

learn that 500 tons of rock have blocked their exit they rejoice, because they realize that the day of judgment has come and that they have been sealed away from Armageddon for their eternal salvation. So they pass their time of waiting in singing hymns of praise.

Only the individualists, bound by no ties to one another and imbued by no principles of solidarity, would hit upon the cannibal gamble as the proper course.

Arguing from different premises, we can never improve our understanding unless we examine and reformulate our assumptions. The following chapters are intended to clarify the extent to which thinking depends upon institutions. A clear framework is needed for a complex argument. I have chosen to approach solidarity and cooperation through the work of Emile Durkheim and Ludwik Fleck. For them, true solidarity is only possible to the extent that individuals share the categories of their thought. That such sharing is possible is unacceptable to many philosophers. It contradicts the basic axioms of the theory of rational behavior by which each thinker is treated as a sovereign individual. But the theory of rational choice, developed on this axiomatic structure, has insuperable difficulties with the idea of solidarity. The plan of these lectures was to bring the two approaches together, advocating that the ideas of Durkheim and Fleck be taken more seriously than heretofore in the discussions about the nature of the social bond. There is a tendency to dismiss Durkheim and Fleck because they seem to be saying that institutions have minds of their own. Of course institutions cannot have minds. It is worth spending time understanding what these thinkers really said.

Institutions Cannot Have Minds of Their Own



NOT JUST ANY BUSLOAD or haphazard crowd of people deserves the name of society: there has to be some thinking and feeling alike among members. But this is not to say that a corporate group possesses attitudes of its own. If it possesses anything, it is because of the legal theory that endows it with fictive personality. Yet, legal existence is not enough. Legal presumptions do not attribute emotional bias to corporations. Just because it is legally constituted, a group cannot be said to "behave"—still less to think or feel.

If this is literally true, it is implicitly denied by much of social thought. Marxist theory assumes that a social class can perceive, choose, and act upon its own group interests. Democratic theory is based on the idea of the collective will. Yet, when it comes to the detailed analysis, the theory of individual rational choice finds nothing but difficulties in the notion of collective behavior. It is axiomatic for the theory that rational behavior is based on self-regarding motives. The individual calculates what is in his best interest and acts accordingly. This is the basis of the theory on which economic analysis and political theory are based, and yet we get the contrary impression. Our intuition is that individuals do contribute to the public good generously, even unhesitatingly, without obvious self-serving. Whittling down the meaning of self-serving behavior until every possible disinterested motive is included merely makes the theory vacuous.

Emile Durkheim had another way of thinking about the conflict between individual and society (Durkheim 1903, 1912). He transferred it to warring elements within the person. For him the initial error is to deny the social origins of individual thought. Classifications, logical operations, and guiding metaphors are given to the individual by society. Above all, the sense of a priori rightness of some ideas and the nonsensicality of others are handed out as part of the social environment. He thought the reaction of outrage when entrenched judgments are challenged is a gut response directly due to commitment to a social group. In his view, the only program of research that would explain how a collective good is created would be work in epistemology.

Durkheim's thought is very apposite at this time. He believed that utilitarianism could never account for the foundations of civil society. Many of the sophisticated problems and paradoxes of utilitarianism were unsuspected in his day. But he was convinced all along that the Benthamite model, by which a social order is produced automatically out of the self-interested actions of rational individuals, was too limited because it gave no explanation of group solidarity.

Durkheim's sociological epistemology ran into considerable opposition and has remained undeveloped to this day. By upgrading the role of society in organizing thought, he downgraded the role of the individual. For this he was attacked as a rationalist and a radical. Since he did not spell out the precise steps of his functionalist argument, he attracted the opposite complaint—as being not too rational but appealing to irrationalism. He seemed to be invoking some mystic entity, the social group, and endowing it with superorganic, self-sustaining powers. For this he earned attack as a conservative social theorist. In spite of these weaknesses, his idea was still too good to be dismissed. Epistemological resources may be able to explain what cannot be explained by the theory of rational behavior.

According to Robert Merton, the French interest in the sociology of knowledge was largely independent of the prolific discussions of ideology and social consciousness conducted in Germany at the same time. Merton's essay on Karl Mannheim is essential background for this topic (1949). He pointed out that the French in their choice of problems emphasized "the range of variation among different peoples, not only of moral and social structures but of cognitive orientation as well." On the other hand, the

German sociology of knowledge was deeply marked by left-wing Hegelianism and by Marxist theory. In its early formulations, the sociology of knowledge in Germany was dogged by relativist problems and dominated by propagandist intentions. As these elements were gradually eliminated, the focus of the subject turned much more upon the relations of the individual to the social order in general. The effect of variation in the social order was (and is still) largely overlooked. All the focus was upon the interests. The usual typology of knowledge, for example, tends to explain different points of view by reference to the conflicting interests of different sections within modern industrial society. There was no attempt to compare viewpoints based on totally different types of society. Merton concludes his survey with a list of the logical flaws in Mannheim's arguments and exposes Mannheim's rhetorical devices for overcoming them. It is clear that no disciplined comparative framework would emerge from a sociology uninterested in the range of variety among different societies.

The French Durkheimian ideas have been less assimilated into the sociology of science by comparison with the German contribution. First, they were less compelling just because they were less political, dealing as they did with examples from distant, exotic peoples. Second, sociology, though it may have started with philosophical questions and political issues, received its major impulse for development because it provided an indispensable tool for administrative purposes. So Durkheim's intellectual program has languished.

Fortunately, the current wave of interest in Ludwik Fleck's work in the philosophy of science coincides with a wave of interest in political theory in the sources of commitment and altruism. In his book on the identification of syphilis, *The Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, (1935), Fleck elaborated and extended Durkheim's approach. It would be worth making a detailed comparison of their points of agreement and their differences. In many places Fleck went far beyond Durkheim; in others he missed Durkheim's central synthesizing idea. Both were equally emphatic about the social basis of cognition.

In his skeptical attack on causal theories, David Hume had already posed the question for Durkheim; Hume had asserted that in our experience we only find succession and frequency, no laws or necessity. It is we ourselves who attribute causality.

Quoting Hume, Durkheim also posed the same question to an

imaginary audience of apriorist philosophers, defying them to show us "whence we hold this surprising prerogative and how it comes that we can see certain relations in things which the examination of these things cannot reveal to us." And his own answer was that the categories of time, space, and causality have a social origin.

They represent the most general relations which exist between things; surpassing all our other ideas in extension, they dominate all the details of our intellectual life. If men do not agree upon these essential ideas at any moment, if they did not have the same conceptions of time, space, cause, number, etc., all contact between their minds would be impossible, and with that, all life together. Thus, society could not abandon the categories to the free choice of the individual without abandoning itself. . . . There is a minimum of logical conformity beyond which it cannot go. For this reason, it uses all its authority upon its members to forestall such dissidences. . . . The necessity with which the categories are imposed upon us is not the effect of simple habits whose yoke we can easily throw off with a little effort; nor is it a physical or metaphysical necessity, since the categories change in different places and times; it is a special sort of moral necessity which is to the intellectual life what moral obligation is to the will. (Durkheim 1912, pp. 29-30)

Compare this with Fleck, who said

Cognition is the most socially-conditioned activity of man, and knowledge is the paramount social creation. The very structure of language presents a compelling philosophy characteristic of that community, and even a single word can represent a complex theory. . . . every epistemological theory is trivial that does not take the sociological dependence of all cognition into account in a fundamental and detailed manner. (Fleck 1935, p. 42)

Fleck went further than Durkheim in analyzing the idea of a social group. He introduced several specialized terms: the thought collective (equivalent to Durkheim's social group) and its thought style (equivalent to Durkheim's collective representations), which leads perception and trains it and produces a stock of knowledge.

For Fleck, the thought style sets the preconditions of any cognition, and it determines what can be counted as a reasonable question and a true or false answer. It provides the context and sets the limits for any judgment about objective reality. Its essential feature is to be hidden from the members of the thought collective.

The individual within the collective is never, or hardly ever, conscious of the prevailing thought style which almost always exerts an absolutely compulsive force upon his thinking, and with which it is not possible to be at variance. (Fleck 1935, p. 41)

Fleck's thought style is very close to the idea of a conceptual scheme, which according to some philosophers limits and controls individual cognition so severely as to exclude transcultural communication. For Fleck the thought style is as sovereign for the thinker as Durkheim held collective representation to be in primitive culture, but Fleck was not talking about primitives.

For Durkheim the division of labor accounts for the big difference between modern and primitive society: to understand solidarity we should examine those elementary forms of society that do not depend on exchange of differentiated services and products. According to Durkheim, in these elementary cases individuals come to think alike by internalizing their idea of the social order and sacralizing it. The character of the sacred is to be dangerous and endangered, calling every good citizen to defend its bastions. The shared symbolic universe and the classifications of nature embody the principles of authority and coordination. In such a system problems of legitimacy are solved because individuals carry the social order around inside their heads and project it out onto nature. However, an advanced division of labor destroys this harmony between morality, society, and the physical world and replaces it with solidarity dependent on the workings of the market. Durkheim did not think that solidarity based on sacred symbolism is possible for industrial society. In modern times sacredness has been transferred to the individual. These two forms of solidarity are the basis of the main typology in Durkheim's theory (Durkheim 1893, 1895).

Fleck distinguished the thought collective, comprising the true believers, from the thought community, formally members of the first but not necessarily under the constraints of the thought

style. Then he allowed for thought collectives to vary according to their persistence over time, from the most transient and accidental to the most stable formations. He considered the thought style of the stable formations to be more disciplined and uniform, as in the guilds, trade unions and churches. Fleck went to some pains to discuss the internal structure of groups; an inner elite of ranked initiates exists at the center, the masses on the outside edge. The center is the moving point. The periphery takes its ideas in an unquestioning, literal sense; ossification occurs at the rim. He envisaged many thought worlds, each with its center and rim, intersecting, separating, and merging. Somewhat parallel to moral density in Durkheim's theory, Fleck recognized that the sheer amount of interaction could vary; the degree of concentration and energy at the center depends on the pressure of demand from the outer fringes. When this interaction is strong, the question of individual deviation hardly arises. Fleck was not interested in sacredness or in social evolution. Nonetheless he applied the Durkheimian idea of a sovereign thought style to modern society, even to science. This would have horrified Durkheim. As Fleck said, the Durkheimians exhibited "an excessive respect, bordering on pious reverence, for scientific facts" (pp. 46-47). He ridiculed their attitude as a naive obstacle to the building of a scientific epistemology.

Durkheim's sayings often invoke a mysterious, superorganic group mind. Fleck cannot surely be charged with the same failing. His approach was entirely positivistic. In dealing with the criticisms that affect them both, a good strategy is to get Durkheim and Fleck to make a common defense. Sometimes Fleck has the best answer, sometimes Durkheim. Fighting as allies, back to back, each can supplement with his strength the weakness of the other.

In his preface, the editor-translator of Fleck's book compares its initial rejection by reviewers with the instant and resounding success of Karl Popper's *Logic der Forschung*, published at about the same time (Trenn 1979, p. x). The different reception could largely be explained by the relative strength of the thought collective to which each writer belonged. Popper was a well-known figure in the prestigious company of Viennese philosophers and Fleck a rank outsider to philosophy. The biographical sketch describes Fleck as "a humanist with an encyclopedic knowledge" (Fleck, pp. 149-53). A medical doctor and a bacteriologist whose publications and research were about the serology of typhus and syphilis and various pathogenic organisms, he was not well placed

to impress the philosophers. It would be more Durkheimian to follow out Fleck's own idea that the thought collective, that is, the social organization, explains the lack of attention he first received. Nonetheless, it is interesting to follow the editor's idea that its initial failure was a matter of incompatible thought styles. Indeed, it seems that the original reviewers faulted Fleck for a reductionist minimization of the individual scientist's role. He was reproached for his neglect of individual personalities in the history of science. His sociological analysis was dismissed as adding little to what Max Weber had already said. All in all, he was criticized for his whole message and not for any incidental elements. The strong demand he made for sociological and comparative epistemology was dismissed. His editors believe that times have changed and that now a decisive shift in thought style has occurred.

Certainly there is a new interest in distinct styles of reasoning in the history of science. Galileo introduced a new style of thought which rendered old questions impossible. Ian Hacking's chapter "Language, Truth and Reason" (1982) briefly surveys a number of recent, influential essays in the history of science on "new modes of reasoning that have specific beginnings and trajectories of development" (p. 51). In most cases, however, the tendency is to be interested in the thought style and not in its relation to the thought collective. If the shift in Fleck's direction is going to be creative, it must not separate thought style from thought collective, thus failing again the sociological part of the enterprise.

Thomas Kuhn was the first since 1937 to draw attention to Fleck's book by a reference (Kuhn 1962). In his foreword to the English translation he voices hesitations that will still be widely shared. Fleck's position, he said, is not free of fundamental problems.

... for me these cluster, as they did on first reading, around the notion of a thought collective ... I find the notion intrinsically misleading and a source of recurrent tension in Fleck's text. Put briefly, a thought collective seems to function as an individual mind writ large because many people possess it (or are possessed by it). To explain its apparent legislative authority, Fleck therefore repeatedly resorts to terms borrowed from discourse about individuals. (Kuhn 1979, p. x)

In sum, thinking and feeling are for individual persons. However, can a social group think or feel? This is the central, repugnant

paradox. Kuhn appreciates in Fleck's book a number of separate insights, but not Fleck's main argument. By rejecting it, Kuhn is sharing discomfort with many liberals. John Rawls' philosophy of justice is founded on outright individualism; in his view society is not "an organic whole with a life of its own distinct from and superior to that of all its members in their relations with one another" (Rawls 1971, p. 264).

It is true that there are now several movements of ideas in the direction to which Fleck was urgently pointing. For instance, we can deal more easily with the uncomfortable terms. The translators considered and rejected several alternatives for *denkkollektiv*, such as "school of thought" or "cognitive community," before they adopted the literal translation, "thought collective." But now the term "world" has acquired the right sense. Thought world (including distinguishable theology worlds, anthropology worlds, and science worlds) in place of thought collective would be faithful to Fleck's essential idea, while linking it appropriately to Nelson Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking* (Goodman 1978) and to Howard Becker's *Art Worlds* (Becker 1982). Fleck's subject was scientific discovery, Becker's is artistic creativity, and Goodman's is cognition in general.

Each of these very independent thinkers has a striking affinity with the others. Becker insists that collective effort produces a work of art, even though it is attributed to a particular artist. He includes in the art world, along with the artist, the anonymous collaboration of the suppliers, the canvas makers, the paint manufacturers, the framers, the distributors, the catalogue designers, the galleries, and the public. It is a historical chance that the one class of actors in the art world of Western painting should be individually named and renowned as the "artists." In other art worlds in other times and places, the collectivity of the studio or the mastercraftsmen's guild overbears the individual's fame. All art worlds depend on the existence of a public for the art work. The interaction with public demand is a crucial and creative part of the music or painting world. Fleck took the same point, emphasizing both the role of laboratory practice and of public support.

Had it not been for the insistent clamor of public opinion for a blood test, the experiments of Wassermann would never have enjoyed the social response that was absolutely essential to the development of the reaction, to its "technical perfection," and

to the gathering of collective experience. Laboratory practice alone readily explains why alcohol and later acetone should have been tried besides water for extract preparation, and why healthy organs should have been used besides syphilitic ones. Many workers carried out these experiments almost simultaneously, but the actual authorship is due to the collective, the practice of cooperative and team work. (Fleck 1935, pp. 77-78)

He even went so far as to enjoin anonymity and self-effacement on all scientists. This democratic ideal may partly explain why he chose the Russian model of a collective farm to describe the science worlds.

Nelson Goodman argues that the rightness of categories depends on their fitting within a world. Rightness, meaning fit with action and fit with other categories, is parallel to Fleck's idea of harmony between elements within a thought style. It almost parallels Fleck's idea that truth, in a sense, is made from illusions (a phrase that troubled Kuhn). The way that Fleck explained the construction of objective reality by the social experiences of the thought collective is very close to Goodman's explanation of rightness as fit with practice:

Without the organization, the selection of relevant kinds, effected by evolving tradition, there is no rightness or wrongness of categorization, no validity or invalidity of inductive reference, no fair or unfair sampling, and no uniformity or disparity among samples. Thus justifying such tests for rightness may consist primarily in showing not that they are reliable but that they are authoritative. (Goodman 1978, pp. 138-39)

Anthropologists have used modes of thought to refer to the same authoritatively interlocked words and ideas (Horton and Finnegan 1973).

It is now easier to use science worlds, art worlds, music worlds, or thought worlds, instead of thought collective, for the social grouping that is defined by its distinctive thought style because it invokes these contemporary supporting links for Fleck's central idea.

The stage may be well set, but the Durkheim-Fleck program

in the sociology of knowledge fails if it is based on fundamental error. Two grave objections are commonly made against it. The first objection is the argument against loose functional explanations. Durkheim's central thesis, that religion maintains the solidarity of the social group, is a functional explanation. Fleck has his own version of a self-sustaining functional loop:

The general structure of a thought collective entails that the communication of thoughts within a collective irrespective of content or logical justification, should lead for sociological reasons to the corroboration of the thought structure (Fleck 1935, p. 103)

They were both functionalists: the question rises, do their arguments fail to provide the necessary logical steps? If not, could a better functionalist argument be made that would justify their conclusions?

The second objection concerns the rational basis for collective action. If individuals are assumed to be rational and seeking their self-interest, do they ever make sacrifices on behalf of the group? And if they do act against their self-interest, what theory of human motivation would explain it? Durkheim brings in religion to do some of the explaining. For Fleck, any system of knowledge is a kind of public good, and consequently, religion itself raises the same problems. For both, the real issue is the emergence of the social order itself. The pages that follow will not concern anyone who holds that the social order springs spontaneously into being. The theory of rational choice forbids spontaneous commitment to be shipped into the argument under guise of religion. The commitment that subordinates individual interests to a larger social whole must be explained. To many readers of Durkheim, his argument seems to depend too heavily on religion, and if, for the purposes of their sociological epistemology, religious belief is to be equated with any other knowledge system, then Fleck's assertion that a thought style reigns sovereign over its thought world seems also to be suspect. How did that sovereignty arise? This is what rational choice theorists require to be explained.

On the other hand, the theory of rational choice has severe limitations. People do not seem to act according to its principles (Hardin 1982). The program of Durkheim and Fleck can answer the functionalist criticism and the rational choice criticism only by

developing a double stranded view of social behavior. One strand is cognitive: the individual demand for order and coherence and control of uncertainty. The other strand is transactional: the individual utility maximizing activity described in a cost-benefit calculus. In most of this volume we will say little about the latter, which is already well represented in scholarly writing. The under-represented case is the role of cognition in forming the social bond.

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MARY DOUGLAS



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