POSITIVISM AND ITS VICISSITUDES:
THE ROLE OF FAITH IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Positivism is a subject about which much is said, yet little understood. Of central importance for the history of the social and behavioral sciences, Positivism appears in widely various guises: as logical positivism of the Vienna School, as a sort of anti-theoretical empiricism against which many theoreticians have railed, and as a doctrine of faith for the regeneration of a broken society. Concentrating on the latter, the author inquires into the development of Positivism in nineteenth-century France in the writings of Saint-Simon, Comte, and Durkheim, all of whom emphasized the role of faith in determining certainty, or, at the very least, in keeping doubt at bay. The thinking of these French Positivists is then linked with the pragmatism of William James.

Marcel Mauss, Emile Durkheim's nephew, once wrote that there are many dead moons in the firmament of reason. One of these is Positivism.[1] While Positivism is generally associated with rational, logical and intentional social improvement and social engineering, there are grounds for exploring its roots in religious beliefs and feelings. If one looks at nineteenth-century Positivism, there is an emphasis on faith and feeling which is conspicuously missing from contemporary notions of Positivism. Indeed writers such as Jeffrey Alexander and others criticize Positivism for being too empirical. There is, consequently, a slippage in the meanings of Positivism from Comte to the present day which, I would argue, is important for contemporary social scientists today to account for and to understand.[2] This paper will, I hope, contribute to a revival of interest in the origin and vicissitudes of Positivism.[3]

Positivism grew up first in France in the wake of the French Revolution[4] and at a time when religious revival swept Europe. Generally thought to mark the beginning of the "modern" epoch, the period following the French Revolution was characterized by a deeply shaken faith in the capacities of reason and a mistrust of rationalizations about what was either known or unknowable, intelligible or unintelligible. Such rationalizations had been firmly grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In this period of political, religious and intellectual upheaval in France and in Europe at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, Positivism was born in the works of Henri Comte de Saint-Simon and August Comte.

A reaction to the moral and social dislocations of the Revolutionary period, Comte's new faith in the possibility of an intelligible social order depended upon his unbridled confidence in the power of ideas. The new social order could be engineered only if one had confidence in its inevitability, like the Second Coming. Yet drawing upon the Deistic, cosmopolitan tradition of the Enlightenment, Comte could not even implicitly rely upon either the presence of God in his heaven or previously dependable Christian discourse to guarantee ideas of social order. Instead, borrowing from Saint Paul and the new Testament, he forged a new rhetoric of social ideas, positing Love, Order, and Progress as great, impersonal ideas ordering the human cosmos. Such a position, which defines a priori as intelligible precisely what it needs to assume—and cannot doubt—seems today to be an odd place for Positivism to have originated.

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Yet this position of Comte says much about basic intellectual dilemmas of the Social Sciences. Like other positivists, Comte wanted it both ways. He assumed that the principles of social order were intelligible as conceived by human minds, that there were no unintelligible social events. And he assumed too that believing in these principles of social order would ultimately give them unquestionable power and universal significance. Essentially, he hid the problems of belief—of the intelligibility of ideas and of doubt about both the social order and human nature—behind a strangely cosmological system.[5] In positivist rhetoric, science could only be based on "realities." No wonder that he set himself up as the High Priest of the Religion of Humanity, and, with all the zeal of a real proselytizer, went about proclaiming the "reality" and "truth" of those principles on which he based his science of society (Love, Progress and Order).

However, despite the fervent, impassioned efforts of August Comte, the problem of doubt made unavoidable by René Descartes continued to haunt Social Science. All theorists in the positivist tradition from Saint-Simon and Comte onwards have set forth with crusader's spirit to slay the hydra of doubt. Consequently, these theorists argue for the need (and will) to believe.

The fundamental, intractable "reality" since Descartes, and more particularly since Georg Hegel (1807), may be conceptualized as the ongoing process of doubting and negation itself. Human beings, so the argument goes, make themselves, fashion themselves, by doubting and by negating the consciousness which they think with and about. Self-consciousness becomes the process by which doubt and negation can be apprehended. For Emile Durkheim, the towering theorist of Positivism and heir to the tradition of Comte, the dialectic between sacred and profane generates consciousness of avoidance (taboos), which in turn constitute "proof" of the workings of negation. The sacred negates the profane, and the profane negates the sacred; the two are always excluding one another, the process of negation itself underlying the process of categorization which serves as the hallmark of all thinking. This Hegelian notion of negation provides the basis of Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912).

The emphasis on the ways ideas themselves acquire power, on the ways collective representations coerce, wheedle, and inspire, can be related to the Ideologues, and to the science of ideas which they promoted. Writing in the shadow of the French Revolution (primarily in the 1780s and 1790s), the Ideologues believed in the potential universality of thinking and interpretation, and stoutly maintained that it was possible and worthwhile to study in detail the formation of ideas, and the ways ideas function as parts of a system. Such ideological functionalism influenced the positivists. A writer not usually associated with the positivist tradition at all, but whose work is heavily influenced by the positivists and the Ideologues, is the American, William James, the self-styled pragmatist. However Jacobin the positivist ideas in France may seem, however direct they may appear to us as translations of French politics and of the centralizing tendencies of the French government and educational system, Positivism contains within it such a peculiarly potent mixture of Cartesianism and Christian ideology that it has exerted powerful effects on presuppositions in the social sciences throughout the west.[6]

Also, James's "pragmatic Positivism" makes an essential point about the relation of Positivism taken generally to both the failure of the Enlightenment faith in reason, and to the "will to believe" which, though made famous by James, characterizes Positivists also. Rationality is, for James, a sentiment of the "right fit," a feeling of appropriateness,

which is grounded in a habit and custom, an emphasis derived from David Hume. But James is far more concerned than was the skeptic Hume with the functions of all ideas — the ones with respect to the others. James's Pragmatism is a theory of the effects of ideas. Careful not to get caught in his own rationalizations, not only can James speak of the relative truth of ideas — he can speak also of the relativity of belief. Good beliefs are not "good" in terms of any theory of innate ideas, or the innate "rightness" or "truth" of specific beliefs, but rather of their impact, power or force — of their consequences. Even as Freud wrote of hydraulic models of unconscious forces and Durkheim wrestled with the powers of social sentiments as represented in collective representations (experienced always as personal and external), so James, their contemporary, sought to assess beliefs in terms of the uses to which they are put, in terms of their pragamatic values.

WILLIAM JAMES AND THE LEGACY OF POSTIVISM

James writes:

> Belief (as measured by action) not only does and must continually outstrip scientific evidence, but there is a certain class of truths of whose reality belief is a factor as well as a confessor; and that as regards this class of truths, faith is not only licit and pertinent, but essential and indispensable. The truths cannot become true until our faith has made them so. . . . There are then cases where faith creates its own verification. Believe and you shall be right, for you shall save yourself; doubt, and you shall again be right, for you shall perish. The only difference is that to believe is greatly to your advantage.[7]

And James adds[8] that Pragmatism as a method (rather than as a dogma — since he believes it is possible to distinguish the two) — can bridge empiricism (materialism) and idealism: "Science and metaphysics would come much nearer together, would in fact work absolutely hand in hand."[9]

In these passages, I suggest, James is expressing ideas charactertistic also of the French positivists: a preoccupation with epistemological principles, an emphasis on the relativism of the observer as well as of any truth he might observe, a desire to steer a course between empiricism and idealism, and to weigh ideals, beliefs, and assumptions by considering the functions and consequences of holding them. To these can be added a chariness of doubt, and an obsession with making ideas powerful through faith (religion). Like Durkheim and Comte, James seeks to bring together faith (religion) and science, although in his synthesis, unlike the Positivists, he emphasizes will, self-interest and the consequences of individual faith rather than the power of collective forces. James does not say that recognizing the power of collective forces. James does not say that recognizing the power of belief is scientific because such power constitutes knowledge of a unitary, underlying, universal "reality," as does Durkheim, basing his ideas on the dichotomous notions of sacred and profane. Rather, James concentrates on the pragmatic consequences (rather than the causes) of holding certain ideas rather than others; such a "pragmatic" judgment is, for him, the necessary basis for any action. Durkheim, too, seeks to unite thought and action (order and progress in the formulation of Saint-Simon). Durkheim does this by means of his conception of the circulation of collective sentiments through the body politic (collective representations) constituted in its rites. Both Durkheim and James attempt to establish conceptual unity embracing thoughts and actions, belief and science, making knowledge responsible and useful. In such conceptual unity there is no room for doubt, since that undermines the power of the unity

for which they are striving. Both need to believe that the conceptual unity is powerful for it to be so.

SAINT-SIMON, POLITICS AND RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

Positivism begins with Saint-Simon (1760–1825). Tutored by Jean d'Alembert, and a friend of the Marquis de Condorcet, Saint-Simon was a prominent financier who, having been reduced to extreme poverty in 1805 under the Directory, turned to social philosophy. De Redern commented tellingly that Saint-Simon "was incapable of organizing anything but the future."[10] Yet, despite the lack of systematic theory in Saint-Simon's writings and despite his emphasis on social ideals, the Saint-Simonians profoundly influenced social thinkers of the nineteenth century and played a prominent role in the great economic expansion of the Second Empire, especially in the growth of banks and railways.

Surprisingly, in view of today's notions of Positivism, the ideas of F. M. H. Saint-Simon drew upon the religious revival and the counter-revolutionary movement. Departing from the Enlightenment's disparagement of the "Dark Ages" (so named in part because of the contrast with the "Enlightenment"), Saint-Simon emphasized the value of the Middle Ages in the definition of positive social ideals. As Luis Markham notes,[11] at a time when "Chateaubriand, Joseph Maistre and Luis Bonald sought in the medieval doctrine of original sin and divine authority an antidote to revolutionary theory," Saint-Simon also contributed to a striking change in attitudes towards the Middle Ages, and, I would add, in attitudes towards the problems of superstition and belief.

Saint-Simon maintains that in the medieval world, Catholicism ensured social stability, but that the progress of science, the Protestant Reformation, a growing middle class, Enlightenment skepticism, and the negative principles of "equality" and "natural rights"—all undermined this world order without establishing anything positive in its place. These negative, destructive forces culminated in the French Revolution. A new organic, scientific set of social principles is needed, Saint-Simon believed. "The philosophy of the eighteenth century has been critical and revolutionary; that of the nineteenth century will be inventive and constructive."[12]

Parting company, however, with the Maistre, Bonald and the theorists of the Catholic revival, Saint-Simon advocated a secular and scientific basis to the new conception of social order. Human thinking, he maintained, has gone through stages: from polytheism to monotheism, monotheism to metaphysics and, finally, metaphysics to positive science. Following the same developmental sequence as sciences such as mathematics and physics, what Saint-Simon calls "social psychology" will become positive and scientific.

Essentially, for Saint-Simon, Positivism consists in the application of positivist principles to all areas of life and of human experience. His vision of the unity of the sciences makes of them a body of stable beliefs which can take the place of religious practices and beliefs. "All sciences were originally conjectural; their destiny is to become positive"[13] writes Saint-Simon in his "Essay on Man" (1813). He adds: ". . . religion, for a man of the intelligence of Sir Francis Bacon, could not be anything but a general scientific theory. The purpose of a theory is to organize facts."[14] Thus, Saint-Simon's science of society was also a science of religion and a religious sociology, a point which would be lost neither on Comte nor on Durkheim. And in "New Christianity" (1825),[15] Saint-Simon says his main objective is "to try and define the part played by religious sentiment in society," a goal firmly in keeping with those of Comte and Durkheim.

Born from the theory of the four stages and from the writings of Condorcet, who divided all history into ten stages the last one being the most "positive,"[16] Saint-Simon's

theory of developmental stages—from conjectural and theological through the meta-physical and finally to the positive—influenced not only Comte and Durkheim in France, and Karl Marx in Germany, but, through John Stuart Mill, Thomas Carlyle and others, found their way into the English and American traditions as well. John Stuart, Mill, a friend of the James family, was thoroughly familiar with the works of Saint-Simon. In fact, in 1842 he passed the hat on behalf of Saint-Simon, and wrote *Auguste Comte and Positivism*.[17]

AUGUST COMTE, HIGH PRIEST OF THE POSITIVE RELIGION OF HUMANITY

Born in 1798 to devoutly Catholic and staunchly royalist parents in Montpellier, home of the great French medical school and center of vitalism,[18] August Comte grew up idolizing Benjamin Franklin, calling him "the modern Socrates." In 1818 he became a friend and disciple of Saint-Simon; in 1826, after the third of his lectures on Positivism, he had a nervous breakdown and was incapacitated for a year; and in 1845, after the death of Madame Clotilde de Vaux, a woman with whom he had a passionate affair, he had a conversion experience. The idea of a Religion of Humanity was born, and he was its High Priest.

Essentially, Comte systematized the ideas of Saint-Simon. He diagnosed the sickness of the time, the great cultural illness ("la maladie occidentale") as "mental anarchy,"[19] similar to Durkheim's concept of "anomie." Such mental anarchy was, Comte believed (following Saint-Simon), brought on by Enlightenment excesses. The antidote he pro-posed was a logical, Cartesian coherence, specifically appropriate for and relative to the given stage in historical development. Here he followed Saint-Simon's ideas of the development of Western history from theology to metaphysics to Positivism. Comte's ideas about the social usefulness and scientific merit of his system relied heavily upon Saint-Simonian notions of social/historical development.

But the crux of his system was the motto: "Love, Order and Progress." Since Positivism was to take the place of the church in the Middle Ages in fostering social cohesion, Comte, following Saint-Simon, argued that the intellect alone could never suffice. Feelings and Imagination were required also, since Positivism consisted of an actual social order made up of human actions, as well as ideas about such an order.

For Comte, Positivism, the quintessential science of the whole, consists of a single conceptual system able to unify intellectual faculties and social sympathies. Such an imaginative synthesis of thoughts, feelings and actions "can only be valid in so far as it is an exact and complete representation of the relations naturally existing."[20]By being comprehensive, the positivist doctrine can simultaneously be functional and practical ("all Positive speculations owe their first origin to the occupations of practical life"). But its function depends, Comte emphasizes, on rethinking the relations between and among thoughts, feelings and actions, so as to unseat and discard "those proud illu-sions of the supremacy of reason." Only in this way is it possible to reserve for the heart its "true place" in the "organization of human nature and society," since both happiness and public welfare are, Comte believes, dependent far more on the heart than the intellect.[21]

As for Progress, it consists in providing external models and motives for our thinking such that these models and motives may be perceived as objective.[22] Therefore, the subordination of intellect to the heart (Order to Love), Comte believes, is a design which actually represents the true and objective nature of human beings. Unlike the

Enlightenment metaphysics leading to the French Revolution which Comte holds responsible for the final destruction of the Medieval order, Positivism aspires "to direct the spiritual reorganization of the civilized world" by constructing a system of social and moral relations "under which the final regeneration of Humanity will proceed." But unlike the theological designs of the Medieval system, Positivism avoids the study of first causes, focusing on "the How instead of the Why."[23]

Despite the "catholic" ambitions of Positivism, Comte speaks insistently about its "relativism." "The word 'Positive'," he writes, "will be understood to mean *relative* as much as it now means *organic, precise, certain, useful* and *real.*" Since "social phenomena have this peculiarity, that the object observed undergoes a process of development as well as and simultaneously with the observer,"[24] the relativism of Comte appears to be an emphasis on relations, in this case between the observer and what he is observing. Comte also holds that since science develops and evolves, the power of scientific ideas depends upon the extent to which they represent "something real," i.e., real relationships.

Belief (faith?) in Humanity (read: Love) includes in the very conception the three essential aspects of Positivism: "its subjective principle, its objective dogma and its practical object."[25] Humanity itself becomes the great being, the only being worthy of veneration. "The very conception of Humanity is a condensation of the whole mental and social history of Man."[26] Therefore, writes Comte, Positivism is the only "true and complete" religion, since its believers, more than those in any other creed, "regard life as a continuous and earnest act of worship." By serving this function in social regeneration, Comte believes, Positivism solves "the great problem of the Middle Ages, the subordination of Politics to Morals."[27] Thus he provides a historical justification and explanation for the superiority of Positivism (as a relgious sociology and a sociology of religion) over all competing visions of social theory.

Since Sociology entails a conception of historical progress (and its relationships), it aims "to explain all historical facts." Because of the claims of Positivism to historical truth, Comte can argue confidently[28] that of all existing social theories only Positivism adequately responds to "the real tendencies as well as with the essential needs of the nineteenth century."[29] Comte's emphasis on Sociology as the science of sciences, like theology in the Middle Ages, produces an all-encompassing theory of social order, social representations and social sentiments which Durkheim will later take over lock, stock and barrel.

DURKHEIM'S EPISTEMOLOGY, THE SACRED QUEST FOR THE WHOLE AND THE SUPPOSITION OF "SOME ACTUAL REALITY"

Durkheim tells us at the opening of his *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912) that, like all positive science, Sociology "has as its object the explanation of some actual reality." And shortly thereafter, he tips his hand: "this reality is man." Therefore, the goal of Sociology — and of all positive science — is to "show us an essential and permanent aspect of humanity."[30] Essentially, Durkheim spends the entire volume demonstrating that the outward manifestations of religious life are "representations" of the universal, human need for ecstasy (ekstasis) in the Greek sense of experiences which take us outside ourselves (as individuals), thereby expressing the force of social powers.

These social forces never inhere in particular objects or people (i.e., they are content without form). Rather, we make use of objects, people and ideas in order to

represent these forces to ourselves. So the form of religious worship and scientific belief can vary, yet, holds Durkheim, the essence of religious experience is everywhere the same. And it is a "reality" which can be studied scientifically. Indeed, it is the most important reality which science can know. What the science of Sociology studies is nothing other than the cultural systems of representations by which these social/religious forces become manifest.

What we have here, then, appears to be a form of Platonism, in which the realm of essential ideas constitutes the core of reality. Yet Durkheim does not see himself as a Platonist — and in important respects he is not. Plato's system does not allow for empiricism, and Durkheim keeps reminding us that, like Comte, Condorcet, and Saint-Simon, he is following in the tradition of Bacon. However, the meaning of empirical facts, he holds, must be assessed in terms of an understanding of the nature of humankind. And, like Comte, Durkheim allows for relativism, essential to his system. The relativism of Durkheim places the observer in the context of what is being observed.[31]

Were Man fundamentally an animal, then it would be possible to study him as do the materialists, the sensualists, and the evolutionists: as part of the natural world. But to do this is to do violence to Man's ability to control the world through ideas about it, to symbolize through categories and by means of objects chosen indifferently. Yet, if our capacity to understand social phenomena is part of the phenomena to be observed and understood, then observers are necessarily a part of the field of their observation.

One major point of departure for Durkheim, Comte, and other positivists is the rejection of any search for first causes. They explicitly jettison Jean Jacques Rousseau's hypothetical history, together with the speculations it entails. Instead, they speak endlessly of "reality," assiduously avoiding any trace of lingering skepticism. Paradoxically and in contrast to Rousseau, however, the French positivists rely on theories of social sentiment, on what is essentially a theological system, and on presuppositions of conceptual unity. In the name of a science of religion and of a religious sociology, the positivists accuse Rousseau of groundless speculation. Because Rousseau did not found his ideas of social order in religion, because there is no religious component to them, say these positivists, he is not dealing with any "reality," and therefore his reasoning is not "scientific."

Since for Durkheim scientific ideas are merely an extension of religious ideas, and since, furthermore, religious sentiments are expressed in the most fundamental categories of understanding and judgment, "the essential ideas of scientific logic are of religious origin."[32] Durkheim bolsters his argument by noting significantly that our very idea of soul, animus, or life principle, for which an equivalent exists universally, is ultimately an experience of the totality of society, whose life we experience as outside of and greater than our own. Religion is a system of symbols, sentiments, and rites based on "reality," however illusory may be the objects of the representations in themselves; "one must know how to go underneath the symbol to the reality which it represents and which gives it its meaning."[33]

And then, in the grand finale to the work, Durkheim supports his argument in a most surprising way. He suggests that to act one must believe (an argument which, as we will see, is identical to the one used by William James).

> Faith is before all else an impetus to action, while science, no matter how far it may be pushed, always remains at a distance from this. Science is fragmentary and incomplete; it advances but slowly and is never finished; but life cannot wait.[34]

And Durkheim clinches his argument by pointing out that scientific truths also need to be believed; being "true" is never enough for any scientific theory. Scientific ideas too are given currency because of the ways in which they fit with our ideas about nature and society. What at first appeared as an antimony between science and the needs of life (religion) is reconciled if one recognizes that "impersonal reason is only another name given to collective thought."[35]

What Durkheim does here is to assume that the needs of action are "religious," whereas the needs of science are "logical" (individual?). Since he maintains that what is individual (egoistic) is by definition essentially profane (and rationalistic), and what is sacred is by definition is essentially social (composed of social feeling), Durkheim seemingly reconciles the dualistic split between thought and feeling.

Comte and Durkheim both state explicitly that knowledge without feeling is useless and socially irresponsible, playing as it does into the illusions of egoistic self-interest. Both Comte and Durkheim attempt to ally experience with empiricism, to span what they see to be the extreme positions of materialism and idealism, and to ground a theory of socially relevant knowledge (a theory of science) in assumptions concerning social needs and the "true" nature of humankind. Thus, for positivist writers such as Comte, Durkheim, or James, knowledge of any kind which does not express these social needs is necessarily groundless. Durkheim, of course, makes the epistemological concerns which are only implicit in Comte the cornerstone of his *Elementary Forms*, his *magnum opus*.

Moreover, Durkheim states clearly that ideals are part of the knowledge required by the social sciences, expressing once more his preoccupation with relativism; his own ideals as sociologist become pertinent to his theoretical work on social order and social forces. Durkheim avoids the pitfall of assuming that only rational ideas are positive. Unlike James the pragmatist, who speaks of ideas, feelings, and ideals in terms of the consquences of holding them, Durkheim the dualist emphasizes the pain inflicted upon individuals by the negative cult which clearly represents ideals and social forces. Like the ecstatic experience, ideals take us outside ourselves.

Idealization for Durkheim means adding something to empirical (animal-like) sensation; it means "substituting for the real world another different one . . Animals know only one world, the one which they perceive by experience, internal as well as external. Men alone have the faculty of conceiving the ideal, of adding something to the real."[36] Indeed, the human need for understanding which goes beyond the limits of sensual (bodily) experience is for Durkheim the basis of both society and religion. "Our definition of the sacred is that it is something added to and above the real: now the ideal answers to this same definition; we cannot explain the one without explaining the other."[37]

Lest the reader assume that the ideal is something outside the individual, Durkheim reminds us that indeed not only is the perception of the sacred altogether dependent upon individual feelings, but that ideals are not outside of the "real" society, since a vision of the ideal society is a part of the real society. Human thinking (the process by which we categorize)[38] is what creates society in the Durkheimian sense, for our experience of society is the experiential "reality" behind our concepts of an animus, a soul, and of our idea of God.

Were it not for our experiences of society as outside of and more powerful than our individual selves, Durkheim argues, we could have no idea either of power or of immortality. Such a conception of society is hardly created ex nihilo, but is made from bits and pieces of experience. In fact, Durkheim claims to ground his sacred/profane dualism or dialectic in what is ultimately most "real": social experience.

Thus, for Durkheim, Sociology (the science of religion and the religion of science) is above all a theory of thinking based on dualism as a process, the workings of which reveal what is most "real." Durkheim slays the hydra of doubt through his use of dualism, classifying the power of ideas into two kinds, one of which is generated by individual experience and the other of which is generated by individual experience of social "realities." We can only doubt as individuals; as a group we do not and cannot. By dumping doubt into the profane (egoistic) sphere, Durkheim clears room for sacred/social forces as these act upon individuals through their sensations, their actions, their ideas and their feelings. Because they are collective and cannot be doubted, the most powerful ideals are of social origin. Therefore, given the antithesis between sacred and profane, individuals do not have the power (or indeed any reason) to doubt social forces and ideals. Banishing doubt from our understanding of social forces makes them all the more "real," all the more reliable as the object of a "true" social science. We believe in them that much more easily. Right we are if we thnk we are.

JAMES, THE SENTIMENT OF RATIONALITY AND THE PROBLEM OF SPONTANEOUS GENERALIZATION

For James, we think many things we will never know. Therefore, were we to attempt to confront the "chaos under our hats," we would deliver ourselves to the enemy of negative thoughts. Given this potential for chaos, we need the assistance of belief. For James, belief legitimates what our attention focuses on, since it is belief in various forms which influences the "fit" in terms of which we perceive certain ideas, symbols, things, etc. to be "real," "rational" or "true."

What we really think about is at once the object of our thought and the "fit" or lack of "fit" which that particular object is perceived to have. "The object of every thought, then, is neither more nor less than all that the thought thinks, exactly as the thought thinks it, however complicated the matter, and however symbolic the manner of thinking may be."[39] For "however complex the object may be, the thought of it is one undivided state of consciousness." Since "knowledge about a thing is knowledge of its relations,"[40] this stream of consciousness, of subjective life, can never be divided as the thought thinks it.[41] Thus James posits a thinking "something" which brings things together in relations. "If things are to be thought in relations, they must be thought together, and in one something, be that something ego, psychosis, state of consciousness, or whatever you please."

The things the thought thinks, like the things the eye sees, constitute but a small part of what is there. Whereas an ant or beetle might pass unnoticed for me or for you, an entomologist would be more likely to notice it, since each individual selects "out of the same mass of presented objects, those which suited his private interest and has made his experience thereby."

Consciousness—and thinking—consist in the comparison of the various simultaneous possibilities which fill the theater of the mind; out of all these possibilities, we select some and suppress the others "by the reinforcing and inhibiting agency of attention."[42] Awareness, therefore, is akin to sight; we look at many things we never "see."

The highest and most elaborated mental products are filtered from the data chosen by the faculty next beneath, out of the mass offered by the faculty below that, which mass in turn was sifted from a still larger amount of yet simpler material, and so on.[43]

Like Durkheim, James recognizes the inestimable value of human thinking and the faculty of representation; thoughts can represent one another, as things can be made to represent thoughts. Consequently, "by experimenting on our ideas of reality we may save ourselves the trouble of experimenting on the real experiences which they severally mean." However, since our experiences constitute "a quasi-chaos," there is "vastly more discontinuity in the sum total of experiences than we commonly suppose."[44] We therefore find ourselves in the position of needing to distinguish between on the one hand "knowing as verified and completed," and, on the other, knowing "in transit and on its way."[45] For all practical purposes, James thinks, there is no knowledge of the first sort, since knowledge is itself part of the incomplete universe perceived incompletely.

And then in one of the most striking of James's metaphors, James explains that experience grows "by its edges;" "one moment of it proliferates into the next by transitions which, whether conjunctive or disjunctive, continue the experiential tissue." And then he continues to prove what makes thoughts thinkable. "These relations of continuous transition experienced are what makes our experiences cognitive."[46] If I understand James rightly here, he is saying that we can only become conscious of what we experience as continuous. We can only focus our attention in thinking on what is agglutinated, as it were, to the mass of experiences remembered or forgotten which constitutes our past, out of which grows both present and future. This is an extremely important point, since rationality itself he qualifies as a "sentiment of fit," of continuity.

Following this line of reasoning, then, "truth" must necessarily be that which is agglutinated or added to what is already there, what grows out of it and what is felt to be akin to what we already know. What then, asks James, are Pragmatism's criteria for truth? "Grant an idea or belief to be true," it says, "what concrete difference will its being true make in any one's actual life?"

True ideas, believes James, are those that we can "assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those we cannot." Truth can only be known through the experience of a "fit." Far from being a property which inheres in objects, ideas or people, truth, says James, is no more nor less than "what *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, it is *made* true by events. Its verity *is* in fact an event, a process, the process namely of its verifying itself . . . Its validity is the process of its validation."[47] James's emphasis on truth as the process of linkage connecting one experience with another is similar to Durkheim's emphasis on represented systems of relations which make the social forces real and true. For James, the "fit" of any given experience is determined by its relation to the mass of previous experiences. In both James and Durkheim, truth can never inhere in any thing, idea or person. Both are reacting against rationalist positions which tend to confer on any particular idea an *a priori* "reality." Freud too focused on the representations (systems of relations) of unconscious processes, maintaining that we cannot know drives (i.e., real processes) directly; we can only know drive derivatives, we can only know their representations.

This representational stance towards epistemological questions, which characterizes Durkheim, Freud, and James leads all three to question absolute notions of truth, even as they recognize the need to be positive. James is perhaps the most explicit and vociferous in his expressions of skepticism towards rationalist positions. "The passion for parsimony," he writes, "for economy of means in thought, is the philosophic passion *par excellence*." And he points out the need rationalists have to make something coherent out of "that somewhat chaotic view which every one by nature carries about with him under his hat." Such passion for parsimony and simplification leads some, says James,

to make the real diversity of things into an artificial monotony which, while comforting to the philosopher, neglects an equally significant need for distinguishing what is "in chaos under our hats." Therefore, "the only possible philosophy must be a compromise between an abstract monotony and a concrete heterogeneity," between, on the one hand, the feeling of familiarity and oneness associated with defined expectations so attractive to philosophers, and on the other, the unpredictable, untidy "empirical sand-heap world."

There is, James notes, no "problem of good." There are only problems of evil, suffering, and pain. Therefore, those thinkers preoccupied with describing a world in which expectations can be comfortingly defined, and a reassuring sense of fit thereby attained, may, notes James, stress the certainty of their theories and feel they are in communion with the universe. These same philosophers have "as a rule with great insincerity tried to huddle [faith] out of sight in their pretension to found systems of absolute certainty."

James defines faith as "the readiness to act in a cause the prosperous issue of which is not certified to us in advance." Defined in this way, faith becomes for James the moral prerequisite to action—all action. James fully realizes that his claims make "the man seem as if he were individually helping to create the actuality of the truth whose metaphysical reality he is willing to assume."[48]

James argues that "faith is synonymous with working hypotheses," since "the thought becomes literally father to the fact, as the wish was father to the thought." Far from apologizing for faith on rationalist grounds, or splitting it off and relegating it to other cultures and other times, James squarely defends the need to believe on what he construes as pragmatic grounds. Faith, he explains, "will always remain a factor not to be banished from philosophic constructions, the more so since in many ways it brings forth its own verification."[49] In other words, it is impossible without faith to achieve verification in certain domains, which brings me back to a discussion of the pivotal role of faith in the social sciences.

JAMES, POSITIVISM AND THE QUESTION OF FAITH

For James, the man with faith is better off than the one without. Like other writers in the positivist tradition, he recognizes the need to be "positive," however irrational or distant from logic such a need may be. The social sciences (and the notion of a science of society, a science of Man) were founded in the wake of the French Revolution and the Terror by writers who felt a need to define social ideals (and experiences) as well as a logical social order. In fact, the social sciences have from the outset rested their claims to being "empirical" on the supposed existence of some underlying reality, closely resembling a divine order. Facts "come" true, and they come true because of belief, belief "working" to make them come true, thereby demonstrating (?) the underlying reality. The "pragmatics" of prediction here comes strikingly close to the pragmatics of divination.

The Comtean sequence from religion to metaphysics to Positivism represents at once a vision of history and a kind of skeptical (negativist?) stance towards rationalism camouflaged beneath empirical rhetoric. It is always difficult to tell whether positivists (at least in the French tradition) are chary of logic and need to find a way of expressing their pessimism, or whether they really "believe" in empiricism.

If religion deals with ideas of first causes (creation myths), then Positivism deals with effects (pragmatism).[50] Consequently, I suggest, positivist principles always implicitly or explicitly call into question our conventional ideas of cause and effect because

there is no room in these for faith or indeterminancy. And, to use a Jamesean argument, from the end of the past century to the present, it is "pragmatic" to allow for both "faith" and indeterminancy, since unitary and unifying systems—organized around any reality believed to be single rather than plural (essentially monotheistic systems)—do not "work" in our cultures any more. What is needed, James holds, like a positivist, is an epistemological system in which belief—together with an epistemologically sound basis for gauging the power which only belief can generate—plays an explicit and central role. And since neither rationalism nor empiricism has room for faith, since both have too narrow a defintion of truth for James, neither can really work socially and psychologically. James's definition of truth is one he considers "pragmatic": "The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good too for definite, assignable reasons." Truth, in other words, is effective belief. True knowledge is grounded on belief which works.

And what works is tested by how well a piece of knowledge "fits every part of life . . . and combines with the collectivity of experience's demands, nothing being omitted." James borrows the Darwinian notion of "fitness" and uses it for his own purposes, to underscore the extent to which a feeling of "fit" and of "fitness" actually *is*—and therefore functions as—rationality.

James points out that this "mutual fitting of things diverse in origin"[51] which he associates with the very essence of rationality is, as it happens, the same argument for the existence of God (the argument from design) used throughout our Judeo-Christian tradition.

> Many facts appear as if expressly designed in view of one another. Thus the woodpecker's bill, tongue, feet, tail, etc. fit him wondrously for a world of trees, with grubs hid in their bark to feed upon. The parts of our eye fit the laws of light to perfection.[52]

And we wonder at how astonishingly well-adapted are fish to sea and birds to air. But, notes James, any hypothesis of a benevolent deity depends upon who or what is doing the perceiving. "To the grub under the bark the exquisite fitness of the woodpecker's organism to extract him would certainly argue a diabolical designer." James firmly addresses the problem of the perspective of the observer, the relativistic theme which appears in positivist positions. "What design? and what designer? are the only serious questions, and the study of facts is the only way of getting even approximate answers."

In the view of James, the use of our thinking is not to "discover" some pre-existing reality, but rather "to help us *change* the world."[53] Here unadorned is one of the most essential and important organizing principles of Positivism.

> We must for this know definitely what we have to change and thus theoretic truth must at all times come before practical application. . . . [But] it turns out that the theoretic truth upon which men base their practice today is itself a resultant of previous human practice, based in turn upon still . . . previous truth . . . so that we may think of all truth whatever as containing so much human practice funded.[54]

For James we make truth as we go along, since experience grows by its edges, casting a new light on the relation between social institutions and historical or social processes. Truth, law, and language, he writes, "*make themselves* as we go. Our rights, wrongs, prohibitions, penalties, words, forms, idioms, beliefs are so many new creations that add themselves as fast as history proceeds. Far from being antecedent principles that

animate the process, law, language, truth are but abstract names for its results." In opposition to Durkheim, James here explicitly subordinates all ideas of law and social truth to experiential process and pragmatic judgments.

As individuals, James believes, we are all handymen, *bricoleurs*, who fashion reality out of the bits and pieces of our collective and individual experience. From this idea James builds up his ideas of relativism. What we know to be true, according to James, can be analyzed to have several dimensions. Sensations, the first of these, are "never true or false; they simply *are*. It is only what we say about them, only the names we give them, our theories of their source and nature and remote relations, that may be true or not." The second dimension pertains to *relations* established between and among these sensations and the interpretations we have given them. And the third dimension takes into account "the previous truths of which every new inquiry takes account." Pursuing these lines, James explains: "What we say about reality thus depends on the perspective into which we throw it. The *that* of it is its own; but the *what* depends on the *which*; and the which depends on us."

Natural and metaphysical worlds depend equally upon our human purposes and how we understand them. "Both the sensational and the relational parts of reality are dumb; they say absolutely nothing about themselves. We it is who have to speak for them." And he continues: "A sensation is rather like a client who has given his case to a lawyer and then has passively to listen in the courtroom to whatever account of his affairs, pleasant or unpleasant, the lawyer finds it most expedient to give."

For example, I can say of a line that it runs east or west. Neither statement will be any less true than the other, nor will my description bother or change the line. The truth of my statement depends upon the observer; there can be no truth independent of the observer. More than that: my description of the line as running east or west indeed adds something to what I observe.

Whereas for the rationalist, the "bellyband of the universe must be tight," for a pluralistic pragmatist, there is room to let out one's belt. For the pluralistic pragmatist truth "grows up inside of all the finite experiences. They lean on each other, but the whole of them, if such a whole there be, leans on nothing."[55] Here James parts company with Durkheim.[56]

SUBJECTIVISM AND THE ROMANTIC, RELIGIOUS UNDERBELLY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

Ever since Condorcet outlined his stages in the progress of the human mind, and it was clear that History was leading us away from theology to what was to be called a more positive state, the positivist tradition has built itself upon theories of sentiments.[57] For Saint-Simon, sentiment and feeling were essential for social progress, as they were for Comte, who over and over says that we tire of thinking and acting but we never tire of loving. Durkheim too makes sentiments (social sentiments) the life-blood of his entire system. This approach to social life through feelings was shared also by Romanticism and Transcendentalism.[58]

Like the positivists, James firmly believes in the primacy of feeling. You may recall that he defined rationality as essentially a *feeling* of fit. Subjectivism, writes James, has "three great branches—we may call them scientism, sentimentalism and sensualism, respectively." All these reinforce our experience that whatever really happens "out there" is of secondary importance to what we perceive and feel. "They all agree essentially about the universe, in deeming that what happens there is subsidiary to what we think or feel about it."[59]

Focusing as do Durkheim and Freud on systems of representation, James suggests "treating the whole thing as a great unending romance which the spirit of the universe, striving to realize its own content, is eternally thinking out and representing to itself." "In theology," he adds, "subjectivism develops as its 'left wing' antimonianism. In literature, its left wing is romanticism. And in practical life," he continues, "it is either a nerveless sentimentality or a sensualism without bounds."

And for those who do not believe, for skeptics such as Ernest Renan and Emile Zola (who cynically views the whole world as a 'roman experimental'), all is unspeakably dreary. Such modern-day gnostics, with their "far off whimpering of wail and woe" cannot be positive about anything, since they have checked themselves into what Thomas Carlyle referred to as "a vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha and mill of death." Similarly, James roundly objects to Arthur Schopenhauer's obsession with tedium and inner emptiness. For the likes of Schopenhauer, James notes, life on the largest scale is no more than the "same recurrent inanities, the same dog barking, the same fly buzzing, forevermore." James castigates such pessimists for refusing to shoulder the burden . . . "of seeing to it that the end of all righteousness be some positive universal gain."[60]

The emphasis on "positive universal gain" to be judged by feelings, has characterized the positivists since their beginnings in France. I have argued in this paper that this emphasis persists within our American tradition. Even beauty, for James, becomes a matter of function. He looks to works of art as guides to living—and feeling. If works of art contribute to "positive universal gain," then they are "good." James illustrates his idea with a quote from William Wordsworth:

> To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,
> Even the loose stones that cover the highway,
> I gave a moral life; I saw them feel
> Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass
> Lay bedded in some quickening soul, and all
> That I beheld respired with inward meaning.

For James, "To sustain a representation, to think is . . . the only moral act, for the impulsive and the obstructed, for sane and lunatics alike."[61] In this, James, Freud, and Durkheim are all sharing a common frame of reference: for all of them the representation is what must be explained. Whatever knowledge one may have of the world "outside" (natural science) becomes subordinated to the human concerns and the needs of thinking which place representations and their functioning at the center of human understanding.[62]

Yet, unlike other positivists, realizes James, no psychology of feeling and sentiment can be complete or adequate if it does not include "wrong ways," and the feelings of "wrongness" which accompany them.[63]

> What interest, zest, or excitement can there be in achieving the right way, unless we are enabled to feel that the wrong way is also a possible and natural way—nay, more, a menacing and an imminent way? And what sense can there be in condemning ourselves for taking the wrong way, unless we need have done nothing of the sort, unless the right way was open to us as well.[64]

By relying on feelings to define what is "right," James necessarily examines the relations of feelings to one another, an examination he feels indispensable to responsible, moral conduct. "I cannot understand the belief that an act is bad," writes James,

without regret at its happening. I cannot understand regret without the admission of real, genuine possibilities in the world. Only then is it other than a mockery to feel, after we have failed to do our best, that an impossible opportunity is gone from the universe, the loss of which it must forever mourn.[65]

Finally, for both the French positivists and James, a leap of faith is required. But there are important differences. Unlike the French positivists who mistrust individual egoism and self-interest, and who clearly believe in the need for individuals to subordinate their interests to those of the group, James defines the scope of psychology as the domain in which the will may be exercised responsibly. For the French positivists, limiting individual will is the basis of social order and perhaps of morality; for James, understanding how the individual will is limited by our own psychological processes gives us as much freedom as we are likely to have. "The terminus of the psychological process in volition," he writes, "the point to which the will is directly applied, is always an idea . . . The only resistance which our will can possibly experience is the resistance which such an idea offers to being attended to at all."[66] Since for James we are inevitably prisoners of seeing what we believe and believing what we see, it is necessary to understand as much as possible both of what we see and do not see, and what we do and do not believe.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have attempted to trace the roots and basic epistemological positions of Positivism. A strange combination of Cartesian skepticism, Christian idealism, and empiricism, Positivism rests upon several basic assumptions which link Saint-Simon, Comte, Durkheim, and James.

First, Positivism eschews first causes, maintaining that the scientist of society must marshal existing evidence to construct arguments. Clearly, James subscribes to this idea. Unlike James, however, Durkheim and the French positivists rely upon a developmental/historical model. Like an archaeologist, Durkheim seeks to sift down through the layers of sediment to the first and most basic forms of social life (*Les formes elementaires de la vie religieuse*). In other words, French positivists assume they can construct a theory of evidence according to which it becomes feasible, as it were, to date, and arrange in sequence, various claims to primacy. So while avoiding discussions of first causes, of genesis myths and myths of creation, Positivism requires an epistemology which can distinguish between primary and secondary phenomena. Using the historical and comparative methods, it claims to be capable of unifying ideas about society and politics in both space and time.

Second, Positivism rests its claims on theories of human nature and theories of the emotions, rather than on any particular ideational content or doctrine. Paraphrasing Huxley, one can say that, with its aspirations to universality, Positivism is Catholicism minus Christianity. Christian ideals and notions of order become, in the systems of Comte and Durkheim, part of what allows for a self-consciousness of society in the Hegelian sense. For Saint-Simon, Christian love occupies a central position in his social philosophy, and for Comte, social order depends on Love, Order and Progress. For Durkheim, the life blood of the social body is social sentiment, represented in collective representations and reinforced by collective rituals. For all these positivists, particular ideas are relative to social circumstances and indvidual situations. However, so the argument goes, general ideas (most especially the very idea of the whole itself, the very principle of

unity), since they are rooted in universal human reactions, appear objective and external, acquiring a power which no individual idea could have.

Third, Positivism designates as the fundamental reality which positive science studies those forces which underlie human actions. This postulate, this principle, in turn implies clear limitations on the ability of an individual *qua* individual to think about what moves him. For Freud as well as for Durkheim and James, rationalizations are severely limited. For there needs to be some way of assessing rationalizations, and of knowing how to sift through delusion and illusion. To positivists things are not as they appear, since those underlying realities about which one can be positive are never directly observable or directly visible. One must infer their existence from behavior and from human activities. Durkheim, James, and Freud all seek to find some middle path, avoiding the extremes of both materialism and idealism. "Pragmatism," notes James, "may be a happy harmonizer of empiricist ways of thinking with the more religious demands of human beings."[67]

Fourth, positivists assess and believe they can understand whatever fundamental realities they designate (for Freud, the unconscious, for Durkheim, social forces) through an examination of their effects. Thus there is a strong functionalist strain in Positivism. This is why, as I have argued in this paper, William James and Pragmatism can be considered part of the positivist tradition, broadly defined. If one can, as James suggests, assess an action, a belief, a delusion, a feeling, or an idea on the basis of "real knowledge" of its effects, rather than any innate moral quality, and if one factors into this conception the effects of holding one of these rather than another (the effects of thinking about the consequences of thinking), then a major factor in the "reality" of this knowledge which allows for the assessment of ideas is the self-consciousness in holding them. This major Hegelian point has not been lost on any of the positivists. And James makes it one of the hallmarks of his philosophical positions.

Finally, Positivism can be seen as a romantic (anti-rationalist) and religious movement which distinguishes between a sense of self and self-consciousness, and brings Cartesian doubt to bear upon the task of social reconstruction, or, in the case of James, to the task of reducing rationalism to a subjective feeling of what fits. Emphasizing how ideas of progress can bring about the progress so imagined, yet chary of rationalist precepts, positivists used Cartesian notions of doubt and skepticism to reinforce belief in the value of emotions which, from Saint-Simon through Comte, include most especially the Christian virtues of love and order.

Thus, the religious revival of the early nineteenth century provided positivists with an image of social cohesion in the Middle Ages on the basis of which to fashion a new social science which would be at once a science of religion and a religion of society, a program for social regeneration. But these positivists could not avoid the concern that it might not work, and so necessarily relied upon belief to make it function. If this brand of Positivism has proven a source of embarassment to liberal, rationalist social theorists of the twentieth century, then consider the consequences of disregarding the dimension of faith altogether.

Notes

2.   The Positivism of which I speak here may be distinguished from the Logical Positivism of the Vienna School, which may more appropriately be associated with the rise of structuralism, and with ideas linking the structure of language to the structure of thinking. In some respects Logical Positivism represents the kind of rationalism which many of the functional, pragmatic Positivists were reacting against. The Positivism of Durkheim and of William James emphasizes ideas of process, flux and function; the Logical Positivism of the Vienna School, ideas of structure. Furthermore, the Positivism of which I write here is firmly linked to national/cultural traditions. There are works devoted to Positivism in Mexico, Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, etc., whereas Logical Positivism, by contrast, as a philosophical movement is not directly associated with political or social agenda.

Yet the Positivism of which I am writing here also differs substantially from that which contemproary social scientists criticize. Consider, for example, Jeffrey Alexander's definition. "The first two postulates central to the positivist persuasion are, first, that a radical break exists between empirical observation and nonempirical statements, and second, that because of this break, more general intellectual issues—which are called "philosophical" or "metaphysical"—have no fundamental significance for the practice of an empirically oriented discipline. The third postulate, which completes what might be called the triadic foundation of the positivistic orientation, is that since such an elimination of the nonempirical reference is taken to be the distinguishing feature of the natural sciences, any true sociology must assume a "scientific self-consciousness." Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Positivism, Presuppositions and Current Controversies.* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1982), p. 5. And Alexander continues in this work to castigate positivism for its anti-theoretical bias, an odd criticism in the light of the materials in this paper. Much has changed between the Positivism of Comte and Durkheim (and James) and the Positivism which Alexander sets out to trounce. Yet these shifts have yet to be described and understood.

3.   For example, in the entry in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,* just such a claim is made: that twentieth-century Positivism has nothing to do with nineteenth-century Positivism and that there is therefore no need even to define nineteenth-century Positivism. Essentially the author contends that the two are unrelated. The article proceeds to talk at length of the Vienna Circle (Schlick, Carnap, etc.), excluding Durkheim, James and the functional/pragmatic positivists altogether.

4.   My interest in Positivism comes from a reading of primary sources cited in the body of this paper. I have not dealt with secondary sources in the body of the text because of space limitations. This paper has been influenced by prior work on the social thought of the late eighteenth century and on the Ideolgues and the Socíeté des Observateurs de l'Homme. See, for example, Kilborne, "Anthropological Thought in the Wake of the French Revolution; La Socíeté des Observateurs de l'Homme," *European Journal of Sociology* 23 (1982), pp. 73–91, and Sergio Moravia, *La scienza dell'uomo nel Settecento.* (Roma: Lantera, 1970; revised ed. 1978). I do not make the explicit link here in this paper but it seems clear to me that the Postivism of which I am speaking is deeply rooted in—and in many senses a continuation of—the work of the Ideologues, with their emphasis on socially relevant, useful, and educationally pertinent knowledge. Many of them played a major role in the educational reforms under the Directory, and were committed politicians. They shied away from abstract knowledge, concentrating on knowledge that "worked," i.e, pragmatic understanding. In certain respects, they were building upon the earlier enterprise of the *Encyclopedie* of Denis Diderot and Jean D'Alembert, who demonstrated how intimately the arts were believed to be related to the sciences; the applied arts, to education.

5.   In my seminars at UCLA on Positivism, students invariably reacted to the ideas of the French positivists Comte and Durkheim with skepticism and alarm, noting their relation to totalitarianism. To my knowledge, the complicated links between Positivism and Totalitarianism as cosmological systems have yet to be fully explored.

6.   In the recent biography of the James family, R. W. B. Lewis provides evidence not only of William's familiarity with the positivists, but a real interest in social thought on the part of Henry James, Sr., whose writings attest amply to a solid knowledge of the works of Comte, Mill, Carlyle, Charles Bernard Renouvier, and a variety of other social thinkers. Lewis's primary interest, however, is not social theory. See R. W. B. Lewis, *The James; A Family Narrative. (NY: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1991).*

7.   *The Writings of William James; A Comprehensive Edition*, Ed. John J. McDermott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 337.

8.   Ibid., p. 379.

9.   Ibid., p. 379.

10.   F. M. H. Markam, Ed. "Introduction," *Henri Comte de Saint-Simon 1760–1825); Selected Writings.* (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1979. Reprint of 1952 edition, Oxford: Blackwell), p. xiv.

11.   Ibid., p. xxxi.

12.   Ibid., p. xxi.

13.   Saint-Simon, "Essay on the Science of Man," 1813, in Markam, pp. 22, 23.

14.   Ibid., p. 23.

15.   Saint-Simon, "New Christianity," 1825, in Markam, p. 81.

16. See particularly the work on which Condorcet was laboring when he was arrested and put to death, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of Progress of the Human Mind* (1793–1794). Translated by June Barraclough and with an Introduction by Stuart Hampshire. (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1979).

17. See J. S. Mill, *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (4th ed.) (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1891). Interestingly, Hippolyte Taine wrote on Mill and Positivism. *Le positivisme anglais; étude sur Stuart Mill* (Paris: G. Bailliere, 1864).

18. Many of the most influential psychiatrists of the late nineteenth century, including Jean Charcot, who so profoundly influenced French psychiatry and Freud, were originally trained in Montpellier. Whereas other medical schools in France and in Europe often stressed mechanistic approaches, Montpellier gave weight to psychological ideas. Pierre Janet, another writer with whose work William James was familiar, was influenced by the Ecole de Montpellier, and by ideas of hypnosis and hysteria.

19. It is interesting to note how closely ideas about psychological health and "order" are mingled with ideas of political and social order, in ways strongly reminiscent of Plato. While social theorists often made assumptions about these correlations, generally speaking, they have not been adequately studied or appreciated. Positivism was born from a lunge for coherence in a world from which it seemed to have disappeared. But the coherence had to be "useful."

20. Auguste Comte, *A General View of Positivism* (Centenary Edition, translated from the French by J. H. Bridges) (NY: Robert Speller & Sons, 1975), pp. 8–9.

21. Ibid., pp. 11, 15. "Unity of action depends upon unity of impulse and unity of design; and thus we find that the co-ordination of human nature as a whole depends ultimately upon the co-ordination of mental conceptions" (p. 26). These ideas strongly influenced the work of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, who, before writing on primitive mentality, actually produced a fascinating philosophical study of the works of Comte. See L. Lévy-Bruhl, *La philosphie d'Auguste Comte* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1900).

22. "The true path of human progress lies in . . . diminishing the vacillation, inconsistency and discordance of our designs by furnishing external motives for those operations of our intellectual, moral and practical powers, of which the original source was purely internal." Ibid., p. 30.

23. Ibid., pp. 49–50.

24. Ibid., pp. 63–68.

25. Ibid., pp. 365.

26. Ibid., p. 439.

27. Ibid., p. 365.

28. Ibid., pp. 62, 84.

29. Consider, for example, the following observation by Comte. "Combining the spirit of antiquity with that of Catholic Feudalism, it proposes to carry out the political programme put forward by the Convention." Ibid., p. 441.

30. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912). Translated by Joseph Ward Swain (NY: The Free Press, 1965), p. 13.

31. Durkheim thereby strikes a balance between the need for unity which is born of understanding and the inexhaustible diversity of the real world which it is the task of the understanding to study. James too makes precisely the same claim: he avoids the "sand heap" of empiricism, while keeping clear also of the shoals of idealism.

32. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, p. 477.

33. Ibid., p. 14.

34. Ibid., p. 479.

35. Ibid., pp. 486, 494.

36. Ibid., p. 469.

37. Ibid., p. 469.

38. See Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss *Primitive Classification (De Quelques Formes Primitives de la Classification, 1903)*. Translated and edited by Rodney Needham (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963). Durkheim and Mauss explain that classification takes no account of emotion, thereby delineating the limits of their argument concerning classification and its relation to thinking, and pointing to the direction of *Les formes élementaires*, which speaks directly of social emotions. The concluding paragraphs of *Primitive Classification* are, I think, the point of departure for *Les formes elementaires* . . . "Now emotion is naturally refractory to analysis, or at least lends itself uneasily to it, because it is too complex. Above all, when it has a collective origin it defies critical and rational examination . . . Thus the history of scientific classification is, in the last analysis, the history of the stages by which this element of social affectivity has progressively weakened, leaving more and more room for the reflective thought of individuals." (pp. 63, 88). The centrality of the Comtean tradition to Durkheim's work has frequently been lost on critics such as Anthony Giddons and Steven Lukes, whose work tends to bleed faith out of Durkheim.

39.   *The Writings of William James . . .* , p. 63

40.   Compare the works of Henri Bergson, with which James was thoroughly familiar.

41.   *The Writings of William James . . .* , p. 72.

42.   Ibid., pp. 64, 73.

43.   Ibid., p. 73.

44.   Ibid., pp. 203–204.

45.   It is highly unlikely that any truths could be held to be "self-evident" before the late eighteenth century. "Self-evidence" implies that as James says here, the knowing is "verified and completed." Such a conception of knowledge which we have inherited from the Enlightenment would be, according to James, a fallacy.

46.   *The Writings of William James . . .* , p. 213.

47.   Ibid., pp. 311, 312.

48.   Ibid., pp. 317, 319, 333, 334. The formulation captures the central dilemma of Positivism, which indeed makes men appear to create as individuals the truth it is necessary to assume. Even Durkheim would, I think, subscribe to this formulation, but might well emphasize, as I did here, the necessity to assume the truth, whereas James couches this as "willingness," placing his emphasis on the will.

49.   Ibid., pp. 336, 341, 345.

50.   In this connection consider the emphasis in Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* on the importance of ritual in, as it were "fixing" social sentiment.

51.   *The Writings of William James . . .* , p. 399.

52.   Ibid., p. 399.

53.   Ibid., pp. 399–448.

54.   Ibid., p. 448.

55.   Ibid., pp. 450, 451, 452, 457.

56.   Durkheim essentially follows the quest for what James, referring to Wordsworth, called 'eternal peace abiding at the heart of endless agitation.'

57.   In this positivists were building on works such as the very influential *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) by Adam Smith (Introd. E. G. West, Indianapolis: Liberty Press/Liberty Classics, 1976). Positivists, following this work of Smith and others, adopted the late Enlightenment assumption that morals had to be based not on ideas but rather on feelings and sensations. Otherwise, it was impossible to develop a science of morals at all, since it could have no empirical basis. A theory of morals, for them as for Smith, was necessarily a theory of moral *sentiments*.

58.   However, this connection has not, to my knowledge, been made firmly enough for contemporary writers on the social sciences to be aware of it.

59.   *The Writings of William James . . .* , p. 599.

60.   Ibid., pp. 602, 604, 605, 712.

61.   Ibid., p. 712.

62.   Such a definition of psychological realities of human experience is, of course, essential to psychoanalysis, for which psychological life is the most essential reality.

63,   One might argue here that Durkheim's notion of the "negative cult" covers such "wrong feelings." Yet for Durkheim, the negative cult serves positive social functions, and does not in theory "feel wrong." Also, whereas James is concerned with a theory of individual will and what makes action possible, Durkheim is focused on the ideas of the soul and of the whole, which necessarily impress themselves on individuals as representations of the underlying realities of social forces.

64.   *The Writings of William James . . .* , p. 605.

65.   Ibid., pp. 605–606.

66.   Ibid., p. 713. A definition of resistance with which Freud himself would have heartily concurred.

67.   Ibid., p. 386.