What is the Welfare State? A Sociological Restatement

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Law Matters Public Lecture
LSE

What is the Welfare State?

David Garland
New York University
1. “Carrying coals to Newcastle”

(LSE and the Welfare State)
2. “The Welfare State” as misnomer
3. Conceptualizing the Welfare State
Three conceptions of the welfare state

1. Welfare for the poor

2. Social insurance and social services

3. Government at the level of the economy and the population
The Welfare State

Government of the economy and the population,

in the interest of security, stability and welfare,

utilizing the tools of insurance, economic management, and social provision,

together with the legal regulations, taxes, and forms of expertise required for their operation.
Welfare State “Governmentality”

(c/f Michel Foucault)

A distinctive mode of government, involving…

…a specific way of reasoning about and exercising governmental power…

…using specific apparatuses, techniques, and forms of knowledge.
4. Problems of the Welfare State
5. The Social Basis of the Welfare State
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6. The Welfare State as a Normal Social Fact
Emile Durkheim
The Welfare State as a Normal Social Fact:

A social fact is normal if….

1. It is present in all such societies at that stage of development and

2. It is bound up with the functioning of society.

“Normal” = functionally essential; integral to social health.
Capitalism:

“a society that has instituted its economy in a capitalist manner, in that it has coupled its material provision to the private accumulation of capital, measured in units of money, through free contractual exchange in markets driven by individual calculations of utility”

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