

Jennifer M. Hudson
jhudson@bard.edu
jmh2165@columbia.edu

The Bureaucratic Democracy of Durkheim, Duguit, and Saint-Simon¹

Bureaucracy involves applying expert techniques in order to resolve questions and develop policies for action. In appealing to scientific objectivity, bureaucracy seeks to ground action on a universal foundation that is by definition unimpeachable and, in theory, acceptable to all. This is a particularly useful strategy for avoiding conflict, especially in times of great tumult and crisis. It is also potentially democratic in that an objective bureaucracy can provide transparent information to democratic publics seeking to evaluate their governments.

The unquestionable appeal of bureaucratic governance during crisis periods makes it clear why late nineteenth century French theorists like the sociologist Émile Durkheim and the jurist Léon Duguit would have relied upon it heavily in constructing their idealized visions of the modern industrial state and society. Nineteenth century France had witnessed multiple revolts, changes of regime, and coups d'État, and the contours of political life reflected this chaos and polarization.

I propose that Durkheim's theory of the modern state, drawing heavily on his reading of Saint-Simon, is suggestive of an alternative, non-classically Weberian, conceptual history of bureaucracy. Recovering this history will help us to deinstitutionalize our notion of bureaucracy and focus, instead, on the type of thinking involved. This should help us to recognize the contemporary diffusion of a flexible, decentralized type of bureaucracy that has evolved and adapted over time, as the concurrent change in organizational ethos within capitalist firms might help illustrate.² Bureaucracy, present in new models of global and regional governance as well as attempts to inject market forces into public management, has subsumed demands for individuality and participation in order to perpetuate a logic of domination while appearing to do the opposite. This has been

¹ Adapted from an article I am preparing, combined with a section of my dissertation, *The Bureaucratic Mentality in Contemporary Democracy and Democratic Theory*

² See Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2007) 70-80.

obscured by the retention of a notion of bureaucracy derived from a constellation of ideas and images from the 1960s. Recovering the Durkheimian bureaucratic theory of democracy, as I will refer to it, should help to encourage contemporary democratic theorists to recognize the bureaucratic nature of proposals to depoliticize and consider incorporating the history of democratic critiques of bureaucracy within their thinking.

In a context of crisis, Durkheim's sociology, Duguit's jurisprudence, as well as the political doctrine of the Solidarists represented important attempts to elaborate a unifying doctrine in support of the Third Republic. These theorists sought to defend the secular, individualist, and rationalist underpinnings of liberalism, which were under attack, by combining or reconciling liberalism with the French tradition of radical thought on the left.³ The result was an endorsement of democracy with a focus on social justice, backed up by a scientific account of the workings of society. This brand of democratic theory seeks to facilitate social peace and harmony by finding the objectively best and thus universally acceptable way of organizing society in order to channel, subdue, or obviate disruptive critique.

Appeals to this type of reasoning should ring familiar to us today, given contemporary challenges to democracy, both theoretical and practical. Turning our gaze towards Europe, we might identify several particularly vexing problems, such as, the rise of populist, nationalist, and xenophobic movements; media concentration, which distorts the process of opinion formation; and the increasingly potent influence of supranational regulatory and executive bodies, especially in the context of economic crisis. Reliance on a practical, technical, or scientific approach to human affairs is an attractive option insofar as it provides a means of avoiding polarized and potentially destabilizing disputes. However, while democracy certainly faces threats from its enemies, rescue

³ See Steven Seidman, *Liberalism and the Origins of European Social Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 159. The nineteenth century witnessed several attempts to fuse liberalism and more radical theories into liberal democratic and social democratic currents of thought. Liberal democrats included Condorcet, Tocqueville, Saint-Simon, Lamartine, Michelet, Renouvier, the Solidarism of Fouillée and Léon Bourgeois, and Durkheimian sociology. Seidman writes that they fused “liberal themes (individualism, pluralism, political centralization, industrial progress) and revolutionary ideas (social equality, social solidarity, decentralized community control, socialized property).” Social democrats differed mainly in that they focused on the abolition of private property: Blanc, Malon, Jaurès, Millerand.

attempts carried out by democratic sympathizers relying on this approach are presenting new and distinct challenges.

A sense of fatalism in reaction to changing circumstances seems to have infected democratic theory, and proposals to modify democratic institutions and standards, in order to accommodate shifting realities, have often made efforts to blend the logics of democracy and bureaucracy. Neo-republican theories (Phillip Pettit, Pierre Rosanvallon), theories of epistemic democracy (David Estlund), and theories of plebiscitary democracy (Jeffrey Green) can all be included in this category. All of them, in some sense, attempt to depoliticize democracy by replacing political judgment on the part of citizens with a form of spectator judgment, an emphasis on impartiality and impartial institutions, or a quasi-scientific form of judgment based on the truth and efficacy of outcomes of the democratic process.

Durkheim is an appealing, but also revealing, resource for this project. Both Durkheim and Duguit, his self-declared disciple, advance arguments as to the importance of administration in democracy, not only for practical purposes, but in theoretical and principled terms. In recovering these arguments, however, contemporary democratic theorists must interrogate the notion of democracy endorsed by these earlier theorists. Durkheim's immersion into Saint-Simonianism in his book on socialism provides a rich resource for this endeavor.

Saint-Simon was engaged in an earlier project of post-conflict political reconciliation. He proposed to unify society around the goal of progress through industrial production and organize it according to objective merit and competence. Incentives should be arranged such that harmony and peace could be achieved within the constantly active system. Durkheim's sole criticism was that there must be an additional "moral" means for orienting citizens towards the public good. His solution was twofold: 1) individualism must be recognized as the principle value of society or the "public good," itself, and 2) corporatist intermediary bodies must absorb and domesticate various societal interests. The result is the transfer of republican "virtue" to the very circulatory system of the structure, where it could not pose the same threat as a cultivated passion residing within citizens.

Both Saint-Simon and Durkheim outline state-society constructs that resemble self-perpetuating and self-regulating machines.⁴

Scientific appeal to objective technique as well as the channeling of political energy allows Saint-Simon, Durkheim, and Duguit to cleanse government of will, which they associate with arbitrariness, command, and force.⁵ All three theorists seek to minimize political turbulence and create harmony by reconciling all parts of society to the state and bringing them inside of a unified system.

Insofar as contemporary democratic theorists focus concern on the lack of trust in representative institutions—the crisis of representation—and the intensified threat of populism, this model of “bureaucratic democracy” is suggestive of a response. To take a prominent example, these are precisely Pierre Rosanvallon’s concerns in his new trilogy in democratic theory, *Democratic Legitimacy*, *Society of Equals*, and the as yet untranslated *Le bon gouvernement*, in which he makes reference to Durkheim and especially Duguit. All three theorists are representative of a tradition within continental democratic theory that tends to downplay politics by replacing it with administration and regulation. They also share a tendency to denounce “bureaucracy” while simultaneously advocating executive-type governing bodies, based on impartiality and technical knowledge or competence.

While he claims to see future salvation in the “democratization” of executive and administrative behavior and governing relationships, Rosanvallon refuses to associate any of these proposals with the label, “bureaucracy.” He invests a great amount of faith in various “modes of government” grouped under the heading of “indirect democracy,” such as impartial administration, executive and administrative “attention to particularity,” and the activity of independent regulatory authorities. These are meant to address two key problems in European politics: 1) lack of trust in

⁴ On the machine as organicist “cosmogram” in the early nineteenth century, see John Tresch, *The Romantic Machine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

⁵ Émile Durkheim, *Le socialisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1928; reprint, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), 177. In this, they clearly share an objective with Hegel, the paradigmatic theorist of the modern bureaucratic state. According to Durkheim, government has always been based on command: “At the same time that it is imperative and because it is imperative, government action is necessarily arbitrary, because men who command command as they want ... the arbitrary is in the very essence of all will.”

representative institutions, or the crisis of representation, and 2) the intensified threat of populism. In the face of these challenges, he promulgates the view that democracy is not actually in danger but rather simply changing form. He offers a conciliatory, rather than critical, account, which parallels those of Durkheim and Saint-Simon in terms of argumentative structure as well as political objectives.

Rosanvallon refers to Durkheim and Duguit in order to support his claims about the historically democratic nature of administrative practices; however, I demonstrate that these ideas do not actually do the work of reconciling bureaucracy and democracy in the way that he hopes. Active democratic public participation is potentially left out of the picture. Without this, one may claim that bureaucracy is representative of or responsive to society, but many forms of government can claim to achieve this without meeting politically democratic standards. Indeed, Hobbes claims that the leviathan state is ultimately a representative of the people.⁶ Representation and proximity of state and society are not sufficient conditions for democratic politics. Duguit and Durkheim, who were in close contact and shared a similar approach, were working in a democratic context and were self-proclaimed republicans. However, their understanding of democracy, as well as the prevalent ideas about democracy at the time, left out the political conflict and intensive participation that we would and should consider central today.

Reconstituting the Whole by Valuing the Part: Individualism as State Administrative Creed

Durkheim's benevolent bureaucratic state is an intricate system of state-society machinery, in continual motion, that both runs on and reproduces individualism. He is endeavoring to repair the rupture between individual and collective effected by the revolution by creating an ideal state that holds individualism to be its core principle while it simultaneously maintains an extensive positive

⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). See Quentin Skinner, "Hobbes and the Purely Artificial Person of the State," in *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (1999): 1-29. Once the state exists, presumably created by a past covenant, he argues that we must assume the people have authorized the state to act in their stead. Thus, the people must own all of the actions of the state and its representatives and forfeit their right to protest.

role in collective life. Along with Duguit, Durkheim denies the existence of an antinomy between the state and individual rights. It is the state which upholds individual rights, and, for him, a stronger state can translate into increasing respect for the individual.⁷ Individual rights are not natural. They are born of the social condition and the state, itself.⁸ This claim unites Durkheim with social democrats, welfare liberals, and especially the solidarist movement, a political group active in France at the time.

Durkheim's main line of inquiry in the *Division of Labor* addresses the process through which the individual comes to depend more and more strongly upon society as a whole while simultaneously becoming more autonomous.⁹ Although modern society had been blamed for social dislocation, Durkheim suggests that the division of labor actually corresponds to a higher form of social solidarity and thus represents progress in society on more than simply economic terms. The solidarity-enhancing role of division of labor is one of the most important components of modern social and political thought, present in the works of Smith, Sieyes, Condorcet, and later the Saint-Simonians. Durkheim belongs to this tradition.

His logical-proof style argument begins with the distinction between mechanical solidarity, or solidarity through similitude, and organic solidarity, or solidarity produced by the division of labor. Using law as a questionable proxy measure for types of social links, Durkheim asserts that mechanical solidarity should be associated with penal law while organic solidarity corresponds to civil law.¹⁰ The proportional quantities of different types of law should in fact reflect the relative importance of different types of social links. Thus, according to him, the increasing importance of civil law provides evidence of the increasing importance of social solidarity created through the division of labor.

⁷ Émile Durkheim, *Leçons de sociologie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), 93.

⁸ Durkheim, *Leçons de sociologie*, 95-96. "Thus, history certainly seems to prove that the state was not created, and does not simply have the role of preventing the individual from being troubled in the exercise of his natural rights, it's the state that creates them, organizes them, makes them a reality. And, in effect, man is only man because he lives in society."

⁹ Émile Durkheim, *De la division du travail social* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1998), xliii.

¹⁰ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, 28.

Durkheim uses his social solidarity typology in order to trace the historical development of the modern state. The predominant type of law shifts from penal to restitutive sanctions as the predominant form of social solidarity passes from mechanical to organic. Parallel to this evolution, the place of the individual in society grows, and the state grows by adding public services “which administer but do not command.”¹¹ Thus, the state and the place of the individual grow reciprocally, contrary to the idea that a large state necessarily reduces individual liberty.¹²

Durkheim’s thought is permeated by a philosophy of history and a vision of the direction of historical progress. Like Tocqueville with democracy, Durkheim believed that the march of individualism was practically unstoppable. The only way to halt its progress would be to stop the continued development of division of labor, which is also impossible for humanity. Thus, the question becomes “not how to achieve social order by restraining or combating individualism, but rather how to complete and extend it.”¹³

A society held together through organic solidarity produces a specific kind of state.¹⁴ In Durkheim’s mechanical societies, the “collective consciousness” is monolithic and imposing, which produces a large and imposing state that holds the rest of society in a subordinate position. He defines collective consciousness as, “the psychic type of the society” that

“does not change at each generation, but on the contrary it links successive generations to one another. It is thus something completely different from the particular consciences, although it is only realized within individuals.”¹⁵

The state or a “directive power” that is newly established must first and foremost protect the common beliefs, traditions, and practices, in other words, defend the collective consciousness. The

¹¹ Melvin Richter, “Durkheim’s Politics and Political Theory,” K. Wolff, ed., *Émile Durkheim: 1858-1917* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1960), 192.

¹² Durkheim is countering liberal arguments. As commerce supposedly replaced contest by physical force, however, John Stuart Mill cautioned that increasing societal complexity would require *increasing* regulation and a more active state, which could pose a different but just as dangerous threat to liberty. In order to fight against the risk of “pedantocracy,” he advocated popular political government and a shifting of attention towards the newly developing bureaucratic activities of the state. See John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (London: Parker, Son and Bourn, 1861); Nadia Urbinati, *Mill on Democracy: From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2002).

¹³ Richter, “Durkheim’s Politics,” 181.

¹⁴ See Frederick Neuhouser, “The Concept of Society in 19th Century Thought,” in *Cambridge History of Philosophy in the 19th Century*, ed. A. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 651-675.

¹⁵ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, 46.

state is actually “the collective form [*type*] incarnated.” Yet it also develops the power to guide society autonomously. Its power can be measured via its authority over citizens, and this tends to be the strongest in “inferior” societies, exhibiting mechanical solidarity, that also have the most powerful collective consciences.¹⁶ The more flexible collective consciousness of organic solidarity will not necessarily produce a smaller state, however, because the “necessity of a supreme regulatory function would not be less.” It is rather the relationship between state and society that will be fundamentally changed, and Durkheim claims this is more important. This echoes Duguit’s claim that the structure of the state matters much more than the size, if we wish to measure state power or sovereignty. Both theorists agree that large states will not necessarily be more authoritarian. In fact, a more expansive public service actually brings the state closer to the needs of society, which should make it less so. This is a key part of Duguit’s argument in favor of civil service as an instrument for social solidarity since bureaucratic administration theoretically breaks apart centralized, absolute sovereignty.

A corollary of the derivative nature of Durkheim’s state, in relation to the more important and determinant societal categories, is the absence of a conception of political repression in modern society. He associates repression exclusively with the earlier mechanical societies and their corresponding political forms, with the partial exception of a slightly more nuanced assertion in his “*Deux lois de l’évolution pénale*.”¹⁷ This is highly unfortunate because it is precisely this type of independent politically coercive force that must be countered in a democratic society that relies on a bureaucratic state. Durkheim’s focus on social mores seems to have prevented him from seeing the problem of political power. Mores, attached to the level of historical development of society, were the focus of his work, and this predisposed him to see them as the main determinant of everything in his political sociology. Political power is not an independent variable here.¹⁸ This is one of several

¹⁶ Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, 52.

¹⁷ See Émile Durkheim, “Deux lois de l’évolution pénale,” *l’Année sociologique* IV (1901): 65-95, cited in Richter, “Durkheim’s Politics and Political Theory,” 192-194. Durkheim admits that a political authority might acquire and exercise force independently of the social form. The correction seems to be more of a footnote to the larger work, though, and does not result in a fundamental shift in his focus on moral consensus.

¹⁸ See Melvin Richter, “Durkheim’s Politics.”

common elements that link Durkheim and Montesquieu in the French Republican tradition. The positive valuation of intermediary bodies is another key point of agreement between them.

Dividing the State and Incorporating Civil Society through Intermediary Bodies

Durkheim sees occupational groups as the moral fiber of society. They should provide moral guidance in areas that need more effective regulation, like the relationship between employees and employers. He negatively judges class conflict as anarchical and abnormal, and he remains unconvinced by the liberal argument that it is a condition of individual liberty.¹⁹ Yet while “genuine liberty can be guaranteed only by authority, a moral authority,”²⁰ in modern society, the family and organized religion are no longer suited for this task. Occupational groups are the only answer, and he leans heavily on them.

The state is ill suited for this role, Durkheim claims, because it “is a cumbersome machine made only for making general decisions rather than for adjusting itself to the detailed circumstances of social and economic life.”²¹ The occupational groups should do the work of reconciling individuals to the state instead of the bureaucracy, which Durkheim negatively associates with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. However, the *corps intermediares* in conjunction with a well-functioning bureaucracy fulfill the same role as the civil service in Duguit’s theory: They incorporate interest inside the state in order to neutralize and harmonize it.

A clearer conception of the relationship between Durkheim’s occupational groups and state bureaucracy can be gleaned from some of his writings on contemporary political issues of his time. Particularly instructive are his contributions to the discussion on administrative syndicalism, which had begun as a movement to protect the legal status of the civil service against political interference. It later metamorphosed into a movement dedicated to dismantling the public administration in favor

¹⁹ Marcel Mauss, introduction to *Le socialisme*, by Émile Durkheim (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1928; reprint, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), 27-31.

²⁰ Richter, “Durkheim’s Politics,” 195. See note in Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, 2-6.

²¹ Richter, “Durkheim’s Politics,” 195.

of more loosely grouped and autonomous syndicates.²² Crucially, Durkheim opposed this movement, explaining that the syndicates were only a poor substitute for the real public administration. The syndicates would dissolve the state into the corporations rather than bring the corporations into the state in the spirit of public good. Durkheim was instead in favor of “vast administrative corporations, strongly organized and unified.”²³ The state was not to be dissolved into civil society; rather, it should gather civil society into itself in order to harmonize sources of potential conflict.²⁴ Durkheim asserts that the occupational groups should be granted official status by and within the state in order to take over certain important administrative functions that would be more effectively managed in this way than through the central state, itself.²⁵ Thus, his network of occupational groups is not so much an alternative to bureaucracy as a bureaucracy that is better organized.

This description of occupational groups and their role has close ties to Léon Duguit’s argument supporting bureaucracy, which reappears in Pierre Rosanvallon’s contemporary theory of bureaucracy and democratic legitimacy. Duguit was a jurist who studied social solidarity or the reconciliation of the individual and society from the perspective of legal theory. His starting point was the same concern that drove the *Division of Labor*, and he was eventually strongly influenced by Durkheim’s ideas. The two thinkers shared a belief in the power of economic associations and the state to create and maintain social harmony. Both sought to replace the antagonism of revolutionary proletarian syndicalism with a conciliatory reformist syndicalism based on professional groups that would mediate class conflict.

Duguit was highly critical of the jacobin 1791 *Loi le Chapelier* which had outlawed professional organizations in favor of a centralized state with a direct connection to citizens, lacking

²² Steven Lukes, *Émile Durkheim* (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 537.

²³ Émile Durkheim, “Contributions to discussion: ‘Sur l’Etat, les fonctionnaires et le public: le fonctionnaire citoyen; syndicates de fonctionnaires,’” *Libres entretiens* 4e série (1908): 261, quoted in Lukes, *Durkheim*, 538.

²⁴ See Pierre Birnbaum, “La conception durkheimienne de l’Etat: L’apolitisme des fonctionnaires,” *Revue française de sociologie*, 17, no. 2 (April-June 1976): 247-258.

²⁵ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 229-230, translation from J. E. S. Hayward, “Solidarist Syndicalism: Durkheim and Duguit,” *The Sociological Review* vol. 8, no. 2, (1960): 33.

the interference of intermediary bodies. Republican politicians forming a movement called “solidarism” shared this critical stance even though they presented their ideas as a prolongation of the revolution.²⁶ Professional associations and, later, associations in general were only legalized in 1884 and 1901. In 1911, Duguit regarded this development in “the juridical organization of social classes” as “the principal event in the social evolution during the second half of the nineteenth century and of the twentieth century.”²⁷ The professional groups, conceived as a quasi-part of the state, were to be the main instrument for achieving social solidarity.

The advent of rational administration in tandem with a decentralized “syndicalist federalism” was a progressive development, for Duguit, because it signaled the undoing of “imperialist” sovereignty, originating in Roman law. The state was no longer a sovereign subject ruling by will; rather, it was in the process of becoming the subject of citizens’ demands for the provision of public services.

Duguit was not, in fact, arguing in favor of democracy so much as a change in the nature of socio-political and legal obligation. The doctrine of popular sovereignty was, for him, nothing but the translation of sovereignty as command into democratic form, leaving the people’s government in the place of the king. His goal was to dismantle “the regalian, Jacobin and Napoleonic conception of the State as power” and replace it with “a fundamentally economic conception of the State, which becomes the cooperation between public services functioning under the control of the government.”²⁸

Duguit wished to propose a scientific understanding of law based on public services that would render obsolete the myth of sovereignty that had been necessary for government in the past. His efforts were part of a jurisprudential conversation that also included solidarists like Léon

²⁶ Serge Audier, *La pensée solidariste: Aux sources du modèle social républicain*, 37; See also Durkheim, “The Principles of 1789 and Sociology” in Robert Bellah, ed., *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973) and Th. Ferneuil, *Les principes de 1789 et la science sociale* (Paris: Hachette, 1889).

²⁷ Léon Duguit, “La Représentation Syndicale au Parlement,” *Revue Politique et Parlementaire* vol. 69 (1911): 33, translation from Hayward, “Solidarist Syndicalism,” 186; also *L’Etat, le droit objectif et la loi positif* (1901): 286-287.

²⁸ Léon Duguit, *Traité de Droit Constitutionnel*, 3rd ed., vol. II (Paris: Ancienne Librairie Fontemoing & Cie, 1928), 756-757, and Duguit, “La Représentation Syndicale au Parlement,” 44, translation from Hayward, “Solidarist Syndicalism,” 193.

Bourgeois. Both sought to use the “normative fact” of solidarity as the basic foundation for the legal edifice, eschewing both statism and individualism.²⁹ Public law, in Duguit's construction, would actually ensure that state agencies performed the services expected because solidarity was the very origin of all state law. The practice of rule would be stripped of sanctification. The myth of sovereignty had simply assumed the existence of a right to rule, whereas modern public law defined governmental control as the power to act and the obligation to serve. The main purpose and function of the state was to protect and promote social solidarity, and its legitimacy rested on this foundation.

Furthermore, the division of bureaucratic competences through Duguit's reformist social syndicalism would divide sovereignty in a way that would protect citizens from an arbitrary state. He explicitly claimed that expanding state intervention did not imply an increased right to control or even increased state power because this “power is counterbalanced, if not outweighed, by the movement towards decentralization which is becoming one of the main characteristics of governmental evolution.”³⁰ Like Durkheim, Duguit did not wish to see the state dissolved into associations; rather, he wanted the associations to become parts of the state in order to regulate social affairs and moderate interest for the purpose of social harmony.

Rosanvallon draws on Duguit in order to show that the bureaucracy of the civil services has an important place in the history of democratic theory and practice. For him, the important point is that Duguit's system replacing sovereignty-as-command is purportedly more democratic *because* it is more bureaucratic. However, neither Duguit nor Durkheim emphasizes political participation as a democratic benefit of the *corps intermédiaires*. They were interested, instead, in democracy as social solidarity, and they emphasized the way in which state-administered corporations or occupational groups could serve to articulate pieces of society within the state in a concordant fashion.

²⁹ J. E. S. Hayward, “The Official Social Philosophy of the French Third Republic: Léon Bourgeois and Solidarism,” *International Review of Social History* 6, no. 1 (April 1961): 27, 31.

³⁰ Léon Duguit, *Law in the Modern State*, (New York: H. Fertig, 1970), 52.

The State as Thinker and Organizer Above Society

In Durkheim's model, intermediary bodies work together with a rationalized state to form a self-regulating republic, free from political turmoil. Like Comte and Saint-Simon, Durkheim derives his explanations of political power from social organization, but at the same time, he describes the state as a clearly delineated entity above the rest of society. It is the guiding organ of social organization in society, not simply society's mirror image.

The state does not incarnate the collective consciousness, rather it remains in communication with society while thinking rationally and making decisions on its behalf.³¹ State and society are in contact, but it is the state that leads. The state "is not a simple instrument of canalization and concentration. It is, in a certain sense, the organizational center of the subgroups themselves. ... It is a group of functionaries *sui generis*, at the heart of which representations and volitions that engage the collectivity are elaborated."

While the collective consciousness is widely diffused across individuals in society, the state is the seat of a more reflective, "higher, clearer" type of thinking.³² The state represents society to itself and acts as the manifestation of its true self-consciousness. It draws information from society and rationalizes it. Durkheim's very definition of the state underlines this rationalized representative element: "We can thus say in summary: the state is a special organ charged with elaborating certain representations that are valid for the collectivity. These representations distinguish themselves from other collective representations by their higher degree of consciousness and reflection."³³ The rationalizing state thinks and guides the administration that acts for it, just as the brain guides the activity of the muscles. The extension of government involvement in society means for Durkheim that more "obscure" or shadowy "things" come into the light of the societal consciousness.

³¹ Richter, "Durkheim's Politics," 191.

³² Durkheim, *Leçons de sociologie*, 86.

³³ Durkheim, *Leçons de sociologie*, 87. My translation. This representational function is one of the major benefits of the democratic state, including the bureaucracy, according to Rosanvallon. This is the legacy of Lefort's symbolic conception of the political in Rosanvallon's thought.

Tradition and reflex are thought through rather than directly acted upon. This idea is common to Hegel, Durkheim, as well as Weber in their accounts of the development of the modern state.³⁴

Durkheim's is an administrative view of the state as opposed to a political one. The state is the guiding organ in the division of social labor, and everything is conceived in terms of effectiveness of organization and functionality. It is like the central nervous system coordinating the rest of the political body, to use a metaphor to which Durkheim often returns. This is, of course, a direct echo of Hegel's description of civil servants as the universal class, acting like "nerves" in the body.³⁵

Durkheim's endorsement of many of Saint-Simon's ideas in his history of socialism further illustrates the type of highly organized society he envisions for a peaceful future. Saint-Simon describes a society driven by and unified around industrial progress, with political questions managed by technical experts with scientific training. Durkheim finds fault with the system only to the extent that Saint-Simon leaves morality mostly out of the picture. He, in fact, goes so far as to say that, besides Cartesianism, Saint-Simon's positive philosophy might be the most important element in the history of French philosophy. Indeed, as he explains and describes Saint-Simon's theories, it is often difficult to differentiate Durkheim's own voice from the one he attributes to his subject.

The definition of socialism Durkheim provides in the book is particular; he defines it in such a way that he can subsume it under his own concerns: "*We term socialist any doctrine that calls for the attachment of all economic functions, or certain ones that are currently diffuse, to the directive and conscious centers of society. We should remark right away that we are discussing attachment and not subordination.*"³⁶ Thus, socialism is about the integration of economy and society within the state, which should guide and regulate but not dominate. Durkheim differentiates "socialism" from "communism" in that communists seek to isolate economics from the rest of social life, whereas socialists wish to bring economic relations to the very center of social relations. Communists believe wealth is the source of public corruption because it stimulates private egotism, which eventually challenges public interest

³⁴ See Peter Knapp, "Hegel's Universal in Marx, Durkheim and Weber: The Role of Hegelian Ideas in the Origin of Sociology," *Sociological Forum* vol. 1, no. 4 (1986): 586-609.

³⁵ See Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 108.

³⁶ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 49. My translation; italics original.

and tears the state apart. Wealth must therefore be quarantined in order to protect public life.³⁷ In opposition to this idea, socialists (and Durkheim) seek to use the state mechanism in order to pacify private interest. The goal is to bring interest inside the state so as to defuse it.

Instead of stifling wealth production, the goal of the Saint-Simonian state is to encourage it for the sake of human progress. Indeed, progress is the key principle of Saint-Simon's social physiology; it dominates human life "with absolute necessity,"³⁸ and the new industrial system of the nineteenth century was an expression of providence and historical development. In his belief in progress, Saint-Simon is following Condorcet, who he sees as his master and precursor.

His social theory is a theory of industrial colonization of all aspects of life. He recognizes imperfections and insufficiency in industrial society, but directs blame toward the incomplete development of industry, which does not yet "embrace all of social life." His solution is to extend and generalize the industrial principle and make sure it is not subordinated to other ideals or impeded by vestiges of the *ancien regime*. The goal of complete industrialization betrays a Saint-Simonian obsession with coherence that is left unexplained. Durkheim simply reports this logic without questioning or clarifying why all of society should be centered exclusively on industry and why the politics of managing industry must be modeled on industry itself. It is as if the principle of coherence, itself, were obviously therapeutic. This obsession with coherence seems to run parallel to the desire for harmony and stability, on the part of Saint-Simon as well as Durkheim.

For Saint-Simon, "... the essential trait of this spontaneous organization [industry] is that it has as its entire goal, and for its exclusive goal, to increase the mastery [*empire*] of man over things." Thus, "instead of seeking to extend the national domain, instead of turning the attention of men away from the goods of this world," the sole goal of the new, post revolutionary, social community should be to "peacefully increase their well-being through the development of arts, sciences, and industry. It has as its unique function to produce useful things for our earthly existence."³⁹ Belief in

³⁷ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 62.

³⁸ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 128.

³⁹ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 161.

human progress, defined as increasing human control over the natural environment, is an essential element of positivism in general, of the Comtian as well as the Saint-Simonian type. Human mastery is to be extended through continuous specialization and coordination of the organs within society. This sort of rationalization, which entails differentiation and coordination for the sake of control and harmonization, is central to bureaucracy.

Durkheim explains that for Saint-Simon, economic affairs are the *only* subject of interest for deliberation, politics, and common action in this new society. “Society must become a vast society of production.”⁴⁰ It is founded upon industry, and industry guarantees its existence, so whatever is good for industry is good for society. As the only useful members of the collective, “producers” should detain all political power including the power to legislate. Durkheim points out that Saint-Simon does not include all property owners in this category, only property owners who are productive and do not live from their rents.

Remember that socialism here is the attachment of economic life to a central regulatory organ. Particular enterprises run by private persons still make up Saint-Simon’s industrial landscape, but “he esteems that this aggregate is a system that has its unity, in which all parties must function harmoniously” and consequently accept submission to directive action, which would be social.⁴¹ The “regulative organs” would “maintain unity and assure the harmony of the system.”⁴² All members of the directive organ should be recruited from among industrialists and scientists, and the directive structure must be constituted in such a way that it can be run based on competence. This means that “collective affairs necessitate special competencies as do private affairs, and that, consequently, the system formed by the ensemble of industrial professions could only be usefully administered with the help of professional representation.”

⁴⁰ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 162.

⁴¹ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 165-166.

⁴² Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 169.

Durkheim makes it clear that Saint-Simon had thereby rejected “...the revolutionary principle that attributed universal competency to each person regarding social matters...”⁴³ This appears to be a tacit recognition on Durkheim’s part of a central democratic / bureaucratic tension regarding the issue of competence, disappointingly without further comment. This is not surprising, however, because it reflects his judgment that the revolutionaries had focused on the wrong problem. The principle of universal competency addressed the question, “Who rules?” rather than problematizing the concept and practices of rulership, itself. Saint-Simon criticizes the revolutionaries for having emphasized regime type when industrial organization was more important. Remember that we found a similar theme in Duguit’s critique of sovereignty and popular sovereignty. It was the disorganized state of industry, according to Saint-Simon, that had caused the ongoing crisis, and economic questions do not depend on “constitutional particularities. ... It is necessary to renounce this method and put all of these purely political problems in their veritable place, which is secondary.”⁴⁴ Saint-Simon goes so far as to claim that it would be better to leave all political or constitutional questions aside and simply adapt to circumstances. This would mean conserving existing types of government—aristocracy, monarchy, republic, etc.—as long as they did not hinder the establishment of the new industrial society.

Saint-Simon’s government is composed completely of technical administration, with no space for political participation. There is a complete substitution of bureaucracy for politics here, with no middle ground. But Saint-Simon doesn’t call the directive organ the “state” or the “government.” He explicitly claims that the government has always damaged industry when it has intervened in economic affairs, so the government’s role should be restricted to defending producers against those “who want to consume without producing.”⁴⁵ The government is granted only this negative policing function, which is arguably even more restrained than the standard liberal role for the state. Only the “industrial councils” as he defines them—not the “government”—will “have the

⁴³ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 172.

⁴⁴ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 174.

⁴⁵ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 173.

quality for determining as sovereigns the direction [*marche*] of society.”⁴⁶ One could thus claim that Saint-Simon’s story is not about bureaucracy or state administration, but that assertion would rest entirely on a linguistic sleight of hand. Bureaucracy as the application of technical knowledge and practices to political affairs certainly corresponds to Saint-Simon’s “directive organ” even if he does not call it “the state.”

This theory of technical administration rests on Saint-Simon’s positivism, which sought to fuse science and philosophy in order to understand the world and man’s place in it. Two goals of positivism were reconciliation with reality and understanding the supposed universally valid laws that governed existing reality. The given was to be exalted and accorded positive status. Social theory needed to concentrate on understanding real facts in a practical sense in order to create the most favorable environment for industry. The model of the natural sciences was to be imported into the study of society because facts should be studied through observation, not through speculative reasoning.⁴⁷ Positivism, solidarism, and Durkheimian sociology have in common their attempt to ground their political ideas on science, turning science into a political ideology.

Solidarism as a political movement sought to marry science and politics in a practical as well as theoretical sense.⁴⁸ In his major 1896 work, *Solidarité*, leading theorist and politician Léon Bourgeois relied heavily on the ideas of renowned chemist Marcellin Berthelot, the “official scientist of the Third Republic.” Author of “*Science et Morale*,” former Foreign Minister, Life-Senator and Secretary of the Académie des Sciences, Berthelot was “second in renown only to Pasteur among French nineteenth century scientists.”⁴⁹ As a promoter of solidarity through a framework of scientism, he had explained,

“the superior and more illustrious notion of human solidarity had been paralyzed for so long by that of Christian charity, but the time had come when rules of conduct had to be based upon ineluctable laws of natural determinism which could alone command the free

⁴⁶ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 174.

⁴⁷ See Herbert Marcuse’s discussion of positivism in *Reason and Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1986)

⁴⁸ see Serge Audier, *La pensée solidariste: aux sources du modèle social républicain*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2010).

⁴⁹ Hayward, “Official Social Philosophy,” 25.

consent of rational beings and at the same time provide an impregnable consent of rational beings while also providing an impregnable, objective foundation for ethics."⁵⁰

Pasteur's revolutionary discoveries on bacteria and infection were also used to support social theory, especially by solidarists like Bourgeois and Charles Gide. Their vision of society as an organic whole, rather than a simple collection of individuals, was hereby given scientific sanction. Illness now took on an unquestionably social dimension, requiring preventive public intervention.⁵¹ Léon Bourgeois was an active participant in several associations, which came together in 1904 to form *l'Alliance d'hygiène sociale*. He was the founder of the *Association Centrale Française contre la tuberculose* and became the president of the alliance in 1907.⁵²

The role of philosophy in society, for both Durkheim and the positivists, is to gather together and systematize knowledge as it progresses. While the increasing fragmentation of the sciences threatened to destroy the idea of human knowledge as a unity, positivism showed that “the eternal ambition of the human spirit had not lost legitimacy” and progress in the specialized sciences did not represent the negation of this dream.⁵³ The solution was for philosophy to turn positive like the specialized sciences, such as astronomy, physics, and chemistry. Philosophy is the synthesis of everything else, and as such, it is itself a science. For Saint-Simon, “a social system is nothing but the application of a system of ideas”: Scientific revolutions and political revolutions follow and cause each other, but at bottom, “It’s the idea, that is to say science, that is ... the initial motor of progress. ... A society is above all a community of ideas. ... Institutions are nothing but ideas in action.”⁵⁴ Philosophy is the special system that links all of the fragmentary knowledge about different parts of the world into one whole.

⁵⁰ Marcellin Berthelot, *Science et Morale* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1897), 28; see also XI-XII, 34-43, quoted and paraphrased in Hayward, “Official Social Philosophy,” 25.

⁵¹ Pierre Rosanvallon, *l'État en France de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1990), 130-131. Rosanvallon devotes a few pages to the “Pasteurian revolution” and mentions several organizations founded by “Pasteur's disciples” to promote public health policy. See also Serge Audier, *La pensée solidariste*, and Marie-Claude Blais, *La solidarité: Histoire d'une idée* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007).

⁵² Hayward, “Official Social Philosophy,” 40.

⁵³ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 132.

⁵⁴ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 118-119. Durkheim is paraphrasing Saint-Simon here.

However, still according to Saint-Simon, philosophy cannot be the unifier of the positive physical sciences unless it becomes positive, as well. Failing this, it can only summarize current results and produce nothing but an ambiguous system, lacking unity. Durkheim inserts himself in the narrative at this point to proclaim,

“But it is precisely this equivocation, as we will see, that is responsible for the critical state of modern societies, that, in preventing them from being in agreement with themselves, from unburdening themselves of internal contradictions, obstructs all harmonious organization.”⁵⁵

If we do not update the ambiguous and non-unified system of philosophy, Saint-Simon contends that philosophy itself will be pointless. By simply clumping together all current knowledge, we can’t discover “the means of holding men united in societies.”⁵⁶ Philosophy cannot just group knowledge together; it must also “complete” this knowledge “by founding a new science, the science of man in societies.”⁵⁷ Saint-Simon does not use the word, “sociology,” here, which Comte will invent later, but he uses the similar term, “social physiology.” Durkheim describes the development of science as the progressive abandonment of the anthropocentric view, first in the natural sciences and then, with Comte, in the human sciences. Scientific knowledge is about creating something objective, thus, by definition, it eliminates the human, and fallible, element.⁵⁸ The “science of man in societies” should, then, remove human judgment in order to find the objective natural determinants that shape human existence within society. From this, it should derive the “ought,” which is necessarily existent within and limited by the “is.”

Saint-Simon—and Durkheim via Saint-Simon—makes a series of strong assertions here that we must examine in order to grasp the different facets of bureaucratic thinking at work. First of all, we see again that harmonious organization is always assumed to be the ultimate goal of society. In fact, the words, “harmony” and “harmonious,” appear throughout the text. Saint-Simon claims that the systematization of all human knowledge as well as the creation of positive human science will help us to maintain a harmonious organization of the social world and “keep men united in

⁵⁵ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 123.

⁵⁶ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 123.

⁵⁷ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 124.

⁵⁸ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 141.

societies.” It is implied that a foundational goal of philosophy and science is to discover the means of social unification. Rationalization explicitly serves the purpose of social unity for Saint-Simon.

Durkheim also forcefully asserts that chaos in ideas somehow translates to chaos in society, or at least that the absence of a harmonious, coherent, and unified system of ideas is a hindrance to the harmonious systematization of society. This statement could actually serve as a metaphor for his entire intellectual project. In the face of political upheaval in France during the second half of the 19th century, Durkheim sought to create a unifying doctrine in support of the Third Republic. Crises were occurring in the political, social, and cultural spheres, not the intellectual one, but Durkheim saw a necessary link between intellectual doctrines and social life. He

“believed that these disparate intellectual doctrines and theories embodied presuppositions and social ideals that perpetuated the social political, and cultural polarization of the Third Republic. It was crucial, Durkheim thought, to discredit the legitimating function of their ideas by criticizing and reconstructing social theory. Durkheim's analytical debates, in other words, with Comte, Spencer, the socialists, and the economists must be read, in part, as conflicts of world-view and politics.”⁵⁹

Significantly, Durkheim chose to sort out these intellectual, and by translation, political clashes in a very specific way: by appealing to science and objective knowledge. This is evident in his sociological work as well as his endorsement of Saint-Simon's ideas here. The advantage of objective scientific knowledge is that it cannot be questioned but yet does not take on the appearance of brute force because it is, by definition, universal. Durkheim looks to science as the salvation of social peace, disregarding the possibility of reasonable disagreement based on political value judgments.

In this respect, it is interesting to compare Durkheim to the aforementioned solidarist politician Léon Bourgeois. Bourgeois' political career was defined by a spirit of compromise and reconciliation, built on a doctrine that emphasized the common elements among liberalism, Marxism, Catholic corporatism, and anarchist syndicalism. Fearing violent upheaval if the social reforms implicit in the principles of 1789 were not put in place, Bourgeois thought the solidarity doctrine could be “the ‘open sesame’ that was to exorcise the demon of social conflict that haunted this

⁵⁹ Seidman, *Liberalism*, 158.

period despite the ‘belle époque’ façade.”⁶⁰ He claimed to be applying the scientific method to social affairs and even suggested that the “more scientific” concept of solidarity should replace fraternity in the revolutionary “*liberté, égalité, fraternité*.” For both Durkheim and Bourgeois, science provides an objective foundation for an argument that is indisputable and thus conciliatory, unifying, and pacifying. Science as a political ideology is about finding an objective foundation for policy so as to rid the political realm of both interest and conflict. This is what bureaucracy is all about.

Like Durkheim, Saint-Simon meant his philosophy to have an explicitly social purpose. Positivism was his reaction against eighteenth century philosophy, which he saw as mainly critical without an attempt at reconstruction. As a result, the Revolution had been destructive, responding only to the need to remove the burden of the past without providing a new foundation for society. It had destroyed stability by taking away the old foundations of political authority and social relations without providing anything new, which is why the revolutionary period was characterized by “a sort of incertitude, an exasperated anxiety.”⁶¹ The restoration of the monarchy provided proof of the partially abortive nature of the Revolution. Saint-Simon contended that philosophy should not only function in a negative way. Instead, it should serve as “the guardian of the social conscience” during calm periods and, in times of crisis, take responsibility for the elaboration of “a new system of common beliefs.”⁶² Again, this mirrors Durkheim’s goal for his own work. The figure of Saint-Simon in these chapters clearly embodies Durkheim’s own projections and preoccupations in revealing ways.

In claiming for science the place of the most important social function, Saint-Simon, according to Durkheim, was only forcing science to recognize itself for what it had already become. Science is nothing other than “the eminent form of the collective intelligence.”⁶³ This portrayal of science and philosophy recalls Durkheim’s state, which, like philosophy, should collect and systematize all specialized and differentiated knowledge from the different corners of society. It

⁶⁰ Hayward, “Official Social Philosophy,” 22.

⁶¹ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 148.

⁶² Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 121.

⁶³ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 172.

should not exist as a simple clearinghouse, however, because it rationalizes this knowledge and thus acts as a manifestation of society's true self-consciousness. It is as if, for Durkheim, science and state were fused.

This is clearly the case regarding Saint-Simon. In his ideal industrial society, science would provide answers to all political questions, which would only be addressed by trained experts. Once "social physiology" is advanced enough, Saint-Simon writes, "politics will become a science of observation and political questions will be treated by those who would have studied the positive science of man, by the same method and in the same way that we today treat questions relative to other phenomena."⁶⁴ Durkheim continues: "And it's only when politics will be treated in this manner and when, following this, it can be taught in schools like other sciences, that the European crisis can resolve itself."⁶⁵ Objective knowledge and technique are to be the salvation of European politics.

If this is the case, what happens to value judgments and morality? Are they determined by science and the collective intelligence as it has progressed thus far, guided by providence? Is there no place for autonomous reflection and critique? This kind of rationalization could be linked with democracy insofar as democratic government requires transparency so that state processes can be monitored, restricting the free reign of private will. However, rational administration is inherently anti-political in that it shrinks the role of the will in general, even one that is democratically constituted.

The major criticism that Durkheim levels against Saint-Simon involves the neglect of moral questions, but Durkheim is not concerned with the possibility of critique so much as the need for societal moral constraint on potentially divisive selfishness. Although Saint-Simon emphasizes the supposedly "moral" tasks of industrial society, Durkheim points out that these are completely contiguous with the paradigm of productive self-interest. The very definition of morality as a

⁶⁴ Claude Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon, *Mémoire sur la science de l'homme et Travail sur la gravitation universelle*, 1813, quoted in Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 127. My translation.

⁶⁵ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 127.

concept is ambiguous in Saint-Simon's work. At times, he seems to equate it with politics, which is of derivative interest. His system also rests on the idea that in a well-organized society, the particular interest would automatically coincide with the collective. In that case, egotism would be a beneficent force in the moral realm as well as the economic one. The problem is then not to combat egotism but to figure out how to organize society so that it can be harnessed in a productive way.

In *Système Industriel* (1821), Saint-Simon seems to have modified his view and realized that particular interest could become a divisive force. Durkheim points out that Saint-Simon's solutions were limited, however, by the absence of any conception of a transcendent force that could be used as a counterweight. The answer, then, had to be philanthropy, or particular interest directed towards others. This addition does not contradict the Saint-Simonian assumption that personal and collective interest will naturally coincide because the claim is that the rich will give to the non-property-owning workers in order to give them a stake in the system. The poor must be "directly interested in public tranquility" through an invitation "to participate more in the benefits of the association."⁶⁶ This is in the interest of all because repression is costly and inefficient. Repressive activity produces nothing and detracts resources from industry. The conditions of the "laborious classes" must thus be improved so that they respect social organization without repressive imposition. This means that everyone has an interest in avoiding dangerous or pure egotism because avoidance is the necessary "price" for a "truly fecund social peace."⁶⁷

Durkheim attacks this construction from a couple of different directions. He first identifies a contradiction, which then leads him to question the very idea that economic interests are or should be the main drivers of society. Saint-Simon had assumed that progress was synonymous with the unleashing of the industrial principle since he had witnessed the progressive crumbling away of religion and tradition as limiting forces. Durkheim contends that the necessary conclusion to be drawn was rather that new moral limits needed to be constructed:

⁶⁶ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 194.

⁶⁷ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 195.

“This is what seems to have escaped Saint-Simon. It seems to him that the means to realize social peace is to emancipate economic appetites from all brakes, on the one hand, and, on the other, to satisfy them by filling them. But, such an enterprise is contradictory. Because they cannot be filled unless they are limited (to be partially filled), and they can only be limited by something other than themselves. From which it follows that they could not be considered as the unique end of Society, because they must be subordinated to some end that transcends them...”⁶⁸

Durkheim does not have a problem, however, with the idea that society needs a unifying, guiding end, be it industrial productivity and economic interest or something else that transcends these. As I mentioned above, he is not concerned with the possibility of autonomous critique any more than Saint-Simon. He cares about values and morality, but society as he constructs it would domesticate any possibly conflictual thrust of value judgments.

If we situate Durkheim within the context of the Republican tradition of political thought, he should appear at the end of a chain of historical progression towards the depersonalization of virtue. In Durkheim's republic, virtue—or morality—is a property of the rationally organized system. It is not a personal attribute to be cultivated, which means also that it is not in danger of getting out of control and causing conflict, violence, or terror. It is a type of virtue that is automatically produced and self-regulating. There is no need to stimulate a passion for freedom or virtuous action since the rational organization of the state takes the place of the virtuous citizens and leaders. Durkheim's state turns out to be just as mechanical as Saint-Simon's. He includes morality in his picture of society, but morality simply forms another objective piece of the puzzle; it is the glue holding everything together. Morality allows the system to maintain itself, but it is a morality that gets domesticated through the chutes and sluices of the system, which include the intermediary bodies or “occupational groups.” There is no room here for conflict based on judgments of political value.

His rationalized state is supposed to allow citizens to take conscious ownership of the laws, meaning they are autonomous and not living under domination. We can understand him as posing the question, “How is virtue possible in the industrial era?” He answers this at least partially with reference to science. Science does not remove our communal or social obligations as citizens, but it allows us to reconcile ourselves to them in order to increase our autonomy. Science increases our

⁶⁸ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 225-226. My translation.

freedom from the arbitrary. This is only possible in society since scientific progress is the result of division of labor. Thus, autonomy is only possible in society—a republican idea.

Durkheim claims that the state, and the democratic state in particular, allows citizens to accept the laws of the country with more intelligence and less passivity. It exists above and thinks for society, gathering statistical and administrative information that is not generally accessible in order to centralize it and form “the point of departure for a new mental life.”⁶⁹ In this way, it allows citizens to take conscious ownership of the laws. The state no longer seems like an exterior force that makes them act in an impulsive, mechanical way. There is a kind of organic unity between state and society, and this is the very essence of democracy for Durkheim.

Durkheim, Saint-Simon, and the later Saint-Simonians like Bazard are all concerned with freedom as non domination when they laud the benefits of a society in which men cease to rule over each other and instead rule together over the realm of things. They interpret history as a movement in this direction. Narrating Bazard’s account of social history at the end of the socialism book, Durkheim writes:

“... What determines this progressive appeasement is that, more and more, the role of force in social relations is diminishing. In principle, it’s this [force] that is at the base of all social organization, which consists in the subjecting of the weakest to the strongest, and then in the exploitation of the first group by the second. But more and more it loses ground, as industry reveals itself to be more productive than war. ‘The exploitation of man by man, this is the state of human relations in the past; the exploitation of nature by man associated with man, this is the picture that the future presents.’ The end that humanity pursues and must pursue is thus not in doubt. It must reach towards a state where all of its members, cooperating harmoniously, will be united in exploiting the globe in common.”⁷⁰

This regime is supposed to constitute itself “spontaneously” and hold together without recourse to anything approximating military force:

“In the industrial society, there will not be a government in the way that we understand this word. This is because he who says, ‘govern,’ says, ‘power to constrain,’ and here, all is spontaneous. Saint-Simonian society is not an army that only has unity through submission to its leaders and that evolves through docilely following their precepts. To speak precisely, it doesn’t have leaders. Each person takes the rank that it is in his nature to occupy, and only executes movements that are commanded by the nature of things.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ Durkheim, *Leçons de sociologie*, 126.

⁷⁰ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 237.

⁷¹ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 180.

All of this comes together, supposedly without the need for leadership, but Saint-Simon does recognize the authority of science. To explain the role of Saint-Simon's directive councils, Durkheim uses the metaphors of the invalid following the doctor, the engineer following the chemist and the mathematician, and the worker following the engineer.⁷² These clearly reference images from Plato, a philosopher who wanted to exorcise politics from the republic because he was afraid of its tumultuousness. This is exactly what we see here with both Saint-Simon and Durkheim.

The story of the progressive whittling away of force in society is familiar to us from Durkheim's *Division of Labor*. It also recalls glimpses Marx gives us of the final stage of communism: politics would give way to the administration of things.⁷³ This account relies on the assumption that it is possible to rid human relations of exploitation and domination by finding an objective understanding of the world. With the help of this tool, men can agree to exploit and manage only the things that are external to them. However, his appeal to an objective understanding of the world in all its facets is impossible to reconcile with the fact of human plurality. In claiming that governments should access it and apply it to all human affairs, we actually put a tool at the disposal of potential usurpers and exploiters who seek to hide or justify their dominance. The appeal to deliverance via objective knowledge also betrays a mistaken understanding of the political as a fight, often petty, about who will be on top. Instead, I contend that the political involves discussion, disagreement, and the never-ending working out of a common vision of ourselves and the world. Both bureaucratic assumptions rely on a distorted, one-dimensional vision of politics that either ignores value pluralism or seeks to deny and exclude it. The resulting conclusions seem to reveal a deep fear and desire to relinquish human freedom in exchange for a false hope for reassurance.

Democracy as a Matter of Degree

⁷² Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 182.

⁷³ Saint-Simon actually coined the expression, "The government of men gives way to the administration of things," and Engels adopted it.

In his most widely read works, Durkheim analyzes the state as a secondary transhistorical institution that undergoes transformation in conjunction with social changes. However, in his lectures devoted to the state he also specifically discusses democracy. It is not surprising that Durkheim does not emphasize deliberation and participation as a major component of the modern state since even his account of democracy largely leaves participatory and conflictual political communication out of its frame of vision. Of course, Durkheim's view of democracy is particular to his time and context. He was engaging in intellectual and political debates that led him to emphasize democracy as a social concept rather than a political one. When importing Durkheimian features into contemporary theories of democracy, we must take this into account.

The term, "democracy," had mostly been used in a pejorative and critical sense until about the 1840s in France. Things changed largely due to the reception of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. For Tocqueville, of course, democracy was a social condition that was forever advancing in history with the help of providence. The goal of his work on America was to understand how political activity within American democratic society had been able to avoid tyranny, which Tocqueville saw as a risk brought on by the equalizing of conditions. At that point, the term took on a social connotation in addition to the legal and political ones attached to it via the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* and the doctrine of popular sovereignty. Socialists, anarchists, and republicans in France began to discuss democracy as a social idea. Certain republicans became promoters of democracy, especially the radical socialists and the solidarists.

The equalization of conditions rather than political choice became the primary emphasis in French discourse on democracy. The solidarists, with whom Durkheim maintained close ties, championed the democratic cause as a reaction against the conceptual and practical gap created by the establishment in 1848 of universal male suffrage and the continued inequality of social conditions. Social democracy was meant to be a completion of the republican project in a social sense. Thus, crucially, it was not a properly political concept during the time in which Durkheim was writing.

In fact, insofar as it was a political concept, Durkheim judged it to be of little importance because, like Saint-Simon, he believed regime type had little impact on modern society.⁷⁴ Social and economic questions stemming from the purportedly deplorably disorganized state of industry had become much more prominent, and debates over regime type were irrelevant to their solution.⁷⁵

This claim corresponds to his theory of historical evolution in which the state progressively loses its function as repressive guardian of the *conscience commune*. As organic solidarity takes over, social unity comes from overlapping interdependency within a system of functional specialization. In modern society, Durkheim remarks, “Government is but one of these functions. It thus no longer plays the great moral role that it fulfilled in the past.” He goes so far as to conclude from this that, “...what best characterizes our current democracies, what accounts for their superiority over other sorts of governments, is precisely the fact that governmental forms are reduced to the minimum.”⁷⁶ Politics and government for Durkheim mean explicit moralizing and repression, thus modern democracies are characterized by less government and less politics. In this, they differ from “primitive democracies,” which can be found on the other end of the chronological spectrum in the historical narrative. This is why Durkheim refuses to define “democracy” as the participation of all in the governance of communal life. This definition would be consistent with “the most inferior political societies that we know”: tribal organization.⁷⁷

As he discusses it in his lectures on the state, democracy does not constitute a regime type; it merely forms a point on the continuum that measures the closeness of communication between society and the state. Durkheim defines democracy as having two characteristics: “1 The greater extension of the governmental consciousness. 2 Tighter communication of this consciousness with the mass of individual consciences.”⁷⁸ Communication with society is meant to be “tight,” but direct democracy falls outside the bounds of his definition because it would entail a collapse of the state

⁷⁴ This is true of the Durkheimians, as well. Their journal, the *Année sociologique* had no separate section for political sociology according to Steven Lukes, email message to author, September 30, 2012.

⁷⁵ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 175.

⁷⁶ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 176.

⁷⁷ Durkheim, *Leçons de sociologie*, 121.

⁷⁸ Durkheim, *Leçons de sociologie*, 121.

into society. A political form in which the people govern themselves is simply a form of society that completely lacks a state. Instead, the state must remain the societal organ of thought, detaching itself from society in order to achieve a clearer quality of thought. Social thought emanates from the various sources within society, but the state elaborates a clear consciousness on top of this. “If the state is everywhere, it is nowhere.”⁷⁹ The expansive reach of the democratic state is important because it signifies that governmental consciousness includes and pervades more and more subject areas.⁸⁰ Durkheim concludes that a larger and deeper-reaching state is necessarily more democratic.

Parallel to his continuum for regime classification, Durkheim describes the development of democracy as a long-standing process of historical evolution, emphasizing continuity over rupture. According to his account, the monarchy not only prepared the way for democracy, it was actually a “democratic government” by comparison with feudalism. The monarch at the head of state is almost irrelevant; the important thing to consider is the communicative relationship between the state and the entirety of the society:

“The monarchy, in centralizing collective forces more and more, in extending its ramifications in every direction, in penetrating more tightly the social masses, prepared the future for democracy and was itself, relative to what existed before, a democratic government.”⁸¹

Given that even the monarchy can be declared to be “democratic” in Durkheim’s conception, we should question the exemplary democratic character of his corporatist picture of the state. Certainly, we must problematize the nature of communication between the state and society in evaluating democracy, but Durkheim does not fully achieve this. He seems to measure “communication” in a quantitative way while ignoring the quality and kind of communication, namely, whether it is of an administrative or political character. He neglects the possibility that bureaucratic thinking might actually distort the reflection of society to itself in certain ways.

Deliberative assemblies play a role in his narrative, but they are not discussed as essential features of a democratic system. He claims that deliberative assemblies are increasingly becoming

⁷⁹ Durkheim, *Lecons de sociologie*, 116. My translation.

⁸⁰ Durkheim, *Lecons de sociologie*, 117.

⁸¹ Durkheim, *Lecons de sociologie*, 123.

general institutions since they are the organs by which societies reflect upon themselves;⁸² however, the direction of causality in the story is problematic. It is as if participatory expression through these assemblies were a side effect of democratization rather than a manifestation of democracy, itself.

Political freedom is a means in Durkheimian democracy, not an end:

“... its worth lies in the manner in which it is used. If it does not serve some end which goes beyond itself, it is not simply useless; it becomes dangerous. It is a battle weapon; if those who wield it do not know how to use it in fruitful struggles, they soon end by turning it against themselves. ... Thus, we cannot limit ourselves to this negative ideal. We must go beyond the results achieved, if only to preserve them. ... Let us therefore make use of our liberties to seek out what we must do and to do it, *to smooth the functioning of the social machine*, still so harsh on individuals, to place within their reach all possible means of developing their abilities without hindrance, to work finally to make a reality of the famous precept: to each according to his labor!”⁸³

Political freedom is thus subordinate to the “smooth functioning of the social machine,” which should promote equality to the extent that a true meritocracy is realizable. As an end in itself, the political is dangerous and destructive, so it must be domesticated through integration in an organized social structure.

Durkheim’s model of the state recalls Hegel’s in that both are describing an apolitical type of representation that happens through the effect of a kind of corrective mirror. The state recognizes and reflects a “corrected” vision of society back to itself. Corporations or occupational groups mediate the process. Both authors seek to avoid the alienation that could result from a direct relationship between abstract individuals, like atoms bouncing off of each other, and the state. Occupational groups should give individuals a sense of belonging and grounding. Members of corporations are afforded recognition as such, which Hegel considers to be a basic good.

Hegel’s account of recognition ultimately underlies his theory of the state as representative. The state represents because it recognizes. In recognizing, it also subsumes or integrates within its own order. It is important also to remember that representation is not synonymous with democracy, which Hegel demonstrates. He explicitly notes that the French revolution did not invent representation; rather, the decay of representation in France made its reintroduction through

⁸² Durkheim, *Lecons de sociologie*, 124.

⁸³ Durkheim, “Individualism and the Intellectuals” in *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society*, ed. Robert Bellah (University of Chicago Press, 1973), 55-56, emphasis added.

revolution necessary.⁸⁴ Hegel is clearly interested in theorizing the concept of the modern state and not democracy. Durkheim imports many characteristics of Hegel's state, and although he is speaking within a democratic context, he mostly presents a theory of the state as a symbolic representative, like Hegel does, rather than a theory of a politically participative *democratic* state. Indeed, he is only barely interested in discussing democracy as a political form. He only writes a few essays on it. He is mostly concerned with social forms.

According to Durkheim, the nineteenth century had witnessed a “progressive erasure of political questions,” with public attention focusing less and less on political questions and turning almost completely toward the social realm.⁸⁵ The “social question,” which had asserted itself during the revolution, became more and more acute with the increasing importance of economic and industrial affairs. The revolutionaries had failed to resolve the issue because they destroyed the old system without organizing the new one. “It is this,” writes Durkheim, “that precisely constitutes the social question.”⁸⁶ Thus, it is Durkheim's thesis that the most pressing issue for modern society had arisen from this need to organize society in a situation of crisis. The social question is ultimately rooted in the need for industrial organization of society. If this is the case, and democracy is about finding a solution to the social question, it is not surprising that democracy for Durkheim is about organization rather than politics.

Harmony versus Politics

Ultimately, Durkheim seeks harmony over politics and consensus over conflict. In his bureaucratic state system, the integration of class interest into the political structure provides a way of reintegrating the unpredictable energy of civil society into the comprehensive whole. Durkheim's social theory is an attempt to reveal a relationship of synergy between the individual and the modern state. His narrative of historical development explains how this relationship may have evolved over

⁸⁴ Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, 51.

⁸⁵ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 175.

⁸⁶ Durkheim, *Le socialisme*, 149.

time, and his model for the modern state displays the mechanisms through which synergistic harmony should be maintained.

Durkheim reconciles society and the individual in his quest for a religion without God based on “a sociological equivalent of natural law,” concord, and moral consensus.⁸⁷ He promotes individualism as the means by which the state can hold society together, thus reassuring a turbulent society that this revolutionary value will have the conservative effect of achieving harmony and stability instead of explosive, unpredictable, and uncontrollable change. This is because individualism implies free thought in order to achieve rational ends, and authority justifies itself through its superior rationality in order to subsume individuals underneath it.

If we conceive of bureaucracy in a way that emphasizes the type of thinking involved, we can clearly trace its path through the work of Saint-Simon, Durkheim, Duguit, and Hegel. Bureaucratic thinking is managerial in nature and aims to create stability through the objectivity of science and reason. Technique based on scientific reasoning is indisputable and thus conciliatory, unifying, and pacifying. As such, it can rid the political realm of conflict and domination; potentially conflicting interests can be harnessed in order to produce a living harmony. Political expression in conjunction with the state as supreme thinker should allow the citizens to take conscious ownership of the laws, creating an organic unity between state and society. This kind of harmonious organization is the essence of democracy for Durkheim.

These thinkers look to science as the salvation of social harmony, but this is at the expense of the participatory politics that is crucial for a different, active, and essentially political form of democracy. Their models of the state allow for the expression of a plurality of political values, but this happens in such a way that they are domesticated through the chutes and sluices of the system, which include intermediary bodies. In this way, their state mechanisms act to neutralize all conflict, and in so doing they encourage passive conformity instead of promoting the emergence of radically new political ideas. Theirs is a revisionary conception of democracy, the point of which is to

⁸⁷ Richter, “Durkheim’s Politics,” 203.

circumvent active citizen participation in favor of an alternative model based on consensual and symbolic representation. Distressingly, this is the conception that certain contemporary democratic theorists, like Rosanvallon appear, to be championing as a new and improved form of democratic legitimacy that can confront the challenge of the crisis of representation in our time.