

DURKHEIM AND HAMELIN

The friendship of Emile Durkheim and Octave Hamelin (1856-1907) is a well known fact for historians of sociology. Hamelin was Durkheim's colleague in Bordeaux; they both held rationalist philosophical and ethical convictions. Durkheim in a letter to Célestin Bouglé dated 22nd March, 1898 wrote that in Bordeaux and especially at the university he was morally isolated. The only people with whom he could talk openly were the Rector of the University and Hamelin (Durkheim 1975, 2, 423). Hamelin and Durkheim cooperated in the organisation of the Dreyfusard and anticlerical association "la Jeunesse laïque" (Lukes 1973, 358). The close personal and collegial relationship is attested by the fact that Durkheim, when his mother was dying and he was forced to go to Epinal, asked Hamelin to replace him on the jury of the oral examinations of the "licence" (see Durkheim's letters to Hamelin 29th June and 2nd July, 1901 in Durkheim 1975,2,452-4). It emerges from the letters that the outlines of Durkheim's lectures were known to Hamelin.¹ After his removal to Paris, Durkheim made every effort to help his friend to obtain a professorship in the capital (see his letters of 30th July, 21st October 1902, 2nd August, 1903, Durkheim 1975,2,454-8). He succeeded in this (Hamelin first worked in the Ecole normale supérieure, then in the Sorbonne) and on this occasion he wrote a very cordial letter to Hamelin on the 22nd August, 1903. He felt that there was an intellectual link between them as well as the personal friendship: "Il y a des raisons d'ordre général qui réclament votre présence a Paris. Il n'est pas possible de laisser la philosophie entre les mains de ceux qui la compromettent. Il faut que les gens de sens droit s'organisent pour la résistance" (Durkheim 1975, 2, 458). Durkheim did not explain the exact nature of the philosophical positions held in common by them. The last letters of Durkheim to Hamelin in the summer of 1904, 1905 and 1906 testify that the personal feelings did not change (Durkheim 1975, 2, 459-461). Durkheim's nephew, Marcel Mauss, too had friendly contacts with Hamelin (Strenski 1989, 142). Hamelin died on the 8th September, 1907 in an accident: at Huchet (Landes) at the seaside he tried to save two drowning

¹The lectures in question are the 1894-95 lectures on the sociology of religion where Durkheim dealt with problems developed later in "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life" - e.g. the criticism of the naturalistic and animistic theories of religion, see Durkheim 1985, ch. II. and III.; 1894-5 manuscripts are lost.

men and disappeared in the waves. Durkheim published an obituary on the 18th September, 1907 in *Le Temps* (Durkheim 1975,1,428-9). He also wrote the preface to the posthumous volume of Hamelin's work, *Le système de Descartes* (Durkheim 1975,1,433-8).

Durkheim's philosophical background is rather neglected in the many analyses of his works. If Hamelin is mentioned at all, it is supposed that Durkheim was influenced by him (e.g. Cuvillier 1955,11, 23, Lukes 1973, 55, Müller 1983,194) and that Hamelin was sympathetic to the ideas put forward by Durkheim (Lukes 1973,104). Lukes says that after the early influence of Renouvier it was the "more specifically epistemological thinking" of Hamelin which had an impact on the Durkheimian conception of the sociology of knowledge (Lukes 1973, 435). Their contemporaries were better informed. Dominique Parodi in his overview of French philosophy made a clear difference between Durkheimian sociologism and the philosophical idealism of Hamelin (Parodi 1920).

In this essay I wish to reevaluate the intellectual relationship between Durkheim and Hamelin, thereby giving a more exact interpretation of some aspects of Durkheim's philosophical background. This reinterpretation will contribute to the more exact understanding of some aspects of the Durkheimian conception of morality. First I will give a sketch of Hamelin's idealism (I) then I will proceed by presenting the evaluation which Durkheim gave of Hamelin (II). I will analyze the criticism of sociologism by Hamelin (III) and in the light of this criticism I will interpret some aspects of the Durkheimian theory of moral ideals and of moral obligation and the overall Durkheimian strategy toward philosophy (IV).

I.

The title of Hamelin's main work (*Essai sur les éléments principaux de la représentation*, 1907) suggests that it is an epistemological treatise — but it is not. Hamelin was one of the representatives of late French idealism. Parodi ranges him among the group of Jules Lachelier and his disciples, Léon Brunschvicg, the young Alain and Louis Weber. All of them "s'accordent pour revendiquer les droits de l'intelligence et proclamer son aptitude, non pas certes à épuiser le réel, mais à le déterminer au moins dans ses grandes lignes" (Parodi 1920, 386 ff.). Hamelin dedicated his work to the memory of the great figure of neocriticism, Charles Renouvier but was influenced also by the dialectical idealism of Fichte and Hegel. He produced his own philosophical system (for an overview see Heitkaemper 1971). He started with the category of relation, the unity of thesis, antithesis and synthesis (Hamelin 1907, 1-2). Relation was the element and the methodical principle of Hamelin's dialectical system. The system evolves in the dialectics of relation which produces the main categories of philosophy, starting with Being and going through Unity, Plurality, Totality, Space, Time and Movement to the completion of the system in the categorial trinity of Causality,

Finality and Personality. Personality is the completed whole (*toute achevé*) because it exists "sans avoir son existence en autre chose" (Hamelin 1907,326), in other words Personality is free existence, the *pour-soi* — the consciousness (Hamelin 1907, 328). There is no need to reproduce here Hamelin's well argued, old-fashioned philosophical system. Its style, its mode of reasoning, its conception of the role of philosophy are all very different from the Durkheimian approach inspired by positivism.²

Perhaps many students of Durkheimism were misled by the word "representation" in the title of Hamelin's work. It is one of Durkheim's central categories and the common usage suggests an intellectual kinship. Hamelin uses the word in the singular, Durkheim mostly in the plural. Hamelin conceives representation as a synonym of consciousness (*conscience*) or more exactly: representation is the kernel, essence (*coeur*) of consciousness and not only its attribute (Hamelin 1907,336). Representation (in the singular!) is the represented and the representing in one. Hamelin is the enemy of every kind of realism ("proposition monstrueuse"): representation is the subject opposed to the object and the object opposed to the subject at the same time (Hamelin 1907, 337).³ The unity of representation is accomplished in the Personality — in the theoretical, practical and affective representation.

Durkheim's conception is akin to the monstrous everyday conception repudiated by Hamelin. Representation as a concept is never defined by Durkheim in spite of its frequent use. He very often exploits the double meaning of the word, i.e. that it means the process of thinking, perceiving and the object which is thought of, perceived, at the same time (Cf. Lukes 1973, 7). The most detailed analysis of the problem of representation can be found in an essay written in 1898. Durkheim's intention was to prove that individual representations cannot be conceived without taking into account society and collective representations. He criticizes the various epiphenomenalistic conceptions and gives good reasons for the absurdity of the reduction of representation to the functioning of the nervous system (Durkheim 1924b, 3 ff). He does not accept the identification of representations with consciousness because he finds psychic functions which are unconscious or which at least the I is unaware of (Durkheim 1924b, 25 ff). Representations are of a special sort of reality, he says, and whereas they have a certain connection with the organic substratum, they are nonetheless independent of it in a certain sense (Durkheim 1924b, 32-3). They form a special sort of reality which has social life as its basis (Durkheim 1924b, 38). Durkheim separates representations from the world of empirical individuals and in

²Hamelin was obviously deeply influenced by Hegel. The same influence is lacking in Durkheim. Strenski (1989) is trying - in my view unsuccessfully - to prove the opposite.

³La représentation, contrairement à la signification étymologique du mot, car il faut bien emprunter les mots au sens commun, ne représente pas, ne reflète pas un objet et un sujet qui existeraient sans elle: elle est l'objet et le sujet, elle est la réalité même. La représentation est Tête et l'être est la représentation" (Hamelin 1907, 344).

this respect there is a certain similarity to Hamelin, but he is not a metaphysician. He does not accept the conception of a consciousness or spirit (*esprit*) which guarantees the unity of the world. Representation (in the singular) is for him always an individual thought; mostly he uses the word in the plural and it means the social world of thought, the symbolic universe, which becomes the social sphere par excellence in his later works. There is no trace of a Hegelian conceptual system in Durkheim. Of course, he believed that there is an essential similarity between social discipline and the logical discipline of the representations (the idea was implied in an essay in 1898 and developed in the preface to *The Elementary Forms* in 1913 - Durkheim 1985, 24). However, the idea was based on the presupposition that logical discipline is but one aspect of the social relationships of authority - this is a statement which simply cannot be interpreted in the philosophical system of Hamelin. The Durkheimian concept of representation was deeply influenced by his conception of truth: he remained in this respect an adherent of the old mirror image conception of truth (as can be seen from his lectures on pragmatism - e.g. Durkheim 1955, 172). In this he differed strongly from Hamelin.

II.

Durkheim's references to Hamelin in his lectures and publications are not very numerous. All of them were made after 1907, the date of the publication of Hamelin's principal work and of his death. They are unsystematic and they are insufficient to serve as clues to the problem of Hamelin's influence upon Durkheim.

Both the obituary mentioned above and the preface to Hamelin's posthumous book on Descartes avoid analysing his main work, the book on representation. This is fully understandable in the case of the obituary which was published in a daily newspaper. Durkheim mentions there that the book recently published was the result of twenty five years of meditation and its publication raised the author into the first ranks of philosophers (Durkheim 1907, 429). Durkheim stresses in both papers the moral purity and greatness of Hamelin. This is shown not only in the circumstances of his death, says Durkheim, but also in his avoidance of the outward signs of success and in his dedication of himself to teaching — a moral virtue which was praised by Durkheim on different occasions.

Hamelin's activity as a historian of philosophy was appreciated by Durkheim. He contrasts him to those who, dogmatically disregarding local and historical circumstances, discuss propositions in an abstract manner. On the other hand, he also disapproves of those who, considering the particular historical personality, give up the possibility of comparing philosophical propositions (Durkheim 1911a, 434). Hamelin, says Durkheim, combined the advantages of the dogmatic and historicist methods, thereby transforming them. His interpretations of Descartes are interesting because he located his philosophical ideas in the special historical circumstances. The dangers

which arise when we interpret philosophical ideas only in the terms which were used by the author, and which lead to mistaking interesting insights as mere archaism, were thus avoided by him. "Si... on se fait une règle de rapprocher méthodiquement le présent du passé afin d'éclairer le premier par le second, il arrive, par une sorte de retour, que le présent lui-même projette sur le passé une lumière qui fait apparaître celui-ci sous un jour nouveau. Une question qui faisait l'effet d'une bizarrerie, imputable à quelque singularité du temps ou de l'auteur, prend alors une signification qui, autrement, serait restée inaperçue. De là de véritables trouvailles..." (Durkheim 1911a, 436). Obviously, Durkheim praises in Hamelin a method which he himself wished to practice.

Both in the obituary and in the preface Durkheim hinted approvingly at Hamelin's philosophical style. "C'était un pur rationaliste, un amant austère de la droite raison, un ennemi de tous les dilettantismes. Pour lui, penser était la chose sérieuse de la vie; il avait en horreur tous ceux qui font de la réflexion un jeu ou un instrument de succès..." (Durkheim 1907, 429, see also Durkheim 1911a, 436). Clearly, Hamelin's style was attractive to Durkheim because he was the enemy of all kinds of intuitionism and it differed from the facile and fashionable philosophizing literature. (Obviously, Durkheim was hinting at the popular Bergson). Professionalism, rationalism, an ascetic work ethic — presumably these were the characteristics shared by the two friends in spite of their very different philosophical opinions.

Hamelin's book on representation was naturally well known to Durkheim. His references to it prove that.⁴ Durkheim's critical remarks to Hamelin are very scarce.⁵

⁴In 1909 while trying to drive an unsympathetic doctoral candidate to the wall (who defending himself without mentioning the name pronounced the central proposition of Hamelin's criticism of sociology: "j'ai voulu dire que pour moi la morale sociologique définit l'obligation individuelle par la contrainte du milieu social" Durkheim 1909a, 369) Durkheim referred to Hamelin who proved that there is a difference between the concept of law and that of the general (Durkheim 1909a, 371). Hamelin is the authority when Durkheim conceives space and time as categories (and not as forms of perception as Kant) and when he does not consider space as absolutely homogenous (Durkheim 1985,13,15). Maybe it is the spirit of Hamelin who appears in the preface of "The Elementary Forms" when Durkheim (after the treatment of the social character of space and time) analyzes the central category of his friend's system, contradiction. However, this category too is considered by Durkheim as dependent on social factors - a proposition which would not have been accepted by Hamelin (Durkheim 1985,17).

⁵Once (in a university lecture) Durkheim opposed his conception to Hamelin's notion of the moral idea which leads necessarily to dualism (Durkheim 1909b, 16).

In his lectures on pragmatism Durkheim mentioned Hamelin twice.⁶ Obviously, Durkheim was well acquainted with the ideas of Hamelin. However, his remarks are dispersed. Fortunately, there was a latent discussion between Hamelin and Durkheim which sheds light on the principal points of difference.

III.

Hamelin never mentions Durkheim by name in his book. He speaks in general terms of the proponents of sociological morality. The most important observations are in the final, fifth chapter, where he considers causality, finality and personality, and the spirit or consciousness (Hamelin 1907, 329 ff.). Consciousness is analyzed by him under its three aspects: the theoretical, the practical and the affective representation. His criticism of the sociological moral is in the paragraphs on practical representation. Hamelin begins by investigating free action, "action véritable et première" and he comes to the conclusion that freedom is "ni nécessité pure ni contingence pure" - it is the synthesis of both, i.e. free action is motivated action (Hamelin 1907, 383). The motive is connected with the will and so he comes to his analysis of consciousness (conscience). He postulates the identity of freedom and consciousness, the identity of the conditions of freedom and consciousness (Hamelin 1907, 395). Hamelin's idealism (which does not know a sharp difference between the intelligible and the real - Hamelin 1907, 401) comes to the conclusion that existence is connected to the will ("Exister c'est être voulu" Hamelin 1907, 396) because the only pure fact, the empirical element of knowledge (connaissance) is that which is wanted by us or by somebody else. However, Hamelin is critical of pure voluntarism, too: the personality (which is the totality of the categories) is not empty, it takes into account his content and everything which it is aimed at (Hamelin 1907, 407). It follows that practical representation is creative and its creativity becomes visible in its activities: in technical, in esthetical and in moral activity. Moral activity is the synthesis of the two others. While the previous activities are dominated by the goal or by the means, moral activity comprises both (Hamelin 1907, 409). That is the point where Hamelin believes that it would be useful to criticize the sociological moral (beside the technological and Kantian conception).

⁶He stressed the similarity of the rationalist, empiricist dogmatism and the idealism of Hamelin because they conceive truth as something given which exists outside of us (whereas pragmatism and presumably Durkheim conceive it as something which is produced by man) (Durkheim 1955,45-6). The second reference is not critical. He remarks that James's pragmatism and Hamelin's idealism both conceive the world as constituted by discontinuous elements which are however connected and form an interrelated reality (Durkheim 1955, 85-6).

Hamelin's conception of morality considers it as the rational will (*volonté rationnelle*) connecting goals and means, therefore obligation (one of the central concepts of morality) can have no empirical foundation: it is reason which obliges (Hamelin 1907, 415-6). According to Hamelin, the sociological moral comes to the opposite conclusion. It commits the error "d'envisager l'obligation comme une contrainte externe et arbitraire" (Hamelin 1907, 416). Hamelin objects to that: "la contrainte social n'est pas l'obligation parce qu'elle est arbitraire" (Hamelin 1907,418). Hamelin's polemic is aimed at Durkheim.

In spite of his serious objections to the sociological conception of morality (as he conceived it), Hamelin was really rather tolerant towards sociologists. He accepted that "l'homme est, il ne peut pas ne pas être un être social... Le social n'est donc nullement un accessoire et une efflorescence de l'individuel. La société est pour l'individu un milieu et même un berceau nécessaire..." (Hamelin 1907, 417). He did not dispute that moral facts were also socially determined: "D'une part donc le fait moral apparaît au sein d'une société et sous des conditions sociales; de l'autre une fois qu'un fait moral, par exemple un jugement moral, s'est produit et exprime au dehors il tombe aussitôt dans le déterminisme social lequel, selon ses propres exigences, tend à lui faire telle ou telle destinée et, par exemple, l'accueille et le favorise ou au contraire le repousse" (Hamelin 1907, 417). He maintained, however, that moral facts were not simple social facts, in other words there was a component in them which could not be reduced to social constraints and the investigation of which did not belong to the realm of sociology. That there is a special moral or cognitive quality and capacity becomes evident for Hamelin from the fact that at least some people are able to tell the difference between truth and falsehood — independent of social influences (which would be a miracle if we accepted the thesis of total social determination). He reproached the proponents of sociological morality for being inconsequent when they supposed that it was possible to find out those rules and constraints among the many contradictory tendencies which coincide with the general direction of social evolution (Hamelin 1907,418). The allusion is clear: in his lecture cited above Durkheim spoke of the new tendencies emerging outside of the old, established traditions. "La science des mœurs peut alors nous permettre de *prendre parti* entre ces morales divergentes: celle qui est, d'une part, celle qui tend à être, de l'autre. Elle peut nous apprendre, par exemple, que la première correspond à un état de choses qui a disparu ou qui est en train de disparaître; que les idées nouvelles qui sont en train de se faire jour sont, au contraire, en rapport avec les changements survenus dans les conditions de l'existence collective et réclamés par ces changements; elle peut nous aider à préciser ces idées et à les déterminer, etc." (Durkheim 1924c, 85-6 - italics mine). Hamelin correctly observed that Durkheim reclaimed the capacity to pass a value judgement when he said that sociology would be able to sort out the facts which were more progressive than the others, and to do that the sociologist must have a competence which is different from that of observing the simple facts. Hamelin's position was that judgements on the truth of propositions or on the evolutionary value of social institutions could not

be deduced from social determinants. They are rather dependent on the general characteristics and the categorical structure of the consciousness - as described in his analysis of representation. He believed that the sociologist, when he aspired to evaluative judgements, took advantage of a capacity the exact nature of which he could not explain sociologically.

Hamelin's position was indeed very reasonable. He maintained that the criteria of factual truth and moral rightness are context independent and invariant of social changes. Most sociologists would readily accept this position. They would say that sociologists have to investigate the social determinants of the emergence, diffusion and disappearance of certain moral ideas and modes of behaviour. The problem of the goodness or rightness of moral ideas, the problem of the real nature of moral rightness are not sociological problems and they can be left to the moral philosophers. The sociologist is not really interested in moral problems as such. He is interested only in ideas which people happen to hold - and the problem is who believes in certain ideas, where and for which empirical reasons people do that. These are the main tenets of the sociological Vulgata — and the authority who is invoked is mostly Weber. Hamelin's philosophical position is very different from that of Weber — the practical consequences are the same. In the sentences cited above Hamelin summed up quite succinctly for example, the ideas which were later expounded by Scheler in the sociology of knowledge - on the regulative role of "Realfaktoren". In many respects Hamelin's position is more "sociological" than Durkheim's if we take as the standard model the notion of sociology which prevailed in the fifties and in the sixties.

Hamelin criticised the exponents (promoteurs) of sociological morality because they transgressed the acceptable borders of empirical science. They believed, said Hamelin, that the moral ideas themselves were social facts and they could be explained causally. "L'être, ajouterait-on, est si bien ce qui produit le soi-disant devoir-être que celui-ci n'est en réalité que la pression de ce qui est sur ce qui est en voie de se faire" - paraphrased Hamelin the objectionable sociological position (Hamelin 1907, 424). He imputed ideas to the sociologists which according to him followed from their tenets. Durkheim was more prudent and he would not pronounce such bold statements as formulated by Hamelin.⁷

After criticizing the sociological conception of morality, Hamelin returned to the realm of metaphysics. The obligation had no social aspects for him. It is connected with the highest ontological and moral value, the will (i.e. with the personality). "Le devoir en general sera de vouloir la personne, c'est-à-dire de vouloir qu'une personne soit une personne, c'est-a-dire encore une volonte" (Hamelin 1907,429). And Hamelin proceeded without considering any further sociological propositions.

⁷Hamelin obviously meant not only Durkheim because he mentioned the "science des moeurs" (Hamelin 1907, 423), and this notion was more characteristic for Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1903) than for Durkheim.

IV.

Before investigating more in detail the Durkheimian standpoint, I would like to analyze Hamelin's remarks on the supposed equation of constraint and obligation by sociologists.⁸ Durkheim did not speak of the arbitrariness of social sanctions and thereby of social constraint — Hamelin imputed to him statements which he would not have endorsed. Hamelin's argument has two different sides depending on the interpretation one gives to the notion of arbitrariness. The first variant: the form of constraint and the behaviour which is constrained is variable depending on historical time and on the type of group in question; there is no form or type of constraint which would be universal to the whole of mankind; obligation as the central notion of moral philosophy is general, it is not coterminous with certain concrete demands or prescriptions; it is unjustified to bind the general notion of obligation to that of constraint which is always particular. The second variant implies that arbitrariness means that the who acts arbitrarily (constrains other persons arbitrarily) is not bound by practical maxims which could be generalized. Arbitrary actions being by definition always particular, the obligation which would be deduced from particular constraints would not be universal — and that would be contradictory. Of course, Durkheim was aware of these problems. He did not try to deduce obligation from concrete, particular constraints. He was too much of a philosopher and Kantian as well. His arguments followed a course which led him to very different conclusions.

Durkheim, in his lecture in the French philosophical society in 1906 on the definition of moral facts, agreeing with Kant and Hamelin, considered obligation as the central element of morality (Durkheim uses the French words "devoir" and "obligation" interchangeably or sometimes together) [Durkheim 1924c, 50]). He said that morality is an "ensemble de maximes, de regles de conduite"; the question is how we can know if a rule is moral or not. Durkheim's criterion is the type of consequences which can be expected after the violation of the rule. If the consequences are sanctions (and not natural effects) then the rule is a moral one. Sanctions are consequences which come synthetically to the action, i.e. they do not follow naturally from the action accomplished. "Ainsi, il y a des regles presentant ce caractere particulier: nous sommes tenus de ne pas accomplir les actes qu'elles nous interdisent tout simplement parce qu'elles nous les interdisent. C'est ce qu'on appelle le caractere *obligatoire* de la regle morale. Voila donc retrouvee, par une analyse rigoureusement empirique, la

⁸ Wallwork's objections formulated about 70 years later were very similar to that of Hamelin: "... Durkheim's frequently repeated claim that moral standards vary cross-culturally is not a sufficient justification of the corollary that all moral standards are engendered by collectivities" (Wallwork 1972,65). Durkheim did in fact argue against the proponents of a timeless individual moral that moral standards vary cross-culturally (e.g. Durkheim 1909d) but he thought that the social nature of morality could be made more plausible by other arguments.

notion de *devoir* et d'obligation, et cela a peu pres comme Kant l'entendait" (Durkheim 1924c, 62). Of course, this reasoning is not at all empirical-as Durkheim wished to make believe, and Hamelin, and after him many commentators of Durkheim, supposed.⁹ The argument is purely logical and its elegance stems from this. Durkheim gives a definition of the notion of obligation (*devoir*, obligation) — the possible social sanctions are the defining characteristics. Hamelin was obviously misled by Durkheim. In reality, the latter did not equate moral obligation with external constraints.

Durkheim explicated moral obligation by dialectical arguments, i.e. by non-empirical reasoning. The procedure is well known: we cannot be obliged to beings who have no consciousness; nobody ever assumed that the obligations which the acting person as a conscious being had for himself would be moral; as other individuals are similar to the acting persons, there is no individual being who could be the genuine object of moral obligation; neither is the group as an aggregate of individuals qualified for this role, as the sheer number does not transform a non-moral object into a moral one; the only remaining conscious being is the collective being who is more than the sum of the individuals who compose it (Durkheim 1924c, 70-74). This argument is untenable because some of the premises (which were supposed by Durkheim to be self-evident or analytical) are in fact empirical statements and false. It is not true for example, that no action was ever considered moral which had as object the actor himself (see Wallwork 1972,178-9).

However, it is the conclusion which is of interest to us. It is well-known, but I quote it in its entirety: "... s'il existe une morale, un systeme de devoirs et d'obligations, il faut que la societe soit une personne morale qualitativement distincte des personnes individuelles qu'elle comprend et de la synthese desquelles elle résulte. On remarquera l'analogie qu'il y a entre ce raisonnement et celui par lequel Kant démontre Dieu. Kant postule Dieu, parce que, sans cetté hypothése, la morale est inintelligible. Nous postulons une société spécifiquement distincte des individus, parce que, autrement, la morale est sans object, le devoir sans point d'attache" (Durkheim 1924c, 74). Durkheim conceived obligation as the absolute precondition of morality. On the other hand, society and social constraint are the logical precondition of obligation - they are in this case quasi-logical constructs. In other words: we cannot speak of obligation in an intelligible way if we do not suppose that individuals are socially con-

⁹Durkheim himself must have had some misgivings in this respect because in his introductory remarks he regretted that he was unable to analyze in detail the different moral rules, as he used to do in university lectures. Therefore, he said, he would be obliged to present his ideas without justification and to replace scientific demonstration "par une argumentation purement dialectique" (Durkheim 1924c, 55). Neither did Durkheim say that moral obligation is produced psychologically by the sanctioning of behaviour as many interpretators suppose. He said simply that if the violation of a rule is sanctioned the rule in question is the object of moral obligation. The argument does not imply that people normally violate the rule before the completion of their moral education, neither that anyone would violate it.

strained.¹⁰ In sum: Durkheim does not proceed empirically from social constraint and from social obedience to moral obligation. Obligation is not an empirical generalization of obedience — as Hamelin seems to believe. Durkheim gave a *metaethical interpretation* of obligation — even if he did not see quite clearly what he did (Wallwork 1972, 159 ff., 175 ff.). Metaethics and sociology were connected by Durkheim: the general, formal conditions of morality were introduced by sociological reasoning. That Durkheim mentioned Kant was not at all accidental: sociological reasoning took over functions which were earlier fulfilled by the criticism of practical reason. In this sense the formal sociological definition of obligation and the acknowledgement of the factual diversity of moral rules (and of concrete obligations) do not contradict each other. We can have very different empirical obligations and we can hold them for very different reasons — the formal (social) structure of obligation remains the same.

The above considerations can be completed by taking into account some remarks in his lectures on moral education.¹¹ Durkheim's central problem was the formation of moral behaviour and the sense of obligation in children. As he believed that the sense of obligation implied the regularity of behaviour, he paid particular attention to the spirit of discipline as an indispensable element of the moral (chapters 2-4. deal with these problems, Durkheim 1974,15-47). The education in discipline, which accordingly, is the crucial element of moral education, is the subject matter of chapter 10. Durkheim outlined importance of school education in contrast with family education.¹² School regulations, he said, are not an artificial means with the sole function of securing the smooth organization of teaching. "Elle (i.e. la discipline scolaire) est la morale de la classe, comme la morale proprement dite est la discipline du corps social. Chaque groupe social, chaque espèce de société a, et ne peut pas ne pas avoir sa morale, qui exprime sa constitution. Or, la classe est une petite société: il est donc naturel et nécessaire qu'elle ait une morale propre, en rapport avec le nombre, la nature des éléments qui la composent et avec la fonction dont elle est l'organe. La dis-

¹⁰In fact, Durkheim was not as rigorous in 1906 as earlier. He mentioned that moral rules are not only constraining but also desirable. The argument could be completed in this sense (Durkheim 1924c, 64).

¹¹These lectures - which were published first in 1925 — could have been known by Hamelin because similar courses were given by Durkheim in Bordeaux; the version known to us was held in 1902-3, and in 1906-7 again (Fauconnet 1974, V). The central propositions of the 1906 lecture in the philosophical society were formulated first in the university lectures. The definition of moral fact is very similar to the final 1906 version, the metaethical character of the definition is, however, less outspoken. "En premier lieu, il y a un caractère commun à toutes les actions que l'on appelle communément morales, c'est qu'elles sont toutes conformes à des règles préétablis. Se conduire moralement, c'est agir suivant une norme, déterminant la conduite à tenir dans le cas donné avant même que nous n'ayons été nécessités à prendre un parti. Le domaine de la morale, c'est le domaine du devoir, et le devoir, c'est une action prescrite" (Durkheim 1974, 20).

¹²It is very important as the source of altruist sentiments, of solidarity, but the family is too small and family relationships are too personal for the task of the education of discipline (Durkheim 1974, 124-5).

cipline est cette morale. Les obligations que nous enumerions tout á l'heure sont les devoirs l'eleve, au meme titre que les obligations civiques ou professionnelles, que PEtat ou la corporation impose a l'adulte, sont les devoirs de ce dernier" (Durkheim 1974,125-6). Durkheim believed that school discipline had general educatory functions. The school had to breed the faculty of discipline as a general, universal faculty which is the constituent of man as a moral being. "C'est en respectant la régle scolaire que l'enfant apprendra a respecter les regles, qu'il prendra l'habitude de se contenir et de se gener, parce qu'il doit se gener et se contenir. C'est une premiere initiation á l'austerité du devoir" (Durkheim 1974,126; see 132, too).

Durkheim's conception of education was not very original or surprising. It accords well with his general ideas and with his definition of morality. He believed that the moral personality must have some general behavioral faculties. In this respect he was in accord with the majority of post-Kantian moral philosophers. Concrete disciplinary demands had no intrinsic value for him: they were the means of development of a generalized anthropological capacity to moral actions. In this respect his educational ideas and his conception of metaethics accord well.

The more restrained definition of the sociology of morality which was implicitly proposed by Hamelin (and which accords well with the general orientation of mainstream sociology after 1945) was unacceptable to Durkheim. This latter definition presupposes the elimination not only of the normative ethical but also of the metaethical questions from sociology, which should restrain itself to the study of social "influences". In contrast, Durkheim's sociology of morality operated on two different levels: the level of empirical observations and generalizations and the methaethical level. This complex programme was prone to misunderstandings and Durkheim, too, sometimes misunderstood what he was doing. He pretended to proceed in an empirical manner but he could not avoid sometimes reaching sham solutions for real problems. On the whole, however, Durkheim knew what he meant by practising sociology in this way. He enlarged the sociological domain for strategical reasons. He had two, equally ambitious goals: to establish sociology as a professionalized, independent science (see his sharp remark on dilettantism above) and to secure a possibly dominating position in the philosophical field for the sociological school. Therefore he would not renounce the analysis of certain philosophical problems and he had the ambition to criticize some traditional doctrinal positions in philosophy from the point of view of the newly conquered and professionally cultivated territory of sociology (Karády 1976, esp. 305).

There are many examples of this double procedure and in each case Durkheim was misunderstood and often criticized for the wrong reasons. Let us consider the famous case of the origins of classification (Durkheim-Mauss 1969). This well-known essay is a classic example of the old-style armchair ethnography and analyzes the classificatory activities of different distant tribes. Simultaneously, Durkheim tried to prove that the elementary logical operations are in fact social operations. His thesis was not that the forms of classification to be found in the different tribes were the mirror image of the

social organization (that is the standard misinterpretation and it is analogous to the criticism proposed by Hamelin) — he was more ambitious. He maintained that the faculty of classification itself is a social faculty and sociology alone can find out and explain its origins (Durkheim-Mauss 1969, 395). This is the same double and equivocal claim as that observed in the case of moral obligation. True, Durkheim did not clearly differentiate his aims, and aspired to factual truth when philosophical correctness was sufficient.

His ambition to solve epistemological puzzles by sociological means was very clearly stated in the introduction to "The Elementary Forms". There he described his own theory as the "sociological theory of knowledge (connaissance)" and then went on: "Ainsi renouvelée, la théorie de la connaissance semble donc appelée à réunir les avantages contraires des deux théories rivales (i. e. empirisme et apriorisme), sans en avoir les inconvénients. Elle conserve tous les principes essentiels de l'apriorisme; mais en même temps, elle s'inspire de cet esprit de positivité auquel l'empirisme s'efforçait de satisfaire. Elle laisse à la raison son pouvoir spécifique, mais elle en rend compte, et cela sans sortir du monde observable" (Durkheim 1985, 26-7). The classical philosophical camp was outflanked by the Durkheimian sociology and Durkheim believed that he could advance on both sides simultaneously.

Durkheim found other ways too, to substantiate his sociological claim to epistemological criticism and to metaethical statements. After 1907 — in connection with the problem of moral ideals which was also mentioned by Hamelin — he hinted at the possibility that sociology would be able to contribute directly to the positive definition of moral and political ideals (see Lukes 1973, 424 ff, Hall 1987, 75) while, of course, he knew the difference of "is" and "ought" well and the difficulties connected with such an undertaking. He conceived moral ideals as the central, most important collective representations.¹³ In a university lecture in 1909¹⁴ he declared that the real object of sociological inquiries would be the public morality which exists independently of individuals and which contains moral ideals. Therefore, there is no obstacle to the rational sociological investigation of ideals (Durkheim 1909b, 16). The statements are equivocal. In a restricted sense they define moral ideals as observable which can be classified and analyzed in the same way as any other social fact. However, rational

¹³"Qu'est-ce en effet qu'un idéal sinon un corps d'idées qui planent au-dessus de l'individu, tout en sollicitant énergiquement son action?" (Durkheim 1974, 103).

¹⁴The fragments were conserved among the notes of Georges Davy. There he spoke of the common morality (morale commune) which can be found in the common consciousness (conscience commune) (and not in the average consciousness [conscience moyenne]). The common consciousness can be observed, he said, in the moral ideals as they appear in effervescent situations (état d'effervescence). (Durkheim 1909b, 13-4). At this point he mentions Hamelin who considered the real factors as ideal ones but who could not avoid a certain dualism. The objection is justified but its connection with the central points of the lecture is not clear.

analysis can mean a very different procedure which aspires to the scientific understanding of the validity of ideals — a broad programme which was not developed in detail by Durkheim, but was present in his relevant remarks.

The 1911 lecture on factual and value judgements is equally important. There, through a critical analysis, Durkheim comes to the foreseeable result that the idéal standards, which make value judgement possible, are collective products. They arise in creative effervescent periods (Durkheim 1924d, 211-2). The society "ne peut pas se constituer sans créer de l'idéal. Ces idéaux, ce sont tout simplement les idées dans lesquelles vient se peindre et se resumer la vie sociale, telle qu'elle est aux points culminants de son développement" (Durkheim 1924d, 136). He pronounced the thesis (surprising for a normal sociologist) that factual and value judgements are not different in nature. Both bind two kinds of elements together: the first binds concepts, mental construct (which are ideals, too) and things, the second moral and other ideals and things. Of course, Durkheim does not pretend to be able to deduce a value judgement from a factual one (Durkheim 1924d, 139). Is it not a mere sophism what Durkheim says on the similar nature of the two kinds of judgements? After all, he has to concede that they are mutually irreducible. In the final paragraphs of the lecture, he states that sociology only investigates but does not create ideals. Sociology considers the idéal "comme une donnée, comme un objet d'étude, et elle essaie de l'analyser et de l'expliquer. Dans la faculté d'idéal, elle voit une faculté naturelle dont elle cherche les causes et les conditions, en vue si c'est possible, d'aider les hommes à en régler le fonctionnement" (Durkheim 1978,141). The programme outlined in these sentences is much broader than that of later mainstream sociology, since Durkheim believed that ideals could be analyzed cognitively, that sociology could understand the social conditions of their validity. Thereby he implied that in some respects sociology dealt with problems which traditionally belonged to the domain of philosophy. I do not claim that Durkheim's programme is clearly stated or that it is realizable. I wish to stress only that it was much broader in its intent than that of "normal" sociology and that once again it was trying to "outflank" philosophy.

Durkheim's last theoretical work was the introduction to his planned book "*La morale*". There he makes a difference between morality (la morale) and the science of moral facts (science des faits moraux): the first one is a practical discipline because the moralist cannot confine himself to the observation of facts, he has to find moral ideals (Durkheim 1917,318). However, the moralist needs the science of moral facts: the construction of the moral ideal presupposes an inductive and positive science (Durkheim 1917, 328). This science, says Durkheim, is yet to be made because so far only some sociologists have contributed to it. "Il n'est pourtant pas de tâche plus urgente, car les anticipations de l'art moral n'ont et ne peuvent avoir d'autre base que cette science des faits moraux acquis et réalisés" (Durkheim 1917, 330). In other words, Durkheim believed that there was a continuity between sociology as the science of moral facts and the practical moral. He believed that the moralist had to take into account the facts described by the sociologist (the "accepted view", too, agrees with

that) but he went further. While accepting that sociology cannot produce ideals (neither can the moralist: only creatively effervescent society can do that) he implied that it can describe the inner structure, the conditions of the validity, the "grammar" of the ideals.

Durkheim outlined a science which would take over traditional philosophical tasks. Let us try to imagine a science which would analyze the "natural faculty" of the ideal: it would be a philosophical meta-analysis of value judgements and value construction. While avoiding the justification of concrete value judgements it would have to explain the social capacity to produce evaluative and normative statements and ideal objects with normative content. Durkheim's proposals remained unfulfilled, to say the least. My purpose is restricted to identifying the traces of a project stated in unclear or confused terms which determined his attitude toward philosophy.

Durkheim, of course, has always been a moralist in the traditional sense of the word. His works were full of openly moral argumentations and he enjoyed passing moral judgements on the most heterogeneous issues. In his lectures on moral education, of course, he felt himself to be entitled to do so. However, in his last works he became more embarrassed. Gradually he gave up his earlier consequent evolutionism and became more relativistic in his evaluations — in the evaluation of moral issues too (cf. Durkheim 1909c, 1909d). Thus, he could not conceive sociology as a directly moral science — and there was no need to do so. Sociology had a more restricted, but in other respects more ambitious role, to fulfill. The sociological theory of knowledge treated the old insoluble philosophical issues in its own terms and demonstrated that they were built on false premises. The sociological moral applied the same procedure to moral problems and explained the faculty of obligation and the faculty of the construction and observance of ideals by social principles. Thus he could resolve the contradiction between relativistic views and ethical universalism (Miller 1988): the general formalism of obligation was invariant to historical difference.

Durkheim's strategy which aimed at the outflanking of philosophy was obvious for contemporary observers. Parodi said that "la sociologie va apparaitre en quelque sorte comme un principe d'explication générale. De science particulière, aux ambitions modestes et précises, elle semble s'élargir peu à peu jusqu'aux proportions d'une conception totale, d'une synthèse philosophique universelle.... La morale aussi bien que le droit, la religion non moins que la logique même, vont apparaitre comme autant de phénomènes essentiellement sociaux, dont la sociologie, et elle seule, pourra aspirer à rendre compte adéquatement" (Parodi 1920,132). Durkheim himself declared the claim of sociology to the role of a super-science. In 1909 he published the philosophical introduction to his book in preparation on the elementary forms of religious life. The third section of this planned introduction (which was omitted in the final version) dealt with the tasks of sociology and came to the following conclusion: "Voilà comment cette science est destinée, croyons-nous, à fournir à la philosophie les bases qui lui sont indispensables et qui lui manque présentement. On peut même dire que la réflexion sociologique est appelée à se prolonger d'elle-même et par son progrès na-

turel sous la forme de reflexion philosophique; et tout permet de présumer que, abordes par ce biais, les problèmes que traite le philosophe presenteront plus d'un aspect inattendu" (Durkheim 1909,188 - italics mine). Maybe it was either too much or too outspoken.

Scientific strategy and institutional strategy both influenced each other. Durkheim's goals were not restricted to the construction and institutionalization of a new specialized science. He wished that sociology should dominate the field of social sciences and therefore he tried to place his disciples and his colleagues who had been won over to the sociological point of view in strategic positions in the French system of secondary and higher education. The "sociogram" of the Durkheimian school (Besnard 1979) reveals that sociology as represented by the "patron" occupied a dominating position in the centre, and the collaborators and disciples in the different disciplines (philosophy, law, economics) had the task of delivering the materials for the sociological synthesis and of diffusing the basic sociological ideas (Clark 1973,167 ff.). The followers who were active in other sciences had to create the "demand" for sociological production (Karády 1979, 53). This social organization corresponds to the Durkheimian conception of science where philosophy is partially replaced by sociology (or sociology is transformed into a quasi-philosophy).¹⁵

This institutional arrangement had its drawbacks. The conception of sociology as a "science carrefour" (Karády 1979, 53) hindered its disciplinary independence and contributed to the relatively slow institutionalization of sociology in France (Karády 1976). Durkheimism had a much more lasting influence in ethnology and in some philological disciplines than in sociology, which declined in the inter war period. After the death of Durkheim there was nobody who could have openly represented the claims inherent in the Durkheimian conception of sociology and of science in general. After 1945 sociology was institutionalized as an industrious discipline, oriented towards social problems, forgetting the original ambitious plans to initiate a revolution in the other social sciences.

CONCLUSION

Hamelin's rational idealism was directly threatened by the Durkheimian conception of sociology and by Durkheimian strategy. Durkheim, on the other hand, saw no provocation in Hamelin's old-fashioned idealism (which was buried by the subsequent transformations of philosophy) and he did not attack it directly. There was not much to borrow from it, either. Hamelin's style of philosophizing was deeply rooted in the

Strenski, while he sees quite clearly that Hamelin's and Durkheim's conceptions concerning the relationship between (social) science and philosophy were quite different, attributes to both of them a "Hegelian" attempt to "reconciliation" and believes that their programmes were essentially similar (Strenski 1989, esp. 162-4).

French tradition and Durkheimism was too innovative to share any common intellectual grounds with it. As a tactical ally, however, he was important in Durkheim's fight against other, more dangerous tendencies. So it is fully understandable that the Durkheim-Hamelin dispute remained latent. However, an analysis of this one-sided and latent dispute has contributed to a more adequate understanding of the Durkheimian scientific strategy. In spite of its innovative character Durkheimism was later also rather neglected by the predominantly action theoretical sociological paradigm which became the dominating one after 1945 (See Némedi 1990a). The epistemological and metaethical problems, however, which emerged in the Durkheimian approach found no satisfactory solution. On the contrary: the idea of a sociological theory of knowledge (or of a socialized epistemology) reemerged again (see Némedi 1990b); metaethical and moral philosophical problems reappeared in the works of Habermas, among others (Habermas 1981). Of course, Durkheim's overambitious plans for a sociological reorganization of the social sciences and philosophy were not renovated in the aggressive form in which he put them forward. On the other hand - if it is of any consolation - philosophy also lost its dominating position and it is not the mighty opponent it was earlier. Demoralized philosophy and bustling empirical sociology which is again and again menaced by the triviality of results - the situation is rather different from that of the turn of century when Durkheim was trying to cut the metaphysical ground under the feet of his amicable or hostile philosophical colleagues.

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