarity.

Only at the very end of this abidingly optimistic work does Durkheim briefly consider some "abnormal forms" of the division of labor, which "normally" "produces social solidarity." Where solidarity is not produced, "it is because the relations of the organs are not regulated, because they are in a state of anomy" (1933, p. 368). It is apparent that Durkheim is here calling attention to both a structural and a normative pathology. The latter is seen in his claim that "a body of rules" will normally come to regularize the relations of divided functions, and that the absence of these rules creates a lack of harmony of such functions. The former, the structural problem, refers to a deficiency of social interaction that impedes these norms of exchange from spontaneously emerging. "Relations, being rare, are not repeated enough to be determined; each time there ensues new groping" (1933, p. 369). "We can say, *a priori,* that the

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state of anomy is impossible wherever solidary organs are sufficiently *in contact* or sufficiently prolonged" (1933, p. 368; my emphasis). As Alvin Gouldner points out (in Durkheim 1962, p. 25), Durkheim never sufficiently clarified this analytical distinction between the structural and normative poles of the "nomic" process. Sometimes he identified anomie with defects in one of these poles and sometimes with the other, depending on what phase captured his vision. In any case, it is clear that wherever only one of the two poles is singled out, the other is also implied.

This unstated holistic form of analysis, this contextual union of both the structural and normative poles, is of enormous importance for understanding Durkheim's work and its peculiar line of development. Specifically, it results in an early commitment to microsociological levels of analysis, as these best reveal the ongoing structural foundations of normative culture without the need to abstract either pole from its holistic context. Thus, in the "abnormal forms" of *The Division of Labor,* in spite of his apparent concern with problems besetting all of industry, Durkheim's actual focus is on microsocial processes, on deficiencies of social interaction. "For, normally," he explains, the division of labor should require the individual to "keep himself in *constant relations* with neighboring functions," and it presumes that he "does not lose sight of his collaborators, that he acts upon them, and reacts to them" (1933, p. 372; my emphasis). And even in the sciences, the reason given for the anomie is that "scattered over this wide surface, [scholars] have remained until the present too remote from one another to feel all the ties which unite them" (1933, p. 370).

Nevertheless, Durkheim remains optimistic. He reassures us that the division of labor is anomic only "in exceptional and abnormal circumstances" (1933, p. 372). And given his microsociological focus, he undoubtedly feels that the problem can be solved internally, in each of the occupational collectivities in which the social relations are anomic.

ANOMIE AND *SUICIDE*

When the theory of anomie is elaborated in the middle of *Suicide,* it is still in most respects a microsociological theory. Inactive or disrupted group life is seen to create unregulated individuals with "insatiable appetites" and "fevered imaginations" (1951, p. 256). In characterizing "domestic anomie," Durkheim gets right down to microsociological detail, discussing the crises of widowhood and divorce and their debilitating effects on the individual. And "economic anomie" (the "freeing [of] industrial relations from all regulation") (1951, p. 254) is also seen microsociologically. As in *The Division of Labor,* anomie is still the result

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of some group inactivity within a specific category of social organization (in this case the occupational role). This treatment of economic anomie is reaffirmed early in *Professional Ethics,* where it is clear that differential occupational membership is responsible for the presence or absence of anomie. The priest, soldier, lawyer, magistrate—none of these are plagued by the anomic situation, while those involved in trade and industrial occupations are (1958, pp. 29–30).

So far, *Suicide* has posed no new problems for the analysis of anomie. But once we turn to the other sections of the chapter on anomie, to the two chapters on egoistic suicide and particularly to the final chapter, the difficulties of analysis become staggering. Indeed, it is only by the careful hindsight of Durkheim's later works that *Suicide* can be rescued from the hopeless confusion it still seems to generate.

Let us start with egoistic suicide. First, recall the central idea that the greater the integration of the religious, familial, and political groups to which an individual belongs, the greater is his immunity to suicide. This is because "when society is strongly integrated, it holds individuals under its control . . . and thus forbids them to dispose wilfully of themselves" (1951, p. 209). And what is the nature of this "control"? "There is, in short, in a cohesive and animated society a *constant interchange* of ideas and feelings . . . , something like a mutual moral support, which instead of throwing the individual on his own resources, leads him to share in the collective energy and supports his own when exhausted" (1951, p. 210; my emphasis).

With egoism, we are clearly back to the same structural deficiency that Durkheim had first uncovered in the anomic division of labor. But if both egoism and economic anomie share a common deficiency of regular social relationships within specific group contexts, what is it that distinguishes them? Durkheim's answer: "Both spring from society's insufficient presence in individuals. But the sphere of its absence is not the same in both cases. In egoistic suicide it is *deficient in truly collective activity*" whereas anomie "results from man's activity's [sic] *lacking regulation* and his consequent sufferings" (1951, p. 258; my emphasis). In my terms, egoism is a structural pathology, anomie a normative one. Apparently, you can have one malady without the other, in spite of Durkheim's microsociological tendency to see both poles embedded in a single holistic context. He even claims that egoism and anomie afflict different occupational statuses. Intellectual types think too much and thus withdraw from social interaction, whereas business types lack the rules and regulations that would serve to moderate their hunger for gain. But this attempt to separate the structural and the normative poles remains utterly unconvincing. In claiming that Protestants are more prone to egoistic suicide than Catholics, for example, he

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winds up comparing not only their respective styles of social interaction, but also the normative differences given by their theologies. Protestantism *requires* the individual to exercise freedom of inquiry concerning his salvation. And in economic anomie, it is not simply that the producer is unregulated but that he no longer has direct interaction with his consumers (1933, pp. 369–70). In short, the harder Durkheim tries to separate out the structural pole from its holistic context with the normative, the more certain we can expect the normative pole to sneak its way back into the analysis, and vice-versa. Small wonder that egoism and anomie "have a peculiar affinity for one another" and that "it is almost inevitable that the egoist should have some tendency to non-regulation; for, since he is detached from society, it has not sufficient hold upon him to regulate him" (1951, p. 288). Nor is it surprising that the famous solution he advances at the end of *Suicide* for the problem of anomie—the occupational corporations—is proposed at the outset as a remedy for egoism.

Durkheim did not long retain the microsociological conception of anomie. After the very beginning of *Professional Ethics* (1898, the year after the publication of *Suicide*) it drops out of his work entirely, only once reappearing in the preface to the second edition of *The Division of Labor* (1902), which seems to be just a slight revision of the first lectures in *Professional Ethics*. With hindsight, it seems apparent that Durkheim was becoming increasingly preoccupied with the concrete conditions of his own society. His attention was thus drawn to macrosocial sources of anomie even in *Suicide,* and there was little danger of confounding this concept with the concept of egoism. Furthermore, the remedy for the macrosociological problem of anomie would have to be much different than that for the egoism of specific group contexts, as we shall see.

Durkheim first introduces the macrosociological concept of anomie after discussing how each stratum of society sets normative boundaries for the upper and lower limits of aspiration of its members. Anomie is the situation in which these normative boundaries are thrown awry: "When society is disturbed by some painful crisis or by beneficent but abrupt transitions, it is momentarily incapable of exercising this [regulating] influence" (1951, p. 252). In periods of "abrupt growth of power and wealth," for example, "the limits are unknown between the possible and the impossible, what is just and what is unjust, legitimate claims and hopes and those which are immoderate" (1951, p. 253). At this point, Durkheim regards this instance of anomie as "temporary"; it merely occurs "in intermittent spurts and acute crisis" (1951, p. 254). He then hurries on to the above-documented concept of "economic anomie," which "is actually in a chronic state" (1951, p. 254).

What is the important difference between these two conceptions? In the situation of economic anomie, the problem is specific to the oc-

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cupational world and, further, specific only to those involved in trade and industry. In the "crisis or transition" concept of anomie, however, Durkheim has moved to a macrosociological level of generality, for now it is mere membership in *society* that is responsible for the difficulty. Anomie here *cuts across* all specific roles; it is a societal problem, not one occurring because of structural deficiencies at the level of specific groups.

In the important "Practical Consequences" conclusion of *Suicide,* the discussion of anomie is so far removed from the microsociological conception that I believe the two sections of the book were written at much different times.[2] Indeed, without any warning, the macrosociological conception of anomie has been shed of its "temporary crisis" status and is now made into a permanent condition of society. Hence, Durkheim's famous pronouncement: "The entire morality of progress and perfection is thus inseparable from a certain amount of anomie" (1951, p. 364). There is no longer any mention of what suicide rates mean with respect to specific associations, whether familial, religious or political. And the rates are now simply totaled for whole societies and compared with earlier totals for each society without any intrasocietal differentiations: "Actually, in less than fifty years, [the suicide rates] have tripled, quadrupled, and even quintupled, depending on the country. . . . Our social organization, then, must have changed profoundly in the course of this century to have been able to cause such a growth in the suicide-rate. So grave and rapid an alteration as this must be morbid; for a society cannot change its structure so suddenly" (1951, pp. 368–69).

NOMOS AND ANOMIE: THE OCCUPATIONAL SOLUTION

Let us now see what impact this emerging macrosociological view had on his thinking about how to remedy egoism and anomie, seen as social problems. At the end of *Suicide,* Durkheim proposed the occupational corporations as a remedy for egoism, and he added that they would also eliminate anomie. But egoism was a fundamentally microsocial problem. Once anomie is seen to cut across all specific groups, then any remedy would have to do likewise. Thus, for example, he rules out any marital remedy once he discovers that "the suicides of married persons are growing *as well as* those of the unmarried" (1951, p. 405; my emphasis), and that "*the aggravation appearing in the course of the century is therefore independent of marital status*" (1951, p. 377; Durkheim's emphasis).

Seen from this light, it becomes readily apparent that in *Suicide* the remedy offered is only for egoism and anomie considered as microproblems, and at this level the problems of social engineering were not found

[2] This is a distinct possibility, since eight years elapsed between Durkheim's first course in suicide (1889) and the publication of the book (1897).

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to be particularly vexing. The would-be corporations were the perfect embodiment of Durkheim's microsociological commitment, and we can well appreciate the haste that drove him to formulate in such painstaking detail the intricacies of a social proposal that he was to all but totally eclipse a short time later. In one of his most critical assaults on the Utilitarian Individualists, he had said that interests can only "give rise to transient relations and passing associations" (1933, pp. 203–4), but now his discovery of economic anomie showed that these unlikely "transient relations" were relatively commonplace, at least in the business world and in the specialized divisions of knowledge. This had to be a source of some embarrassment, for now his theoretical advances were vitiated by the facts: the rule of individual interests was not supposed to be possible; yet here it was, at least in part. That being the case, the best that he could do was to criticize the Utilitarians for turning their empirical description into a putative social good. Armed with suicide statistics, he would claim that the moral condition of society was pathological, that it was the duty of thinking persons to engineer it back on its proper course. "The only remedy for the ill [of egoism]," he concludes, "is to restore enough consistency to social groups for them to obtain a firmer grip on the individual" (1951, p. 373). No measure would itself provide a moral integration, for he was convinced that normative commitments can only be *spontaneous* outgrowths of repetitive social interactional situations, of their structural underpinnings (1958, p. 31). "A system of ethics is not to be improvised. It is the task of the very group to which they are to apply. When they fail, it is because the cohesion of the group is at fault, because as a group its existence is too shadowy" (1958, p. 13).

Durkheim had already documented this nomic process in his early works, and a brief digression will be useful here to suggest his typical line of thinking. For example, in *The Division of Labor* he discusses how crime threatens the collectivity because it challenges those sentiments that are held most dear by its members. Any contrary sentiment cannot "rear its head with impunity. . . . We inveigh against it, we work against it, we will do something to it, and the sentiments so evolved cannot fail to translate themselves into actions" (1933, p. 98). The collectivity must in some way retaliate, and the process is lucidly described:

> Crime brings together upright consciences and concentrates them. We have only to notice what happens, particularly in a small town, when some moral scandal has just been committed. They stop each other on the street, they visit each other, they seek to come together to talk of the event and to wax indignant in common. . . . If the offense is serious, the whole group attacked masses itself in the face of the danger and unites, so to speak, in itself. They no longer are content with exchanging impressions when they find the occasion, of approaching

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> each other here or there according to chance or the convenience of meeting, but the agitation which has gradually gained ground violently pushes all those who are alike towards one another and unites them in the same place. This material contraction of the aggregate, while making the mutual penetration of spirits more intimate, also makes all group-movements easier. [1933, pp. 102–3]

This brilliant portrayal of the structural side of a nomic process also has its normative counterpart, for it is clear that the mobilization just described results in a reaffirmation of the moral sentiments infracted by the crime. "We can thus say without paradox that punishment is above all designed to act upon upright people, for, since it serves to heal the wounds made upon collective sentiments, it can fill this role only where these sentiments exist, and commensurately with their vivacity" (1933, pp. 108–9).

Durkheim's theory of crime and punishment was perhaps the spark for much of his theorizing about the nomic process viewed microsociologically. All that was needed was the further recognition that collective mobilization may occur for many reasons in addition to the single stimulus of crime. Indeed, the simple fact of people meeting people and communicating is thought to be generative of ideational, normative, or emotional products for the interacting collectivity:[3] "If anyone expresses before we do an idea which we have already thought of, the representation that we gain from it contributes to our own idea, superimposes itself, confounds itself with it, communicates to it whatever vitality it has. From this fusion grows a new idea which absorbs its predecessors and which, accordingly, is more vivid than each of those taken separately" (1933, p. 99; 1958, p. 105; 1961, pp. 61–62).

In summary, Durkheim had already illustrated the two sides of the nomic process as early as *The Division of Labor,* first positively, as in the examples just cited, and then negatively, in his account of the anomic division of labor at the end of the book. In *The Rules of Sociological Method* he elevates these insights into a sociological law: "*The first origins of all social processes of any importance should be sought in the internal constitution of the social group*" (1938, p. 113; Durkheim's emphasis). He then elaborates this concept of "the internal constitution" by focusing on the group's "dynamic density," which he defines as "the number of individuals who are actually having not only commercial but also social relations, i.e., who not only exchange services or compete with one another but also live a common life" (1938, p. 114).

Nomos, then, must always have some microsocial nexus, whatever the

[3] In part of my unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, "Society, Anomie, and Social Change: An Interpretation of Émile Durkheim's Sociology" (1971), I have attempted to codify Durkheim's ideas about the different possible results of social interaction and their specific determinants (see chap. 3).

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larger forces coming to bear on a given group's dynamics. Such was the background that Durkheim brought with him to suggest a remedy for anomie. Focusing principally on economic anomie, he found his solution in reestablishing the medieval occupational corporations along modern lines.[4] He referred to this proliferation of corporations as an "occupational decentralization" that would "produce a greater concentration of social energies" (1951, pp. 389–90). And each occupational center would generate its own emergent morality:

> Within any political society, we get a number of individuals who share the same ideas and interests, sentiments and occupations, in which the rest of the population have no part. . . . They feel a mutual attraction, they seek out one another, . . . and form compacts. . . . Once the group is formed, nothing can hinder an appropriate moral life from evolving, a life that will carry the mark of the special conditions that brought it into being. [1958, pp. 23–24]

THE BREAKDOWN OF THE OCCUPATIONAL SOLUTION

As a solution for economic anomie, this occupational remedy can hardly be faulted, at least in theory, but it left certain macrosociological difficulties untouched, problems that seem to transcend the individual vis-à-vis his occupational role. In *Suicide,* Durkheim warned "that the rising tide of suicide originates in a pathological state just now accompanying the march of civilization" (1951, p. 368). But civilization is one thing and specific groups are quite another. Presumably, if the suicide rates of married people were rising just as quickly as those of the unmarried, then perhaps the suicides of those in professional occupations were rising just as rapidly as those in trade and industry. And if this were the case, then the occupational corporations might have little effect on this "pathological state . . . accompanying the march of civilization." Durkheim himself had claimed in *The Division of Labor* that "the occupational mind can only have influence on occupational life. . . . As these rules have their roots only in a small number of consciences, and leave society in its entirety indifferent, they have less authority by consequence of this lesser universality" (1933, pp. 302–3). In brief, social relations might be rid of their anomie within each corporation, but this is to say little about how persons confront others *outside* the context of their occupational roles.

Seen from this light, we can better understand why Durkheim began to speak repeatedly of the need for "societies to become conscious of themselves" following the publication of *Suicide*. He was thinking of

[4] Durkheim's suggestions about the duties of these corporations may be found in (1958, pp. 37–40, 217–18; 1933, pp. 25–27; 1951, pp. 380, 389–90).

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the "nomic" process again, only this time on a grand scale. He was seeking some norms and sentiments that might be shared by everyone in society, not just by those in occupational or other specific groups. And yet we have seen that his earlier microsociological leanings had committed him to relating all norms to their structural underpinnings. How was it possible to accomplish this for societal norms and values? What structural counterpart could possibly give rise to a distinctively societal culture? This was the truly bold problem that Durkheim had now set for himself.

Two alternatives logically suggested themselves as solutions to this problem. The first was that everyone in a society may somehow interact with everyone else. Unfortunately, "[the mass] has no unity, is not gathered within one enclosure, and its attention cannot be applied at the same moment to the same object" (1958, p. 92). The second seemed to be the only solution, and this was to look for "gatekeepers" to the society—persons or associations whose members were recruited from the society at large and served a function of mediating and articulating "society." It would be possible, at least in theory, for everyone in the society to receive information from these gatekeepers and relay feedback in various ways. The result would still be an emergent societal "nomos," only obtained through means of social interactions that were indirect.

In *Professional Ethics* and *Moral Education,* Durkheim attempted two different "gatekeeper" solutions to anomie, now seen as a macroproblem. The first one, the political solution, required certain refinements in his conceptual scheme. In the middle of *Suicide,* the state as a membership group was seen on the same level as membership in a family, religion, or occupational group. It is simply one of an individual's "various social environments" (1951, p. 151), and Durkheim's study of suicide rates led him to see its similarity to other associations rather than its differences: "Whereas these different societies [domestic, religious, and political] have a moderating influence upon suicide, this is due not to special characteristics of each but to a characteristic common to all. . . . They are all strongly integrated social groups" (1951, pp. 208–9, 378). At the end of *Suicide* when Durkheim sought a remedy for egoism and anomie, he hastily rejected "political society," because "in ordinary times it is overshadowed, barely perceptible, and even wholly eclipsed. Such unusual circumstances as a great national or political crisis are necessary for it to assume primary importance. . . . No such intermittent influence as this can regularly restrain the suicidal tendency" (1951, p. 374).

It was not until Durkheim was able to see the differences between the intrasocietal associations discussed in *Suicide* that he was able to achieve new clarity on the problem of anomie. This development occurs partially in *Professional Ethics* and is then completed in *Moral Education,* and

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it consisted in the recognition that the different realms of social group membership—family, occupation, religion, nation, humanity—involve different levels of societal inclusiveness: "We might say that the moral forces come to have a hierarchic order according to their degree of generality or diffusion" (1958, pp. 72–73; see also p. 42). "The evidence suggests that familial goals are and should be subordinated to national objectives, if for no other reason than that the nation is a social group at a higher level" (1961, pp. 74 ff.).

THE POLITICAL SOLUTION TO ANOMIE

This refinement of Durkheim's conceptual scheme gave new life to his macrosociological interests. Whatever similarity the state had to other associations, it had one unique feature that captured his attention: while the different members of a society can support many families, many educational associations, many corporations, many churches, they all seem to belong to the same state. Perhaps, then, the state held the key to a remedy for anomie. Under the umbrella of the citizen role, everyone stood in the same relationship to everyone else in the entire society, despite their occupational and other differences.

Here, then, was the normative side of a macrolevel "nomic" process. "Civic morality," as Durkheim called it, had a binding influence on people which cut across and transcended all specific group memberships at the microlevel of social organization. Now what can be said of the *structural* side of this societal "nomos"? Clearly, each citizen does not interact with every other citizen to give rise to civic morality. How, then, does it come about and evolve?

At this juncture, Durkheim introduces the first of what I call his two "gatekeeper" solutions to anomie. Unlike the average citizen, the various government leaders and members of the national deliberative assembly can all interact with one another. And they, in turn, may stand in a particular social relation with the mass of the people. Durkheim's political sociology thus entailed two questions: first, what "nomic" process occurs within the higher reaches of the state, and second, what kind of nomic process connects the members of the central government with the people?

The first question was easy enough. Everything Durkheim had learned about the nomic process in microsociological contexts was perfectly applicable, because here was just another such context. Deliberative assemblies "are the means by which societies can give considered thought to themselves, and therefore they become the instrument of the almost continuous changes that present-day conditions of collective existence demand" (1958, p. 90). We find here one of Durkheim's most significant statements about an emergent societal "nomos" in complex societies:

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> All these deliberations, all these discussions, all this enquiry by statistics, all this administrative information put at the disposal of government councils, and which go on increasing in volume—all these are the starting point of a new mental life. Thus, material is collected which is not available to the mass of the people and it undergoes a process of elaboration of which this mass is not capable. . . . Is it not inevitable that something new must emerge from all this activity? [1958, p. 92]

As for the second problem, the nature of the nomic process between state and society, it was necessary to carefully distinguish these two components of the macrolevel of social organization before attempting to relate them. But in trying to elaborate "society," Durkheim was now lacking the structural underpinnings that had proved so invaluable in dealing with microlevel processes. Thus, he tended to focus on the normative or "consciousness" side of society. He wrote of societal culture as if it had simply existed indefinitely, as if no specific collective action had anything to do with either creating or perpetuating it. Sounding much like William Graham Sumner discussing "folkways," he spoke of an "obscure collective consciousness" that consisted of "social sentiments and social states of mind," of "representations that are spread throughout all societies—myths, religious or moral legends, and so on" (1958, p. 50). He also spoke of these sentiments as "collective preconceptions we are subject to from childhood" and as "currents of public opinion." "There is something spontaneous, automatic, something unconsidered about this whole form of life." It is "diffused"; it "stays in the half-light of the subconscious" (1958, p. 79). As for the other type of societal consciousness—that arising from the governmental machinery of the state—it is "localized in a specific organ" rather than being diffused throughout the entire society, and its "representations are distinguished from the other collective representations by their higher degree of consciousness and reflection" (1958, p. 50; see also pp. 79–80).

Durkheim is certain that the changes that complex society needs in order to rid itself of its anomie cannot arise from the obscure, diffused societal consciousness: "When collective ideas or sentiments are obscure or unconscious, when they are scattered piecemeal throughout the society, they resist any change. They elude any action because they elude consciousness" (1958, p. 87). And this was tantamount to saying that no structural foundation of this "obscure" societal consciousness could conceivably be located.

Thus, the central government had the crucial role to play in generating civic morality. But how does the nomic process in the deliberative assembly have anything to do with the mass of the people?—for, as Durkheim says, the "obscure" collective consciousness "goes beyond the State at every point. . . . There is at all times a vast number of social sentiments and social states of mind of all kinds, of which the State hears

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only a faint echo" (1958, p. 50). The diffuse societal consciousness and the state's societal consciousness remain *independently* in process. What, then, is the character of their ongoing relationship?

DEMOCRACY AS SOCIETAL CONSCIOUSNESS

In a democracy, the link between the state and society (people in the mass) is essentially a dialectical one, neither unit ever submerging its own identity in the other.

> The two are closely related. The vaguely diffused sentiments that float about the whole expanse of society affect the decisions made by the State, and conversely, those decisions made by the State, the ideas expounded in the Chamber, the speeches made there and the measures agreed upon by the ministries, all have an echo in the whole of the society and modify the ideas strewn there. [1958, p. 79]

> From the moment that the people set themselves the same questions as the State, the State, in solving them, can no longer disregard what the people are thinking. [1958, pp. 81, 91]

The critical issue, then, is how well and how completely this dialectic between state and society goes on (see 1958, p. 93). Durkheim recognized that certain institutions could greatly enhance the conversation between the two: "It is these institutions that enable the people to follow the working of government (national assembly—parliament, official journals, education intended to equip the citizen to one day carry out his duties—and so on . . .) and also to communicate the result of their reflection (organ for rights of franchise or electoral machinery) to the organs of government, directly or indirectly" (1958, p. 83). But if the people must be able to follow and act on the working of the state, the state must do likewise with the people. It must expand its functions and keep pace with whatever developments are "going on in the deep layers of the society" (1958, p. 85), so that it can take them into account in the course of its deliberations. Only then can it bring all the societal tendencies into clear consciousness and elaborate them for the people, reveal the people to themselves. "Seen from this point, a democracy may, then, appear as the political system by which society can achieve a consciousness of itself in its purest form" (1958, pp. 88–89).

It is this societal consciousness-to-be-achieved that constitutes the ongoing nomic emergent of the dialectic between state and society. In this connection, it is easy to understand why Durkheim was so concerned with how the national assembly should be recruited, why he argued so vehemently for those occupational corporations with which we are already familiar to replace geographical regions as the electoral units of the nation. To be sure, emergent ideas, norms, and policies would be gen-

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erated in any congress in which debate and deliberation could go on actively. But the problem was not simply the ongoing generation of *any* nomos but one relevant to the entire society, and for this the members of the state's legislative body had to be representative of the entire societal collectivity: "In the [legislative] group thus formed, the society would truly gain consciousness of itself and of its unity; this unity would follow naturally from the relations that would develop amongst those representing the different professions thus placed in close contact" (1958, pp. 104–5).

So Durkheim ends his lectures on "civic morals" by once again focusing on his proposed occupational corporations. Each local corporation would elect its own delegates to the national corporation, which would in turn elect delegates to the deliberative assembly of the state. These latter delegates would serve as gatekeepers to society on behalf of their occupational constituency. From them, everyone could expect to learn what his own truest needs are in relation to the needs of the whole society.

How can we assess Durkheim's political solution to anomie? We have seen that, since the "obscure collective consciousness" of society is "unconsidered" and "cannot be grasped," Durkheim depended on contact between average people and their political representatives to enable the former to develop clear ideas about the nature of their society: "Owing to constant exchanges between [individuals] and the State, its life becomes linked with theirs, just as their life does with that of the State" (1958, p. 91). The question is, just how much of an impact do these "constant exchanges" have on the average person? Durkheim makes an excellent case for the government's tendency to find out whatever it wants to know about the people, but his case for the people having the same curiosity is rather hollow: "Everyone is thus able to share in this consciousness *sui generis* and asks himself the questions those governing ask themselves; everyone ponders them, or is able to" (1958, p. 81). Can everyone really? Without undue cynicism, it might be enough to point out that those who govern get rewards for their curiosity, while those governed will have to muster some other incentives merely for being *receptive* to knowledge about society. It may be countered that this receptivity of average people will follow naturally from contacts with those who represent them, who will share their occupational interests. Yet, Durkheim argues, "it is not at all imperative that the contacts should be direct. Life must circulate without a break in continuity between the State and individuals and vice versa; but there is no reason whatever why this circulation should not be by way of agencies that are introduced" (1958, p. 96; see also pp. 100–101). But there *is* a reason, and a rather good one. Durkheim's understanding of nomos and anomie

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had led him repeatedly to stress the need for *direct* social interaction at the various levels of social organization. As early as *The Division of Labor,* we read that "it is not enough that society take in a great many people, but they must be, in addition, intimately enough in contact to act and react on one another" (1933, p. 262). Now surely a series of indirect contacts between political representatives and their constituents cannot count as "intimate contact." We can conclude, then, that the political solution to anomie entailed too great a compromise with the theory of anomie. It was the average person's beliefs and norms that Durkheim was most concerned with, and these were least satisfactorily accounted for in the political solution.

THE CULT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

In many respects, *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* is Durkheim's most intriguing work. Looking over the titles of the Bordeaux courses (1897–99) from which these lectures were published, we find Durkheim lecturing successively on the family, on occupational groups, and on "civic morals." This progression had taken him further and further away from the very structural bases that his theory of anomie had led him to believe were necessary for a viable nomic process. In the remainder of these lectures, beginning with "Duties in General—Independent of any Social Grouping," he now broke away entirely from any possible consideration of the structural foundations of morality. I quote from Durkheim's introduction to these lectures:

> We now come to a new sphere of morality. In the earlier lectures we studied the duties that men have towards one another because they belong to a certain definite social group, or because they are part of the same family or guild or State. But there are other duties independent of any particular grouping. I have to respect the life, the property, the honour of my fellow-creatures, even when they are not of my own family or my own country. This is the most general sphere in the whole of ethics, for it is independent of any local or ethnic conditions. It is also the noblest in concept. The duties we are going to review are considered by all civilized peoples as the primary and most compelling of all. [1958, p. 110]

As yet, Durkheim does not seem to appreciate the complications which these "general duties" present for his theory of anomie. On one hand, such duties, which Durkheim often deemed "the cult of the individual," satisfied all the requirements as a remedy for anomie. They constituted a "nomos" on the level of civilization, one that cut across all specific group contexts and bound each person sympathetically with every other person. On the other hand, even though Durkheim writes here as if this "cult of the individual" were already institutionalized, he had much reason to

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doubt that it was, if only through his own discovery of the startling increase of suicide rates in modern Europe. And, in later works, Durkheim makes himself painfully explicit concerning that lack of a general, binding nomos in modern civilization. (I am thinking ahead to *Elementary Forms,* where he claims that "the old gods are growing old or already dead, and others are not yet born" [1965, p. 475].) The cult of the individual, Durkheim was to conclude later on, like the occupational groups, was something that was much needed but did not yet fully exist. And here is what completes the paradox: such "general duties" as the cult of the individual provide the only way to remedy anomie, but in their absence it is impossible to specify how to bring them about or how to maintain them once they exist, precisely because they are "independent of any particular grouping." In other words, by definition there was no possible appeal to any nomic process that could give rise to this particular nomos.

Nevertheless, Durkheim proceeded to give a remarkable analysis of a drift toward humanistic individualism. His procedure of exposition is most instructive. He simply examines the *legal* evolution of such issues as suicide, homicide, ownership, and contract, and then contends that the different phases evince a growing humanistic ethic that must have characterized the society throughout the various transitions. Unlike his exposition of nomic processes at the microlevel, there is no connection made between this humanistic system of morality and some structural basis of social interaction. And the only connection made between the law and the morality of the people is a logical one; it is nowhere demonstrated. In his brief survey of legislation about suicide (1951, pp. 332–34), Durkheim concludes that the history of such legislation culminates in suicide prohibitions becoming more strict, thus showing that respect for individual life must have increased. But his conclusions about public morality on the matter are entirely inferential. No explication of how *it* becomes more humanistic is ever attempted. What is actually documented is only the changes in the law, but why and how public sentiment changes remain a mystery.

In discussing the history of types of contractual relationships, Durkheim similarly sees "an increase in human sympathies" undergirding each new legal definition" (1958, pp. 209–12). He sees the fixing of minimum wages and other industrial regulations to be manifestations of this same growth in human sympathies (1958, pp. 211–12). Moreover, "everything goes to show that we are not at the end of this development and that our demands on this score [of protecting individuals] are rapidly growing" (1958, p. 212). Exactly who will make this future morality happen is again an open question. The assumption is simply that it will happen because this is the direction toward which society has been head-

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ing—good "horse sense," perhaps, but not very sociological. Durkheim claims that the notion of the "just contract" must ultimately revoke the hereditary transference of property because it "is contrary to the spirit of individualism" (1958, p. 217) which has tended to eliminate "all inequalities that derive from the accident of birth or from family status leaving only those of merit" (1958, p. 219). Moreover, even differences of merit may be superseded:

> If justice alone is in question, these inequalities of merit will still persist. But where human sympathy is concerned, even these inequalities can not be justified. For it is man as a human being that we love or should love and regard, not man as a scholar of genius or as an able man of business, and so on. . . . Essentially, are not these inequalities of merit fortuitous, too? . . . It is here that the domain of charity begins. Charity is the feeling of human sympathy that we see becoming clear even of these last remaining traces of inequality. It ignores and denies any special merit in gifts or mental capacity acquired by heredity. This, then, is the very acme of justice. [1958, pp. 219–20]

Durkheim's sentiments here are truly eloquent. Indeed, if average people really did have all this sympathy for others, no doubt the crisis of anomie would have subsided long ago. Yet even after these lofty sentiments about charity, Durkheim retreats only slightly from the position that this humanistic individualism is already institutionalized: "we see that this feeling of human sympathy only comes to have this depth in some rare forms of consciousness, the highest; consciousnesses remain as a rule too feeble to go the whole way in their logical development. We have not yet reached the day when man can love all his fellow-creatures as brothers, whatever their faculties, their intellect or their moral values" (1958, pp. 219–20). Durkheim's optimism concerning the pervasiveness of the "cult of humanity" was soon to diminish further. Moreover, the "feebleness" of popular consciousness was to surface unequivocally in *Moral Education,* his next major work.

NOMOS AND ANOMIE: THE EDUCATIONAL SOLUTION

Moral Education is a most remarkable set of lectures, but in spite of its availability in English translation for over 10 years, most English-speaking sociologists have remained ignorant of it. Its clarification of the nomic process is excelled only by *Elementary Forms,* and in terms of the problem of anomie in modern society, it is indispensable; nowhere else do we find more than a glimmer of clarification of that "morbid disturbance" which Durkheim claimed, at the end of *Suicide,* was accompanying the whole "march of civilization."

From the very outset, it is clear that *Moral Education* is only searching in new areas for solutions to the old problem of anomie. Durkheim's

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interest in education is far from merely scientific or academic: "Scientific inquiry must proceed most deliberately . . . [whereas] education is not justified in being patient to the same extent; it must supply answers to vital needs that brook no delay" (1961, p. 1). Durkheim is unmistakably talking about the crisis of anomie here, the need for societal consciousness. It is the educator now who must "help the younger generations to become conscious of the new ideal toward which they tend confusedly" (1961, pp. 12–13). And the "new ideal" to which he was referring—the macrolevel "nomos" that could bind everyone together —was unquestionably the "cult of the human person." But in *Professional Ethics* he had held this "cult" to be "independent of any particular grouping," the unfortunate consequence being that it eluded, by definition, any group mechanism for strengthening it. He was forced to concede that "at the present day, the state is the highest form of *organized* society that exists" (my emphasis) and that therefore the individual states must become "the agencies by which this general idea is carried into effect" (1958, p. 74). If each state can develop social interaction further within its boundaries, "to organize and raise the moral level of society" (1958, p. 71), then there will once again be emergent nomic consequences: "Societies will have a growing need to concentrate their energies on themselves to husband their strength, instead of expending them outwards in violent demonstrations" (1958, p. 71; see also pp. 74–75).

In *Moral Education* Durkheim reiterates this theme: "In contrast with the nation, mankind as source and object of morality suffers this deficiency: there is no constituted society. . . . It is only an abstract term by which we designate the sum of states, nations, and tribes, which in their totality constitute mankind. . . . [We must] seek the realization of the human ideal through the most highly developed groups that we know" (1961, pp. 76–77). This time, however, Durkheim sees the state as only "one of *many* agencies that must collaborate for the progressive realization of the conception of mankind" (1961, p. 79; my emphasis). From now on he was to link up very carefully all discussions of nomic products (such as the "cult of the individual") with the structural processes by which they are created or maintained for the average person, as he had done so successfully in all his other works. Never again would he define any set of morals in terms of their being "independent of any particular grouping."

The fact is that in the course of these lectures on education, Durkheim develops a much keener understanding of anomie as a crisis on the level of civilization, and this is why we find him relating morality so cautiously to its structural underpinnings. The cult of the individual had yet to be fully generated, and for this it was essential to single out some agency of

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generation. Accordingly, Durkheim focuses on education as an institutional "gatekeeper" to societal morality. "The school is the only moral agent through which the child is able systematically to learn to know and love his country. It is precisely this fact that lends pre-eminent significance to the part played by the school today in the shaping of national morality" (1961, p. 79).

Moral Education is concerned with three "elements" of morality: "the spirit of discipline," "attachment to social groups," and "autonomy." By "spirit of discipline" Durkheim means just the opposite of anomie, and discipline is what we lack, "for we are living precisely in one of those critical, revolutionary periods when authority is usually weakened through the loss of traditional discipline" (1961, p. 54). The pages leading up to this statement are most interesting. Durkheim restates his familiar argument concerning the need for normative limits on people's aspirations. But in the earlier version of that argument, expanding opportunities for wealth were seen to trigger people's greed for gain in the absence of constraining norms. In other words, the problem was economic anomie, limited mainly to commercial and industrial activities. This time, however, the problem is vastly greater in magnitude: it is a "malady of infiniteness which we suffer in our day" (1961, p. 43), and it characterizes the whole "historical period" (1961, p. 40). "In sum, the theories that celebrate the beneficence of unrestricted liberties are apologies for a diseased state" (1961, p. 54). This generalization of the theory of anomie is made most obvious in Durkheim's claim that "through [discipline] and by means of it alone are we able to teach the child to rein in his desires, to set limits to his appetites *of all kinds*" (1961, p. 43; my emphasis). Thus, it now appears that the absence of internalized regulations characterizes our whole outlook on life, not simply our desire, felt most keenly by businesspeople, to expand our level of living.

If Durkheim generalized the normative pole of his theory of anomie, it is not surprising that he generalized the structural (or "egoism") pole as well. He states that "we must give the child the clearest possible idea of the social groups to which he belongs" (1961, p. 228). He adds that "the citizen must have an inclination toward collective life" and that this inclination "can only become strong enough to shape behavior by the most continuous practice" (1961, p. 233). But the problem was that very little such "practice" was in evidence:

> If, then, with the exception of the family, there is no collective life in which we participate, if in all the forms of human activity—scientific, artistic, professional, and so on—in other words, in all that constitutes the core of our existence, we are in the habit of acting like lone wolves, our social temperament has only rare opportunities to strengthen and develop itself. Consequently, we are inevitably inclined to a more or less suspicious isolation, at least in regard to everything concerning life

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> outside the family. Indeed, the weakness of the spirit of association is one of the characteristics of our national temperament. We have a marked inclination toward a fierce individualism, which makes the obligations of social life appear intolerable to us and which prevents us from experiencing its joys. [1961, pp. 233–34]

Here, then, is a generalization of the structural side of anomie, which Durkheim had first discussed as "egoism" in *Suicide* and which he had very clearly restricted to such intrasocietal contexts as marriage and religious and political group memberships.

Durkheim now turns to a solution to anomie that will bear on the most elementary orientations of all individuals in the society. He addresses himself to the education of children precisely because he wants to instill "the capacity for giving, for devoting one's self" (1961, p. 102), in individuals when they are still very impressionable, before they have been spoiled by anomie. He now makes the claim that "if . . . beyond school age—the foundations of morality have not been laid, they never will be" (1961, p. 18). He makes scarcely any reference to occupations, or to members of legislative bodies, or to tendencies of different religions, because he has clearly come to understand the problem of anomie as one that transcends such intrasocietal divisions. Thus "the public schools are and should be the fly wheel of national education" (1961, p. 18; see also 1956, pp. 69–71, published 10 years later but taking the same stance).

This claim concerning the role of education represents a remarkable shift from the position taken in *Suicide*, where Durkheim said that "to the extent that [corrupted] real life increasingly takes possession of [the child], it will come to destroy the work of the teacher. Education, therefore, can be reformed only if society itself is reformed" (1951, pp. 372–73). In *Professional Ethics*, Durkheim turned his attention precisely to this reforming of society, and we have seen his elaborate development of the role of the state in this connection. He now turns his attention back to the schools, having apparently decided that the state's role was insufficient to solve the crisis of anomie, perhaps for reasons suggested earlier. Moreover, it is likely that by the time of *Moral Education*, some five years after he first proposed occupational corporations as units in which nomic processes could go on (and the state was merely to be a collection of delegates from such corporations), he had become disenchanted with various efforts in that direction:

> In the last several years, we have had a new burgeoning of intermediate associations. Hence, we have all sorts of commercial and industrial organizations. . . . Without passing judgment on these very uneven attempts, . . . they are not very vital. *The central fact is that they cannot become living realities unless they are willed, desired, demanded by grass-roots sentiment—in other words, unless the spirit of association comes*

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> *alive, not only in a few educated circles, but in the deep mass of the population.* [1961, p. 238; my emphasis]

The point is that even if the corporations were successful in eliminating some of the economic anomie, the fact would remain that the very basis of their existence was a pathology obtaining specifically in the world of commerce and industry, whereas anomie was a crisis that Durkheim had come to understand as cutting across such intrasocietal contexts; it was a macrosociological problem, and Durkheim is now quite explicit about this in calling for the spirit of association at the grass-roots level—"in the deep mass of the population." For this the state would not do: "The State is far away. We are not directly involved in its activity. Among events at the national level, only the most considerable have repercussions that reach us" (1961, p. 233).

Thus Durkheim returns to education, and this time there can be no confusing the solution with one that would bear merely on specific educational or other microlevel associations. The school "is the means, perhaps the only one, by which we can leave this vicious circle" (1961, p. 235).

> We have through the school the means of training the child in a collective life different from home life. We can give him habits that, once developed, will survive beyond school years. . . . We have here a unique and irreplaceable opportunity to take hold of the child at a time when the gaps in our social organization have not yet been able to alter his nature profoundly, or to arouse in him feelings that make him partially rebellious to common life. This is virgin territory in which we can sow seeds that, once taken root, will grow by themselves. [1961, pp. 235–36]

The school can "serve as intermediary between the affective morality of the family and the more rigorous morality of civil life" (1961, p. 149). It can pave the way for the general morality of society (1961, pp. 230–31). "The schoolroom society is much closer to the society of adults than it is to that of the family. For aside from the fact that it is larger, the individuals—teachers and students—who make it up are not brought together by personal feelings and preferences but for altogether general and abstract reasons, that is to say, because of the social function to be performed by the teacher" (1961, pp. 148–49). The child in the school environment must learn a whole set of rather general rules of discipline or morality. "He must come to class regularly, he must arrive at a specified time, and with an appropriate bearing and attitude. He must not disrupt things in class. He must have learned his lessons, done his homework, and have done so reasonably well, etc." (1961, pp. 148–49). In short, the schools can contribute toward alleviating the macroproblem of anomie for two reasons: first, the standards of performance in the school

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are very general and universalistic, as against the more particularistic situation of the family, and second, the teacher is a gatekeeper to the societal nomos in much the same way as is each member of the state's legislative body, as discussed earlier: "[The lay teacher] is an instrument of a great moral reality which surpasses him and with which he communicates more directly than does the child, since it is through his intermediation that the child communicates with it. Just as the priest is the interpreter of God, he is the interpreter of the great moral ideas of his time and country" (1961, p. 155).

It is quite clear that Durkheim is again looking for indirect means for individuals to learn the societal nomos, since they cannot possibly interact with everyone else in society. In contact with the teacher, the child is thus spared the difficulty of participating in the vast multiplicity of social interactions by means of which the societal morality was originally generated. And the danger that the teacher will interpret the society idiosyncratically is averted as follows: "The only way of preventing this kind of servitude, of insuring that education does not make of the child a carbon copy of the teachers' shortcomings, is to multiply the teachers in order that they may complement one another, and so that the various influences prevent anyone from becoming too exclusively preponderant" (1961, p. 143; see also pp. 144–45, where Durkheim adds that the influence of a single milieu, like that of a single person, is likely to result in an inadequate education).

But the matter of generating a sound societal morality in students does not end with multiplying the number of teachers or minimizing the isolation of specific educational associations. The teachers themselves "must not cancel each other. To some degree it is necessary to establish a bond between them, to instill in the child a sense of the continuity of that influence, diverse though it is, to which he is exposed" (1961, p. 248). Durkheim hopes to accomplish this interrelatedness between teachers in the same way as the unification of the occupational corporations. Just as the diversity of individual adults is stopped short of anarchy by bringing them together in corporations, so the diversity of individual students is channeled under the authority of the teachers and classes. Just as the interest of the whole society is ensured by the existence of a multiplicity of corporations, so it is ensured at the school level by a multiplicity of teachers. And just as the exchanges between corporations are channeled by the state in the direction of the interest of the whole society, so the exchanges between teachers are regularized by the principal, who "is responsible for the spirit and the moral unity of the school" (1961, p. 248).

It need only be added that the nomic process in both its structural and normative aspects is clearly seen to be going on at all the different levels

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of social organization in the school. In brief, there are nomic products of students' interactions with students (1961, pp. 150–51); nomic products of students' interactions with the teacher, both for the students (1961, p. 155) and for the teacher (1961, p. 159): "[the teacher's authority] rebounds toward him enlarged by all these repercussions. The effect reacts on the cause and intensifies it . . ."; nomic products of teachers' interactions with teachers (e.g., 1961, p. 248); and nomic products of teachers' interactions with the principal (e.g., 1961, p. 248).

THE EDUCATIONAL SOLUTION AND THE CRITIQUE OF REFERENCE BEHAVIOR

I would like to suggest that the most revealing aspect of Durkheim's treatment of education concerns the teacher's freedom from a serious difficulty felt by political representatives. In presenting a "higher" consciousness of society, any representative of the state's national assembly is communicating to the unseen person in the mass, and moreover, has to depend on official documents and other indirect media merely to be heard. Thus, the working of the state as gatekeeper to the societal consciousness is a rather uneven one, because it places too great a burden of responsiveness on the citizenry. On the other hand, teachers suffer no such problem of communication gaps. Their interaction with students is immediate, direct, regular, and face to face; they are all gathered there in a single classroom. There can be no doubt, then, that the educational solution to anomie was far more congenial to Durkheim than the political one, though the two solutions do not at all exclude one another. While the political solution could ensure a nomic process going on among the members of the national assembly through active deliberation, there was no guarantee that this would alleviate the anomic conditions at the grassroots level, which were reflected in individuals' fundamental orientations to the social world.

In the final analysis, then, Durkheim seemed unwilling to compromise very much on his theory of anomie. Gatekeepers to the society might be necessary to ensure a dynamic knowledge of society on the part of the citizenry, but beyond that compromise, given a choice between indirect and direct social interaction with these gatekeepers, Durkheim felt no hesitation in calling for the latter alternative. And this preference for direct interaction is abundantly evident in Durkheim's work from start to finish; it is not a mere adjunct to his educational sociology. We even find a trenchant criticism of what modern American sociology has come to call "reference behavior," and it is altogether certain that if "reference group theory" had been in existence 75 years ago, Durkheim would have charged its exponents with the same indictment of false consciousness that

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he leveled at the socialists. ("Socialism is to the facts which produce it what the groans of a sick man are to the illness with which he is afflicted" [1962, p. 41].) Consider the following statement about reference group theory by the editors of the recent *Readings in Reference Group Theory and Research*: "The reference group concept reminds us that individuals may orient themselves to groups other than their own, not merely to their membership groups. . . . The point to be stressed is that the links in the interpersonal chain do not have to be forged exclusively via direct social relations" (Hyman and Singer 1968, p. 9). Or we might well go back to Cooley, who is cited by Hyman and Singer as a "precursor" of reference group theory: "It is important to face the question of persons who have no corporeal reality, as for instance the dead, characters of fiction or the drama, ideas of the gods and the like. Are these real people, members of society? I should say that insofar as we imagine them they are" (Cooley 1964, p. 122).

We find a glimpse of how Durkheim would have reacted to the attempt to theorize about such phenomena in his assessment of the role of art:

> Art, we maintain, makes us live in an imaginary environment. By this very fact, it detaches us from reality, from the concrete beings—individual and collective—that compose it. . . . Quite the contrary, the world of morals is precisely the world of the real. Morality demands that we love the group of which we are a part, the men who compose this group, the land they live on—all concrete and real things, which we must see as they are, even though we are trying to perfect them as much as possible. . . . To do one's duty is always to serve some other actual living being. [1961, pp. 271 ff.]

It is not that Durkheim fails to acknowledge the occurrence of reference behavior and the influence it may have on individuals' orientations. He simply frowns on any morality that "takes refuge in vague if lofty daydreams, instead of resting upon definite and effective actions aimed at maintaining or transforming reality" (1961, p. 272). The words here are Durkheim's, not Marx's. And why must the individual imagination fail in attempting to generate such "effective actions"? Because of the high probability of a false consciousness of the needs of the social unit on behalf of which such actions would be undertaken. True consciousness of a social unit is the result of social interaction among *all* its members, not merely the result of one member's imagination of that unit. "The individual does not carry within himself the precepts of morality. . . . Such precepts do not emerge except through the relationships of associated individuals, as they translate and reflect the life of the relevant group or groups" (1961, pp. 86, 84). Thus, the implicit critique of "reference group behavior" holds that "the mind, encountering no resistance

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in this imaginary world and conscious of no restraint, gives itself up to boundless ambitions and comes to believe in the possibility of constructing, or rather reconstructing, the world, by virtue of its own resources exclusively and at the whim of its desires" (1938, pp. 17, 14–16).

We can perhaps criticize Durkheim for failing to fully appreciate the dialectic between nonmembership and membership, as expressed so well, for example, in the concept of "anticipatory socialization." But we must not forget that he saw too many problems relating to the most basic forms of social organization to ever move on to a serious consideration of these more subtle nuances of social life. Thus, everyone is born a member of some "society" (at least at this point in civilization); most are born a member of a family unit (*Brave New World* notwithstanding); and everyone is born a member of the group of living beings called "humanity" (1958, p. 4). The implications of such memberships cannot any more be taken for granted today than they could have when Durkheim concerned himself with them. While reference group theory may, as Shibutani (in Rose 1962, p. 133) suggests, be of crucial importance for understanding the phenomena of modern mass societies, this relevance might well reflect the fact that these societies remain essentially anomic. The elimination of anomie requires direct interpersonal relationships, which is why, in *Moral Education,* Durkheim put his hopes in the educational process. The school "is limited enough so that personal relations can crystallize. The horizon is not too vast; the consciousness of the child can easily embrace it" (1961, p. 231).[5]

THE "PERIODS OF CREATION OR RENEWAL" SOLUTION TO ANOMIE

After *Moral Education,* Durkheim was to take one more step in his search for a solution to anomie, and this was a result of his extensive study of

[5] The implicit conflict between Durkheim and the classical tradition in American sociology (e.g., Cooley and Mead) will not be further considered here. Suffice it to say that an analysis of this conflict might best be couched in terms of fundamentally different value commitments. In brief, Durkheim was above all committed to societies, while such thinkers as Cooley and Mead were more committed to social processes. While there are certainly many points of overlap between these two perspectives, the differences may easily become enormous. Thus, Mead believed that selves are the products of social process but carry that process at the same time to wider universes of discourse. Man could grow by carrying on successively broader conversations, by taking the role of distant "others." Durkheim's concern for wider universes of discourse was mediated through his commitment to societies. His theory of anomie was a recognition that there are obstacles in the path of wider universes of discourse. While individuals and various human groupings could travel to more distant places (both literally and figuratively), a truly societal consciousness could not emerge unless the whole society could periodically enter into the conversation and determine its outcome. I would suggest that it is only when the prospect of a societal consciousness is abandoned in favor of a more individual-focused "social process" that a theorist can take reference groups as seriously as membership groups. Reference group theory enables American sociologists to better retain their ideological commitment to individualism.

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the primitive religions of Australia. With *Elementary Forms,* Durkheim came around full circle to his starting point in *The Division of Labor,* which was the question of nomic processes in homogeneous societies. But in the earlier work, only "organic solidarity" had been seen to be problematic, while "mechanical solidarity" was simply given: "What justifies this term mechanical is that the link which thus unites the individual to society is wholly analogous to that which attaches a thing to a person. The individual conscience . . . is a simple dependent upon the collective type and follows all its movements, as the possessed object follows those of its owner" (1933, p. 130). There is clearly nothing here for the actor to do in order for solidarity to be maintained; indeed, "the individual does not appear" (1933, p. 130).

In *Elementary Forms,* nomic processes can no longer be called mechanical, even with regard to these homogeneous Australian societies. Society is seen here to be an "*active* cooperation" (1965, p. 466; my emphasis). Most likely, it was Durkheim's study of rites that led him to see social solidarity as a dynamic process; it cannot be assumed: "To become conscious of itself, the group does not need to perform certain acts in preference to all others. The necessary thing is that it partakes of the same thought and the same action. . . . So everything leads us back to this same idea; before all, rites are means by which the social group reaffirms itself periodically" (1965, p. 432; see also pp. 474–75).

In *Elementary Forms,* the problem of social solidarity is now the same in both simple and complex societies. "There can be *no* society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments" (1965, pp. 474–75; my emphasis). If primitive societies need their rites for the purpose of maintaining their nomic products, so do modern societies in spite of their current "state of incertitude and confused agitation" (1965, p. 475). "A day will come when our societies will know again those hours of creative effervescence, in the course of which new ideas arise and new formulae are found which serve for a while as a guide to humanity; and when these hours shall have been passed through once, men will spontaneously feel the need of reliving them from time to time in thought, that is to say, of keeping alive their memory by means of celebrations which regularly reproduce their fruits" (1965, p. 475).

That Durkheim generalizes from primitive nomic processes to those in modern societies is most interesting in the light of his intellectual development concerning the problem of anomie and its solution, which has been traced throughout this essay. To begin with, Durkheim retained the macrosociological conception of anomie. The problem of nomos is held to be a societal one; there is no mention of any intrasocietal levels of social organization and their particular problems of integration. Through-

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out the *Elementary Forms,* he seems to have fortified himself with a most impressive array of data concerning the structural side of nomic processes in primitive Australia. Whether it is songs and dances and their origins or his equally brilliant and more elaborate treatment of the functions of mourning, in every instance he shows us unmistakably how these are products of specific structural bases. It is as if, having rediscovered the structural pole of a societal nomic process in primitive rites, he felt the ground was now solid enough to make the leap back to his own France. In brief, Durkheim's last major work returned to those microsociological considerations with which he had always been most confortable. The only difference is that he would now claim for society what he had earlier demonstrated for subsocietal groupings. Structural bases could be identified in small-town reactions to deviance, in occupational groupings, in families, in religions, in legislative congresses, in schools—in every case there could be no doubt as to how the particular nomos is generated and maintained. Having now studied a whole miniature society and finding the same structural processes upholding that total society's nomic products, Durkheim is ready to grapple once more with the problem of modern anomie at the societal level of social organization.

It is clear that Durkheim's final solution for anomie departs radically from that offered in *Professional Ethics* and in *Moral Education.* In speaking (in the previous citation) of "those hours of creative effervescence," he has in mind a cyclical theory of nomic emergence: "There are periods in history, when, under the influence of some great collective shock, social interactions have become much more frequent and active. Men look for each other and assemble together more than ever" (1965, p. 241). It is at these "moments of collective ferment that are born the great ideals upon which civilizations rest":

> The periods of creation or renewal occur when men for various reasons are led into a closer relationship with each other, when reunions and assemblies are most frequent, relationships are better maintained and the exchange of ideas most active. Such was the great crisis of Christendom, the movement of collective enthusiasm which, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, bringing together in Paris the scholars of Europe, gave birth to Scholasticism. Such were the Reformation and Renaissance, the revolutionary epoch and the socialist upheavals of the nineteenth century. [1953, pp. 91–92]

Why did Durkheim turn to a cyclical theory of nomic emergence? In *Elementary Forms,* he was very impressed by the "two distinct phases" through which Australian life passes, the first a period of dispersion during which social interaction is at a minimum, and the second a period of concentration during which social interaction is tremendously intensified through the mechanisms of ritual. It can be readily imagined why he would be tempted to apply this model to modern societies: since he had

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seen modern people's interests to have become dominated by occupational roles, it was easy to equate such interests with primitive periods of dispersion (in which he claimed economic concerns were also predominant) and to posit a missing period of concentration as well—missing, that is, as long as the crisis of anomie prevailed: "If we find a little difficulty today in imagining what these feasts and ceremonies of the future could consist in, it is because we are going through a stage of transition and moral mediocrity. . . . The old gods are growing old or already dead, and others are not yet born" (1965, p. 475).

Unfortunately, while Durkheim claimed that the primitive concentrations seemed to be occasioned by "periodical variations of nature"—the death of vegetation every year, the birth and death of animals, the capriciousness of the rain (1965, pp. 386–87)—he could not find any such easy formula for the would-be occasions of modern concentrations. The best that he could do was to make very general remarks about various possibilities: "This revivification [of ideals] is the function of religious or secular feasts and ceremonies, all public addresses in churches or schools, plays and exhibitions—in a word, whatever draws men together into an intellectual and moral communion. These moments are, as it were, minor versions of the great creative movement" (1953, p. 92). In any event, Durkheim was unable to specify the initial occasion for the creation of "new gods" other than to speak abstractly about "moments of collective ferment," so his discussion of how these putative new ideals might be reaffirmed is rather hollow. Yet he chooses to make the parallel with primitive Australia, and this needs to be explained.

Unfortunately, it is not easy to account for Durkheim's radical departure in *Elementary Forms* from his earlier attempts to find a solution for anomie. There seems to be a lapse in his theorizing between his educational sociology in *Moral Education* and his sociology of religion in *Elementary Forms*. Does Durkheim's cyclical theory of "periods of creation or renewal" constitute a rejection of his educational solution to anomie proposed in *Moral Education*? One can only conjecture here, but my guess is that it is certainly an approach that was more congenial to him, given the evidence of various other tendencies in his intellectual development.

Two points will be advanced on behalf of this interpretation. First, the new position in *Elementary Forms* obviated some unfortunate consequences of the older solutions in *Professional Ethics* and *Moral Education*. In the latter works, while Durkheim had come to see anomie as a societal problem, he had rested upon specific associations—first the political and then the educational—for his solutions, in spite of the fact that in *Suicide* he had rejected both of these approaches (1951, pp. 372, 374). In the new position in *Elementary Forms*, Durkheim no longer has to

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reconcile himself to one associational sphere performing nomic functions on behalf of the entire society. Indeed, the advantage of the "periods of creation or renewal" solution is that it takes the problem of remedying the crisis of anomie completely outside the whole sphere of given, institutionalized social life. The burden of a new nomos is placed on the obtrusion—across the institutional boards, so to speak—of "some great collective shock."

Perhaps the new position is in some respects more realistic, given the weight of historical evidence of other instances in which significant new values have emerged, but it also raises an ethical problem that was not inherent in the older position, which had accorded the social scientist a rather heavy hand in engineering various reforms in society. If there is one way that *Elementary Forms* differs from every one of Durkheim's earlier works, it is that there is here no mention whatsoever of the scientist in his ameliorative role. Does Durkheim now believe that the best we can do to eliminate the crisis of anomie is to sit around and wait for the millennium? For surely no society would tolerate a collection of social scientists who ran about administering "great collective shocks."

The second reason for Durkheim's new solution, related to the first, is that it obviated the need to depend on "gatekeepers," unlike the solutions in *Professional Ethics* and in *Moral Education*. In brief, the new position seemed to depend on no need at all for intermediaries between the individual and society; it had the advantage of coming closer to the ideal case in which everyone could interact with everyone else, thereby producing emergent nomic products relevant to the whole society. Aided by Durkheim's examples, one pictures a massive popular uprising spontaneously enveloping the entire society and culminating in social interaction that far transcends any prior institutional commitments. What a paradox that a man whose temperament *had* to be mellow finds himself left with a revolutionary solution to the crisis of modern man!

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This essay has traced the development of Durkheim's theory of anomie from the beginning to the end of his work. As a problem, anomie is first seen to characterize social relations primarily at the microlevels of social organization: it afflicts people in certain occupational roles, or in certain domestic circumstances such as divorce, or in certain religions, and so on. Later on, it comes to be seen as a macrosocial problem, one that cuts across individuals' specific group memberships and affects their capacity to function as responsible members of society. The question became not so much how a Catholic might relate to a Catholic, or a worker to a worker (or to an owner, for that matter), or a specialized intellectual to

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another specialized intellectual, or a married person to his partner, but, rather, how does a Frenchman relate to a Frenchman? What living bonds tie together the inhabitants of a society qua fellow society members? The theory of anomie came to dwell on the absence of any such living societal bond.

Along with the shift in Durkheim's definition of anomie from micro- to macroproblem came a parallel shift in his remedial proposals. At first, when anomie is seen primarily as a problem afflicting economic activities, we are told that guildlike occupational associations would solve the problem. With the later elevation of anomie to a transoccupational problem, it became clear that the occupational solution was too limited. As a professor, I may be bound by a code of ethics which helps me in certain relationships with other professors and with students, and so on, but this code contributes nothing to my apprehension of other people who mean nothing to me except that they are also Americans. Whatever the solution, then, it would have to bear upon people's experiences in their societal roles, and Durkheim attempts two different "gatekeeper" strategies to this end.

The gatekeeper strategy consists of asking, who in society represents and mediates the whole society to the average person? Durkheim answered that, first, national political representatives represent "society," and what they do has an impact on average people through their citizen roles. And on another level, teachers mediate society to young children, giving them their first real exposure to the meaning of country and coaxing them to identify with it.

Like the occupational solution to anomie, neither of the two gatekeeper solutions was completely adequate. The political solution fell down at the point where it had to assume what it was ordained to bring about, namely, the receptivity and responsiveness of average people to their political representatives and, through them, to their society. The educational solution fell down because it assumed that teachers were extraordinary people, possessed of rare faculties of societal consciousness. In *Suicide,* Durkheim knew better: "Education is healthy when people themselves are in a healthy state; but it becomes corrupt with them, being unable to modify itself. If the moral environment is affected, since the teachers themselves dwell in it they cannot avoid being influenced; how then should they impress on their pupils a different orientation from what they have received?" (1951, p. 372). In *Moral Education,* Durkheim neglected to reiterate that question.

Durkheim's last attempt at a solution to anomie was considered in the previous section. The gatekeeper strategy was apparently abandoned in favor of a popular-movement approach. If things got bad enough, average people would seek each other out in uninstitutionalized contexts through-

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out the entire society, and the resulting interchanges would culminate in a new sympathy and affection of man for man. This new societal nomos would spontaneously come to be relived in periodic celebrations and ceremonials. The main difficulty with this approach, as we have seen, is that we are given no basis for concluding that any such popular uprising is imminent. Durkheim knows that people can live with a great deal of suffering without being driven to do much about it, and in *Suicide* he tells us that modern-style "progress" necessitates living with a certain amount of anomie. Waiting, then, for one of Durkheim's "periods of creation or renewal" threatens to be little more salutary than waiting for Godot.

None of the different solutions to anomie seems to be exclusive of any of the others, but even granting this flexibility, Durkheim clearly failed to solve the problem on his own terms. These terms demanded a nomos that would bind all of society's members together as purely human beings —"the cult of the human person"—but this nomos would have to be nourished and sustained by the same microsocial structural processes that Durkheim found to sustain all viable nomic products. The problem with these terms, and one that proved to be insoluble, is that when people interact on the microlevel, they tend to generate nomic products that are specific only to them and to their particular situation; such products embrace and uphold and provide a common meeting ground only for those who actively contribute to their making and remaking. In brief, if a group can become conscious of itself through the nomos that its members produce in the course of coming together, then a society can only become conscious of itself through all *its* members coming together. But how and when do all the members of society come together (save for those rare "periods of creation or renewal")? The answer is, they never do; hence the perpetuation of the problem.

Nevertheless, Durkheim claimed to know what it is that society will "become conscious of" once it does become conscious of itself. His position seemed to be that from the scientific observer's point of view, some objective aspect of people's relationships may or may not be symbolized (i.e., "represented" collectively) and hence known to individuals. To take a simple example, in the process of courtship a man and a woman may become more and more intimate with one another without the idea of "love" entering into their shared meanings. But once the recognition dawns that "we love each other," this new symbolization provides the couple with a much altered consciousness of their social relationship. In other words, "love" reacts back on the lovers and *ipso facto* changes their relationship. Similarly, for Marx, a "class" may exist with or without class consciousness on the part of its members. Now Durkheim did not much concern himself with lovers or, for that matter, with social classes. As Gouldner points out (in Durkheim 1962, p. 27), he seemed to

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be making a much more generalized application of the Marxian framework. In an era of nations, he figured that a societal consciousness would be far more critical than any class consciousness, since the problem of people's relations to other people now transcends all classes. That being the case, there remains the knotty problem of just what it is about societies that may "become conscious." It was here that Marx's more limited sociological perspective had yielded theoretical fruit, for it was no problem for him to specify what a class is before it becomes known or "conscious" to its members. A class is simply any common relationship to the productive process in society. But what is a societal reality? This is the bold problem that Durkheim was tackling. He had moved on to a level of generality that transcended the matter of class differences, and consequently his vision would have to be that much more far-reaching if he were to deal with his problem as lucidly as Marx had with his.

The path that Durkheim took was to reason that, increasingly, people no longer have anything in common except the bond that they are all human beings (e.g., 1951, p. 336; 1958, p. 112; Lukes 1969). This common humanity may be taken as the foremost objective quality of contemporary human relationships; whether this objective quality is subjectively known and hence purposefully acted upon by individuals is another issue entirely. Durkheim is pointing beyond both the normative and factual orders to a third consideration, to one that characterizes humankind in their species life (to use a Marxian term). That is, there is a common characteristic that people "get from their intrinsic quality of human nature" (1958, p. 112), from the mere fact "that they are all men" (1951, p. 336). This species solidarity, or "human ideal," as Durkheim often called it, is a timeless constant of people's relationship to other people anywhere and everywhere. What varies is the extent to which this species bond gets into a society's normative culture and factual order. At certain times the species bond may become more salient, particularly when other sources of solidarity—class, ethnic, national, and others—become effaced by various historical processes. These are times when social horizons expand tremendously, when particularities of social group membership recede into the background as people begin to reconcile themselves to a world of unlimited social diversity (see, e.g., 1961, pp. 75, 81). To say, in this connection, that society may "become conscious of itself" is only to say that people in a society may come to see their species relationship with other people as the predominant one, that the species bond comes to pervade society's normative culture.

Why, then, has this not yet happened—why do "consciousnesses remain . . . too feeble to go the whole way in their logical development"? (1958, p. 220). The answer is that the crisis of anomie impedes this logical development, which brings us back to the insolubility of the problem.

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To return to the lovers example, the common awareness that "we love each other" needs hardly to be prodded into being; it will dawn quite spontaneously given a continuing intimate relationship. In the same way, the consciousness of a species bond will also dawn spontaneously if people who share nothing greater than that bond begin to maintain active social relationships instead of remaining anomic and "acting like lone wolves" outside of the context of their narrower social relationships. Thus, the realization of the species bond requires nothing more or less than the end of anomie:

> For a society to become conscious of itself and to maintain at the necessary degree of intensity the sentiments which it thus attains, it must assemble and concentrate itself. Now this concentration brings about an exaltation of the mental life which takes form in a group of ideal conceptions where is portrayed the new life thus awakened. . . . A society can neither create itself nor recreate itself without at the same time creating an ideal. This creation . . . is the act by which it is periodically made and remade. . . . The ideal society is not outside of the real society; it is a part of it. [1965, p. 470; see also 1953, pp. 92–93]

Finally, it might be added, lest Anthony Giddens's recent reminder (1972, p. 41) go unheeded, that Durkheim's career-long quest for a solution to anomie was not a concern with "the problem of order." His interest in anomie was based not on theoretical but on practical-humanistic grounds, and there is a vast difference between the two. Had Durkheim been interested simply in theoretical questions, he could have stopped his analysis far short of the lengths to which he pushed it. Theoretically, any nomic products "solve" the problem of order, and in the course of his investigation Durkheim discovered many of them, including some "representations" of the whole society. No doubt it could be shown that our political representatives do mediate some understandings to some of us about the nature of our whole society, and so do our teachers. Socialists also mediate certain understandings about society to some of us, however misguided Durkheim may have thought them to be (1962, pp. 41–42), and even sociology has its hand in the matter of society becoming conscious of itself (1956, p. 129). Then too, average people do share certain nomic products with most of their fellows, regardless of their particular group memberships. Examples cited at various times are "the longing for infinity," "the malady of infinite aspiration," "general pessimism" (1961, p. 40), "the drive to get ahead" (1961, p. 49), the general hostility to all regulation (1961, p. 54), and the individualistic values making for hostility toward association. The implications of these nomic products may well be inhumane, but they do constitute a nomos nonetheless; apparently, those "transient relations and passing associations" which Durkheim had warned us about back in *The Division of Labor*

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were sufficient to give rise to a variety of nomic products, thus sparing society a state of utter chaos.

Now to those interested in the theoretical problem of order, any nomos sufficient to eliminate utter chaos "solves" the problem and ends the analysis, while for those who, like Durkheim, concern themselves with practical-humanistic issues, the absence of chaos begins the analysis. The question becomes "what kind of order do we have?" instead of "do we have any order or not?" For Durkheim, the crux of the matter was that suicide rates indicated a contemporary social malaise. They showed not that people were living under conditions of disorder, but simply that they were suffering more than they needed to. On these humanistic grounds, Durkheim saw fit to make distinctions between true societal consciousness and false societal consciousness. "The consciousness which society may have of itself which is expressed in general opinion may be an inadequate view of the underlying reality" (1953, p. 38; see also p. 60). The "underlying reality" which he had in mind was the species bond between people. Thus, Durkheim sought not just any nomic processes but those that would enhance people's capacity to perceive the human being in each of their fellows. To this end, he searched for appropriate structural bases that could give rise to true societal consciousness. If he was unsuccessful, perhaps it is because anomie is endemic in any large group.

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