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AN AXIOLOGICAL STUDY  
OF DURKHEIM AND WEBER  
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OF  
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## ABSTRACT

This work examines the contributions of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber to the study of moral phenomena. Durkheim advocated extreme social realism and explained morality as the product of the collective nature of society. However, ample evidence is found to suggest that he conflated the terms 'collective' and 'societal.' Durkheim gave a convincing explanation for the power of the beliefs and ideals of society, its 'collective representations,' but to the extent that his paradigm attempts to become holistic, it fails. Durkheim's errors are described and explained in relation to his own perspective of social realism and to the perspective of methodological individualism. Durkheim's theory readily comes to grip with moral issues faster than alternate theories, but in certain assumptions remains a matter of faith, especially in the belief that society is a collective entity.

Methodological individualism remains a better approach for the study of moral phenomena, but is not yet, by itself, the only method. Research in this area can only benefit from an examination of the Durkheimian approach —without of course, accepting the genuine flaws in Durkheim's reasoning. It would appear that the final authority in the sociological investigation of moral phenomena must be methodological individualism. This does not mean that there can be no role for collective concepts derived directly from social realism and its extreme form of social holism. It appears that there are no grounds for formal *rapprochement* and integration between methodological individualism and collective concepts, at least no possibility was found by an examination of both Durkheim and Weber. Collective concepts may indeed be a useful heuristic device and a means to open up additional questions for investigation, but the final judgement of issues must be made within the premises of methodological individualism.

## Chapter One: Introduction

This inquiry into the intersection of axiology and methodology in the works of Durkheim and Weber will lead to the consideration of several related matters. The prospects for a rational study of moral phenomena has to be seen as something in itself apart from both naturalistic inquiries and ideology. The relationship of the individual to society needs to be explored along with what we consider to be the nature of the individual and the nature of society. We will see how philosophical and conventional assumptions of what is "moral" will be linked to sociological and empirical investigation. We will look at how a study of moral phenomena and socially-created moral codes is dependent on certain axiological and normative assumptions. The project to seek to examine moral phenomena will be affected by what we think is "moral" to begin with, and is dependent on certain value-judgements within the methodology.

The moralist, as a social scientist, can choose among a variety of paths of investigation. The moralist can seek to advance a normative point of view, describe what exists without normative criticism, or can seek the most 'scientific' methods available to examine and explain the phenomena in question with the least amount of personal bias. It is this last approach which concerns this dissertation. We do not intend to divorce our approach from all sociologists and philosophers with different concerns, but our goal here is to discuss the rational examination and explanation of moral phenomena *in general*. In particular, we wish to reveal the scholarly contributions of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber to this enterprise.

The point here is not to argue for the futility of rational analysis of moral phenomena, or to exhaustively draw up an agenda and paradigm for making this endeavor a moral science similar to the natural sciences. Our object is to discover what we can learn from the works of Durkheim and Weber in order to facilitate a rational analysis of moral phenomena in general. We can show that the extreme moral holism in Durkheim's paradigm known as 'social realism' reveals the pitfalls and mistakes of methods of



moral collectivism for the understanding of moral phenomena. We critique Durkheim's paradigm sympathetically *from its own point of view* with the knowledge and concerns of Weber's 'methodological individualism.' We can demonstrate that Durkheim's paradigm fails from within its own point of view, and in addition, cannot meet the challenges from the paradigm of methodological individualism. We discuss the theories of Durkheim and Weber together in the same analysis because their theories are the archetypal representatives of much different and exclusive schools of thought which are still part of contemporary sociology.

The rational analysis of moral codes and ethical ideals has been long in coming and has arrived from diverse paths. Ethics had been traditionally the province of gods and other superstitions. Eventually ethics was discussed by philosophers as well as by the theologians. The philosophers liberated the discussion of ethics from both tradition and theology, but generally consigned it to the purely abstract and theoretical domain. Sociology emerged at the end of the 19th century when philosophy seemed incapable of dealing with the diversity of new problems, and no great return to religion seemed possible. Though sociology and philosophy employ different methods and have different goals, the disciplines are interrelated; the sociological approach has not as much rejected philosophy as it had different concerns. We can examine the concrete manifestations of moral phenomena in different cultures, societies, and individuals, and we can also discuss 'theoretical ethics.' The domain of 'theoretical ethics' would include the overall relationship of moral codes to social institutions, human nature, evolution, history, cultural universals, and unique cultural specifics. Similarly, not only can we study what is in the domain of the historical as well as the theoretical, but we can analyze what is and what might be.

After framing the question from the point of view of a specific ideological point of view, we can then analyze what *should be*. Whether we should analyze what should be is a different matter. This choice should not be made without reservations, and sometimes need not be made at all. Any discussion of what *should be* is built upon value-judgements, and any attempt to avoid recognition of this fact will only be to the detriment of a rational dialogue and conceptual clarity. There is no basis for value-judgements which

is independent of the human mind, inherent in the nature of matter, or inherent in the nature of the progress of ideas. There are merely people with ideas. The fact that we have to accept people's rights to their ideas does not mean that all ideas are of equal worth. Values can be judged as being more or less rational, and more or less congenial or inimical to human life. Values are always judged by other values and purposes, and at some point, debaters may have to accept that not all of their value differences are reconcilable. The ideas with which we as social scientists use to perceive and analyze moral phenomena are not automatic and beyond scrutiny themselves. This is not to suggest that "complete relativism" is sanctioned here by these reservations. Certainly this must not be interpreted as an endorsement of epistemological or metaphysical relativism. Rather this is just the recognition that social scientists use their own ideas as they examine the belief systems of individuals and cultures. Every time we examine the teeming social life in the human pond, we also see our own reflections cast upon the image: this is not necessarily a distortion but a clarifying frame to see better. There is no frame of reference to judge moral phenomena that is not human.

If social scientists are ever tempted into discussing what 'should' be, not only are there pluralistic considerations to be kept in mind, but there is also a consideration that such a question must be asked specific to human existence and nothing else. The discussion of what 'should' be cannot be divorced and made independent from the discussions of what is and what can be. Our concern is not only what can and does exist, but we have the metaphysical rule that only what does or can exist can influence our decisions over what should exist. To phrase this in a different way, both epistemology and axiology are grounded in existence. Not only do square circles not exist and cannot tell us anything about what real circles are, but it would be irrational to judge human existence by nonhuman possibility, posit impossible "ideals," and thereby reinvent secular versions of "the Original Sin." This latter point is relevant to our interpretation of Durkheim. It is from a close examination of Durkheim that we draw reservations regarding the role of collective concepts for the sociological enterprise. Collective concepts seem to have a more problematic

existence than Durkheim had hoped, but they seem to be useful as a heuristic tool nonetheless; they remain relevant in part because other people use them and refer to them.

We devote most of the inquiry to Durkheim because if his theory were true then we would have to accept moral collectivism in general, and it would be unnecessary to examine the less 'ambitious' and yet more complex paradigm of methodological individualism. Durkheim was aware that his theory was not totally adequate for creating a 'moral science' [ Durkheim, 1979, p.57 ], but had hoped that this might someday be rectified. This paper will show that Durkheim's theory cannot be improved, and that a 'moral science' is unlikely to ever emulate the natural sciences or yield precise normative conclusions.

Weber's theory of methodological individualism seems to be stable, internally consistent, and efficacious. It seems to be the preferable alternative to theories of moral collectivism and Durkheim's social realism. Space does not permit us here to demonstrate that Weber's theory is better than all known theories; rather, it avoids making the crucial errors intrinsic to moral collectivism in general and the precise errors within Durkheim's theory. Unlike these theories, however, Weber's methodological individualism does not directly use collective concepts and Weber suggested that the question whether they exist cannot be divorced from value-related questions [ Weber, 1975a, p.180 ]. To what degree collective concepts are as real as they appear to be, is yet unknown. Any attempt to resolve the matter would presumably necessitate an underlying agreement on values and on the separate matter whether we need to believe in collective concepts if we can do without them. This debate is unlikely to be resolved, and if resolved, is probably unlikely to be resolved in such a way that proves their existence (as entities) to anyone who did not initially assume their existence as an act of faith.

That is to say, collective concepts are resilient but do not appear to have the same level of reality as material things. They do not appear to be real but cannot be dismissed without being first disproved, and this has not been achieved in this research. They appear to have a different level of reality than other concepts, but different does not mean equal or superior. It may be that new theories based upon methodological individualism will be developed to include collective concepts, or this may prove to be

unnecessary. However, our examination of Durkheim's collective concepts with Weber's methodological individualism shows no immediate or obvious grounds for a *rapprochement*. Methodological individualism can use collective concepts as heuristic devices, but that appears to be the limit of their use. In any conflict between the two, it would appear that methodological individualism must have the final say.

The first task of this study is to discuss what is meant by a rational study of moral phenomena. Chapter Two, "Social Science and Moral Phenomena," establishes how Durkheim and Weber separately perceived the study of moral phenomena, what goals they posited for it, and how they saw it in comparison to sociology in general.

It is necessary to examine the basis for Durkheim's paradigm before the critique can be developed. In Chapter Three, "Moral Reality and Social Realism," the philosophical influences on Durkheim are explored as are their conceptual premises. Durkheim showed that social reality is a moral reality at all times. To explain this to a human being is like trying to tell a fish that it is swimming in water. It is so obvious that it needs special elucidation.

The proofs of Durkheim's theory are potentially two-fold. If it is possible to prove the bifurcation of *Man*, that humans are divided within themselves and that unity is achieved only at a level above the individual in society, then this would prove that society exists in the way that Durkheim thought it existed. If Durkheim was able to succeed in showing that society existed as a holistic being, then this would prove that individuals were either helpless components or bifurcated people, or both. It would prove that *Man* is *Homo Duplex*. To sufficiently refute Durkheim's paradigm, it would appear necessary to prove both that *Homo Duplex* is not the only possibility based on Durkheim's own evidence *and* that there is no proof that society exists as an entity, much less as a social being.

For Durkheim, the root of the creation of society as more than the sum of its parts is the process of collective effervescence. In mature societies, this process also intensifies the moral processes that

already exist. Chapter Four, "*Homo Duplex* and Effervescence," shows the connection in Durkheim's theory between his concept of collective effervescence and his concept *Homo Duplex*. According to Durkheim, for society to be a moral reality, human beings have to be bifurcated. A ruthless examination of this link in Durkheim's theory shows that collective effervescence cannot be the basis for society, that the implications of *Homo Duplex* are disturbing, and that *Homo Duplex* does not follow from Durkheim's own premises.

Chapter Five, "Moral Action within Society as a Being," examines how the individual fits into the linkages of collective concepts and whether society succeeds as a "being." It shows that Durkheim's use of the term "collective" always led into his use of "societal" and that his use of "societal" led to his assumption that society was a whole being. Durkheim would add premises to his argument as he went along, sometimes by including conditional premises and sometimes by appealing to the interests of his audience. Durkheim's reasoning frequently resembled a slippery slope.

Although Durkheim's linkages between collective and societal have been proven incomplete in Chapters Four and Five, his theory still holds some attraction. This sympathetic counter-argument against Durkheim's assumptions has failed to disprove his concept of "collective representations." Methodological individualism does not readily recognize collective concepts. Therefore, it is necessary in Chapter Six, "The Nature of Collective Representations," to examine the efficacy and coherence of "collective representations" to see if they are a vital or a superfluous element in the analysis of moral phenomena.

Durkheim's theory is criticized in Chapters Four and Five, and part of it salvaged in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven, "The Foundation of Knowledge," examines the basis for Durkheim's reasoning in general. A theory of knowledge is advanced and discussed in relationship to Durkheim's assumptions. What we can and cannot disprove in Durkheim's theory then leads us to make tentative conclusions about the nature of the rational analysis of moral phenomena in general. There are reasons to have reservations about Durkheim's approach, but these reasons are enlightening. The weaknesses within Durkheim's

paradigm are not results of his idiosyncrasies, but are representative of his collectivistic approach in general.

At this point, the analysis turns to Weber. Weber's paradigm of methodological individualism is discussed in Chapters Eight and Nine as an alternative to Durkheim's social realism. The basis for Weber's theory and work is discussed in Chapter Eight, "Weber's Methodological Value-Relations." It is shown that his suspicion that collective concepts lacked "value-freedom" prevented him from making the same error as Durkheim.

Once it has been established that methodological individualism avoids errors, it then becomes necessary to show its efficacy. Methodological individualism emerges as the sole paradigm of cognitive understanding which uniquely recognizes individual decision-making and subjective rationality. To mention subjective rationality might tempt critics into labeling this point of view "relativistic" or "irrational." It is necessary in Chapter Nine, "Cognitive Determinism," to demonstrate why Weber's theory of explaining events by their meaning for the individuals concerned does not commit the theorist to relativism and nihilism, and does not consign moral phenomena to the domain of the irrational beyond the systematic understanding of an objective social-scientist. Objectivity is not a starting point, rather it is the goal of sympathetic understanding and dispassionate causal explanation.

Chapter Ten summarizes the conclusions drawn by this dissertation about collective representations. Collective representations are held to all the same value-judgement limitations of all collective concepts, but collective representations may indeed exist or be a valuable tool for interpretive explanation. For collective representations to be useful, they must be divorced from holism and it is not necessary to assume a single origin for either collective representations or society in general.

In Chapter Eleven, the conclusion, there is a discussion of how collective concepts might relate to methodological individualism and the implications of this for our understanding of individual life as a moral end in itself. The individual is always surrounded by social forces which are strong and yet without accountability. Social forces cannot be held in account to a single great being. In addition, we can

establish that these social forces are not products of a collective social being: there is no proof that such a being even exists except as a hypothetical construct or as a generalization. Social forces cannot judge themselves for they are not sentient. The only being that can judge social forces remains the individual. The individual encounters the social forces created by interaction as a swimmer does an ocean current: he can think or sink. The individual does not have to surrender cognitive and moral understanding to such forces as chance and context create. Society is more than the sum of individuals, yet the individual is the only cognitive unit. Social interaction would be subtly changed as the individuals realize their potential self-worth.

The rational study of moral phenomena will not give us "quick fixes," nor will it tell us what to believe. A totally presuppositionless study of moral phenomena is impossible, yet this will be shown in the end not to be a final barrier to our investigation. Moral phenomena are products of human interaction and cognition, and as such, can be studied by the social scientist. Perhaps this study cannot be made totally "objective," and certainly not as "scientific" as the natural sciences, but this not need be a complete handicap. What we seek here is to find from the works of Durkheim and Weber the appropriate methodology to study moral phenomena.

## Chapter Two: Social Science and Moral Phenomena

We seek here to demonstrate the continued relevance of the works of both Durkheim and Weber to the methodology of the sociological study of moral phenomena. The paradigms of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber are usually studied separately and are rightly seen as mutually exclusive. However, a strong case can be made for studying their works together. Both Durkheim and Weber contributed to the founding of sociology and worked extensively to clarify the investigation of moral phenomena. For the purpose of this study, moral phenomena (*les choses morales*) are all actions and events to which a person cannot be indifferent. The individual feels a social or cognitive imperative in regarding these phenomena. The secular social science of moral phenomena includes what Durkheim would call '*la morale*,' the abstract qualities of moral relationships in general, and '*les moeurs*' the content of particular moral codes. This investigation in no way suggests the feasibility of finding some kind of 'absolute hierarchical ethics' as the result of scientific investigation, but neither does it condemn moral phenomena as being outside of rational and methodical investigation.

There are right ways and wrong ways to study moral phenomena. The right ways depend both on sound 'scientific' methodology which is 'value-free,' and on the rational goals, concerns, and values of the social scientists involved. If there are apparent paradoxes in this enterprise they will be rectified in succeeding chapters. There is no one obvious method to study moral phenomena in general, and there is no hope for a scientific formula to be applied to data that will tell the researcher what to believe. Rather, the researcher must pursue objectivity and have a passion for facts and truth, and as well, a respect for human life. Given that the social scientist seeks to aid understanding based upon facts and intrinsic respect for human life, certain avenues in the scientific investigation of moral phenomena are open and others are closed. Moral phenomena are complex and subject to quick personal judgments and



misunderstanding, yet they are still part of our natural world. A moral code is frequently seen as irrational from the point of view of those people who do not accept it. There is some truth in this, but a final and immutable qualification must be made. There is nothing *intrinsic* within moral phenomena that confines them to the realm of the irrational and puts them outside of rational and methodical examination.

A sociological study of morals, according to Durkheim [ Durkheim, 1984, p.xxviii ] is, by definition, conservative *in regards to knowledge*. Thus, recent efforts towards a "critical," "radical," or "postmodern," sociology would have inveighed against progress in our endeavor. Revolutionaries and ideologues can be scientists, but a desire to change society remains separate from the commitment to understand society. There is no *necessary* future for human beings. Similar to the revolutionary who bases theory on a desired future, is the ideologue who bases theory on granting causal power to a sweeping generalization of present conditions. Any historical 'stage' remains a descriptive rather than a predictive label. In any case, the Owl of Minerva flies only at dusk. Not only is prediction impossible because of the complexity of the phenomena involved, but there is no inevitability or guarantee of progress, social-evolution, and the course of history.

A sociological study of morals belongs to those who respect reality and the ongoing persistence and intractability of social phenomena. Facts, not fictions, are the relevant matter. There is room for speculation in scientific investigation, but all theories must remain based only upon the proven facts. Durkheim and Weber were insistent that only past events and not speculation on future events should guide theorizing. We see this in Durkheim's use of 'positive facts,' and also in Weber's rejection of Hegel, which will be dealt with at a later juncture. In addition, both men's skepticism of founding sociology upon evolution can be seen in the light of this concern to separate fact from fiction. Both men accepted Darwin's theory of Evolution; neither accepted the generalizations of changes in species as fixed and absolute processes which could be used to indicate the unknown past and future of human societies. Similarly, both men referred to 'historical stages' only as generalizations which depend on specific criteria and variables, and not as causal agents. Weber and Durkheim can be called 'conservative in regards to

knowledge' to emphasize that they placed a premium on facts, and not to suggest that their politics were part of the 'conservative' movements of their times. Granted, this is not the place for a thorough contrast between Weber and Durkheim and all their contemporaries, but we can make this following generalization. Although Durkheim and Weber created different paradigms, their insistence on using facts and not teleological processes as the data for social science, separated them from Comte, Spencer, Lenin, and Ward. As well, it also separated them from some of the more conspicuous adherents of politicized interpretations of Christianity, Hegel, and Marx.

However, despite similarities in their respect for objective social science and their interests in historical studies of morals, Durkheim and Weber differed as to the nature of the goals of their studies. Durkheim had attempted to create a sociological and scientific study of social values and moral codes [ Durkheim, 1978, p.67 ]. Durkheim once said: "Our first duty at the present moment is to make a moral science for ourselves" [ Logui, 1983, p. 154 ]. What he meant by that is further described on page thirteen below. Insofar as Durkheim was looking to study social phenomena rationally and empirically and to explain events and moral codes, his project would not have differed much from most other macro-sociologists, including Weber who rejected any possibility of a science of ethics [ Weber, 1949, p.13 ]. What appears to have made Durkheim's project particularly ambitious, was his desire to establish the primordial relationship between the individual and society and to establish single causes for complex phenomena. Durkheim sought to start from the multitude of different moral codes to find the exclusive generic moral imperative for all societies and to find the best way to implement that principle in contemporary industrialized societies. It would appear that Durkheim sought to provide a scientific guide for his own interpretation of ethics that he largely drew from Kant and Rousseau. Durkheim's project was not to merely study moral phenomena, but to establish the generic relationships between the individual and social groups in order to yield an all-encompassing abstract moral imperative.

If Durkheim was attempting to create a science of ethics in addition to a scientific study of ethics, Weber, in contrast, in his essay "*The Meaning of 'Ethical Neutrality' in Sociology and Economics*" categorically rejected such an undertaking:

On the contrary, I am most emphatically opposed to the view that a realistic 'science of ethics,' i.e., the analysis of the influence which the ethical evaluations of a group of people have on their other conditions of life and of the influence which the latter, in their turn, exert on the former, can produce an 'ethics' which will be able to say anything about what *should* happen. [ Weber, 1949, p.13 ]

Weber's rejection of a science of ethics should not merely be seen as a negation. Weber's statements on ethics reflected his long-term project to establish social science as autonomous from the changing fashions of morals and prejudices and from what could be called 'moral entrepreneurs.' The social scientist needed a professional sense of proportion and an awareness of his limitations. Weber sought to keep social science secure from all totalitarian and scientistic ideology. He hoped to establish a framework that combined tolerance of values with scientific precision of fact and clarity of argument. Weber's paradigm affords us the means to continue scientific professionalism. A fact-value distinction must be observed, and terms used with precise nonideological definitions. In addition, Weber addressed the issue of individual dignity and anxiety of the scholar and advocated means for the scholar to maintain his professionalism in times of moral and political uncertainty. The scholar had to accept the fact that social science would not supply direct answers and Weber gave guidance for how the scientist could accept science's on-going lack of progress in the realm of ethics.

Durkheim's paradigm was an attempt to understand the collective nature of morality and its intractable presence in all aspects of social order. Sometimes this has been interpreted as the advocacy of a normative moral science; that is, sociologists would seek to determine which values we *should* have for our particular society at a given point in time and development. There is some truth in that, but Durkheim seems to have recognized belatedly the difficulties in this undertaking after reviewing the work of Levy-Bruhl [ Durkheim, 1979, p. 29 ] and through a debate with Belot [ Durkheim, 1979, p.57 ]. Durkheim continued to emphasize the necessity of pedagogy and a science of morality, but reduced by thirty pages

the first preface in his book The Division of Labour which had more strongly advocated the pursuit of scientifically validated cultural norms than his rewritten introduction.

Durkheim and Weber have appeared to be at opposite poles in regards to the study of moral phenomena. However, the differences have been somewhat exaggerated and need to be clarified. Though Durkheim may have aimed 'higher,' his basic description of the task was uncontroversial. He stated in his lectures published as Professional Ethics and Civic Morals the following:

The science of morals and rights should be based on the study of moral and juridical facts. These facts consist of rules of conduct that have received sanction. The problems to be solved in this field of study are:

- (1) How these rules were established in the course of time: that is, what were the causes that gave rise to them and the useful ends they serve.
- (2) The way in which they operate in society; that is, how they are applied by individuals."

...the equipment of the method used in studying the science of morals and rights is of two kinds. On the one hand we have comparative history and ethnography, which enable us to get at the origin of the rule, and show us its component elements first dissociated and then accumulating by degrees. In the second place there are comparative statistics, which allow to compute the degree of relative authority with which this rule is clothed in individual consciousnesses and to discover the causes which make this authority variable. [ Durkheim, 1992, p.1-2 ]

This statement of intent is unambiguous. Durkheim's goals were not all that different than those of other social scientists who were not associated with his type of project. Weber, Sumner, Tönnies, and Wundt presumably would have agreed with the basic thrust and intention. Weber's disavowal of a science of ethics would not have led him to oppose Durkheim's intention to study moral codes methodically, that is without religious or personal bias. However, nowhere in the above statement did Durkheim make any allowance for methodological individualism. There may be less of a gulf between Durkheim and Weber in their desire to study moral codes systematically than in their chosen means. Though they phrased their goals much differently, they were still similar. In the end, the differences between their chosen means would prove to be more decisive than their goals. Their chosen means follow from their different premises and leads to further ramifications, which keep their two paradigms mutually exclusive. In fact, it is noteworthy that Durkheim drew a sharp distinction between moral rules and the products and content of individual consciousnesses. Durkheim's social realism in the statement quoted above is certainly

compatible with Wundt and also with Jung, in that they saw people being moved by rules and imagery which belonged to the group of which they were a part. However, what Durkheim chose to study within the domain of moral phenomena were things that Weber could and would never study: collective concepts and manifestations of assumed fixed and absolute social-moral relationships. In addition, though Weber had interest in "law-like" generalizations, he would have had an aversion to Durkheim's interest in finding "social laws" that were real laws.

Durkheim sought to establish a science of morality to study both *la morale* and *les moeurs*. He may have been inspired by Comte, to whom he owed a large intellectual debt. Comte had earlier advocated a new science of morals after the successful development of sociology [Thompson, 1975, p. 58 ]. Similar to Comte, Durkheim came to advocate the creation of a new moral science to be associated with sociology, but which could only be initiated after sociology was consolidated [ Durkheim, 1986, p. 265 ; Durkheim, 1964, p. 424 ]. Durkheim believed that answers were both needed and possible, but that they would not be historically specific as much as *socially* specific. For Durkheim, the legitimacy of moral codes was validated by the particular society and as well by the type of society to which it belonged. (Society types were largely determined by the type of the division of labor and the level of dynamic density.) Durkheim rejected cultural universals, but in limiting his use of concomitant variation to social types or *genera* and limiting the relevance of types of moral phenomena to types of societies [ Durkheim, 1964, p.432 ], his cultural relativism was not extreme. Durkheim did make specific recommendations to cultivate civic morality in France as part of a political agenda, as can be seen in his lectures published as Professional Ethics and Civic Morals. However, he was more concerned with general relationships that sustained moral phenomena than becoming involved in interpreting current political developments. He placed great emphasis on how moral sensations were *felt*, how the sacred was revered, and on the empirical nature and origin of the individual from collective groups. We shall see that Durkheim stressed the need for both *disinterest* and *constraint* in societal-wide ethics. Though Durkheim was not a

totalitarian, he preferred order to freedom; he valued individual freedom as a means for social solidarity, rather than as an end in itself.

Durkheim and Weber disavowed absolute values, but this committed them to much different paradigms. Durkheim thought that ethics would be relative to the needs of a particular society. Weber claimed to have no metaphysical or religious truths. Instead, he was interested in how *individuals* could be *facilitated* to seek, out of their own initiative and direction, a *meaningful* ethical existence. Both men understood that a sociological conception of ethics had to be relative to something societal that *changed*. That is, a sociological study of morals had to relinquish static conceptions of human nature, fixed virtues and ideals. There are other necessary premises for a sociological investigation into moral phenomena, but there is no other aspect which sets the sociological venue apart so well from the other methods of explanations.

Morals appear to be more social than individual in origin, yet the recognition of this fact must not obscure its implications. Morals emerge from voluntary and involuntary consensus and even from societal compromises and polarization created by groups which refuse to compromise. In some ways, virtues have been the impractical ideals of moral life and morals have been the ideas and values of common practice. Morality seems to be a creation of social life, yet all life is that of individuals. Durkheim emphasized a sociology of positive social facts to be inferred from the collective nature of the society under examination. In contrast, Weber argued for methodological individualism. Here, the goal of the social scientist was to understand the meaning of the action for the individuals concerned and to detail the necessary and relevant context. There is reason to profit from both approaches in the study of moral phenomena. The ideas of a group of people seem more resistant to change than the ideas of most individuals. This relative intractability holds true, whether the group is a subculture, a region, an ethnic group, or a "holistic" society.

The fact that acceptable and legitimate ideas about morality are not subject to individual whims supports the hypothesis that a rational study of morals remains feasible. It would appear plausible that the

relative irreducibility of social phenomena and the intractability of moral phenomena are results of some kind of basic moral nature of each society which can be studied "scientifically." However, there are grounds to have some reservations about the objectivity within such a "scientific project." If we assume that we can divide societies up into "real types" based on what we wish to find out, or if we assume that there must exist only the one moral principle we wish to find, we telescope our own concerns into the matter of scientific investigation and it becomes an exercise in tautology and implicit bias. Some ideas are long-lasting, and appear to be collective, that is to say, they appear to be collective and not merely a product of what the individuals would have otherwise have held in common. However, we can not just simply label these ideas as both real and collective and then set off to unproblematically study these things as concrete natural phenomena. The relationship of individuals to their societies appears to be at least diverse if not dynamic, and we should be reluctant to assume that there are universal social relationships and some kind of universal moral principle. In addition, how we label ideas does not appear to be without possible distortion from our own value-judgements as social scientists. The labeling of these lasting ideas is not bound to be value-free, and this can present a challenge for scientific analysis. Durkheim labeled the enduring ideas that were not the product of individual volition, in total, the collective conscience and, separately, the collective representations. Neither term is value-free, but both are useful. The nature of collective representations is dealt with in Chapter Five. It would seem plausible that social scientists can study the basis for moral phenomena, but how to do it without bringing in ultimately unsubstantiated value-judgements may end up being a Herculean task.

Still, despite the matters of ideology and value-judgements, the different social scientists who have espoused a systematic and secular study of moral phenomena have had some convergence in how they have defined their subject. It is sufficient at this point merely to clarify that the key part of the subject matter for the scientific study of moral phenomena is things as they are, the real ideas and beliefs that endure in specific societies. We are also concerned with the realm of speculative ethics, but this is better understood not as an independent field, but as a subset of the beliefs people hold. Moral phenomena

include everything that people think to be right or wrong and the behavior which follows as a consequence. However, what people may think of as right or wrong does not have to be limited to thoughts and values on the same level of clarity and abstraction, nor does a belief system have to be held in its entirety by the separate individuals that it dominates<sup>1</sup>. Hence, Durkheim and Wundt would include both the more and the less conscious, and they (and not Weber) would regard the on-going systems of beliefs as something separate from the beliefs of the individuals who are immersed in them. This is to say, that "law-like" consistent patterns of interaction may result from on-going disputes and differences of opinion, and even from "muddled thinking" and empirical mistakes. People do not always have to know exactly what they are doing in order to continue doing it. Durkheim and Wundt considered on-going patterns of reoccurrences as resulting from social laws; Weber considered saw consistent phenomena as not resulting from "real laws" but possessing a "law-like" quality of prediction and explanation.

Though Durkheim and Weber's theories are built upon different premises and the foundation of good theory is that premises should not be mixed, there is a case for the continued relevance of both Durkheim and Weber to the study of moral phenomena. Durkheim's paradigm remains credible for the study of the values and collective representations of society. Weber's paradigm remains viable for the study of how individuals experience society's ideas as their environment and create both intended and unintended social change. Yet the relationship of individual action to societal phenomena is not fixed or necessarily stable. With greater understanding of the collective nature and origin of societal ideals, individual action and self-direction become more efficacious. In fact, Durkheim's study of collective representations revealed the possibility of great conflict that originates in society and not in the individual! Durkheim said that if the individual understood the origin of ideals, it would increase the individual's respect and obedience to them [ Durkheim, 1993, p.134 ]. However, this argument can also be turned around. Insofar as the individual can understand the origin of the ideals that promote conflict, destruction,

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<sup>1</sup> Drawing upon the anthropological studies of his time, Durkheim said that for "primitive societies" all members each possessed the totality of the belief system, but that for more "advanced" societies, this was not the case at all [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.54 ].



and the denigration of human life, the individual has a better basis for resisting them. The intractability of society's ideas can be explained in part by their function and necessity, but also by the lack of knowledge of their true origins and alternatives. This is not exactly the same contention of the so-called 'rationalists' of the Enlightenment, who thought that reason would swiftly dismiss prejudice; rather it is to say that prejudices and traditions have strong structural supports, and that one of their supports is the ignorance of their true basis.

Durkheim's reasoning has much to recommend it, but a certain flaw in his use of terminology gives reason to pause for new consideration. It does seem likely that most, if not all, of the dominant moral ideals (and many of the nondominant ideals) of most societies were collective in origin. However, a close examination of Durkheim's theory shows that the term "collective" takes on holistic attributes. Today, societal holism is less acceptable for political reasons and the vicissitudes of history than it was for Durkheim's bureaucratic patrons in the Third Republic. Durkheim moved quickly from *collective-in-origin* to *collective-in-function* to *societal*. Durkheim did make a convincing case for the collective origin of most moral phenomena. However, 'collective' seems to have more than one meaning. If an idea is created through the interaction and juxtaposition of *more than one* individual we can call it 'collective,' yet 'collective' also applies to the ideas formed from *all* the individuals within the society together.

"Collective" does not necessarily mean "holistic" and "societal." Societies exist as groups within groups and groups alongside of groups. Depending on your point of view, the product of one group can appear as a product of this group or as a product of a much larger group or other "totality." The Dreyfuss Affair was a product of the French civil service, Paris, France, and of Europe, depending on the point of view. In addition, groups intersect each other, and the decision of boundaries and the attribution of phenomena to one group and not another it intersects would be a value-judgement which is not always unproblematic. "Holistic" refers to the characteristics of a collection of individuals as a whole acting as a whole. "Collective" refers to characteristics of individuals acting together as a group or team, not merely

individuals who happen to enact the same behavior. For an action within society to be "collective" does not mean that all of that society's individuals were involved or even knew of the action.

Durkheim did not appear to recognize any lasting difference between what was collective and what was societal and holistic. (Sometimes collective was used to mean irreducible to its components, and sometimes to mean a product of the social whole.) If he could demonstrate that something was one, he made it the other. Further exacerbating matters was the fact that Durkheim did not recognize degrees of difference within "collective." The idealistic products of interaction are 'collective' as separate 'collective representations,' and the 'collective conscience' is 'collective' in a holistic way as the sum total of these beliefs taken as a whole. This is to say that these abstract *things* that are created by part of a society are put in the same category as things created by all parts of that society.

The holistic leap that Durkheim makes from showing that ideas have collective origins to giving them unquestionable moral authority for the needs and purposes of society, falls short. Weber's approach, in contrast, being built upward from a sound methodology, appears more useful for both quantitative and qualitative research. Weber's methodological individualism is better suited for the understanding of the experience of moral phenomena and individual agency than Durkheim's holistic paradigm and typology. Although a combination of the two paradigms *could* be used for sociological research and the analysis of moral phenomena, such eclecticism would have to be justified by a theoretical understanding between the two theories, an understanding that appears difficult though not impossible. Both theories can supplement each other in asking questions and sensitizing the researcher to different concerns, but ultimately one paradigm will have to take precedence over the other. That paradigm will have to be methodological individualism unless collective holism can be proved.

Durkheim's paradigm can be used to pose questions regarding the basis for the social environment and to provide an explanation for the otherwise unexplained intractability of irrational social ideals. Weber's paradigm can be used for different purposes: 1) to discuss how the individual can find meaning in his life and in his choices, 2) to reveal the subjective rationality in beliefs and actions that are

not apparent to a casual outside observer, and 3) to show how the individual can better protect himself from the irrational moral phenomena that bestirs and becalms itself in all aspects of his social environment.

Weber and Durkheim had taken opposite approaches in regards to sociology's relationship with ethics. Today as in Durkheim's life-time, his project of a 'science of ethics' and a 'moral science' gives provocation to be caricatured as an attempt to found a science that could give moral answers for the questions that would otherwise elude individuals and societies. This notion of a moral science to show the way for immoral human beings, is a contradiction in terms and is not what Durkheim believed. He stated that moral reality of a society was always something in itself [ Durkheim, 1979, p.34 ] and did not have to be found [ Durkheim, 1979, p.31 ] like a lost puppy. A moral fabric and its social imperatives, however changing in flux or in evolution, were always being experienced uniquely by its people [ Wallwork, 1972, p.56 ]. Weber also had modest and carefully limited goals for the prospects of moral analysis, and like Durkheim, his position was also misrepresented in an overly simplified form. Weber is frequently understood in the English world to have believed in a "value neutral" social science, with a complete break between personality and scientific investigation [ Peikoff, 1982, p.150 ] and a complete autonomy of social inquiry from value-judgement [ Tenbruck, p.344 ]. Allan Bloom even called Weber a moral relativist and blamed him along with Freud for the degeneration of Western civilization. [ Bloom, 1987, p.150 ]. This position too, is a caricature. Rather, Weber and Durkheim used different approaches, had different assumptions, but neither believed in a deductive method, neither quantified morals or created a hierarchy of values, and neither believed that a science of morals could provide specific answers to exact questions. Durkheim however, preferred to conceptualize his study as a science of morals derived from the collective nature of society. Weber preferred to express his work as a study of individual social action and a history of moral institutions.

Durkheim once had been more hopeful that social science could give definite answers in regards to what moral values should exist in a given society, [ Wallwork, p.165 ] and then, according to Robert

Hall, perhaps later modified his position after reading Levy-Bruhl's book *La Morale et la science des moeurs* (Ethics and the Science of Morals) in 1903 [ Hall, 1986, p.10 ]. Durkheim reaffirmed his belief in a method of investigation which he characterized as both a science and an art of ethics [ Durkheim, 1979, p. 32 & p.82 ]. "It would have to be begun by establishing a science, which, after having classed the moral phenomena, would look for the conditions upon which each of these types depends, and would determine its role" [ Durkheim, 1964, p.422 ]. Though immediate results might not be forthcoming, he maintained his belief that such moral science could discover the laws of moral reality and aid subsequent political action [ Durkheim, 1979, p.32 ]. Finally, moral science would reveal and prove how much the individual depended on society and how society spoke with a moral authority [ Durkheim, 1995b, p.34-35 ], and this ending of individualistic and 'rationalistic' dreams would facilitate the smooth efficacy of society's collective conscience.

Durkheim disavowed static and universal normative content as a possible result of a science of morality, but he did not disavow insight, clarity, understanding, and practical benefit for social engineering. He emphasized that the practice of moral science could reveal the nature of societal moral conflicts and changes. It could articulate with clearer abstraction the already-existing moral reality. The social scientist could then "operationalize" the existing moral reality's demands into a political agenda to accommodate society's needs and to facilitate social change. This possible "facilitation" of social change would involve a plethora of suggestions. The state could educate citizens in order to prevent superstition and to encourage cooperation and discussion. The state could restrain itself from war or civil repression and restrain the appetites of its citizens to prevent unnecessary violent opposition to whatever was inevitable. The state would inform the students how important society was, how the state (*patrie*) served society, and how the student should serve society and its 'highest' organized form, the nation-state [ Durkheim, 1995b, p.35 ]. Hence, the political agenda of the politicians and bureaucrats of the French Third Republic becomes clear. The Third Republic supported a program of moral education which would be flexible and allowed to change, but would always ensure political stability and its own support. This is

indeed a little ominous, if the educators cared less for the details than for the function of the education: to inculcate obedience. Durkheim also suggested that the state could move, if recommended by moral science, to the drastic elimination of inheritance [ Durkheim, 1984, p.319 ; Durkheim, 1992, p.213 ]. The last suggestion does lend some credence to the charge that a sociology of morals could be used to justify totalitarianism, but in Durkheim's case, reflected a Comte-like disregard for economics being considered autonomous from social forces.

Durkheim's holism and his use of speculative facts separated his work from the other schools of the social sciences. Durkheim would also have attributed to social science an exploratory research role in understanding particular societies by being able to determine their moral structures from what was known about them in other respects. This belief, that facts of past societies could be deduced scientifically and unproblematically, did at times threaten to undermine his use of 'positive facts.' Therefore, there is provision for a counter-argument that Durkheim was less 'scientific' or 'positivistic' than he wished to appear. However, it is sufficient to maintain that Durkheim was a 'social scientist' but that his understanding of science was different from some of his contemporaries and from the prevailing opinion today. Durkheimian sociology was connected with anthropology and imbued with Comte's dislike of the autonomy of competing social sciences. In contrast, German sociology maintained a great adherence to psychology, economics, political ideologies, and the humanities. Durkheim was attracted to the notion that scientific analysis could possibly discover moral values hidden from daily understanding and contradicting "common-sense," but it would be wrong and simplistic to see his work as a quest for universal values or for attributing moral legitimacy exclusively to the practitioners of moral science.

Weber conceptualized his study of ethics in a strikingly different way than had Durkheim, though they never directly compared each other's work. Weber shared Durkheim's belief that morality was not quantifiable, and yet was subject to study through accurate observation, both qualitative and quantitative. However, Weber, unlike Durkheim, never conceptualized his investigation as a search for the "laws of moral reality" as such. It is doubtful indeed, that Weber thought "social laws" existed in any form, though

of course he was interested in the causality of change of social phenomena. Perhaps Durkheim believed, especially in his earlier essays, that a study of morality could supply normative answers [ Wallwork, 1972, p.165 ], but Weber was completely free of that temptation. Weber did not ascribe to science any moral authority, rather he seemed to see social scientists as being especially vulnerable to making mistakes on moral matters. Not only could the scientist inject ideology into science, he might unwittingly inject the ideologies of science into conventional ideology, and in either case, confuse his personal beliefs with scientific truths. These points will be explained in greater detail in Chapter Eight.

Durkheim believed that the scientific study of morals could supply answers to guide political action which affected the institutions which undergirded and expressed morality. Weber, in contrast, would not have disagreed with the statement that the study of ethics could aid political action, but he did not perceive political action as even potentially united with science. Weber, unlike Durkheim, did not perceive either science or politics to be united within themselves, much less between themselves. Durkheim had hoped for a moral science to guide the Third Republic in its secularization and modernization. Weber hoped for a study of ethics to create an accurate body of knowledge that with difficulty could exclude the prejudices of its practitioners. That body of knowledge could be used, like any other, as a tool in the fractured world of politics. Science, in Weber's opinion, could inform our moral decisions, but not affect morality itself or provide an unproblematic guide to political action. Durkheim had felt that moral science could guide political action, but that the connection would be problematic insofar as the knowledge would often be vague. We would be able to identify only "laws" and causal patterns regarding the body and foundation of public morality [ Durkheim, 1979, p.33 ]. In contrast, Weber would have asked the question, "Guide politics —where?"

For Weber, science could not provide answers for how we *should* lead our lives, but social science *could* provide a frame-work for the inevitable failure of any science to provide such definite timeless answers. The word "timeless" is appropriate. Durkheim did not believe that there were static philosophical answers for all people for all time. He did have strong sympathy for Kantian ethics, but pondered that

even if the Categorical Imperative was correct, then the application would still be diverse and not subject to easy generalization [ Durkheim, 1979, p.33 ]. Durkheim believed that morals were specific to particular societies at specific "stages" and conditions of their development. Weber, in contrast, would *not* have thought that any group of social scientists would have automatically reached the same answers *irrespective* of their own transformative experiences, values, concerns, and present concerns. Nor would he have thought that any group of answers would necessarily have been correct, provable to be correct and then replicable by another generation of scholars using the same methods and data.

Weber's work in defining the role of sociology can be perceived as advocating the creation of knowledge for individual action. Weber had nothing in common with pragmatism, but wished to provide a realistic understanding of the means and ends for both individual social action and group political action. In addition, Weber wished to stabilize the scholarly discourse and to help scholars cope with what he considered inevitable axiological and ontological anxiety [ Weber, 1989, p.30 ; Weber, 1978a, p.xxxiii ]. Value-spheres had to be kept separate from science to prevent *mutual* contamination. It was important that social science should not be 'for hire' and that the social scientists should steel themselves for their responsibilities and not submit their integrity to those prophets, true and false, who promised with Siren-calls to erase all doubt and to lead the way.

Weber rejected the possibility that the values that people *should* have are to be discovered or proven by social scientists. Neither are the values we should have dictated by the times or eras we live in. People not only make the events of the times, but they also delineate the times, and invent the generalized descriptions, such as 'modern times,' 'the postmodern era,' 'the post-industrial age,' 'the post-war era,' and 'the next century.' Weber protected sociology from both historical-relativism and cultural-relativism, which might have otherwise given intellectual legitimacy for ideology to become its own truth. Weber rejected the perspective of many German historians, economists, and social-psychologists of his day with his rejection of collective concepts and his distinction between "facts" and "values." To put it in the simplest way, Weber would have said that social science cannot study the facts and determine the answers

to the questions of what values people should have because the process of science itself is not entirely objective and the researcher brings into the investigation his or her own value-relations. We see much more of the development of this idea in Chapter Eight in Weber's criticism of "emotionalism" and the "Historical School of Economics." We see this throughout Weber's methodological writings in regards to his criticism of social-scientists who use the terms "*Geist*" and "*Volk*" unproblematically as causal agents [ Ringer, 1997, p.56 ; Weber, 1975a, p. 61 & 205 ]. People label the times and separate cultures. We can make generalizations about the value-systems of the times and different cultures. We cannot say that these value-systems exist independently and have lives of their own. We cannot study value-systems of any society to see what the people in these societies should believe, because these value-systems and societies are all generalizations created by the social scientist and our images of them are biased relevant to what we want to know and what we consider relevant.

Weber protected sociology not only from false claims of scholarly objectivity and social-metaphysical holism, but from all ideology. He sought to help people in this emerging era in which science is unable to replace the moral sanction of fading religion and tradition. Quick fixes are impossible, and formulas to tell people what to believe are useless, as such an application would certainly imply that the individuals wielding the formulas are empty and unthinking otherwise. Weber rejected the possibility of a science of morals that would tell people what to believe, an approach which, if heeded, would have prevented any totalitarian regime from prostituting social science. In conventional wisdom, it is often believed that Durkheim had some hope for a sociology of morals, and that Weber in vehemently rejecting it, consigned morals to the realm of the irrational and the relative. In Chapter Eleven we will see that the recommendations of these two theorists have in fact some remarkable mutual application but lack a common frame of reference. Morals *are* subject to rational analysis, but this rational analysis is not as unproblematic and 'scientific' as Durkheim had hoped.

A secular analysis of moral phenomena different from the speculations and ideologies of the moralist is possible if one takes into account the combined insights of Durkheim and Weber. As we have



discussed earlier. Durkheim formulated the task as a study that could understand the "foundation" of morality, rather than as a way of creating a quantifiable or normative science of ethics. He believed that the collective conscience did not have to be found or determined; it was always being experienced. According to Durkheim, morality was always on-going and in continual action, reproduction and change. Morality did not depend on the dictates of the moralist. Social scientists could come to understand the causal relationships that supported and recreated morality so as to better aid both scholarly and political action. Weber did not share Durkheim's optimism in this regard. Rather he studied specific historical processes and institutions through his paradigm of social action. Durkheim's endeavour provides the impetus of this dissertation, and Weber's endeavour provides the development. Durkheim's paradigm did not lend itself to a self-critique [ Layne, 1974, p.193 ]. It may seem unusual, but it is feasible to begin with Durkheim, and then use Weber's greater grasp of history and methodology to critique the project in the later course.

Durkheim wished to create a positive science of ethics. The term "Positive" comes from Auguste Comte. There are reasons to be skeptical of Comte's paradigm, a paradigm which is counterproductive for genuine research. However, Comte's influence was more formative than developmental, and there may be some confusion regarding what Durkheim meant. Durkheim refused to call himself a Positivist, which would openly bind him to the philosophy of Comte, but called himself a rationalist. This distinction has led to the unusual charge by Tiryakian that Durkheim was a neo-Kantian positivist [ Tiryakian, 1978, p. 204 & p. 210 ]. This phrase, though unfortunate, has a genuine ring of truth, just as the circus that was famous for having "the tallest midgets" and "smallest giant apes." Durkheim was not a Positivist and he was not a Kantian, if one judges by the premises concerned. (For some, premises are the starting point of reasoning, for others, they may be merely the assumptions needed for their chosen ethical and political destination.) Yet, because he endeavoured to continue Kant's work in ethics in a sociological approach which would emphasize the primacy of inductive reasoning and specificity over deduction and universal principles, Durkheim, a rationalist, *could* be considered a "neo-Kantian positivist." Durkheim was an

adherent, not of Comte's Positive Philosophy *per se*, but of a positive philosophical approach for sociology.

Durkheim stated his view of knowledge in his inaugural address at Bordeaux :  
 If there is one point beyond doubt nowadays, it is that all natural entities, from mineral to man, relate to positive science, that is to say, that everything happens according to necessary laws. This proposition now is no longer based on conjecture. [ Durkheim, 1974b, p.195 ]

Durkheim believed in a universe in which everything could be understood through scientific analysis.

We can thus conclude by saying that we have to choose between two positions: either recognize that social phenomena are amenable to scientific investigation or admit, without reason and contrary to all scientific induction, that there are two worlds in the world, one ruled by the laws of causality, the other ruled by arbitrariness and contingency. [ Durkheim, 1974b, p. 195 ]

Durkheim did stress that all sciences had to be pursued through their own methods [ Durkheim, 1974b, p.198 ], that all science was unified in its conception of knowledge, and that sociology had its own methods distinct from other and earlier sciences. While this is a Comtean inspired perspective, it did not necessarily bind him to the rest of Comte's paradigm. In saying that he was pursuing a positivist method, Durkheim meant that he would study and observe events and generalize from those facts. This is a *positive* method, because what has not existed, or has never occurred, then has no value in causal explanation.

Emile Durkheim described the relationship of social science to what is simultaneously its foundation and application:

But, it may be argued, if science can foresee, it cannot command. This is true: it can only tell us what is needful for life. Yet how can we fail to see that, *assuming mankind wishes life to continue*, a very simple operation may immediately transform the laws that science has established into rules that are categorical for our behavior? Doubtless, science then becomes an art. But the transition from one to the other occurs with no break in continuity. It remains to be ascertained whether we ought to wish to continue our existence, but even on this ultimate question we believe that science is not mute.  
 [ Durkheim, 1984, p. xxvii ] (original italics)

A moral science within sociology cannot give us ultimate answers because there are no ultimate questions. We can speak of questions that are basic to on-going debates and which are relevant to our lives. The intrinsic relativism of social science is securely anchored as long as its practitioners endeavor to be objective and to give an intrinsic value to human life.

Durkheim continued in the same appraisal of knowledge as can be seen in his last written work

"*La Morale*" in 1917:

Thus, the art of morality and the construction of the moral ideal presuppose an entire science which is positive and inductive and encompasses all the details of moral facts.

[ Durkheim, 1979, p.90 ]

Just as the project of science binds knowledge in boundaries of particular forms, the nature of knowledge we pursue likewise creates a particular scientific project. Positive scientific knowledge is based on facts, but not just any facts, they must be objective facts. What we think will occur is based upon what we already know has occurred. In contrast, the "facts" of what we think will happen or want to have happened are not facts in the same way as the objective facts of events which have happened. The future *nirvana* or utopia of ideologues can, therefore, have no influence upon scientific-positive causality. This is an aspect of a good methodology, and it prevents Durkheim's reasoning from falling into tautology. Durkheim's pessimism prevented him from making the methodological errors caused by utopianism. Durkheim's insistence on the nature of scientific knowledge is one of the stronger aspects of his methodology. This rejection of tautology and destiny also prevents the fallacy termed by contemporary psychologist Steven Goldberg as "when wish replaces thought" [ Goldberg, 1991 ]. There are some grounds to suggest that Durkheim did not always keep to this rule in his The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, a charge that will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Durkheim may have called himself a rationalist, but he meant it in a sense different from Descartes and Leibniz. He frequently specified that the start of understanding morality was *not* to start with axioms and logic, but to study the reality of morality in observed events. Durkheim said that no doubt an isolated scholar could, in the privacy and seclusion of his study, create an axiom-derived or transcendent system of morality, but the individual scholar's aspirations would still remain a product of society. Morality itself would always be an ongoing product of society [ Durkheim, 1964, p. 435 ]. According to Durkheim, all ideals come from the collective nature of the society in which they arise and exist. Also, an ideal is not known in its full form by any one individual [ Durkheim, 1982, p.59 ]. Ideals can be original, utilitarian, harmful, mystical, metaphysical, logical, or irrational, but always remain

social products. Practical-lived morality always remains the more tangible and more intransigent *social reality* which is much bigger and more tangible than the dreams of the individual theorist. Even the quest to "improve" society is merely part of the evolutionary aspect of social development, which tries on many little changes in many directions at once and lets those that reflect its collective nature survive. To perfect a society is to make it more like itself, to make the society with its customs, mores, laws, and institutions reflect more accurately its developing collective nature [ Durkheim, 1964, p.435 ]. Durkheim's logic reflects the thinking of his mentor Renouvier, who dismissed the possibility of the represented and the representation ever being divorced or *a priori* to each other [ Jones, 1996, p. 53 ]. Thus, the morality of a society reflects the collective nature. This premise that Durkheim relied upon throughout his career, carefully distinguishes his thinking from Kant, Comte and Rousseau, who were otherwise his greatest influences. There can be no society without morality, and there can be no morality that exists without its own society. Both the represented (society) and the representation (moral codes) can change, but they can never exist without each other.

Then in his definition of scientific knowledge Durkheim was separating himself from both Comte and Spencer. He explained his own positive philosophy as an analysis that examined only the real, that sought to identify causality, and that did not take into account destiny of any kind. Durkheim did use the term "evolution" [ Durkheim, 1974b, p.197 ], but he did so without any moral association, without a belief in "Progress" as such, and without tautology, all because of his positive scientific method. Durkheim was an evolutionist more in the effects than in the attribution of causality. Unlike Comte and Spencer, Durkheim saw no metaphysical necessity for evolution. However, Durkheim had separated societies into 'primitive' and 'modern.' The morals suitable for a 'primitive' society would not be suitable for a 'modern' society. In this one respect, he would have shared a great deal in common with the more vulgar evolutionists, who saw the evolution of mankind as leading to the development of 'superior' and more developed morals. In Durkheim's defense, he said that each society had to be judged by its own type, and he respected all societies, including those that he labeled 'primitive,' for he attributed the creation of an

objective and sophisticated reference point not to the individual, but to society. Also, Durkheim's frame of reference was not what society could be or would eventually become, nor a hypothesized ideal society, but how society was in actuality and what it already was in the process of immediately becoming. Finally, unlike the Social-Darwinists, Durkheim never suggested that the "evolution" of society was a metaphysical necessity and one which had to be served by the people. Even if society does "progress," society does not need Social-Darwinists to advocate either *laissez-faire* capitalism or its opposite, colonialism and government control; society can take care of itself.

Durkheim saw himself as initiating and developing the empirical inductive method for the study of social, and especially, moral phenomena [ Durkheim, 1993, p.90-92 ]. It is arguable that Durkheim was not as inductive as he portrayed himself [ Durkheim & Mauss, 1969, p.xvi ]. In part, this was due to the fact that according to his method, moral phenomena had to be separated into types and the types then studied through concomitant variation of their species [ Durkheim, 1964, p. 422 ]. This meant that societal comparisons would always be limited to examples of societies of the same "type" or "species." Societies could be arranged or separated by type, such as by their type of solidarity which resulted from their division of labor. The delineation of types would be a typology and was not derived from the application of a methodology. However, the separation of the examples into the species of types would still appear somewhat imprecise and subject to the influence of the questions posed by the social scientist. The fact that the division of societies into types was based upon variables which reflected intuitive decisions meant that Durkheim was making in smaller form the same mistake of intuition that Weber criticized in the Historical School of Economics [ Weber, 1975a, p.180 ]. Still, all in all, Durkheim was a systematic theoretician. Durkheim's conception of knowledge was both objective and flexible, and in these two qualities similar to Weber's, as we shall see in the execution of these details later on.

Durkheim saw himself as moving out of the philosophical tradition and establishing the sociological. To do this, all social phenomena must be submitted to study:

Philosophy is now in the process of splitting into two groups of positive sciences: psychology on the one hand, sociology on the other. Specifically the problems once belonging exclusively to ethics arise out of social science. We will take them up in turn.

Ethics of all the aspects of sociology is indeed the one that attracts us most and which will be our first preoccupation. Except that we will try to treat it scientifically. Instead of constructing ethical behavior according to our own personal ideals, we will observe it as a system of natural phenomena which we will submit to analysis and whose causes we will seek. This experience will teach us that it is of a social order. [ Durkheim, 1974b, p.202 ]

Durkheim felt that psychology, though promising, was in its infancy. He was appreciative of the "folk psychologist" Wundt, but was generally critical of the independence and usefulness of other more individualistic psychological schools of thought. Durkheim rejected both the philosophical and psychological models for understanding morality. Psychology could not deal as well as sociology with how human life is experienced differently, not merely on an individual basis, but through membership in different societies [ Durkheim, 1979, p.83 ].

Man is a social animal. Whatever human nature is, human beings are never found apart from society. Our only and continual experience of human nature occurs within society. Also, all societies are different and evince differentiation within themselves. Humans and societies exhibit the greatest of variation so as to make the causal use of any universal concept of human nature problematic at best. Human nature has varied in time. What it was yesterday is not the same as it is today. And it varies geographically. Human nature is not the same for the aboriginal Australian as it is for us...And this diversity has sprung out of the diversity in human societies, of which the human type is a function. Consequently, since man is the product of history, it is only through comparative history that he can be understood. To achieve this, all kinds of research which have hardly yet been carried out are required. It is therefore not enough to borrow the notion of man in general from current psychology. [ Durkheim, 1979, p. 31 ]

Human nature was an independent causal variable for both philosophy and psychology, but Durkheim perceived its profound limitations for a social analysis. A few observations have been made of feral children, but the pathetic human beings in those incidents seem far removed from the lofty "Human Natures" as posited by the drawing-room philosophers. As far as it is known, any such "feral" children have limited communicative skills, limited cognitive skills, and no ability to conceptualize or use abstraction. Certainly, all 'feral children' had no innate ideas [ Lane, 1976, p.25, 39, & 48 ]. Observations of a handful of cases of feral children seem to corroborate Durkheim's understanding of human nature and his insistence that cognitive understanding was social in its origin and development.

Durkheim, as a sociologist, rejected Kant's *a priori* cognitive and logical autonomy of the individual [ Tiryakian, 1978, p.211 ]. This rejection was respectful and formative. Durkheim benefited not from ignoring Kant nor in accepting him, but in rejecting Kant's premises as a starting position. This rejection of Kant's paradigm left an imprint on Durkheim's work for his entire academic career. In some respects, Durkheim replaced Kant's metaphysical starting position with his own of a society *sui generis* as a more convincing platform to deal with the challenges of social upheaval caused by the industrialization of the late 19th century. Durkheim seemed to share a great deal in common with Kant in regard to normative assumptions, but he had an entirely separate methodological base which seemed to have been chosen to be congruent with the normative assumptions he shared in common with Kant [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 51-52 ]. Society held the exact same place in Durkheim's theory that God and metaphysics held in Kant's, and in both cases this was a consequence of their view of the lack of moral worth of the individual, a fact that Durkheim remarked upon in "The Determination of Moral Facts" [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.51-52 ]. This argument will be examined in greater detail in Chapter Five.

Durkheim stated that the individual, as we know him, was a social creation [ Durkheim, 1973, p.231 ]. The self-conscious individual did not exist in primitive society characterized by extreme mechanical solidarity [ Durkheim, 1984, p.84 ]. Durkheim understood quite well that the conception of human nature was in itself a topic for sociological study, as the changing conceptions of human nature reflected other societal changes [ Durkheim, 1979, p.30 ]. Once we strip humanity away from all the specificity and cultural influences, we are merely left with a residue of vague platitudes at best [ Lukes, 1972, p.19 ]. What makes us human and convinced of our human nature, is society, and even the matter of whether the individual has free will or not, is a matter for the metaphysicians and not the sociologists.

The question of knowing whether man is free or not is undoubtedly interesting, but it belongs in the realm of metaphysics, and the positive sciences can and ought to pay no heed to it. [ Durkheim, 1974b, p. 195 ]

Durkheim was interested not in abstract Man, but in real human beings:

Real man, whom we know about, and such as we are, is complex in a different way. He exists in time and in a country, he has a family, a city and a patrie, a religious and political faith, and all of these stimuli and many more mingle and combine in a

thousand ways, overlap and interlap their influence without it being possible to say, at a glance, where the one begins the other ends. [ Durkheim, 1974b, p. 196 ]

People only exist as people and never as abstractions. Only what is real can be a suitable population set for the data of sociological inquiry.

Moral science for Durkheim was an essential concern of social science. As Robert Hall pointed out, Durkheim did clarify his position regarding the science of morality in his book review of Levy-Bruhl's

*La Morale et la science des moeurs.*

One can usually distinguish two parts -- almost two distinct disciplines -- in morality. On the one hand, theoretical, and on the other, practical morality. It is the former which is regarded as the scientific part. Levy-Bruhl has no difficulty in showing that it does not in any way constitute a science. Its object is not in fact to express a given reality, but to determine the general principles of what ought to be done. Morality seeks to discover what goals man *should* pursue, and what the hierarchical relation of these goals *should* be with one another. The only function of sciences, whatever they are, is to discover what is, not to prescribe or legislate. It has been supposed that one could get round this objection by calling theoretical morality a normative science; but the linking of these two logically incompatible words merely expresses the contradiction inherent in the conception. It does not lessen it. A science can indeed reach conclusions which permit the establishment of norms, but it is not normative in itself. The notion of a theoretical morality is therefore a bastardization which lumps together genuinely scientific, theoretical considerations and the practical ones. And lastly, it is the latter which are far and away preponderant. [ Durkheim, 1979, p. 29-30 ]

In that book review of 1903, Durkheim made his harshest critique of the feasibility of his own program. It must not be interpreted that he gave up hope or the effort. In 1917, in his final written work, "Introduction to ethics," he confirmed his belief in the importance of a science of morality or moral facts that would result in practical value [ Durkheim, 1979, p.92 ].

"Theoretical morality" was for Durkheim the practice of armchair scholars and deductionists. These men play a vital role in the moral life of a society, but do not ever create morality. They ask questions, conduct scholarly work, and articulate positions. These moralists either advance positions that are doomed to fail and we learn by their mistakes, or they articulate what is already being created. If they merely explain what is already there, they do conduct a service. *They can express society as it is or as it is becoming.* But because these moralists generally do not understand that they themselves are products of society, they risk deluding themselves into thinking that they themselves were the causes of social change or stability.



In fact, the moralist lays down the law less than he thinks; he is merely the mirror of his time. He simply reproduces the moral practices of his contemporaries, organizing them in such a way as to make them easier to grasp. This is why the moral speculation of philosophers has upset public opinion far less often than the discoveries of sciences. There is no 'moral theory' which has ever produced a revolution in thinking comparable with what resulted from the teaching of Galileo, for example. This is because theoretical morality, far from dictating laws for practice, merely mirrors practice and conveys it in a more abstract language. It is just another aspect of moral reality. It is partly therefore the thing to be explained, without itself actually providing explanations. It is an object of science and yet not a science. [ Durkheim, 1979, p. 30 ]

Durkheim seemed to believe that morality had an exclusively social base. "Morality either springs from nothing given in the world of experience, or it springs from society" [ Durkheim, 1951, p. 318 ]. Here we see that Durkheim used a 'straw man' argument. However, his recognition of the thick social base for ideas did not obscure his perception of ongoing conflict. His paradigm took into account the necessity of differences of opinion –even if only to maintain a particular moral or ideological hegemony.

It is crucial to understand that Durkheim disassociated himself from any attempt of the deductive philosophical determination of desirable normative content of morals. He constructed an inductive and positivistic study of morality, which would have practical consequences. The use of "practical" does not entail an acceptance of pragmatism. Nor did Durkheim mean that a science of morality, like a computer running on code and input data, could tell us directly what we should believe. Rather, morality was always on-going, and inescapable. A sociological study of moral facts could prevent legislative action from undermining morality by interfering with its foundation. Moral science could guide proper legislative action and clarify and articulate the morality of a changing society so as to prevent unnecessary confusion and friction. Durkheim was close to accepting Kant's Categorical Imperative, but he noted, even if it was true, translating that principle once it became known as a "fact" into action, would present numerous difficulties [ Durkheim, 1979, p.33 ].

The study of morality in the social sciences received considerable opposition from theologians and philosophers, and to a lesser extent, from psychologists. The theologians rejected the basic idea of 'society as God' out of hand. Theology's condemnation of the assumption of moral authority by comparative moral analysis was understandable and expected. The whole purpose of the rise of pedagogy

and moral education in particular, and social science in general in the Third Republic, was to undermine the moral hegemony of Roman Catholic thought.

At the turn of the century, the program of comparative moral analysis was greeted with considerable attention. The sociological analysis of morals was espoused by Durkheim, Spencer, Simmel, Levy-Bruhl, Westermarck, Sumner, Ward, Hobhouse, and Belot. The detractors were many and included intellectuals of all disciplines. The criticism that was leveled at sociology in this period of its greatest growth of 1880-1920 is still worthy of consideration.

The basic problem between the philosophical and the sociological concepts of morality was thus the exclusivity of each. The sociologists were understood to be saying that morality was nothing but the established norms of society, and the philosophers were understood to be contending that the established social norms had absolutely no ethical significance. [ Hall, 1996, p.9 ]

Sociologists then had to clarify their position. They studied the established norms and other moral facts of societies in comparative analysis to understand the mechanisms of morality.

The sociological moralists attempted to avoid the philosophical critique in various ways. Some, like Herbert Spencer... developed an evolutionary position to the effect that the social norms of the more highly evolved societies are ethically better than those of the more primitive; but they were eventually unable to specify the evolutionary criteria. Wundt... and W.G. Sumner held that there are certain moral norms that are universal and could constitute the basis of an ethical theory by universal agreement. Hobhouse... and Belot... believed that "social welfare" or the "public interest" could be defined sociologically and that the function of morality was to promote the social interest. [ Hall, 1996, p.11 ]

Then, in summary, the social scientists were not writing lists of ethical virtues, but were seeking to understand why societies developed and retained certain common values and certain patterns of deviance.

The domain of moral phenomena would include not only the creation and maintenance of values common and deviant, but also the actions and events motivated by such values. To say that the subject matter was exclusively the values themselves, would imply an idealistic paradigm and would leave aside the sociological. It would be an over-simplification to say that we are concerned about the 'common values' of societies. Such a statement would imply that the 'common values' were more 'moral' and more social creations than 'uncommon values.' Also, more common ideas may need less common ideas as their anchors, and averages are frequently held in place and defined by their relation to the extremes.

Finally, when we talk about values, we do have to keep in mind whether we are talking about values such as those held by the individual or values held by society. Most theorists, collective or individualistic, generally used the word value to refer to the beliefs held by people, and that is also the assumption of this paper. However, this assumption would not go unchallenged by some; they could reject it in good conscience without giving us in turn a reason to change our minds.

Sociologists at the end of the 19th century had little trouble in discussing how different societies had different belief systems, but the concept of "values" emerged and diversified under their fingertips. It was the insight by Nietzsche and Weber that "values" were not elements of one single ethical system ordained for us, and were not the inevitable products of God, evolution, or society. Apparently, Nietzsche was the first philosopher to speak of "values" as diverse individual choices within society, some equally legitimate, and others not. Weber was the first sociologist to use the term in this similar way. Weber not only introduced "values" into the sociological discussion, he used the term differently than had other and earlier sociologists. For Weber, it was just a matter of observation that different people within the same society had different values. Diversity even occurred within distinct value-systems such as religious movements. We owe our present understanding of the term "values" to both Nietzsche and Weber [ Himmelfarb, 1996, p. 11 ]. When Weber used the term "values" he was referring to value-differences and different choices between individuals. In contrast, the more "social realist" theorists like Wundt, Durkheim, and Tönnies saw values as products of society and believed that each society held (unproblematically for the most part, except during transitions) a single value system.

Durkheim's notion of social fact takes as its starting point the view that the relevant values are values of society and not of individuals as such, because what the individuals may believe would be only partial manifestations of the ideas and values [ Durkheim, 1982, p.59 ]. Durkheim always emphasized that the values were common because they were collective and not collective because they were common, a perspective that was built upon his use of social facts. The parts that the individuals held affected the whole of the collective belief and vice versa, but the collective belief was more important than its

particular manifestations in individual minds [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.32 ]. However that may be, the concern of this paper is to see how moral phenomena can be studied, and our starting point is the beliefs and values of individual minds. Hence, this paper does not assume that collective values do or do not exist, but our starting point and chief concern are the values held by individuals, values that are complete enough to make sense to the individual minds, regardless of the possibility that they may be manifestations of some hypothesized greater whole.

All values (those clear and lasting long enough to be identifiable) are social creations worked out through individual minds. This simple statement accepts a variety of interpretations of social realism and the relationship of the individual to society. (It is not compatible *completely* with Durkheim's use of values as mentioned in the previous paragraph, but it is not directly at odds with it either.) In any case, moral phenomena cannot exist without the individual in a social context with other individuals. We communicate to ourselves and to others with the same symbols. Without the continual efforts of human beings to make the world intelligible and meaningful to themselves and to others, moral phenomena could not exist. Despite the buffeting of conflicting social forces, we think clearer than otherwise because we are in social interaction.

Morality is all around us insofar as we are goal-directed, sociable, communicative, human beings. There is some dispute about this interpretation. Durkheim said that moral action consists exclusively of actions committed by the individual, which include hardship and a feeling of violence to his nature committed in the pursuit of a higher good [ Durkheim, 1995b, p.29 ]. However, by including the broader interpretations from methodological individualism, we can say that moral actions include those which the actor considers moral or exacting in principle. Let us accept the fact that every theorist has a private definition of what is moral and also establish the fact that we have to have an abstract definition for morality that is "value-neutral" (*Wertfrei*) which does not establish an implicit bias towards any one point of view. The Collins Dictionary provides us with such a definition:

1 concerned with or relating to the distinction between good and bad or right and wrong behavior: *moral sense*. 2 based on a sense of right and wrong: *moral duty*...5 **morals** principles of behavior in accordance with standards of right and wrong...  
[ HarperCollins, 1995, p.518 ]

Morality then is something which is relative to someone's beliefs about good and bad, true and false. To say that morality is relative does not mean that all points of view are equally correct. For those who value truth, a moral code built upon false assumption and wrong facts would be considered inferior to one without the flaws, all other things being equal. Morals that are arbitrary and cannot last do not have to be taken seriously by those who are both mature and sane. This value-neutral definition in the dictionary makes it possible for us to work with a definition of "moral" specific to our examination of Durkheim and Weber and would indeed be relevant for all the theorists. *Morality is a moral code which differentiates between desirable and undesirable conduct, a code built upon a respect for being true and always differentiating between true and false, a code which is practiced by some agents or agents for a purpose.* The moral principles that make up all known moral codes are generally thought to be altruism and self-sacrifice (serving others rather than self), self-interest (serving oneself), masochism (destroying oneself), and domination/resentment (destroying others). It is also quite conceivable that the same phenomena could be described in different ways, and that any new moralist could delineate a new set of principles, but these are the possible moral principles that are commonly used, separately or in combination.

Morality is practiced exclusively by human beings, not by inanimate objects and probably not even by other animals. Morality is contingent on choice and consciousness. The purpose of a moral code can be practically anything, but is generally held to be relevant to life for a sentient entity. This definition of morality would allow us to perceive the different moral codes at a glance. Durkheim would hold that morality is practiced by people for society's purposes and that the exclusive moral principle is altruism. A theologian would say that morality is the service of his divinity, and his concerns would perhaps be other-worldly and not concerned with this life. Weber would say that all people are potentially different in their beliefs and points of view, and that to understand their actions, one has to see what their values and purposes are. In a nutshell, morality is generally oriented to serving the individual, society, or a divinity,

and any combination of moral principles is possible. For example, a Christian may wish to serve God, help others as a means to serving God, make himself and his family prosperous to serve God, and to hope that the wicked be appropriately punished. Such a moral code would include altruism, self-interest, and resentment, and would be directed exclusively for the purpose of the divinity.

Morality is part of all life. This is not surprising, as moral codes are oriented to either serving life and making it possible, or possibly, serving death. It is hard to imagine a day in one's life which is not permeated by morality. Sometimes morality is perceived as an exterior moral force, other times it is a free choice made quietly in one's conscience. The act of giving accurate change is completely moral, and a common occurrence, just as it would be moral for one to give one's life for another, which is a rare occurrence. A congenial moral code is oriented towards life, and all the secular moral aspects of our lives are concerned with our lives in this world. (All concerns about any "after-life" are the exclusive domain of the theologian moralists.) It would be abundantly moral to say that, "Every job worth doing is worth doing well." What is intrinsically incompatible with moral phenomena is indifference.

One may indeed ask whether our definition of morality for this thesis is not so broad as to make it difficult to apply. The answer is that morality is the basic generic orientation of human life, and we need an abstract definition broad enough to encompass all concrete particular manifestations of moral codes which will allow us to identify them and perceive their general form. What is moral for me may not be moral for you, but we need a common definition that will allow us to identify each other's points of views as sets of values and not just bizarre absurd idiosyncrasies. The abstract definition of moral and morality gives us a frame of reference which is relevant to all sociological theory and all individual points of view.

Mutual understanding of morals is particularly difficult because of accidents of language. Most words associated with morality have their own histories of evolving meaning and particular connotations. For example, "noble" was once relevant to the beliefs of the aloof aristocrats, "common people" has sometimes been seen as plebeian and sometimes as virtuous, and self-interest has sometimes been seen as virtue and sometimes as irrational vice. In addition, because of this on-going verbal ambiguity of

meaning, moral actions can generally be explained from more than one moral principle. A parent looking after a child can indeed be called either altruistic or selfish. It is important to distinguish between principles of motivation and the effects. If a parent cares for a child when the parent would rather be doing something else and the action is committed grudgingly out of duty or social sanction, the action of self-sacrifice is indeed altruistic in its motivation, as altruism is defined as "*the unselfish concern in the welfare of others*" [ HarperCollins, p.20 ]. If a parent cares for a child because the parent cannot bear to see the child suffer, then properly speaking, this would come under self-interest, particularly as the parent is caring for his or her own child, and not just any person's child. This action would be best described as *the selfish concern for someone else valued by the individual*. Caring for someone is completely separate from whether the action or feeling is motivated by altruism or not. A parent may enjoy caring for a child because out of a love for Duty in the Kantian understanding of the word, or out of an intensely selfish love for the particular child and the pride of parental possession. The connotations for the terms altruism, self-interest, and self-sacrifice vary from person to person, and also culture to culture. I have done my best to keep my usage dictionary-correct and relevant to both how Durkheim and Weber used the terms themselves.

Moral phenomena encompass both the factors which give rise to creation and strength of values, and the intensified experience of their motivated action, as well as the values themselves. In Durkheim's terminology, sociologists studied *la morale* insofar as they studied the abstract relationships between moral phenomena and societies, and *les moeurs* as the particular content of different moral codes.

Durkheim's contributions to the study of moral phenomena by social science remain perhaps the most significant in this field. He used a conception of change that was closer to development than evolution or progress and displayed a subtle appreciation of temporality. Certainly, his use of the term evolution was not mystified with teleology. His very understanding of positive philosophy prevented him from necessarily ascribing moral improvement to future changes. He believed that one was to gauge the present by the values of the present and the future by the values of the future. This was a modification

away from the Historicist point of view, because society could be judged by both itself and its own social type, and therefore, not only could society change, but its legitimate representation could change as well, in this case, moral reality and moral codes. That is to say, the moral structure of a society could develop to become in better congruence with society as it was or as it was becoming. A society's moral codes do not always clearly reflect the true nature of how the society is at the moment. There is a sort of temporal lag between the representation and the represented. Durkheim had thoroughly critiqued Utilitarianism in his early scholarly years. He did not believe that a "public good" could be either quantifiable or assigned causal power but he did believe in a "collective nature."

Robert Hall, in his presentation paper "Sociology and Ethics: An Uncontested Divorce and a Possible Rapprochement" (1996), summarized the sociological critique of prevailing studies of morals through Durkheim's school as follows:

Four major, but overlapping, elements can be distinguished in the sociological critique of ethics: the deductive paradigm, the assumption of a universal human nature, the pluralism of moral norms and values, and, most importantly, the understanding of morality as a social institution. [ Hall, 1996, p.2 ]

More could be said. It would appear that Durkheim's laudable four insights delineated by Robert Hall either led Durkheim into social determinism, or alternately, were the means by which social determinism was to be proved:

In reality, a people's mental system is a system of definite forces not to be disarranged or rearranged by simple injunction. It depends really on the grouping and organization of social elements. Given a people composed of a certain number of individuals arranged in a certain way, we obtain a definite total of collective ideas and practices which remain constant so long as the conditions on which they depend are themselves the same.  
[ Durkheim, 1951, p. 387 ]

Though this may be ultimately unprovable as an allegation, it would appear that Durkheim's means and ends in his argument too neatly dove-tailed. The removal from moral analysis of statements of human nature, and the embracing of pluralism, both resulted from the inductive method and empirical approach. Once this was accepted, social determinism was in effect the conclusion to the assumption of morality as a social institution that could be empirically studied. However, it is part of the purpose of this dissertation to



show that social determinism was not inevitable from the secular and empirical study of moral phenomena and that other conclusions are compatible with Durkheim's initial approach.

Durkheim had rejected deductionism through his positive philosophy of science, and he rejected the universal abstraction of Human Nature. However, the thrust of his empirical approach did distinguish him profoundly from the rationalists like Kant and Descartes and also from the scholars of the Enlightenment who may have thought that truth set one free because of a power of its own.

Knowledge is not sought as a means to destroy accepted opinions but because their destruction has commenced. To be sure, once knowledge exists, it may battle in its own name, and in its own cause, and set up as an antagonist to traditional sentiments. But its attacks would be ineffective if these sentiments still possessed vitality; or rather, would not even take place. Faith is not uprooted by dialectic proof; it must already be deeply shaken by other causes to be unable to withstand the shock of argument.

[ Durkheim, 1951, p.169 ]

Durkheim did not disavow science; he embraced it. However, he did not ascribe to science a power of itself outside of society, though he did accept that science had its own peculiar moral sanction.

Of all the elements of civilization, science is the only one which, under certain conditions, presents a moral character. That is, societies are tending more and more to look upon it as a duty for the individual to develop his intelligence by learning the scientific truths which have been established.... Science is nothing else than conscience carried to its highest point of clarity. Thus, in order for society to live under existent conditions, the field of conscience, individual as well as social, must be extended and clarified. [ Durkheim, 1964, p.52 ]

Durkheim upheld logic, but if the application of logic and a discovered 'truth' affected society, it would only be because society was ready for it and had already created the means for which the logical truths could be pursued and revealed.

In his article "Morality without God: an attempt to find a collectivist solution" (1905), Durkheim explicitly revealed how he perceived the relationship between the study of morals and the moral forces which we experience.

Morality is not geometry; it is not a system of abstract truths which can be derived from some fundamental notion, posited as self-evident. It is a complexity of quite a different order. It belongs to the realm of life, not to speculation. It is a set of rules of conduct, of practical imperatives which have grown up historically under the influence of specific social necessities. All peoples of the same type have at all stages of their development a morality which results from the way they are organized and which expresses their mentality, just as the nervous system results from and conveys the nature of the living being. The role of the moralist is thus not to create or invent morality as though it did not already exist: *it does exist* and must be recognized by him, just as it must be

recognized by his contemporaries. ...Through historical analysis and by utilizing the data provided by moral statistics, what one can legitimately do is to endeavour to discover which causes have given rise to the moral precepts which we practise and which sustain them. [ Durkheim, 1979, p. 34-35 ]

Morality is all around us, and just like the atmosphere, it is subject to study and alteration by human beings. The air, whether its quality is good or bad, remains around us and, in a way, inside us. Finally, morality is always *felt*, it is experienced, and the individual feels an emotional attachment that he did not originate [ Durkheim, 1969, p. 298 ].

Perhaps it is best for someone who is unclear on Durkheim's conception of morality to compare moral systems to languages, and moral facts to the rules of grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation. Language is a social creation and also a product of reason. Language is also a social institution which in many respects is supervised by the state and yet preceded the state, and it can resist arbitrary political demands. To control language one has to understand it. Alternately, both language and morality can be over-simplified and bastardized into jargon, pragmatism and tacit-understanding, and mob feeling.

Durkheim made this analogy in The Elementary Forms of Religious Life:

Which of us knows all the words of the language he speaks and the entire signification of each? This remark enables us to determine the sense in which we mean to say that concepts are collective representations. If they belong to a whole social group, it is not because they represent the average of the corresponding individual representations; for in that case they would be poorer than the latter in intellectual content, while, as a matter of fact, they contain much that surpasses the knowledge of the average individual. They are not abstractions which have a reality only in particular consciousness... [ Durkheim, 1969, p.483 ]

Language has an *a priori* relationship to the individual. One can have a love of language and take pride in skill and communication, but one is not born with language, but born into it. Ultimately, not one individual can take the responsibility for language, though we can attempt to add to it. As individuals we can sustain it with our loving craft, and study it scientifically. Governments even pass legislation to (unwisely) throw foreign words out of the vocabulary or to replace old words with less archaic forms or substitutes with less offensive connotation. Sometimes a government directive is followed and sometimes it is not; and conversely, sometimes the government directive is merely following changes in popular usage and sometimes it is not. Regardless of what the individual or the government may *will*, the ultimate

reality of language escapes direct control. Language and morality are both products of human beings and are partially responsive to political influence, yet ultimately seem to have an existence of their own through their mutual flexibility and intractability. Slang emerges spontaneously and unpredictably. Distinctions are maintained between low and high forms of language. Once popular words can fade suddenly from usage and then re-emerge. Language is what people use to communicate with words in a collective reality that goes beyond any arbitrary agreement between two people. Language, like morality, is around us and inside us at all times for we think through it and through it we make our world comprehensible.

People become themselves only through association. A person cannot be born in isolation from other human beings, but a person becomes an individual and self-conscious agent only through association. Stable associations of (presumably) more than a few individuals take on collective characteristics rather than just remaining as groups of individuals. How such associations exist, and how they determine the relationship of the individual to society is the subject of many long scholarly debates. Society in itself must not become reified. As Durkheim noted, there is no Society, only many societies [ Durkheim, 1974b, p.197 ].

However, in contrast to both Comte and Durkheim, both Society and societies are not natural phenomena and their borders are disputable. Even the term *societies* often becomes problematic. There is no "perfect" way to determine beyond all dispute which society an individual is in. There is no method to make such a decision that is outside of those value-judgements that can be legitimately contested. One could say quite legitimately that one is within "civilized society," "French society," "Quebec," "Canadian society," and "Metis society" all simultaneously. Also, there is no definite or agreed upon number of the societies that exist. "Society" remains a useful term, but the origin of the word allows a person to belong to a secret society, world society, national society, a life-style subculture, a religious order, and a linguistic group, all simultaneously.

Durkheim had insisted that the existence of societies as entities *sui generis* be accepted on faith as a means to other ends. "It is not realized that there can be no sociology unless societies exist, and that societies cannot exist if there are only individuals" [ Durkheim, 1951, p.38 ]. This meant that Durkheim established a better case rhetorically and persuasively than logically and empirically. It is indisputable that people live in society, but it would appear questionable that societies have the same concrete and discrete characteristics that Durkheim ascribed to them. Durkheim had said that societies could be classified by type [ Durkheim, 1964, p.435 ] and that collective entities had concreteness at least equal to that of physical things [ Durkheim, 1982, p.35 ]. It is noteworthy that Durkheim never addressed the question of how to discern different societies out of intertwined social networks, nor did he ever examine directly how to determine the borders of societies in general. That is, he never had to delineate the border of a society if a political border already existed. Rather, his work shows a reliance on the conflation of political entities with social entities, of nation-states with societies. In contrast, Weber certainly raised this point that an ancient city could be many different things at once, and have equally *legitimate* different borders to different people. (Not all differences of opinion are legitimate, but many are.) This point of view that certainly sets Weber apart from Durkheim's mentor in history Fustel de Coulanges [ Weber, 1975a, p.180 ]. It would thus appear that Durkheim's use of 'social fact' was based upon a premature perception of societies as obvious and concrete.

The misunderstanding of the borders of society has been similar to the misconception of the borders of history. In both cases, the search for first and last causes submerged comprehension and usefulness. There is no reason for the beginning or end of existence. Similarly, there are no definite boundaries to societies, in time, human interaction, or imagination, except by the default that where people are not, society is not, either. Society is the useful term to remind us that we are always embedded in patterns of interaction. This interaction can be explained as the product of processes such as exchange, voluntary association, involuntary association, conflict, action, and domination. There is no necessary definite end to the patterns of interactions that have influenced us; no definite ends of the earth as it were,

as society exists through time, space, interaction, and imagination. As Spencer said, society is like an organism, but a sentient organism has a consciousness and a society does not. Every organism has a definite consistent boundary or dies, and a society has many little boundaries, but no final boundary. In any case, argument by analogy has no powers of proof, but rather facilitates mutual understanding.

Morality is more than just the sum of actions and intentions which are labeled 'good,' and we owe this insight to Durkheim. Both theft and honest production have been called both 'good' and 'evil.' There are grounds to consider an individual or society 'morally bankrupt,' but perhaps not in a way which lends itself to an effective political accusation. Durkheim's term 'anomie' seems worthy of consideration. Anomie is not the state of normlessness, but the quality of the lack of external regulation of the individual by society. Norms would still exist but are not enforced [ Durkheim, 1951, p.247 & p.253 ]. This enforcement and 'external regulation' would not only be behavioral, but also ontological. Hence, we see in Durkheim's analysis that the domain of moral phenomena is not chiefly values as such, as rationalist abstractions, but the social relations that create values and which give values their coercive power. Or alternately phrased, according to Durkheim, morals are not the values that people want to be right, but the values they are forced to feel are right and which they can also see enforced.

Morality is a human creation which has both means and ends. If either the ends of moral action are revealed to be empty, or the means are found not to be efficacious, then we can certainly speak of 'moral bankruptcy.' Morality needs purpose, and it would be false to ascribe the origin of morality's purpose to any entity or thing which is unable to have purpose of its own. Hence, Durkheim's theory will be shown to depend upon whether 'society' can have purpose. Hence, there will be more discussion in the rest of this thesis about Durkheim's conception of 'society' and whether it logically follows that we can move from the 'collective' origin of moral codes to societal purpose.

Ultimately, the crucial process of moral phenomena is cognitive. Symbols have to be meaningful, communication has to be speedy and complex. Here we can see Weber's emphasis on individual meaning tidies up the loose threads of our understanding of Durkheim. Durkheim did not dwell much on the role of

the individual, but neither did he ignore it. From reading Weber, we can see that the cognitive process is not only crucial for Weber's paradigm of methodological individualism, but for Durkheim's social realism as well. Communication and individual cognition are essential for all moral phenomena. Sociologists can attribute the cause of moral codes and tumultuous social events such as riots and demonstrations to society-wide factors such as the division of labor, the media, the standard of living, and ethnic polarization, but societal explanations still depend on the presence of continuous individual thinking, especially communication and cognition. Any weakening of individual cognition and the individual's interest and motivation, not just for particular things, but *in total*, would presumably lead to 'moral bankruptcy.' The individual has to identify aspects of the environment which are meaningful for him to be morally affected by them, and the individual has to have some motivation for some thing, any thing. Apathy is by itself sufficient to render one inhuman. In Weber's essay "Objectivity," he recognized that to perceive reality it is necessary to perceive it either in regards to something or for a particular purpose [ Weber, 1949, p.72 ]. The individuals who are indifferent would lack not only goals and values, but the means to perceive the world around them. It would be as if the colors and shapes of the world would fade to a miasmic greyness.

In summary, for the purpose of the scientific study of moral phenomena as envisaged by Durkheim and Weber, we can say that a plethora of different viewpoints are possible. Premises should not be mixed of course, but the researchers can have their choice of different interests and motivations, and can choose their own assessment of 'social realism.' Whether one researcher values self-sacrifice as good and another values self-preservation as good, remains a matter of personal choice. Academics can worship different gods as it were, but remain united on the rational and methodical study of moral phenomena. Moral codes can be described and explained, and the causality of the mechanism involved, understood and agreed upon, as in Weber's famous suggestion [ Weber, 1949, p.58-59 ], by researchers of different cultures and points of view. In addition, if specific criteria are explicitly given (which other researchers can accept or reject) the moral life of a particular society or group can be judged as to whether it has the

appropriate intensity or the appropriate content for its moral codes. However, moral phenomena, regardless of the personal values of the social scientist, remain in the domain of what can be studied 'scientifically,' with the resulting studies submitted to the scrutiny of one's peers.

If an analysis of morals and moral life cannot be made through the rigorous criticism and tests of social science, then morals are left outside the domain of all social science. Morals would then be considered intrinsically *irrational* and outside of rational analysis. If morality is condemned as irrational, humanity would condemn itself as well. If morality is irrational, then let us remember that the most irrational human being is the madman. The actions of the madman are unpredictable, uncontrollable, and arbitrary. In contrast, the rational man is creative, productive, dynamic, and logical without contradiction. A sociology of morals will not give us "quick fixes" to problems that have plagued mankind for thousands of years. A rational study of morals will help us understand that the entire realm of experience is understandable. Value-systems are not blindly determined by fate, nor are the values that make *Homo sapiens* into human beings consigned to the realm of irrationality by some mechanism beyond our ken.

### Chapter Three: Moral Reality and Social Realism

Durkheim's paradigm is the investigation of empirical collective phenomena within a societal context that is initiated on unproven but plausible assumptions about the nature of society. It is part of the thrust of this study to show that Durkheim's use of collective phenomena still has something to recommend it, but that Durkheim's use of "society" may be faulty. If this is so, then other paradigms that avoid the methodological error of assuming "society" to be an unproblematic unit would have greater relevance. Moral reality appears to remain as Durkheim conceptualized it, as a collective phenomenon. Morality may be more than a collective phenomenon, but it is important to recognize that it is and has been a collective phenomenon. Durkheim's insight into the *nature* of morality seems to be tenable, but his conclusions in other areas will bear a later critique.

All moral and religious systems change. Sometimes the change is not due to outside influence or to a receding lack of commitment, but arises from the application of rational agency by a system's adherents. Weber identified the process of rationalization as the manner in which intellectuals and laymen work out the inconsistencies in their chosen beliefs or in the values of the community. This process of rationalization not only clarified the moral beliefs of a society, but also had the sometimes inadvertent side-effect of raising the value of reason and expanding the role for individual agency. Furthermore, rationalization facilitated the rise of bureaucracies and institutions of knowledge as well as the standardization of written dogma. Morals of any community were no doubt affected as they were codified and put into writing. Durkheim would have perceived the process of rationalization much differently. Durkheim said that every culture creates its own rationality. Weber might have agreed with that in a broad interpretation, but Durkheim insisted that the rationality of any culture was *by its own merits* the equal of the rationality of any other culture [ Hall, 1993, p.26 ]. In contrast, Weber had emphasized that the



ultimate perspective to judge rationality was that of the individual rational mind. Not only did Weber insist that all actions be explained by the meaning that they possessed for the individual actors, he said that meaning was relevant only for individuals and that there existed no 'pure' or 'objective' or transcendental frame of reference [ Weber, 1978a, p.4 ]. Different cultures do have different developments of rationality, but cultures and societies cannot directly judge them.

A structure of morals can be changed by both internal forces and external influences. External influences are the most obvious. A tribe that worships one god can be conquered by another tribe with a different religion. The next generation of the survivors worship the god of the winning tribe during the day and practices the old religion at night. Eventually, the religion of the defeated tribe is partially accommodated into the religion of the dominant tribe, and in part becomes the stuff of fairy-tales and bed-time stories. In another example, a tribe can suffer a flood and then make the flood a key aspect of its mythology. Similarly contact with a new people can stimulate new beliefs or awaken old fears.

A structure of morals can also be transformed by change taking place solely within its society. The population density of a community may rise, bringing more people into contact with each other. Durkheim referred to this process as "increasing dynamic density" [ Durkheim, 1984, p.201 ]. Durkheim's understanding of the dynamism of societies' moral forces led him to see the individual as an effect and not the cause of social organization. The present sanctity of the individual in today's western civilization would not have been an obvious possibility in many other societies. It is quite probable that Durkheim had over-emphasized the lack of individuality in 'primitive societies' marked by mechanical solidarity. In his defense, it may be that the standards by which we judge him today will someday also be found wanting.

In describing events, there is the question of whether the acknowledged moral beliefs of the people involved were what was relevant to their actions or were just a "sugar-coating" over the real meanings for them. Weber would have suggested that the social scientist look for the meaning of the actions for the participants, but we can see how self-deception and the deliberate deception of others can make this more difficult than we would like. It is no doubt in part due to the difficulty in finding the "real"

meaning of actions that collective concepts seem more trustworthy than they would be otherwise. In certain situations it is difficult to tell whether the ascribed 'legitimate' morality is the facade or an independent stimulus. We can sympathize with the desire of some social-scientists who would ascribe the explanation of the conquest of the New World to such abstract and collective concepts like "capitalism," "nationalism," and "colonialism" rather than to untangle the genuine meanings of so many different actors.

The roles for social realism and moral reality become more relevant as we understand our own potential biases for how we interpret meanings for the people involved in actions. These two concepts remain useful because they emphasize that what we think of as moral need not be what other people think of as moral. Also, we separate what is "moral" from what is "ideal" and "desirable." Meanings are intensified through social-interaction. What is "moral" includes all of what social interaction and individual cognition together lead individuals seeing as either strongly desirable or repugnant. If Durkheim is correct, the independent role of individual cognition is virtually zero, and so this meeting of minds between social realism and methodological individualism is not eclecticism but a common frame of reference created through an understanding so broad that it is applicable to both paradigms. When we interpret the meaning of people involved in events, we must understand them by the meanings specific to their own culture and keep in mind the connection between the moral and the social. Otherwise, we are blind-sided in part by our cultural prejudice that whatever is "moral" must be "good," and hence, "evil" actions cannot be moral. Even a desire for notoriety or fame presupposes that other people have moral values. Greed may or may not be considered 'Good' in a particular ethic, but even *wicked greed* is still in the moral domain because it is the pursuit of a goal based upon values intensified by the social milieu. Whether greed is good or bad is either a cultural or subjective judgement, but greed as well as altruism always remains moral.

It appears that from the beginning to the end of his academic career that Durkheim saw the individual *as we know him today* as a social creation. He saw that what is genuinely individual as

nonhuman by our own standards. It is difficult to understand Durkheim in terms other than his own because of his use of terminology. Durkheim used 'social' and 'moral' as synonyms, and 'individual' as their antonym. [ Fields, 1995, LV ]. A mind free of society was not human [ Durkheim, 1995a, p.16 ]. Yet, Durkheim did not disparage the individual as such, especially as he valued all that was collective and that was derived from society. Durkheim valued the individual and the individual's feeling of uniqueness as important social creations. His exact delineation of the social process which made a person into an individual who deemed to call himself free, is stated below:

Originally society is everything, the individual nothing. Consequently, the strongest social feelings are those connecting the individual with the collectivity; society is its own aim. Man is considered only an instrument in its hands; he seems to draw all his rights from it and has no counter-prerogative, because nothing higher than it exists. But gradually things change. As societies become greater in volume and density, they increase in complexity, work is divided, individual differences multiply, and the moment approaches when the only remaining bond among the members of a single human group will be that they are all men. [ Durkheim, 1951, p. 336 ]

This is not to suggest that Durkheim was correct, but to show that he had his own explanation for how moral forces had developed in general to lead humans to our present milieu in which individual freedom is both allowed and directly understood. However, many readers may feel uncomfortable with the fact that in effect Durkheim used temporality to mix his premises. He showed his readers that, provided they accept his premise of the complete subordination of the individual to society, they will get what they presumably wanted, a 'scientific' validation for our current human rights and freedoms. This is a "poison pill" that will be bitter in the end. It would be to say that individual rights are acceptable, not from the intrinsic nature of the individual, but from the effects of complex social development outside the understanding of any individual. Durkheim *could* be condemned for smuggling in holistic determinism as the basis for today's liberty, yet in the short-term there would be little here to condemn, as Durkheim and his paradigm supported democracy, legal rights, and some civil liberties.

Durkheim had said that together the 'dynamic density' and the division of labor had been the dynamo which had pulled societies from mechanical to organic solidarity. Since Durkheim's day, the advent of radio, television, and mass transit has also brought people closer to each other. Increased

individual contact increases small-scale conflict and yet reinforces the necessity for people to reconcile these little differences in order to coexist as they are forced by circumstances to live in closer proximity and to *feel* they are in even closer proximity. Durkheim never considered an absence of conflict normal or necessary for the on-going maintenance of a society. Daily conflicts reinforced morality through the maintenance of the processes of communication and negotiation. This, in turn, led to the sharing of information, the making of appeals to legitimate authority, and spurred the re-examination of moral imperatives. As already mentioned, the process of rationalization is an internal transformation of morality. Durkheim's main point in his early works, was that the increase in the division of labor in a society would transform the moral life from mechanical to organic solidarity. The increase in material prosperity, the increase in dynamic density, the increase of means of knowledge, and the increase in the daily division of labor, all contributed to transforming the nature of the society's solidarity. In particular, the division of labor would facilitate daily conflict and negotiation among people with different economic interests. This intensified the legitimate patterns of negotiation and arbitration, so that people would be forced by their circumstances to reach a compromise as they lived in greater economic interdependence. Durkheim maintained that the increase in the division of labor would keep society integrated, and at the acceptable cost of a large number of little differences, prevent large scale differences and hostilities from erupting within the particular society.

It is possible here to make a common frame of reference which is compatible with Durkheim's social realism in particular, and which remains compatible with the concerns of methodological individualism. As long as the people conducting actions have values which are more than both subjective and individual whims, values created or reinforced through a social context and interaction, we can call their actions "moral." For us to insist that morality is something "good" would reduce morality to a narrow-minded use of *virtue*. Such a perspective would fail to see that the recognition of virtue (and how it changes from group to group) is a product of interaction and cultural context. One of Durkheim's greatest achievements in sociology and pedagogy was to establish that actions, both praised and

condemned, are facilitated and intensified through social interaction. Our understanding of what is wrong comes from the same sources as our understanding of what is right. Even deviant and condemned actions can then be said to have a "moral" quality in the sense that they are social. Durkheim was indifferent to the notion of 'free will,' but thought that individuals acted with strong wills on the basis of motivations and contexts not of their choosing.

Since, therefore, moral acts such as suicide are reproduced not merely with an equal but with a greater uniformity, we must likewise admit that they depend on forces external to individuals. Only, since these forces must be of a moral order and since, except for individual men, there is no other moral order of existence in the world but society, they must be social. But whatever they are called, the important thing is to recognize their reality and conceive of them as a totality of forces which cause us to act from without, like the physico-chemical forces to which we react. So truly are they things *sui generis* and not mere verbal entities that they may be measured, their relative sizes compared, as is done with the intensity of electric currents or luminous foci. [ Durkheim, 1951, p. 309-310 ]

Here Durkheim seems to have over-emphasized the concreteness of the collective phenomena he described. His main point is clear. Even suicide, an action generally found reprehensible, was a moral phenomenon insofar as it was generated by social conditions and relationships irrespective of the precise idiosyncrasies and personalities of the individuals involved.

The aspirations of virtue are sometimes merely products of the imagination alone [ Durkheim, 1977, p.207 ]. Whether something is seen as good or bad depends on the person's point of view and values, such as whether one's concerns are 'worldly' or 'other-worldly.' Morality is more tangible and this is true whether we are discussing moral structures or the foundation of all moral structures. It is unwise to automatically condemn what one does not want as 'immoral.'

Durkheim's means of cutting to the conclusion that both good and bad actions are potentially moral and that even bad actions and evil can be considered normal, is worthy of perusal.

We must therefore call crime necessary and declare that it cannot be non-existent, that the fundamental conditions of social organization, as they are understood, logically imply it. Consequently it is normal. It is useless to invoke the inevitable imperfections of human nature and maintain that evil does not cease to be evil even though it cannot be prevented; this is the preacher's language, not the scholar's. A necessary imperfection is not a disease... [ Durkheim, 1951, p. 362 ]

Durkheim thus did not consider crime and evil actions merely as a consequence of evil personalities and the exercise of free will by evil persons. His reasoning here suggests that anything inevitable is normal. What may be considered normal, will no doubt vary within societies and between societies. Here we have a problem of the level of abstraction and generalization suitable for social science. If something is inevitable in the long term or across broad society, is it always normal? Violence and malaria would then be considered normal. If a degree or rate of an occurrence can be said to be normal, then *perhaps* individual instances of the occurrence would also then be considered normal. Such was the point of view of the Stoic Marcus Aurelius [ Aurelius, 1997, p.90 ]. Even if absolute free-will was initially acknowledged as the sole determinism of all actions, once a rate of actions is considered normal, then there will be an automatic tendency to excuse an individual action as being socially determined. What is normal could be confused with what was *necessary*. There seems to be the possibility here of an error in logic similar to the convergence of parallel lines on the horizon, because given enough time and social interaction, *anything* becomes inevitable.

Durkheim's argument here in regard to what is 'normal' discreetly relied on his notion of social fact and the subordination of the individual to society. Without both tenets accepted, his argument would fail and both 'good' and 'evil' could not be both considered 'normal.' While we can talk about 'normal' rates of crime, such as what is to be expected even under 'ideal' or good conditions, the connection between a normal rate of deviancy and deviancy as normal appears incomplete. This connection in Durkheim's reasoning appears to be almost a play-on words.

There is a last reservation. Durkheim stated that his argument did not have to take into account the 'inevitable imperfections of human nature,' a statement which does not mean that he considered human nature unflawed. Rather this was a way of bringing in an additional and unneeded philosophical premise to bolster his argument. Can 'nature' be flawed? According to what point of view? For human nature to be flawed, there would have to be a transcendental point of view which is somehow 'perfect' -- and this point of view could presumably only be 'God' or 'Society.' If God exists, God could have a point of

view. It may be more likely that 'society' exists, but whether 'society' can have a point of view is a different matter entirely. If society is perfect, then all individuals would have to be flawed in comparison --and all individuals would only be judged from a point of view to which they could never measure up: a horrible method of judgement. That is exactly the ramification of Durkheim's point of view. In another work, Durkheim would belabor the point that not a single individual is genuinely innocent [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.40 ]. It appears likely that Durkheim's exact definition of social fact and his level of generalization led him to this belief that crime can be 'normal' and no individual can be 'innocent.'

#### The origins of Durkheim's paradigm

There is much debate regarding the influences upon Durkheim. Durkheim was well read, and he was well apprised of developments in philosophy, anthropology, German social-psychology, and French sociology. In attributing debts that Durkheim may have had to previous theorists, one must remember that many of Durkheim's most productive long-term intellectual relationships came from how he rejected their solutions to the problems they had posed. The negative influences affected him as profoundly as the positive influences. In Durkheim's last written work and in his last lectures on pedagogy, significant space is reserved for a critical and sympathetic discussion of both Kant and Rousseau.

Durkheim began his 1887 essay on the prospects of moral science by stating that in France at the time, there were two schools of thought on the subject, the Utilitarians and the Kantians. If Durkheim had embraced either camp, he would have just said so, and the discussion would have been a lot shorter. He was appreciative of both schools of thought, but he believed they rejected completely the concept of social facts. The Utilitarians included in particular John Stewart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, and to a lesser extent the Manchester School of Economics and others sympathetic to the ideas of Herbert Spencer. The Utilitarians discussed the maximization of individual self-interest, but as Durkheim pointed out, they failed to see that their concepts of self-interest, the individual, and the values the individuals were

supposed to recognize and pursue, were all social creations. Not only were they social creations, these concepts were feasible only within the social contexts of the industrialized countries of 19th century Europe. The whole economic milieu, which made individual economic initiative possible, was built upon a long historical foundation which in part generated its own conceit. Durkheim's debt to Kant was more profound, but it would be misleading to consider him as a kind of Kantian. Durkheim in one sense replaced Kant, rather than followed him. Durkheim liked to call himself a rationalist, but with specific qualifications. He praised Kant for his questions and for recognizing the limits to "pure Reason," but did not think Kant went far enough. Durkheim as an atheist rejected Kant's attempt to connect a rationalist study of morals to God. Durkheim, as a social scientist, rejected the notion that logic and reason automatically existed in the individual outside of both experience and society. Durkheim wished to render the concepts of human thinking amenable to empirical study, to turn aside from both mindless empiricism and mind-without-matter *a priori* mental categories, to perceive how all people think as *social facts*.

Durkheim rejected all attempts to explain ethics that began with the individual as an intrinsically autonomous unit or as an *a priori* creation:

Far from the individual being the primitive fact and society the derived, the former only slowly disengages itself from the latter. But while the life of the individual takes shape and expands, the collective life is not thereby diminished. [ Durkheim, 1993, p. 108 ]

Society was the source of individuals and all concepts regarding individuality. Durkheim had contempt for the individual mind as such, and said that the individual mind was incapable of understanding anything new except through society [ Durkheim, 1974b, p.198 ].

Due to translation ambiguities there has been some misunderstanding over the idea that Durkheim advanced the position for some kind of "group mind" in society. The term "*la conscience collective*" was simultaneously translated as both collective *conscience* and collective *consciousness*. It is unclear whether Durkheim believed that there was a "group mind" in society. Conventional interpretations generally reject the "group mind" thesis, yet recent work such as by Dénes Némedi [ Némedi, 1995 ] suggests that there are grounds to make such an interpretation, particularly once it is understood that Durkheim had closer links to the German holistic Idealistic philosophers Kant, Hegel, and



Schopenhauer than is generally acknowledged. This is not to suggest that these philosophers advocated a "group mind" thesis, but that when we understand their influence upon Durkheim we see different shades of meaning in Durkheim's words than before. Support for the "group mind" thesis rests in particular on Durkheim's critique of the Marxist Antonio Labriola in 1897 [ Durkheim, 1982, p.171 ] and Durkheim's repeated use of analogies comparing the relationship of the individual mind to the collective society as similar to that of the brain cell to the individual consciousness [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.24 ]. Durkheim did appear to disdain the "group mind" notion: "We do not recognize any more substantial a soul in society than in the individual" [ Durkheim, 1951, p.51 ]. If Durkheim saw society as a "group mind" Durkheim would have to assume that individual minds existed as entities separate of society, a notion which Durkheim rejected. He considered individuals to be the substratum of society, not its component parts. Durkheim said that from his point of view, society was made up of collective representations [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.2 ; Marske, 1987, p. 12 ].

The degree to which Durkheim tolerated individualism is a matter of some debate and misconception. Durkheim stated that one of his biggest differences with Wundt, was that he felt Wundt excessively denigrated the individual as unimportant compared to society [ Durkheim, 1993, p.120 ]. However, this alleged difference may have included some posturing. It does not follow that because Durkheim posited that the source of morality was in society that he saw individual life as expendable. Durkheim was not an 'individualist' like Adam Smith, Ayn Rand, or Friedrich Nietzsche, but he did not denigrate individual life, either. Comte called individualism a social disease; Durkheim called it a palatable social cult. From Durkheim's point of view, individualism's flaw was that it considered itself self-evident: that it treated the individual as the creator of society when the individual and individualism were products of society [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.68 ]. Durkheim, in his lectures published as Professional Ethics and Civic Morals, spent much time specifying ways for individualism and equality to be consolidated by developing its social foundation [ Durkheim, 1992 ]. Durkheim did not appear to see the individual as expendable as much as banal. The individual's physical life was not to be sacrificed for the

greater good of society. What was to be sacrificed was the independence of the individual: the individual's independent epistemology and ontology, the individual's freedom, individual differences, individual conscience, and the right of the individual to try to rise above the mass and above the submission to society that was ordained for him. In short, Durkheim saw all pleasure (such as the joy of freedom and individual achievement) as superfluous if it did not serve the known interests of society [ Durkheim, 1993, p.120 ].

Durkheim owed much of his introduction to inductive methods to Montesquieu [ Durkheim, 1965a, p. 52 ]. Durkheim also attributed to Montesquieu the basis for his own concept of social facts. Montesquieu had written that the various moral elements of a society, such as its family life, laws, crime, and customs, could not be studied separately, as they were all parts of a whole [ Durkheim, 1965a, p. 56 ]. Durkheim wrote his Latin doctoral dissertation on both Montesquieu and Rousseau. From Rousseau, he derived an even greater inspiration to study both society and morality as forever intertwined. In a tone of approval, Durkheim quoted Rousseau:

A society is 'a moral entity having specific qualities distinct from those of the individual beings which compose it, somewhat as chemical compounds have properties that they owe to none of their elements. If the aggregation resulting from these vague relationships really formed a social body, there would be a kind of common sensorium that would outlive the correspondence of all the parts. Public good and evil would not be merely the sum of individual good and evil, as in a simple aggregation, but would lie in the relation that unites them. It would be greater than that sum, and public well-being would not be the results of the happiness of individuals, but rather its source.'  
[ Durkheim, 1965a, p. 82 ]

Durkheim also had the advantage of hindsight. He had accepted Darwin's evolutionary theory in general, but had rejected Darwin's explanation for morals. He also rejected the Social-Darwinists' belief that evolution led *purposefully* to "higher" forms of society and he rejected their belief that social evolution led to "higher" forms of morality. From Durkheim's view, the morality of a "higher" or more developed society was only applicable and relevant to that type of "higher" society, and so, though there were "lower" and "higher" types of societies, they were neither inferior nor superior to each other. However, by accepting the importance of both genesis and longitudinal development from the evolutionists, he was more able to critique Rousseau:

He fails to see that every society embodies conflicting factors, simply because it has gradually emerged from a past form and is tending towards a future one. He fails to recognize the process whereby a society, while remaining faithful to its nature, is constantly becoming something new. This accounts for the singularity of his method. Social existence is determined by conditions of two types. One consists of present circumstances, such as topography or size of population. The other pertains to the historical past. Just as a child would be different if he had had other parents, so the nature of a society depends upon the form of the societies preceding it. If it has a background of inferior societies, it cannot be the same as if it had sprung from highly civilized nations. [ Durkheim, 1965a, p. 59 ]

Durkheim's debt to Montesquieu and Rousseau was profound. He accepted that society was more than the sum of its parts and that society *as such* was irreducible to individuals.

Durkheim praised Rousseau for seeing that society was created irretrievably out of the proximity and interaction of human beings and that the notion of the isolated individual was only hypothetical. However, Durkheim emphasized that Rousseau did not go far enough, and so, reduced society to its mere parts: the individuals, their population and resources, and their knowledge.

But it would be a serious mistake to interpret this theory as implying that ethics is based on the greater material force resulting from the combination of individual forces. This coercive power is doubtless important; it guarantees the rights that come into existence with the civil state, but it does not create them. [ Durkheim, 1965a, p. 103 ]

Durkheim criticized Rousseau for saying that society was a creation of what the individuals had in common, since all that the individuals might have in common was society, the nature of their collective existence. Being born into society was common to all and hence, could not create the nature of society.

The general will must be respected, not because it is stronger but because it is general. If there is to be justice among individuals, there must be something outside them, a being *sui generis*, which acts as arbiter and determines the law. This something is society, which owes its moral supremacy, not to its physical supremacy, but to its nature, which is superior to that of individuals. It has the necessary authority for regulating private interests because it is above them, hence not a party to disputes.  
[ Durkheim, 1965a, p. 103 ]

Here Durkheim linked two disparate premises, the existence of the 'general will' and the fact that society was irreducible and not a matter of choice for the individual. We shall examine Durkheim's theorizing more critically in later chapters. It is sufficient here to note the possibility that the perception of the 'general will' may be variable, and that it does not necessarily follow that because society is irreducible, that it *must* have a general will. Insofar as Durkheim erred on this point, he also followed Rousseau.

Durkheim saw society as something above all individuals, even dictators. Though society was not an organism in itself, neither was it a product of material or idealistic resources, or a creation of mass individual action.

Thus the moral order transcends the individual; it does not exist in material or immaterial nature, but must be introduced... To effect this synthetic connection a new force is required, namely, the *general will*. [ Durkheim, 1965a, p. 103 ]

We can see here the germ of Durkheim's conception of collective conscience, derived from Rousseau's term the general will, sometimes referred to in Latin as *universalis consensus*. However, he explicitly rejected Rousseau's dichotomy of the individual *versus* the "general will," through rejecting Rousseau's notion of the hypothetical and abstract individual [ Durkheim, 1965a, p. 131 ].

Durkheim felt that people, being by nature *homo duplex*, had strong wills which needed social restraint and ontological guidance.

We are not naturally inclined to put ourselves out or to use self-restraint; if we are not encouraged at every step to exercise the restraint upon which all morals depend, how should we get the habit of it? [ Durkheim, 1977, p. 12 ]

A balance was needed between the two natures which resided within the individual. Yet the basis for resolving any imbalance was not really the product of individual effort, but more of the ongoing collective life of society through the ongoing re-creation of social solidarity. Durkheim emphasized that society constrained us at all times, and this constraint was moral. Constraint is not the only aspect of morality, but it is a necessary one in this paradigm [ Durkheim, 1964, p. 435 ]. This factor relates to *homo duplex* in an interesting way. Society constrains us at all times. This constraint is external and internal. The internal constraint is our consciences, an understanding which is similar to Freud's theory of the superego. However, society constrains the way we can see the world. This constraint, though binding, also gives us what we critically need: epistemological and ontological stability. *Homo duplex* will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

S. Mestrovic has recently speculated that Durkheim was a disciple of Schopenhauer [ Mestrovic, 1988b & 1989 ]. According to Mestrovic, Schopenhauer contributed to the founding of social science by suggesting that ethics could be studied empirically [ Mestrovic, 1989, p.431 ]. To call Schopenhauer an

empiricist would be most unusual, and so there are grounds to be skeptical of Mestrovic's claim. However, Mestrovic's thesis remains worthy of consideration. There are reasons to suggest a connection between Schopenhauer and Durkheim, even though Durkheim rarely referred to Schopenhauer directly in his writings, and on the few occasions he did so [ Durkheim, 1993, p.108 ] he was critical. Durkheim's outline for his last work *La Morale* had made extensive references to Rousseau and Kant. Schopenhauer was also a sympathetic critic of Kant and Rousseau and so there might have been an affinity between Durkheim and Schopenhauer's direction of thought, though evidence for a more direct relationship between them still appears to be unproved. A lot of people read Schopenhauer, including Weber, Simmel, Tolstoy, Wundt, and Nietzsche, yet they certainly remain original talents.

Durkheim's emphasis on a strong primordial psychological will restrained by social factors does appear to lend some plausibility to Mestrovic's theory, but there appear to be greater grounds for reservations. Durkheim seems to have adapted ideas directly from other theorists that he could have also found in Schopenhauer. Durkheim's sympathetic critique of Rousseau and his partial incorporation of Rousseau's ideas into his own may tempt us into seeing a greater similarity between Durkheim and Schopenhauer than is actually the case. Rousseau and Schopenhauer had superficial similarities and deep metaphysical differences. There appear to be in Rousseau's works precedents for the chronic pessimism and suffering that is associated also with Schopenhauer. Rousseau once said, "He who does what he likes is not happy if his desires exceed his strength...." [ Rousseau, 1996, p. 57 ].

All desire implies a want, and all wants are painful; hence our wretchedness consists in the disproportion between our desires and our powers. A conscious being whose powers were equal to his desires would be perfectly happy. [ Rousseau, p. 51-52 ]

Schopenhauer was not the only philosopher who had discussed the relationship between the individual's will and his unhappiness. There is also the possibility that Durkheim was affected by Stoic philosophy. There is nothing wrong in speculating on a link between Schopenhauer and Durkheim, but to do so, one would also have to discuss the other theorists who shared the same pessimistic concerns.

In addition, Durkheim was also a student of Wundt. Elements of Durkheim that Mestrovic has attributed to Schopenhauer, can also be found in the works of Rousseau or Wundt which Durkheim

discussed directly. Schopenhauer influenced many thinkers of the 19th century such as Simmel, Wundt, Nietzsche, and Tolstoy, but there is no irrefutable evidence to attribute the origin of Durkheim's theory to him. Durkheim completely rejected the metaphysics of Kant and Schopenhauer, and there is no mention in any of his work of the Kantian term "the thing-in-itself" or *noumena*. However, in a way unrelated to Mestrovic's treatment of the hypothesized link between Schopenhauer and Durkheim, Durkheim's term social fact with its insistence that the apparent world is not the *whole* real world and that collective values and representations are never *fully* viewed by anyone, appears to be similar to Schopenhauer's collective mysticism, but it would also be similar to anyone else's collective mysticism. To call Durkheim a follower of Kant or Schopenhauer, only makes sense in that he may have tried to come up with new answers to their questions or to otherwise duplicate their achievements upon a sociological basis to meet the new demands of the modern world. Still, the similarities between Durkheim and Schopenhauer appear to be unappreciated by Durkheim's critics and popularizers. That is to say, the aspects of Durkheim's theory which provide the basis for the alleged link to Schopenhauer are the aspects which were distorted or glossed over in conventional interpretations. There may indeed be a closer relationship between Durkheim and Mestrovic's Durkheim than with Parson's Durkheim.

Durkheim was in no way a member of the German neo-Kantian movement which included Simmel and Weber, yet his relationship to Kantianism bears scrutiny and clarification. Durkheim was deeply influenced by the French philosophers of the Third Republic who were themselves deeply influenced by Kant's writings. In particular, Boutroux and Renouvier were considered Kantians and they in turn were Durkheim's professional mentors. However, these French philosophers had rejected Kantian notions of 'the thing-in-itself,' intuition, and *a priorism*. Instead of basing his paradigm on metaphysics, Durkheim built his ideas upon his teacher Renouvier's understanding of society as a reality *sui generis*, in which a divorce between representations and the represented was not viable [ Jones, 1996, p. 53 ]. Yet such a statement in itself is metaphysical because it implies absolute certainty about things we cannot observe directly holding true in all cases, real or hypothetical. Renouvier posited absolute 'formal'

relationships between representations and the represented and between the individual and society which could not be observed directly and could not be subject to empirical scrutiny. We can call such a point of view 'social metaphysics.' Though this 'social metaphysics' is not the same as Kant's metaphysics, it may have been intended to accomplish similar political and pedagogical goals.

To say, as Mestrovic does, that Durkheim's term *homo duplex* and *representation* bind him to Schopenhauer and his use of *Vorstellung*, is to overstate the case. Rather, Durkheim in his discussion of will and restraint, emphasized that our "natural" or "psychological" impulses are balanced by physical constraints, social constraints, and the actions of other people, to render us as normal individuals. Durkheim thus distinguished himself from the Utilitarians and Kantians, who saw the individual as juxtaposed to society. In his outline for his proposed definitive book on morality, Durkheim referred to Kant's argument repeatedly, with the chapter titles: "The problem of the Kantian solution," "Critique of Kantian ethics," "Relation between public and individual morality (autonomy and the Kantian solution)," and "Property. The Kantian theory" [ Durkheim, 1979, p. 78 ]. Durkheim was as familiar with Schopenhauer as he was with all philosophers including Fouillee and Renouvier, who critiqued Kant in a way separate from the German self-titled neo-Kantians. In any case, considering that Schopenhauer challenged people with his assertion of *immutable* "blind will," Durkheim's contention that people become who they are only in society, remains poles apart. Durkheim emphasized that the individual's equilibrium, self-concept, and feelings of both repression and empowerment were derived from the individual's presence within society, and that though society made demands upon the individual, it was never alien.

Perhaps one *could* speak of Durkheim as 'some kind' of Kantian, but only with regards to the function of the philosophy and not the content. Durkheim replaced *a priori* categories with social facts and replaced God with Society. He ended up ultimately at a conclusion similar to Kant's by subsuming the individual under society's moral imperative. Durkheim was in no way part of the neo-Kantian movement which used Kantian terminology, rather we can see that Durkheim was obsessed with creating wholly new terminology different from conventional French Cartesian and German Kantian philosophy. To try to

label Durkheim as part of a philosophical school, would raise the question of whether we understand philosophy through terminology and premises, the conventional view, or through its purpose, function and political needs. If we are to judge philosophy by the function of its truths and its deceptions, then we could call Durkheim a follower of Kant and Schopenhauer, but as long as we adhere to convention and attribute philosophical influence to premises and assumptions, we should not.

### Durkheim's Moral Reality

We deal here now more with Durkheim's ideas, rather than with those of Weber or any other thinker, because Durkheim was the main author of the paradigm of social realism. Social realism deals directly with all the aspects of moral reality and collective societal moral forces that act upon and inside the individual. If Durkheim's understanding of moral phenomena is sufficient, then it would hardly be necessary to examine other options. However, while Durkheim's understanding of moral reality has a great deal to recommend it, he made mistakes in other concerns. So, it is necessary to examine in great detail just what Durkheim meant by morality. Morality is not just the values people think that all people would hit upon logically or emotionally by themselves. "Virtue as it exemplified in the most literate people exists only too often in the imagination alone" [ Durkheim, 1977, p.207 ]. He meant that though we think as an act of our own volition, our thoughts are always conditioned by our social context.

The examination of morality in general, by itself and not its concrete content, is the investigation into how values exist and their relationship with actual events. Durkheim rejected the values of the metaphysicians and the notion that there were absolute ethics floating above normal life.

Ethics, by contrast, operate in the realm of action, which either gets to grips with real objects or else loses itself in the void. To act morally is to do good to creatures of flesh and blood, to change some feature of reality. In order to experience the need to change it, to transform it and to improve it, it is necessary not to abstract oneself from it; one must rather stay with it and love it despite its ugliness, its pettiness and its meanness. One must not avert one's gaze from it in order to contemplate an imaginary world, but on the contrary keep one's gaze directed steadily towards it. This is why a culture which concentrates to an excessive extent on aesthetic values tends to create slackness in the moral sphere, because it turns us away from the real world. [ Durkheim, 1977, p. 207 ]



Daily life of actual people, and not the ideals of hypothetical people, is the true moral domain. Morality can never be divorced from society and individuals.

Morality is not a system of abstract rules that people find inscribed in their consciences or that the moral philosopher deduces in the privacy of his or her office. It is a social function or, even more, a system of functions which is formed and consolidated under the pressure of collective needs. Love in general, the abstract tendency toward unselfishness, does not exist. What actually exists is love in marriage and in the family, the free devotion of friendship, civic pride, patriotism, the love of humanity, and all these feelings are products of history. [ Durkheim, 1993, p. 74 ]

Here Durkheim emphasized the nature of moral analysis as positive and empirical. He believed that the moral philosopher was very much a product of the same society that he sought to reshape according to what he thought were absolute ethical rules.

It is not the dreams and lofty ideals of intellectuals and theologians that are directly the content of morality. The facts of morality's substance are social facts:

The moral philosopher can, then, neither invent them nor construct them; he or she must observe them wherever they exist and then seek their causes and conditions in society. No doubt the sense of the ideal, this need that pushes people to be discontent with anything relative and to seek an absolute which they cannot attain, intervenes in the evolution of moral ideas; but it does not create them. On the contrary it presupposes them and can only give them a new form. [ Durkheim, 1993, p. 75 ]

All societies have ideals, many impractical, and these ideals are a necessary part of the symbolic life. Durkheim believed that ideals are not individual wishes, but images of what should be, which are unrealizable directly by the individual. Hence, ideals reinforce collective power, as no individual can actually identify so closely with an ideal that he or she would be outside its coercive power.

Durkheim's use of ideals is troubling. To accept in their definitions that ideals are intrinsically unrealizable and that absolutes are unobtainable, is to bring in many hidden premises. These might include that humans might be imperfect or fallen from a state of grace, or that humans live in an universe which judges them by standards which they cannot achieve, in effect, a malevolent universe. To say that ideals and absolutes are unobtainable by human beings would beg the question of who could realize them. Durkheim's ready answer would be *society*. A theologian would say *God*. This is quite congruent with Durkheim's point of view that individuals were to be judged by society with society's standards. In

contrast, an individualist would have to consider the possibility that the belief that ideals are intrinsically beyond human grasp is an implicit recognition that the ultimate judge of morals is something nonhuman.

We look for the understanding of morality in collective life, not in the innate. No doubt neuro-psychology has more to offer us today than in Durkheim's era in understanding how the human brain works, but as we know that people are physiologically very similar and yet their actions differ so markedly we do not turn to biological reductionism for an explanation. Neuro-psychology could tell how human beings think physiologically, but not how they think what they think through volitional consciousness.

Durkheim rejected the notion of an abstract human nature as a causal variable.

Far from being immutable, humanity is in fact involved in an interminable process of evolution, disintegration and reconstruction; far from being a unity, it is in fact infinite in its variety, with regard to both time and place. Nor do I mean simply that the external forms of life vary, that people do not everywhere speak the same language, wear the same clothes, or observe the same rituals. Rather it is the very basis of human mentality and morality which is perpetually in the process of transformation and is not the same here as it is there. [ Durkheim, 1993, p. 25 ]

Durkheim accepted the notion of human nature in the form of human potential, but not as a force in itself.

He explicitly rejected the Darwinian explanation for morals as part of the bio-evolutionary process

[ Durkheim, 1993, p.105 ]. Human life was variable and contingent on group life and capable of facilitating a multitude of behavior and moral codes to appear natural to people who grew up in a particular society.

It is fascinating that Durkheim rejected abstract human nature, yet posited that human nature was necessarily imperfect. To understand this paradox, one has to keep in mind that Durkheim was exclusively concerned with the relationship of the individual to society. Apparently, according to Durkheim, the ultimate frame of reference is not intrinsic human nature, but concrete and specific societies, which have a generic and nonspecific but absolute superiority over the individual.

We are always in moral life. Moral life is always some *thing* around us and inside us. Durkheim saw individual existence as *homo duplex*, that all human beings have a societal sociological component and an innate, more psychological component within them simultaneously. He attributed to morality an origin in society and not in the individual, and in life rather than in empty abstraction.

For us too, morality only has a purchase in the domain of striving, struggle, sacrifice and unselfishness. For us too, the moral life is not simply a matter of embarking upon the easy downward slope which is empirically prescribed for us by our physical nature: it is rather a question of building with our own hands upon this foundation a natural structure which is more special and more sublime, which is truly and uniquely characteristic of humanity, which is entirely spiritual, which we alone are capable of creating but whose laborious construction is so arduous that it would never even have been attempted, had we not felt morally and socially obliged to undertake it.  
[ Durkheim, 1977, p. 210 ]

In particular, Durkheim articulated the view that the nature of morality was a strong compulsion to serve the group in some way. He rejected morality as something that could be chosen by individuals to serve themselves. No doubt all individuals have some choice in their lives, but Durkheim emphasized the otherliness of the nature of all moral life.

Durkheim emphasized that the entire moral reality was collective in origin. The way that he explained this is sometimes debated and often misunderstood. Durkheim was not a materialist, but he did always examine the physical factors of a society under consideration, and these factors included geography, climate, material resources, population, population density, and the division of labor. Durkheim was also not a Social-Darwinist. He did examine racial hypotheses, but he found them wanting in credibility. He seriously examined the possibility of differences in temperament between men and women. He also wondered if women had degenerated a little biologically since the start of civilization, though that notion seems absurd to us now. Durkheim wisely rejected the then-accepted conclusions of studies at the end of the 19th century, which on inadequate evidence "demonstrated" racial differences. However, from other physical-anthropological evidence, he left himself open to the possibility that women and men's relative size and intelligence had changed through the development of civilization [ Durkheim, 1964, p.60 ].

Durkheim was close to being an idealist, but he was not an idealist in the ways that it was commonly understood. Durkheim posited no absolute values, and he did not ascribe to values and ideas any causal power, nor at any point did he anthropomorphize such ideals as "Freedom" or "Democracy." Durkheim was an idealist only in the sense that he was a cultural relativist. He believed that each society had its own rationality, and as well from its own unique history and present circumstances, its own values

and identity. Each culture held its own beliefs, but all societies were committed to their own survival and could be judged as normal or pathological in regards to their general social type [Durkheim, 1964, p. 432]. A society's rationality and moral code were appropriate for it, if they adequately represented the true state of the society, such as its dynamic density, particular history, language, and economic relations —a list which included many, but not exclusively material, factors. Durkheim was not an ethical relativist, however, and this distinction is crucial. He did not say that all moral values were equal, rather he posited that they were to be judged by the needs of the collective foundation of society in general and the circumstances and needs of the particular society in which they were found.

There is an alternative to both idealism and conventional metaphysics which still accomplishes the same effects and creates the same impression of transcendence. This would be not to ascribe existence and causal power to ideas as such, nor would it demand the belief in the existence of absolutes in the realm of ideas and ethics. Rather, it would be to believe in absolutes in the form of social relationships and their causal relationships with each other. These relationships would be the absolute subordination of the individual to society, the absolute existence of *homo duplex*, and the absolute unbreakable connection between the represented and the representation. Arguably, this is the Durkheimian paradigm, the substitution, in a sense, of social metaphysics for idealistic metaphysics. We can call Durkheim a 'social metaphysician' if we are also willing to remember that in any difference between the label and the man's theory, it is his theory which is more important. In any event, he preferred to be known as a rationalist.

Durkheim was a cultural relativist and not a moral relativist. He stated that every culture had its own rationality and unique characteristics. However, the fact that society was a reality did not mean that truth and objectivity did not and could not exist. Rather, Durkheim insisted that truth was relative to the truths of the particular culture and had its own special moral characteristic. He understood that insofar as all cultures might believe something, that universal values could exist as well. However, the potential for cultural universals appeared somewhat limited to such things as a recognition of and a concern for truth.

Truth cannot be separated from a certain moral character. In every age, men have felt that they were obliged to seek truth. In truth there is something which commands our respect and a moral power to which the mind feels properly bound to assent.

[ Durkheim, 1983, p. xxxviii ]

Knowledge is not all relative in Durkheim's paradigm, but is relative to specific societies. Moral phenomena, being relationships that represent the collective nature of the particular society, are relative to the *type* of society in which the specific moral phenomena occur [ Durkheim, 1964, p. 435 ].

One considers as a normal moral fact for a given social type, as a determinate phase of its development, every rule of conduct to which a repressive diffuse sanction is attached in the average society of this type... [ Durkheim, 1964, p. 435 ]

This later provision mitigates somewhat Durkheim's cultural relativism. For someone to claim that Durkheim believed that all values are relative and that people should not believe in absolutes, values, or universals, would be a misunderstanding. Values are specific to societies. We do not have a frame of reference outside that of different societies. Not only is there no universal or absolute frame of reference, the moralists and social scientists are also citizens. Social scientists may study how moral codes are relative to specific societies and to types of societies, but they also experience their own society as an absolute.

After World War One began, Durkheim wrote two tracts describing the collective conscience and moral nature of German society and how they had facilitated German aggression. He emphasized that while the French and the Germans held different values, it was still possible to evaluate them and to judge German militancy as undesirable [ Durkheim, 1915a, p.18 ]. Sometimes Durkheim is interpreted as having modified his position slightly regarding the possibility of cross-cultural truths and universals, but this appears to be unjustified:

It is misleading to take the claim about duty to one's country out of context, to claim that the 'early' Durkheim is a universalist rather than a relativist in his ethical theory [ Wallwork 1972 : 164 ]. Durkheim -'early' or 'late' - is both, always recognizing moral universals while always emphasizing every social type's own morality. The most important statement of his ethical theory, the course on moral education, analyzes duty and the good as moral universals while emphasizing autonomy as an aspiration of the modern human ideal. [ Miller, 1996, p. 29 ]

In his emphasis on cultural specificity, Durkheim did not imply that our concern to avoid ethnocentrism should keep us from making scientific judgments regarding morals or from having confidence in the values of our own culture. The sociological study of morals, by showing how values vary from culture to culture, can also show the existence of universals. Not only can certain phenomena exist in all cultures,

but other phenomena can be proved to be universal in all cultures which have a certain desirable characteristic. We can judge cross-cultural similarities and differences by the criteria of universalism but also by accepted value-judgements relative to particular tasks, ideology, or politics. If we are concerned with individualism, for example, we can then find the elements that universally facilitate individualism though individualism itself is not universal. Cultural specificity does not end the prospects of scientific analysis of morals, but provides key information by showing what diversity is possible under specific conditions.

In Durkheim's careful use of relativism, there remained cultural universals and a sacred value attributed to truth. Truth did not lose its efficacy and sanctity as truth by being relative to the specific society which created it. In all societies, truth is respected as such. Not only is truth a cultural universal, it is an axiom of all cultures. This removes Durkheim from the pragmatist position that truth is merely relative or is whatever works as truth. Rather, Durkheim would maintain, truth is not relative to individual whims or petty demands, but to the social sanction from the collective nature of social life of a specific social reality. In any case, though Durkheim's use of "truth" was flexible, in no way did he suggest that the past was not fixed, as G.H. Mead would later assert [ Mead, 1964, p.322 ], nor did he measure truth by its short term efficacy, which was the view of the pragmatist school of thought in general. In fact, Durkheim's position was quite at odds with pragmatism, though the superficial similarities did cause Durkheim to write a series of lectures on the topic to distinguish his position, Pragmatism and Sociology [ Durkheim, 1983 ]. The American pragmatist sociologist Herbert Blumer grounded his theory of Symbolic Interactionism in "the mutual definition of the situation by the participants" [ Blumer, 1969 ]. Durkheim in contrast found that those people who had to define their own situations suffered considerable angst. He called this malaise *anomie*, and attributed it to a transitional stage in social solidarity. Durkheim's term *anomie* is sometimes considered by those who had read Robert Merton, to be the condition when a person's desires exceed his resources. Durkheim emphasized that *anomie* was as much a problem of the individual suffering a lack of ontological guidance [ Durkheim, 1984, p.120 & 298 ]. The

synonym for *anomie* was not normlessness, but '*dérèglement*' [ Mestrovic, 1988b, p.689 ]. The founder of Symbolic-Interactionism, Herbert Blumer, emphasized that the individual actor can and must freely define his situation. What was the solution for a pragmatist like Blumer was the problem for Durkheim, and this difference was based upon their different use of truth. Blumer had made truth relative to the shared meaning of the specific individuals involved in a single 'joint-action.' Durkheim made truth relative to social reality, which is not to make it arbitrary, but to emphasize that no individual who uses truth or fact is ever outside of a cultural context.

Durkheim emphasized that morality was a phenomenon of society though all experience of course is realized through individuals. Individuals do have individual representations, but these unique mental images are short lived and puny compared to the representations of society. Durkheim attributed all of the moral imperative to society and not to innate instincts, virtue, or logic. It was from the effects of society, including even unconscious motivations and causes obscure to the individual, that people were bound to each other and maintained civilization [ Durkheim, 1982, p.171 ]. Morality commands, and the individual obeys, and hence, the origin of morality lies not in any individual.

Now, there is only one moral power -moral, and hence common to all- which stands above the individual and which can legitimately make laws for him, and that is collective power. To the extent the individual is left to his own devices and freed from all social constraint, he is unfettered too by all moral constraint.[ Durkheim, 1992, p.7 ]

Society surrounds us at all times, remaining inside us, even if we should try to isolate ourselves. The dominant images of society are held in common by the individuals, but this is a collective fact which results from their common position within society. The fact that people have these images (representations, ideas, emotions) in common could not give the images their power, because then the people could just merely change them. Rather, the dominant images of life are rooted in social reality beyond the control of any one individual and beyond all individuals acting together in volitional coordination.

Moral ideas have the same character. It is society which forces them upon us, and as the respect inspired by it is naturally extended to all that comes from it, its imperative rules of conduct are invested by reason of their origin, with an authority and a dignity which is shared by none of our internal states: therefore, we assign them a place apart in our

psychical life. Although our moral conscience is a part of our consciousness, we do not feel ourselves on an equality with it. [ Durkheim, 1968, p. 298 ]

We enter social reality and find its rules and images around us fully grown, waiting to be realized slowly and uniquely through the workings of our individual consciousness. When we leave society and die, the images and rules continue without us. The social images, or representations, as Durkheim frequently called them, were held by the individuals in diverse states of clarity and consciousness [ Mestrovic, 1988b, p.693 ], but were never to be explained by the needs or innate nature of the individuals who held them. Durkheim made it clear that from his point of view that the dominant beliefs of any society were not the "average" beliefs of the majority of the citizens. Such a position would have had a great deal in common with conflict theorists and Marxists, except that Durkheim went on to say that the dominant beliefs were also not the product of any one group within society but were products of the collective nature of society as a whole. [ Durkheim, 1982, p.171-173 ]

The moral symbolic tapestry of human life is not a matter of choice by the individuals concerned, nor do they have to fully understand the source of their values. In one of his publications, The Positive Science of Morals in Germany, (1887) Durkheim wrote:

Most social facts are much too complex to be able to be embraced in their entirety by human intelligence, however vast it might be. The majority of moral and social institutions therefore, are due not to reason or calculation but to obscure causes, to subconscious feeling, and to motives which have no relationship to the effects they produce and which, consequently, they cannot explain. [ Durkheim, 1993, p. 73 ]

Durkheim was of the exact same opinion ten years later in his critique of Labriola which is published as "Marxism and Sociology: The Materialist Conception of History." We like to think we are individuals, and that we can cultivate our own morals, but in the least, we do not do this in circumstances of our own choosing, and possibly, we remain ignorant of some of our own motivation.

Now that we have demonstrated that for Durkheim moral reality was the essence of the collective nature of human life and was established through social solidarity we must see what morals were in their experience. Durkheim seriously considered the Kantian argument that morality was duty performed not out of pleasure or self-interest, but out of obligation alone. Though he did place a premium on constraint as a necessary element, he found Kant's paradigm wanting. To act exclusively out of duty would create a



life and existence that would be dreary, even from the point of view of someone like Schopenhauer, who considered life as only aesthetics, misery and misery's lack. William Gibson's play *The Miracle Worker* about the epistemological education of a young blind-deaf woman Helen Keller by a social worker makes this point clear. The social worker teaches her ward the rudiments of discipline needed for social etiquette, but is discouraged by the lack of understanding on the part of her pupil regarding the meaning of the words and concepts she is trying to teach: "...to do nothing but obey is--no gift, obedience without understanding is a --blindness, too." [ Rand, 1984, p. 91 ] Moral reality is not just obedience to forces outside ourselves. Weber, in contrast, had emphasized the importance of meaning and free-choice. Durkheim attributed the nature of morality to society and rejected moral universals, and yet looked for universal principles of social relationships. Consequently, he grappled with the difficulty of finding sufficient reason for why people should obey and how they obeyed social sanction. Obviously, constraint is a vital part of moral sanction and law codes, but it would appear insufficient to explain why people obey. There is the old fable dating back to the philosopher Zeno. The master tells the slave to do a task or else he will break his leg. The slave says, "Then my leg is broken." Obedience even to the threat of force is not automatic. Durkheim searched into the individual experience of morality to find what it was that made us respond to the commands and coercion from society, and he thought he had found it. For obedience to be realized, there had to be at least a tacit acknowledgment in either 1) the desirability of the results of the social sanction or 2) the desirability of the maintenance of its process, even if the results were unpalatable or unrealizable. Emile Durkheim considered the first option to be outside the moral domain; individualists such as Max Weber and Ayn Rand would have disagreed, albeit for different reasons. Durkheim, following in Kant's footsteps, looked to make desirability part of the process of the moral response of the individual and absolutely rejected self-interest, and so, therefore, argued in a somewhat convoluted course that in "proper" moral events the individual came to see the moral sanction and power itself and the obligation of duty to it as what was desirable [ Durkheim, 1995b, p.28 ]. Desirability was a necessary part

of moral action for Durkheim, but this desirability had to be transcendent and relevant to the individual serving society and not the individual serving his own life.

Durkheim found a link between the individual's experience of life and his receptiveness to the commands of often harsh moral dictates. He emphasized that though the individual was of a lower nature than that of society, the individual's petty wants and pleasures were how the individual related to the pleasures of pleasing society and indeed made life itself pleasant [ Durkheim, 1993, p.120 ]. In addition, in contrast to Kant, Durkheim saw no penalty in pleasure and self-interest *per se*. If the individual found pleasure in conducting a moral action, this did not end the moral nature of the action. Kant in The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals had insisted that virtue must be not only its own reward, but its *sole* reward [ Rand, p. 96 ]. Durkheim rejected Kant's sufficient use of duty as the sole and exclusive quality of moral life.

However different Durkheim was from Kant, Durkheim's moral theory is still to be understood in relation to Kant. Durkheim had rejected Kant's belief that someone who found pleasure in doing something "good" was immoral and that the only good actions were those without any self-interest. However, this qualification and increased tolerance was still achieved within the overall Kantian perspective that emphasized the primacy of duty over choice and self-interest. Someone who enjoyed pleasing his family could be just as good as a parent as someone who merely went through the motions of familial obligation. However, one should consider whether it sounds reasonable to say that parents who voluntarily care for their children are "just as good" as parents who reluctantly and begrudgingly care for their children out of the stale dictates of social duty. The former may certainly be no worse than the latter, but to say so, implies some kind of reversal in one's point of view. The Kantian approach to morality is suspect. Any sociologist who creates a new theory by mitigating the worst aspects of an older theory through the inclusion of additional variables and premises, remains in philosophical dependency upon the original theory. Durkheim sugar-coated Kant's emphasis on duty and self-sacrifice by making the overall

theory more inclusive. In a mathematical analogy, Kant was negative; Durkheim was nonpositive. Kant seemed to value self-sacrifice, Durkheim valued the lack of self-interest.

The two perspectives were virtually identical but Durkheim's theory was a little broader and seemed to be more flexible. Durkheim's phrasing would avoid antagonizing as many people as Kant's moral theory did; it could be accepted a bit at a time before its full implications were understood. Also, it was expressed in such an unusual way that the politically polarized audience of the Third Republic would give it a full hearing and it might appeal to people on all sides of the political spectrum.

Durkheim had added additional steps and variables to the Kantian paradigm. Durkheim emphasized that duty or constraint was not the sole element of moral life:

Morality must, then, be not only obligatory but also desirable and desired. This desirability is the second characteristic of all moral acts. [ Durkheim, 1993, p.43 ]

However, this does bear some circumspection. The Neo-Platonists had argued that what was inevitable should also be desired and that one gained 'freedom' in a way by giving up free-will and accepting destiny and the nature of the universe. Durkheim was not a Neo-Platonist, but implied in his reasoning that the individual *should want* what was obligatory or what would otherwise be enacted without his consent upon him by force. The individual's desire for the obligatory act was necessary but flexible, and did not need to bear a fixed relation to it, nor did the desire need to have a stable or universal content.

Within Durkheim's paradigm of social realism, obligation and desirability were the two necessary aspects of moral experience. To say that they were both necessary does not imply that they were equal. We see these two conditions discussed in several places in Durkheim's works, in particular his lecture on education published as "The Teaching of Morality in Primary Schools" [ Durkheim, 1995b, p.28 ], and in his essay "The Determination of Moral Facts" [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.36 ]. There are different kinds of obligations and different degrees of desirability. It would seem likely that the obligation would have to be long lasting, but there is no apparent need for the desirability to last longer than the act itself or the initiation of the act. If the desirability was the 'stronger' and more 'lasting' element in the consideration of a particular act, then the act would have been committed by the individual before the 'obligation' aspect

was necessarily recognized. Then, according to Durkheim, the individual would not have felt a moral motivation or a particular 'social-imperative' experience to the act. So, by definition, according to Durkheim's paradigm, there would always have to be either a temporal time-lag or a synchronism: obligation must always precede desirability if the two are not simultaneous. As stated above, this desirability cannot be perceived as independent self-interest, but is some kind, any kind, of desirability for the system that created the obligation, for the obligation directly, or for the urge to transcend and sacrifice oneself in one's duty for the obligation. In other words, seen from an unrepentant individualist perspective, the desirability that Durkheim spoke of is merely the rationalization and temporary justifications of the frightened and also the empty rigidity of the petty who believe in following rules for their own sake. Durkheim described the desirability as the willingness and need of the individual to serve something greater than himself and to join it through the violation of his own nature [ Durkheim, 1995b, p.29-30 ]. This view of morality is surprisingly similar to such otherwise divergent examples as Adorno's "authoritarian personality" and Freud's notion of the identification of a victim with the victimizer.

Durkheim did not see self-interest and self-preservation as particularly moral, in part because he did not think people genuinely valued themselves in that way. Social scientists are free to reject Durkheim's reasoning in one of two linkages. They can decide that human life is intrinsically valuable and hence 'moral,' or they can argue from within Durkheim's paradigm that contemporary observation does show that individuals value their self-interest more than Durkheim had thought. However, there is a subtle aspect to Durkheim's reasoning in the mixing of obligation and desirability. Obligation was often insufficient for the individual to commit himself to the moral action, but it always gripped the individual, as the individual was always in that society's collective conscience and that collective conscience was in part in the individual's soul of '*homo duplex*.' Then the individual would find a desirability, however weak, specious, irrational, rational, or short-lived, and then commit the act. The role of obligation not only included genuine physical threats of coercion and the desire to be 'good' for 'goodness' sake,' but also molded the individual's orientation and set much of the individual's mental agenda for interpreting his

environment. After all, we are dealing with 'representations' which have a coercive ontological effect as they restrain and direct the individual will, and these are not necessarily reducible to individual thought.

Durkheim gave no premium to self-interest, and considered self-preservation and self-interest by themselves to be morally neutral [ Durkheim, 1993, p. 109 ]. Yet, Durkheim understood that morality seemed to have a combination of both constraint and internal motivation.

In fact, moral reality always presents simultaneously these two aspects which cannot be isolated. No act has ever been performed as a result of duty alone; it has always been necessary for it to appear in some respect as good. Inversely there is no act that is purely desirable, since all call for some effort. [ Durkheim, 1993, p.44 ]

Both of these above quotations are from Durkheim's 1887 essay "*La Science positive de la morale en Allemagne.*" In his 1906 essay "The Determination of Moral Facts," Durkheim maintained the exact same position:

In opposition to Kant, however, we shall show that the notion of duty does not exhaust the concept of morality. It is impossible for us to carry out an act simply because we are ordered to do so and without consideration of its content. For us to become the agents of an act it must interest our sensibility to a certain extent and appear to us as, in some way, *desirable*... It will be our main intention to show that all moral acts have these two characteristics, even though they may be combined in different proportions. [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 36 ]

Durkheim's theories maintained remarkable consistency over a long period of time because his premises stayed the same. Yet in Durkheim's conclusion there appears to be some compromise. How then would he classify actions that individuals committed out of intense obligation no matter what their revulsion, in obedience to social-sanctioned moral institutions such as churches and national governments? According to his paradigm, such actions would not be moral, yet they would be believed by the people involved to be moral. Durkheim directly specified that even the worst barbarities were committed out of moral feeling [ Durkheim, 1995b, p.30 ]. Durkheim's paradigm can be saved by explaining that the individual's revulsion in committing particular moral acts (war, genocide, execution) is attributable to the tension within the *homo duplex* or to the acceptance of the possibility that revulsion and desirability are not mutually exclusive, but merely opposed.

Durkheim saw moral life as all actions (and implicitly their antecedents) conducted out of simultaneous obligation and desirability. It is interesting then to note the distinctions between the different

positions on this aspect of moral life. Kant gave the individual's categories of thought an *a priori* reality and assumed the existence of God. Kant founded an ethical theory out of rationalism after denigrating reason and used instead the term 'pure Reason,' to mean all that is logic free of all experience and observation. 'Pure Reason' was a concept similar to how we could call life devoid of all oxygen, means of life, and purpose of life, 'pure Life.' Kant concluded that the highest outcome of morality was the beauty of duty alone without personal benefit. Kant may have been one of the most famous theorists who waxed poetic on the nature of duty and self-sacrifice, but his point of view was not shared by all other philosophers. Ayn Rand attributed to the individual an automatic autonomous existence, upheld reason as a volitional act of thinking about experience, and concluded that duty was an abomination to the dignity of the individual. Durkheim grounded the individual as a product of society, gave society an *a priori* reality, and made reason a social creation that was socially-specific. He maintained that moral action was both good and desired by the individual and imposed through obligation, achieved only through difficulty and was sometimes intrinsically unrealizable. Opposites are not necessarily dichotomous, rather more than two different conclusions can be opposites to each other simultaneously.

Human beings are free to invent reasons to explain what they do, or to model their identities on various explanations for how they experience social compulsion. The nature of moral interaction does not need to be understood in order to exist. However, understanding the true reasons for morals and to gain clarity for understanding what they are, are goals of social scientists, and achieving this understanding does not conversely undermine the legitimacy of social compulsion.

Won't it shake people's moral beliefs if one asserts that they have such obscure causes?  
On the contrary, the conception of the sociology of morals that we have explained is the best safeguard for the traditional faith, since it shelters the traditional faith from its worst enemy, rationalism. [ Durkheim, 1993, p. 134 ]

In fact, Durkheim said that as we gain understanding of morality as a collective force derived from elements rational and irrational, and from elements idealistic, material, and physiological all combined, we can then understand the stability and long history of our moral systems. We can understand as well that these moral systems are not to be threatened or moved by individual ignorance or insight.

But if one admits the principles described above, then one can tell young people, and everyone else, that our moral beliefs are the product of a long evolution, that they are the result of an endless succession of cautious steps, hard work, failures, and all sorts of experience. We do not always perceive the causes that explain our moral beliefs because their origins are distant and so complex. Therefore we ought to treat them with respect, since we know that humanity, after such pain and labor, has not found anything better. We can be assured, for the same reasons, that we will find more wisdom accumulated in them than in the mind of the greatest genius... Morality would thus have quite enough authority in our minds since it would be presented to us as the summary and conclusion, however provisional, of human history. [ Durkheim, 1993, p.134-135 ]

Durkheim wrote this passage in 1887 at a time when progress seemed assured. In the 20th century humanity would go mad. Durkheim's conviction that our collective moral life would always continue a slow but steady development, was touching, but misplaced.

The following chapters shall explore the reasons why Durkheim's paradigm cannot be recommended *en total*. Durkheim's paradigm is strong, useful and very persuasive, yet part of that strength is built upon Durkheim having assumed plausible rather than proven links in his theorizing and methodology. We shall explore these aspects in the next chapter.

#### Chapter Four: *Homo Duplex* and Effervescence

Durkheim posited that the individual is composed of social and asocial components, and that we become Man (recognizable human men and women) only in society. There is some merit in this approach, but also some potential problems. In this chapter we address the issue of Durkheim's theory of the individual and how it logically justifies virtually total social control over the individual by society.

Durkheim suggested his theory of the self relatively early on in his career. His 1898 book Suicide did not differ in its understanding of the individual from The Elementary Forms of Religious Life which he published in 1912 or from his 1914 essay "The Dualism of Human Nature and Its Social Conditions."

He wrote in Suicide:

If, in other words, as has often been said, man is double, that is because social man superimposes himself upon physical man. Social man necessarily presupposes a society which he expresses and serves. If this dissolves, if we no longer feel it in existence and action about and above us, whatever is social in us is deprived of all objective foundation. All that remains is an artificial combination of illusory images, a phantasmagoria vanishing at the least reflection; that is, nothing which can be a goal for our action. [ Durkheim, 1951, p. 213 ]

This rather untestable hypothesis is persuasive, but not proven. It is also not final; reasonable alternatives exist. Sociable people have no necessary obligation to serve and express a particular society, except possibly in a very generalized and poetic way, which may be more in the eye of the whimsical beholder than in the state of things itself.

The following ten quotations in this chapter are taken from The Elementary Forms of Religious Life. In this work Durkheim discussed the collective effervescence of Australian aboriginal religious rituals as being the foundation of not only the particulars of their society but of society itself and the individual mind. Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence is interesting and useful, but he makes this same mistake throughout. He assumed that if there was a collective origin in certain phenomena that all such phenomena must have a collective ( higher) purpose [ Durkheim, 1951, p.212 ]. He also erred in



assuming that all collective phenomena are responsible for collective life as a whole, that is, society, and that collective phenomena are all equally worthy of regard. However, it is possible that Durkheim by the end of his career developed his theory to draw a distinction between collective representations that had the purpose of reflecting and embodying society, and those that had no purpose but moved erratically for simple self-affirmation [ Durkheim, 1995, p.426 ; Durkheim, 1974a, p.91 ]. If so, this qualification is generally not included in how Durkheim is taught to university students.

Durkheim emphasized that society is superior to the individual, and that society is not maintained for the existence of individuals. Not only is society prior to the individual, society is a higher level of existence than is the individual and its purposes are superior. However, it is important to recognize that Durkheim took those two elements to their logical conclusion when he said that individual moral action must be made exclusively for society at the expense of the individual.

Society also fosters in us the sense of perpetual dependence. Precisely because society has its own specific nature that is different from our nature as individuals, it pursues ends that are also specifically its own; but because it can achieve those ends only by working through us, it categorically demands our cooperation. Society requires us to make ourselves its servants, forgetful of our own interests. And it subjects us to all sorts of restraints, privations, and sacrifices without which social life would be impossible. And so, at every instant, we must submit to rules of action and thought that we have neither made nor wanted and that sometimes are contrary to our inclinations and to our most basic instincts....

An individual or collective subject is said to inspire respect when the representation that expresses it in consciousness has such power that it calls forth or inhibits conduct automatically, *irrespective of any utilitarian calculation of helpful or harmful results*. When we obey someone out of respect for the moral authority that we have accorded to him, we do not follow his instructions because they seem wise but because a certain psychic energy intrinsic to the idea we have of that person bends our will and turns it in the direction indicated. [ Durkheim, 1995a, p.209 ]

There were options to this axiological statement. Durkheim could have said that the individual has an obligation to serve society provided that he ( "he" meaning the subject for both the objects him and her ) benefits himself, or alternately, does not risk hurt to himself, does not destroy himself, or does not violate the nature of his individual conscience or even his basic cognition of reality. If Durkheim had meant by restraint that we must be polite, respect other people's freedom of speech, and obey parking regulations, he could have and would have said so. Even the Utilitarians and Social-Darwinists would have made similar

arguments about social responsibility. Such regulations and constraints can be specified as either objective and universal, or alternately, for the personal benefit of the individual if everyone conducted himself similarly in that particular context. Those possibilities and explanations were decidedly *not* part of Durkheim's theory. Universal normative values, or even universal principles in the identification of norms would have violated Durkheim's social epistemology and his insistence that society is always a higher level of life than the individual.

Durkheim said that the creation of the religious, that is, the sacred, was a key element in rendering us human, in the creation of society, and in subsuming the individual under control of society.

However complex the outward manifestations of religious life may be, its inner essence is simple, and one and the same. Everywhere it fulfills the same need and derives from the same state of mind. In all its form, its object is to lift man above himself and to make him live a higher life than he would if he obeyed only his individual impulses. The beliefs express this life in terms of representations; the rites organize and regulate its functioning. [ Durkheim, 1995a, p. 417 ]

Durkheim's insistence that the social is greater than the individual is interesting, and it was probably derived from Rousseau. However, his insistence that society is 'higher' than the individual is perplexing given his own evidence and description. Durkheim described the customs of the Australian aborigines to show the essence of the religious and social uplifting of the individuals concerned and how they were subsumed into society. Yet his own statement about this 'collective effervescence' gives us pause.

The very act of congregating is an exceptionally powerful stimulant...And since passions so heated and so free from all control cannot help but spill over, from every side there are nothing but wild movements, shouts, downright howls, and deafening noises of all kinds that further intensify the state they are expressing. [ Durkheim, p. 217-218 ]

It is hard to contest that human social action such as congregation cannot be stimulating. But stimulating in just what sense? Given Durkheim's wording, this event would seem to be stimulating to the people's 'animal nature,' perhaps, yet Durkheim cited this as evidence that the social uplifts the individual to a higher phase or plane of being.

The people do their best to imitate the animal; they cry out like it; they jump like it; they mimic the settings in which the plant is daily used. [ Durkheim, 1995a, p. 363 ]

Durkheim did his own argument a disservice. It is hard to accept that the imitation of animals necessarily raises people up to society and away from being confined to merely their own animal-individual human

nature (the lower half of the *homo duplex*). Perhaps, if people were rolling around, imitating animals and howling, they were becoming *less* human, not more human, and degrading themselves to a level *worse* than the animals concerned. Nonhuman animals are merely themselves; they do not imitate each other, nor do they deliberately injure themselves.

As has been said, Durkheim advocated the idea that Man is *homo duplex*. His description of the relationship of man to society, and the relationship of man's two natures to each other, is not encouraging. He discussed how, in the creation of the sacred, the creation of individual suffering is often crucial to 'uplifting' the individual:

Abstinenances and privations are not without suffering. We hold to the profane world with every fiber of our flesh. Our sensuous nature attaches us to it; our life depends upon it. Not only is the profane world the natural theater of our activity; it enters us from every direction; it is part of us. We can not detach ourselves from it without doing violence to our nature and without painfully clashing with our instincts. In other words, the negative cult cannot develop unless it causes suffering. Pain is its necessary condition. By this route, people came to regard pain as a sort of rite in itself. They saw it as a state of grace to be sought after and induced, even artificially, because of the powers and privileges it confers in the same right as those systems of prohibitions to which it is the natural accompaniment. [ Durkheim, 1995a, p. 317 ]

These quotes are Durkheim's own words. Durkheim saw the creation of the sacred as synonymous with the creation of the social, and the creation of the social as what has raised primitive egotistical *Homo Sapiens* up into recognizably *human* beings. Durkheim seemed to advocate the sacred quality of suffering.

The ideal beings to which cults are addressed are not alone in demanding of their servants a certain contempt for pain; society, too, is possible only at that price. Even when exalting the powers of man, it is often brutal towards individuals. Of necessity, it requires perpetual sacrifices of them. Precisely because society lifts us above ourselves, it does constant violence to our natural appetites. So that we can fulfill our duties toward it, our conditioning must ready us to overcome our instincts at time—when necessary, to go up the down staircase of nature. [ Durkheim, 1995a, p. 321 ]

Durkheim's passages are brilliant and crucial, even if they are wrong. He emphasized that the suffering needed and demanded by society and civilization is not merely physical and material suffering, but emotional suffering, and a violent disservice to our own human nature. Marx's theory of unnecessary alienation pales in contrast to Durkheim's advocacy of necessary and desirable mental suffering.

Durkheim was a pessimist. This does not mean that Durkheim thought that things would always get worse. For example, he believed that the problems associated with modernization could be alleviated,

especially if proper social regulation was introduced. He was a pessimist in that he saw suffering as the most important characteristic of the human race. Like Schopenhauer, Durkheim gave suffering a positive existence and did not give happiness an independent existence. In this way, Durkheim is understood as part of the *fin de siècle* malaise. Interestingly, Durkheim attributed to suffering a sacred aspect [ Mestrovic, 1988b, p.681 ; Durkheim, 1995a, p.405 ], something he did not attribute to pleasure, though he did see delirium as part of the sacred realm. This perspective alone puts Durkheim beyond and outside the Utilitarians and to a lesser extent, the Pragmatists.

As Durkheim's paradigm is the epitome of social realism, the question arises as to whether morals created through social realism are inherently more concerned with and build upon suffering than pleasure and achievement. He very well may have been right that this has been the case, but wrong to think that this has to be the case indefinitely. The re-emergence of hedonism in western culture especially in the prosperity since World War II and the rise of new communicative technologies may indeed have confirmed part of Durkheim's thesis in overthrowing it. Perhaps suffering was the central theme of moral and aesthetic expression in more traditional and less technologically advanced cultures. Today, we are bombarded by apparently conflicting messages in art and entertainment because the themes of suffering and pleasure are both more accessible now than they have ever been. Finally, even if this speculation is true, it does not truly capture the full limit of the role of the individual as an individual in a milieu of social realism and dominant cultural themes created through interaction. The individual has the potential to embrace one theme more than another and to add something special through his involvement. Durkheim was interested exclusively in the socially-created images and sentiments that were thrust upon the individual and which dominated him. He saw the blind acceptance of these images and sentiments as uplifting, regardless of their content. I would argue that the content really is the issue, yet to judge the content would presuppose a frame of reference independent of what is being judged.

Durkheim's idea of 'uplifting' is anything but. The individual is not 'raised' to a new understanding of his nature and potential, but dispossessed of his own spirit, and violated. Yet Durkheim

explained the creation of the distinction between the social and the profane and the basis for all society and civilization as coming from this act of violation and disorientation:

It is not difficult to imagine that a man in such a state of exaltation should no longer know himself. Feeling possessed and led on by some sort of external power that makes him think and act differently than he normally does, he naturally feels that he is no longer himself. It seems to him that he has become a new being. [ Durkheim, 1995a, p. 220 ]

As man joins the sacred and the social, he loses himself. He has lost his normal inhibitions and he accepts the violation of his own nature.

Man is carried outside himself, pulled away from his ordinary occupations and preoccupations. We observe the same manifestations in both cases: cries, songs, music, violent movements, dances, the search for stimulants that increase vitality, and others. It has often been observed that popular festivals lead to excesses, causing people to lose sight of the boundary between the licit and the illicit, there are also religious ceremonies that bring about a kind of thirst for violating those rules that ordinarily are widely obeyed. [ Durkheim, 1995a, p. 387 ]

Thus man was carried outside of himself, and engaged in a Dionysian-like frenzy. Durkheim's description of a religious event is somewhat similar to a modern-day rock music concert such as Altamont.

No doubt societies are often marked by episodes of upheaval which facilitate their self-definition, such as the burial of a religious or political leader or a public massacre. It seems incontestable that key moments in both historical and cultural change have been initiated by tumultuous 'social gatherings.' These social events are as diverse as the Polish Solidarity Movement's origins in the shipyard strike at Gdansk which through crowd sentiment forced a young electrician to climb a fence in view of the riot police, 'Beatlemania,' the Vietnam War anti-war protests and draft-card burnings, and the 'Velvet Revolution' in Eastern Europe against Communism in 1989. However, there may not be a case for saying that these heady gatherings *in which people do things they did not expect to do or would not do alone* are the basis of society itself. To emphasize 'collective effervescence' as the foundation for both society and the individual as we know him today, would imply that human beings are somewhat plastic and interchangeable. The advocates of such a point of view would say to you about a riot, "If you were there with us, you would have done what we did, too, because everyone did it!"

The belief in and emphasis on collective effervescence may blind us to the distinction that sometimes crowds of people act as a crowd and sometimes they act as a group of individuals. At the stock-market, individuals rationally compute the effects of their actions and those of other individuals; it is high-density frantic social action, but it is not collective effervescence. There is an immutable difference between a union demonstration which gets out of hand when strikers commit violent actions for which they claim no direct responsibility, and the commotion of the 'bear pit' of the stock exchange in which a large hurly-burly of stock brokers shout in apparent chaos, but take absolute responsibility for every single one of their exchanges. Sometimes there appears to be collective effervescence or otherwise crowd phenomena in which no general will is manifest. People laugh nervously in the darkened movie theatre, waiting for a reply, wondering if the movie is funny and they should laugh again. None of these three concerns directly challenges the validity of Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence. However, there is a disturbing aspect to this phenomena and it is one that Durkheim valued. In episodes of collective effervescence such as gang rapes, city riots, and religious revivals, the people involved frequently did things they later regretted, created destruction, and violated their own moral codes and each other. There appears to be insufficient grounds to deny the existence of collective effervescence, but there are serious grounds to doubt the premise of its intrinsic social utility. The term 'social utility' used here of course does not refer to the total utility for a number of individuals, but to the utility, function, or purpose for the feeling or quality of society inherent within group life.

Durkheim's insistence that this act of social gathering is intrinsically sacred and of a higher moral order than the individual, gives us concern. Durkheim emphasized that in their religious ceremonies, the Australian aboriginals committed incest –a crime which they otherwise condemned strenuously. At these same ceremonies, they also partook in divorce and rape [ Durkheim, 1995a, p. 218 ]. The weakest and most vulnerable members of the group, usually women, risked being murdered by frenzied berserking people [ Durkheim, 1995a, p. 404 ]. Durkheim cited these incidents as 'proof' that the individual was raised to a higher moral plane. Yet, the normal condemnation of rape and incest among

the Aboriginals was also presumably social in origin. The individuals in question, before the *observed* religious event, were all 'social' and not Natural Man. Durkheim confused or conflated present Australian religious rites with humanity's first religious rites —which were not only unobserved by historians, but according to Durkheim's own premises, *unobservable* by their own practitioners. To say that the congregation and religious rites had an intoxicating effect and caused the individuals in question to act against their own individual natures *and* to violate the social norms that they would have otherwise upheld, is proof of their attainment of a 'higher' social consciousness, is wrong. The intoxicating religious rite in question, like a New York 'wilding' or the ancient Grecian Dionysian event which allegedly killed a harmless musician bystander, violates both the social norms and what the individuals in question would probably have freely decided was right and virtuous as sociable individuals. People have personal inclinations and social norms before the social event which brings them into such a frenzy that they violate their own long-standing social norms. To say that people can be brought by societal conditions to violate societal norms is *not* sufficient proof for Durkheim's typology, let alone methodologically sound. Durkheim is quite right to have suggested distinctions between what people want to do, what "human nature is," and what people feel morally obligated to do. Unfortunately, his conflation of social pressure, crowd phenomena (especially collective effervescence), and morality brings out the error he avoided at that previous step and obscures matters once again.

Durkheim said that in social situations people commit actions and feel emotions that they would not do and feel otherwise. This seems true in its broadest sense, but the extent to which it is true is a matter of debate. When people are in a river they also do things they might not do otherwise on dry land yet they do not become better or different people. What seemed important for Durkheim as the social basis for morality was the reaffirmation of feelings and the lack of individual accountability and free-will. Durkheim saw collective effervescence and its euphoric pain and pleasure as the basis of the sacred, and he saw the action of a crowd acting as a crowd and not as separate individuals as the collective will made

manifest. Durkheim may or may not be wrong in his conclusion, but he was quite right that the different parts of his theory belong together.

Durkheim discussed both pleasure and pain in his writings but he seemed to reserve the more important role for pain. Not only is pain that we feel as individuals painful, but according to Durkheim, the pain we feel in social interaction becomes much more intense. Durkheim seemed to see this "communicated pain" as the basis for the life of society.

We know from elsewhere how human feelings intensify when they are collectively affirmed. Like joy, sadness is heightened and amplified by its reverberation from one consciousness to the next, and then it gradually expresses itself overtly as unrestrained and convulsive movement. This no longer is the joyful animation that we observed awhile ago; it is cries and shrieks of pain. Every person is pulled along by every other, and something like a panic of sadness occurs. When the pain reaches such a pitch, it becomes suffused with a kind of anger and exasperation. One feels the need to break or destroy something. One attacks oneself or others. One strikes, wounds, or burns oneself, or one attacks someone else, in order to strike, wound, or burn him. Thus was established the mourning custom of giving oneself over to veritable orgies of torture. It seems to me probably that the vendetta and head hunting have no other origin... The extraordinary violence of the displays that necessarily and obligatorily express the shared sorrow is evidence that, even at this moment, society is more alive and active than ever. [ Durkheim, 1995a, p. 404-405 ]

It is with perhaps unconscious irony that Durkheim describes vendetta and torture as evidence of a society being more intensely alive than ever. People can become carried away with torture, rape, murder, arson, and suicide, but there would be a degree of faith involved to say that these events are manifestations of the same collective force which brings peace, order, prosperity, logic, and morals to the society. It is undeniable that these are social forces, but until there is evidence to the contrary, we do not assume that all forces are the same in their origin and function.

The fact that we present concerns and qualifications concerning Durkheim's original argument is not meant to suggest that we intended to undermine the concept of *homo duplex* and to dismiss it indirectly. There *appears* to be quite a *substance* to Durkheim's collective concepts, but the concepts do imply and depend upon certain premises which must be understood by those who would use them. While Durkheim's argument is useful in the study of moral phenomena, certain aspects are problematic enough to make it difficult to accept as a whole or without supplementation and qualification. Durkheim did make



a permanent contribution to social science by showing through his concept of 'collective effervescence' that when people congregate, they do things together and acquire qualities that they otherwise would not have shared in common. However, the commotion and losing of inhibitions that Durkheim described, is not an increase in humanity, but a loss. Part of the problem is caused by how we dichotomize words such as 'inhibition.' A change in behavior does not have to be expressed exclusively in terms of increased or decreased regulation or a gain or loss of inhibition. Rather, the phenomena could equally be explained in terms of a *change* of regulation or of inhibition.

Durkheim's typology does lead to a pessimistic view of life at best. "Life is often harsh, treacherous or empty" [ Durkheim, 1951, p. 366 ]. Durkheim saw religion as the way in which the social and higher forms of humanity arose, yet this view also brings with it an image of humanity that is difficult to accept.

It is quite true that religious life cannot attain any degree of intensity and not carry with it a psychic exaltation that is connected to delirium.... These physiological defects predisposed them to great religious roles. The ritual use of intoxicating liquors is to be understood in the same way.... It provides further evidence that a very intense social life always does a sort of violence to the individual's body and mind and disrupts their normal functioning. This is why it can last for only a limited time. [ Durkheim, 1995a, p. 228 ]

For Durkheim, this religious propensity necessary for the 'higher' forms of human life is facilitated by physiological defects. This emphasizes how Durkheim believed that the 'transcendence' of the individual is created through the violation of his nature, whatever it is, as it hurts the individual and is facilitated by alcohol, intoxication, delirium, an unawareness of what one is doing, and by physiological defects. It is as if a student practicing to become a concert pianist would have to first break his own fingers. If we have to violate our human nature rather than to either supplement or develop it, this begs the teleological question of why people have their nature at all.

We can see here how the rigors of *homo duplex* bind Durkheim to placing an emphasis on how individuals are violated by society. If we follow Durkheim's reasoning, it is not surprising that the resulting 'higher' individuals would then lead lives of furtive and uncertain ontological scavenging. People become dependent on society for their norms and their view of the world, their ontology. Unfortunately,

not only is the collective nature of society always changing (which might rob the individual of normative and ontological stability), but the society around them, by being spasmodic and contorted in its effervescence and transient episodes, dominates the individual's mind still further through both its power and unpredictability. Not only is society always evolving, the aspect of society that the individual experiences is also always twisting within itself. Society may be the cause of many mental processes, but society is not answerable for its actions. In addition, if society was the source of all epistemology and morality, then there would be no being to whom society could answer. Within the doctrine of social realism, there are no necessary limitations on society's ontological powers, and no necessary functions that society must create and maintain. Coupled with society's lack of 'personal' responsibility and the fact that it is not some kind of 'group mind,' this means that society is not responsible to any authority and it is not responsible for its actions, as it has no choice in the matter. Durkheim seemed to resolve this matter by positing that society was an organism beholden only to itself. In his view it *had* to be an organism so that the moral forces that were created through social interaction could then have an identifiable creator and purpose [ Durkheim, 1974, p. 51-52 ].

Our examination of this paradigm of extreme social realism would suggest the following conclusion. Society's incredible power to originate the aspects of human life, the lack of its own control over this process and the lack of *anyone's* control over this process, would mean that society surmounts and imprisons the individual. The greatest insight a person could have into the true state of his life, would be to perceive that he is powerless and insignificant. Society brings the individual forth and keeps him trapped but also moving forward. The individual moves forward tremulously and without real hope of surety, like a harried laboratory rat in a maze. At least the rat can trust its senses; Durkheim's paradigm does not grant this epistemological confidence to *Man*. The individual is trapped in a *shifting* maze.

To see the full extent of Durkheim's cognitive role for the egotistical nature of man in *homo duplex* we can turn to his inaugural address at Bordeaux:

Our minds cannot produce ideas from scratch. Suppose one discovers an entirely new living thing, without any analogy to the rest of the world. It would be impossible for the mind to think of it. The mind could only represent it in terms of something concerning

which it already has knowledge. What we call a new idea is really only an old idea which we have refurbished to adjust it as precisely as possible to the special object which it ought to express. [ Durkheim, 1974b, p.198 ]

Here we see that in 1887 Durkheim was using the terminology and assumptions of 'representationalism,' that were shared by Renouvier, Schopenhauer, and Wundt. In his "The Positive Science of Morals in Germany" (1887) Durkheim stressed that morals evolved in society from factors other than individuals minds, '*...the feeble scope of human intelligence...*' [ Durkheim, 1993, p.105 ].

Essentially, Durkheim's society as a reality *sui generis* yields no cognitive power to the individual without the help of society. Without society one cannot think. Thus, it is a fallacy for the individual to judge the ideas and representations of society, except by society's own methods of judgement, and the belief that the individual can judge society for himself and by himself is a conceit. Durkheim's dismissal of the individual mind and the role of agency of the individual does not apparently change between the time he wrote "The Positive Science of Morals in Germany" in 1887 and his critique of the Marxist Antonio Labriola in 1897 [ Durkheim, 1982, p.171 ].

Durkheim's position would then suggest that the individual is nothing without society and that social events cannot be explained as being caused by decisions of individuals. However, it does not appear that this bleak opinion is true. This is not to say that 'feral children' could judge complex social issues. It is to emphasize that for the individual to be able to think at all within society, the individual mind must still be able process stimuli, integrate abstractions, and choose between alternate choices on the basis of chosen criteria. For the individual to accept society at all and to work through the 'representations' and social images, the individual still has to have a mind. One cannot solve a complex problem by saying, "I will just sit here and society will figure out the solution. Social representations will be formed through interaction and I will not have to think." This is not to contest the premise that *some* ideas or representations are created in social interaction. It is to say that if the individual mind cannot process collective representations and if our ideas are not products of our minds but of social interaction, then it would be as if no person is capable of thinking for himself or of even envisioning a whole problem or task, but has to work towards unseen, unknown goals in cooperation and conflict with his fellows. This

discussion is not a diversion, but links disparate themes together. In The Division of Labour Durkheim was adamant that the advance of the division of labor was not pursued for *eudaemonic* and teleological ends. In hindsight, we can see that this belief was necessary for Durkheim, because he did not believe that individuals could ever deliberately think anything new. He thought all ideas were somehow advanced automatically through society. He thought ideas were advanced through the negotiations, conflict, effervescence, rationalization and challenges which were inevitable for that society's division of labor, dynamic density, social solidarity, particular history, and combination of representations. Durkheim saw almost anything that happens as evidence of society's own intrinsic and inevitable tension and development. The purposes that were relevant to sociological explanation were teleological functions or societal-purposes, and the ideas that reflected the 'collective nature' were not individual ideas as such, but collective representations. In either case, individuals did not have to understand the teleological functions that controlled their lives or to behold in their totality any collective representation.

Durkheim's paradigm leaves a limited freedom of action to the individual, but not epistemological or ontological freedom. The true reality are collective phenomena that the individual can never truly perceive in its entirety and true state [ Durkheim, 1982, p.171 ]. The individual is prevented from having any relationship to and knowledge of his surroundings, except that which is created through the 'collective nature' of society. The individual is not allowed to rely on himself, and is condemned for attempting to do so. In any case, the individual must never claim responsibility for achieving a stable view of the world, but nevertheless needs one in order to function. Therefore he must pick one up second-hand from the social relations immediately present. The social relations that are responsible for creating these aspects of mind that are necessary for human life, are, however, not responsible for the consequences of their own actions, not responsible for genuine objective truths, and not responsible for clarity or consistency. The individual in Durkheim's paradigm is divided within himself and is reduced to being an ontological scavenger.

Perhaps Durkheim's argument at this point harkens back to Rousseau's favorite dictum: "He who gives himself to all, gives himself to none." Rousseau had meant that the individual gained freedom through shameless obedience to society. Unfortunately, society never sleeps. In Durkheim's paradigm, the individual is not even capable of seeing or producing stable, let alone objective, relations between himself and society. When the individual is under the coercive powers of society, the individual must obey the *image* of everyone else. Everyone else, being similarly unsuitable for receiving service in themselves, are presumably doing likewise. However, in Durkheim's paradigm, the individual is even worse off, since the individual not only must obey social norms, but must also obey any norms inadvertently created through social phenomena, such as crowd activity and arbitrary religious rituals, even if these additional norms violate the norms produced by the stable aspects of that same society. Not only must the individual pick up from society the view points to see the world, he must also put them down again without any control over the matter, any commitment, or even any regular pattern imposed by his collective master.

Durkheim's theory is *not* one of normal political totalitarianism like National Socialism or Stalinism. Those two brutal dictatorships had stable norms and a simple command of obedience. Durkheim's paradigm lacks both characteristics. Durkheim consigned to the individual considerable freedom in day-to-day actions. However, this latitude remains forever dependent on the current state of social solidarity and the division of labor and other social characteristics. Durkheim was a champion of democracy. The purpose of his pedagogy lectures was the consolidation and advance of French democracy. He also supported the appeal of Dreyfuss. In Durkheim's paradigm, the individual has a right to vote in a democracy, but is reduced to being an ontological scavenger, picking up and putting down discordant views of the world that he does not produce, views whose creator bears no responsibility for their actual efficacy. This is the natural consequence of Durkheim's particular rejection of methodological individualism.

Durkheim did not love the individual but neither did he hate him. There was always a certain ambivalence towards the individual and individualism in Durkheim's writings, especially in such essays as

"Individualism and the Intellectuals." Durkheim did not despise individual life or individualism, but he rejected individualistic means of explanation. He rejected the individual as a unit of analysis, and he rejected methodological individualism. Durkheim praised the current value of individual life as a familiar heady draught, though not as something objectively valuable in itself or for itself [Durkheim, 1993, p. 109]. Considering the role that Durkheim placed on socially created intoxication for collective effervescence, his choice of referring to the value of human life as a kind of pleasant social inebriation does give one cause for pause. He rejected the notion that individualism was a social disease. Instead he saw it as a social creation [ Durkheim, 1973, p.48 ]. These qualifications however, in no way mitigate the ontological weakness that Durkheim consigned to the individual. The very value of individual life is a creation of the collective nature, and the collective nature can take it away again whenever it does so, though not because of it having any will in the matter, or any real purpose. The collective nature may have causes for its actions, but it is incapable of possessing reasons. The more the individual is divided within himself, the less he is a unit fit for social analysis and causation. The more divided the individual, the greater the power of society over the individual. With the individual divided, society gathers up a sole monopoly on the moral imperative. A comparison here of *homo duplex* with the paradigms of other thinkers who divided the individual would be profound, but passes outside of the domain of this study. However, it can be noted that such thinkers included Freud, Mead, and the fictitious character Dr. Jeckyll, as well as the Manicheans, the Bogomils, and possibly, the adherents of the Ying-Yang view of human nature.

The problems Durkheim grappled with or inadvertently created as he attempted to relate the individual to the collective representation, are rooted in his concept of *homo duplex*. This conceptualization had explanatory value but did not advance social science. Man *can* be regarded as being composed of social and asocial elements, or alternately, of altruism and egotism, or the sacred and the profane, or the societal and the individual. However, Durkheim's exact definition of *homo duplex* led to intransigent theoretical difficulties that could have otherwise been avoided.

Dichotomization is necessary at one level for all human knowledge. The basic Law of Identity, which is the basis for all reasoning and human life, is that something cannot both be and not be in the same way at the same moment. That is a dichotomization. Aristotelian logic is binary. Answers are either true or they are false, though answers may certainly be incomplete as well. Dichotomization is necessary for life and reason. However, the dichotomization of variables and concepts is unnecessary as it has been presented in Durkheim's reasoning. The tetrahedron is composed of four points, each 120 degrees away from each other in three, not two dimensions. The tetrahedron always lands with one of its points straight up, which made it the ideal shape for the medieval *calthorp*. The point being that each point has three opposites, as it is part of a shape of three dimensions. To say that things must be opposites because they are different is a logical fallacy. To assume that one thing can only have *one* opposite *if it does* have an opposite, is another. Durkheim's *homo duplex* assumes that there are two aspects to the human mind and that they have separate natures and that *therefore* they are opposites. This is a mistake. We do not need to contest the idea that there are different aspects of the human mind. We do not deny the concepts that Durkheim posited: sacred-profane, society-individual, social-individual, egotistic-altruistic. However, the acceptance of those two premises does not lead necessarily to Durkheim's mechanical dichotomization of the subject matter into unified and opposing natures. Durkheim's breakdown of the human being into an egotistic individual self and an altruistic societal self is almost Manichean. Both Durkheim and the Manicheans posited that the human being is in conflict, tossed between egotism and altruism and that neither side can or should win. The human being has to accept this eternal and endless battle and live with it in balance.

It may be an accident of the translations, but we see in Durkheim's works consistent differentiation between human nature & "the nature of the individual" on one hand and, on the other hand, "individual nature." For Durkheim, human nature and the nature of the individual are each the complete *homo duplex*. Individual nature is the "bottom" of *homo duplex* which Durkheim referred to as including the idiosyncratic, the psychological, the egotistical, and the biological. There is every reason to

support the contention that in Durkheim's paradigm the individual's human-biological-animal nature is unified and his social nature is completely lacking in unity and is diffuse. The social nature within *Homo Duplex* is not a complete reflection of society and is nothing without other social components. Durkheim's concept of *homo duplex* then begs the question of how human nature can actually exist if it is composed of one unified thing combined with a shifting mixture of elements that can only make sense when viewed as part of the ocean of society. Durkheim is quite right then to emphasize the tension inherent within *Homo Duplex*. It would appear that contemporary writers have failed to perceive all the necessary tension created by this dualism, dualism not merely from the opposition of forces, but also from the opposition of characteristics. To put the matter into metaphor, the tension of *Homo Duplex* is not brought about by the opposition of the individual and the social, but from the unstable opposition between thing and something which exists in too small of a measure to be perceived as itself.

Durkheim's construction of *homo duplex* was useful, but full of latent methodological danger. It was useful in that it showed that human beings had different aspects to their selves. Arguably, it was useful in prefiguring Freud's hypothetical mental constructs of Id, Ego, and Superego. There is also a distinct parallel with G.H. Mead's notions of the "I" and the "Me" as the different phases of the self. Unfortunately, none of these hypothetical neo-Hegelian-like constructs are actually helpful in themselves. These concepts have to be taken on faith, and cannot be reduced to methodology and observation. Faith cannot be the basis of social science. These three paradigms are ways of seeing the self, but they are not the products of observable and positive facts. No "Me," "Ego," or "*homo duplex*" will ever be observed, let alone be operationalized. Durkheim was not a student of Hegel's philosophy as such, though at least one argument has been made to suggest a close connection [ Knapp, 1986, p.1 ]. By default, because the concept does not build upon a realistic and empirical foundation, or a materialistic base, "*homo duplex*" seems to be distantly akin to German Idealistic philosophy. Not surprisingly, Mead had studied Kant and Hegel and Durkheim had studied Schopenhauer and Kant. As Weber once said, "There are only two ways: Hegel's or our own" [ Grumley, 1988, p.21 ]. Either one embraces reality based on methodological



principles to facilitate observation and logic, or one embraces the desired 'essence' of reality on faith. We can tell how useful these three sets of hypothetical constructs have been by how often they have been actually *used* in research as compared to how often their authors have been referenced. A glance at the recent decades of publishing is insightful. In the social sciences, much research makes at least passing reference to Hegel, Durkheim, Freud, and Mead, but *no* research is actually built upon their hypothetical constructs. No research is conducted with these sets of hypothetical constructs, because methodologically sound empirical research *cannot* be built upon them. It is possible for the proponents of these ideas to conduct empirical research as long as they do not scrutinize or test the concepts, or render them to empirical observation. They can only observe genuine phenomena while being 'informed' by the concepts. Durkheim's concept *homo duplex* was useful for understanding society and for concept formation, but not useful for genuine research. Usefulness is not the final criterion for judging a hypothetical construct; nor is pragmatism the best way to judge a concept. Rather, the danger of Durkheim's concept of *homo duplex* is that it is neither useful for research nor is it provable. Though it is 'useful' to help someone conceptualize 'society' as a social reality or being, there is every possibility that it is wrong. To create two unified natures that reside fully separate in the human mind, is to create a bizarre hypothetical construct that should not reside outside of either theological scholasticism or neo-Hegelianism.

*Homo duplex* appears to not be tenable in regards to its own logic. The concept is theoretically weak on its own grounds. The chain of deductive reasoning and assumptions that builds this concept includes unnecessary and unproven delineation of the form the elements can take in the resulting combination. That is to say, though it appears plausible that the elements of *homo duplex* are viable for consideration, the exclusivity of positing two separate, distinct and whole natures to the individual is unproven by the premises and reasoning that support the rest of the concept. Who can prove that the two natures, altruistic and egotistic, are even complete whole natures? Aristophanes, in Plato's Symposium, would not even go so far as to say that individuals had one whole nature; he thought men and women shared one only in combination. Durkheim gave the human individual 2.0 natures, which begs the

question of why not 1.9 or 2.1 ? According to Occam's Razor, it is better to limit the premises and variables of a theory to the minimum that is needed for explanation. It is sufficient to plausibly describe the individual for the purposes of sociological explanation as having different elements. It is unproven even within its own chain of reasoning, that the two proposed "natures" would have to be complete in themselves. It is also unproven that the two natures have been exclusive and are intrinsically exclusive. It is necessary for Durkheim's paradigm to posit *homo duplex* and to wholly reject methodological individualism. It is not necessary in of itself for the purpose of theoretical explanation. To argue that society is greater than the sum of its parts, the position that Durkheim took against the Utilitarians and rationalists [ Durkheim, 1993, p.57 ], it is not necessary to also argue in favor of *homo duplex*. A sociological method of explanation that accepts social realism does not necessarily have to include a divided individual. However, if the goal is to place society on a 'higher' level than the individual and not merely to see it as greater than the sum of its parts, it is conducive (but not absolutely necessary ) to posit *homo duplex* or another form of the divided self.

Though we do not have space to fully explore this, social realism and the unified individual do not seem to be intrinsically incompatible. In fact, social realism could easily accept unified individuals as a premise. We see such a solution in the works of Herbert Spencer. Alternately, it can be argued that individuals have incomplete human natures which are realizable as wholes only through family or communal life, which seemed to have been Tolstoy's position. Though social realism and the 'whole man' thesis are often compatible, it is not necessary for sociological explanation to assume that social realism is the dominant premise and the individual the subsidiary, or in alternate phrasing, that social realism must be given preference over the unified individual in the event of a conflict between the two.

Finally, methodologically *homo duplex* is not only unprovable and unusable, but it is also not indicated. In sociological theory we use concepts which have direct application in research. Judging from the abstracts, no sociological research directly attempts to operationalize or use directly the concept, no matter how many refer to Durkheim in their abstracts and bibliographies. The concept is undemonstrable

in that it is unobservable. People are seen, *homo duplex* is not. Individuals, groups, and even variables such as sex and ethnic group affiliation are observable. No research subject reports information directly on their own *homo duplex*. Sometimes people say they feel of two minds on an issue, and others may indeed say they are of three or more, but mere ambivalence does not necessitate Durkheim's concept and typology. Finally, the concept is not indicated by observed facts and it cannot be. It is impossible to go from observing specific phenomena, such as particular churches, specific individuals, exact economic relationships, or unique behavior of deviance, and arrive then at *homo duplex*. Not only can people arrive at different interpretations when they agree on the same facts [ Weber, 1975a, p.180 ] when the alleged phenomena cannot be observed directly, interpretation and legitimate disagreements run rampant. Methodologically, when research is conducted on specific observable phenomena, it has never been shown that there is a necessary direct link to Durkheim's typology, nor has it has ever been shown that Durkheim's typology was indicated from the description and explanation of facts yielded from observation. Perhaps there *could* be a link. Perhaps, in the future, research that does not first assume the existence of Durkheim's concepts will find evidence to indicate their existence and to support Durkheim's hypotheses, but this appears unlikely. It is unknown at present how one can move from direct observation of specific phenomena and search for generic explanation of the events concerned and necessarily arrive in their logical conclusion at *homo duplex*.

Durkheim published his essay "The Dualism of Human Nature and Its Social Conditions" in 1914.

The peculiarity referred to is the constitutional duality of human nature. **In every age, man has been intensely aware of this duality. He has, in fact, everywhere conceived of himself as being formed of two radically heterogeneous beings: the body and the soul...And not only are these two beings substantially different, they are in a large measure independent of each other, and are often even in conflict. (my boldface)**  
 [ Durkheim, 1973a, p. 150 ]

Here Durkheim defined *homo duplex*, but left himself open to attack. He used as his method of argument for truth, the rule that if everyone believes something, then it is true. This is a test for truth which will be further criticized in the following section. However, *all* people have never *always* believed human nature

to be so divided. From *Ecclesiastes 9:3* to Pliny to contemporary atheists, opinion on the subject has never been uniform. Durkheim's doctrine of social realism with its base on moral collectivism seems to have been a secular guise for several old theological beliefs. It is otherwise inexplicable why he would otherwise cite religious beliefs of otherwise exclusive religions to support a concept for social science.

Durkheim's separation of the human individual appears to be arbitrary, and if so, would facilitate the subservience of the individual to the collectivity. The more unified an individual is, the less arbitrarily divided are the elements within, and the less opposing the elements are, the greater 'bargaining power' the individual would have against the collective. The individual would see with one perspective and speak with one voice. But this is not the case with Durkheim:

Our intelligence, like our activity, presents two very different forms: on the one hand, are sensations and sensory tendencies; on the other, conceptual thought and moral activity. Each of these two parts of ourselves represents a separate pole of our being, and these two poles are not only distinct from one another but are opposed to one another. Our sensory appetites are necessarily egoistic: they have our individuality and it alone as their object. When we satisfy our hunger, our thirst, and so on, without bringing any other tendency into play, it is ourselves, and ourselves alone, that we satisfy.

[ Conceptual thought ] and moral activity are, on the contrary, distinguished by the fact that the rules of conduct to which they conform can be universalized. Therefore, by definition, they pursue impersonal ends. Morality begins with disinterest, with attachment to something other than ourselves. [ Durkheim, 1973, p. 151 ] ( square brackets inserted by original author )

Durkheim divided the individual within himself at all points and unified society at all points, and hence the sole moral imperative is that of the individual towards society.

This division of the individual as the source of the sole moral imperative presents at least six theoretical quandaries. First, it assumes that self-interest alone can never be moral. Second, it creates opposites out of egotism and altruism. Third, it denigrates the role of perception and individuality in moral understanding. Cognitive determinism is an approach to the study of moral phenomena that must not be overlooked. Fourth, Durkheim's use of 'universalized' is slightly ambiguous, as presumably it would refer to symbolic communication and rationality within only one culture and not objective ideas that cut across cultures. Fifth, if people did not value their own life as a starting point they would be unable to serve for long something other than themselves. Durkheim did address this point in his 1887 essay. He

said that as long as someone kept themselves alive to serve the collective, then that self-preservation could contain a moral aspect [ Durkheim, 1993, p.109 ]. But in real life, serving others is greatly facilitated by having a strong interest in self-preservation and self-development. If it appeared that others did not need our services for the foreseeable future, we might otherwise rot and starve away, only to find out too late that other people could find a use for us after all. If we all served others with little thought to self-preservation and personal happiness, we would never be happy and we would be 'served' in ways essentially unrelated to our own potential happiness by reluctant, unhappy, and unhealthy slaves. Durkheim had "defended" individualism as a product of society, but his understanding gave no role for individual pleasure and dignity as goals in themselves.

Sixth, and most importantly, Durkheim's statement opposes intellect to sensation. This is a very Kantian idea. In contrast, Epicurus was largely correct when he said reason and observation went together:

If you fight against all your sensations, you will have no standard to which to refer, and thus no means of judging even those judgments which you pronounce false. [ Epicurus, 1995, p. 8 ]

Logic is merely the means of noncontradictory identification for us to make sense out of our sensory perception. Perception can tell us that our use of logic is wrong, and it is perception as well as logic that informs us that a mirage is an illusion. In reality, reliance on sensory perception is bound together with reliance on logic, and together they provide the basis for the difficult task of choosing and clarifying values. Durkheim's position was that theory had to precede sensation and facts, and that those sensations and observations which contradicted theory were to be distrusted. He felt that things cannot be made sense of when we perceive only individuals, and not all things can be made sense of by the individual [ Durkheim, 1982, p.171 ].

In The Elementary Forms of Religious Life Durkheim attempted to replace Kant, not to follow him, and to do so in such a way that would adhere to the objectives and accomplishments of Kant's philosophy. Kant had completely separated self-interest from morality and from his treatment of logic, which was innate, limited, and mystical. Durkheim, in attempting to give six of the thirteen Kantian

categories a new base, completely subsumed logic under the social, and away from perception and self-preservation. Durkheim sought to provide a social basis for what had been known since Aristotle as the six most important categories of thought: time, distance, number, cause, substance, and personality [ Durkheim, 1998, p. 8 ]. To think conceptually at all was to subsume the individual under the social [ Durkheim, 1995a, p.440 ]. This is interesting and yet open to criticism. Even if logic were purely a social creation, how could we explore it if not through our awareness that we were alive? Durkheim took positive facts to postulate something that had happened before observation was even possible, and he then assumed that the consequences of this postulate would apply to all cases that could ever be observed. This error in Durkheim's theorizing will also be explored in chapter six in relation to the discussion of collective representations. The facts to directly support or to disprove the argument cannot exist or be observed. We cannot go back in time to see what people were like before religious rites or to witness the first rites. Neither do we have real examples of man without society. Even if we should find a man without any society, the mere act of observing him would bring him into our own. Though contradictory to historical fact, the function of Durkheim's paradigm is quite consistent. He had to divide the human personality to subjugate the individual completely to the collective. Or alternately, once having decided to divide the individual into two opposing natures, the lower one innate, the 'higher' one social, he had to subjugate completely the individual to society.

Durkheim's treatment of conceptual thought is somewhat contradictory, yet it is consistent for his paradigm. Logic is logic, yet if logic is, as Durkheim says, purely a social creation, then logic depends on the tribe or culture which created it, and is totally socially dependent for its existence and its content. Durkheim's treatment of logic is certainly relative as it is social. In making society the social reality, Durkheim cut off the individual from reality and objectivity. In Durkheim's paradigm, the universality of logic depends upon the collective, rather than upon the objectivity and consistency of the universe and the ability of the individual mind to grasp it. The individual is immersed in society at all times, and becomes an individual only within society. These two aspects are incontestable, but Durkheim posited a complete

consistency and unproblematic nature for both the social reality and society, and he divided the individual up into a puppet made of pieces of string and bits of wood, animated by conflicting orders.

Durkheim simply said that everything that is not innate in us belongs to society. This simple statement is based on certain premises which can be contested. For the statement to be true, society would have to be A) unified, B) possess definite borders, and C) capable of possessing at all. Not only would society have to be an entity it would have to be a subject. A mountain is unified, but some mountains blend together without borders. More importantly, nothing can belong to a mountain. A web of social interaction is somewhat unified, although it may have undefined borders, but it too is incapable of possession. Mountains, like societies, have an existence independent of observation like all things, but how we understand them with details and concepts is the creation of the individual minds that behold them and study them.

Durkheim's conceptualization of the individual as *homo duplex* is key to his paradigm. Yet, putting aside the question of the premises and the consequences of his concept, the vivid definition of its parts give it a surrealistic form.

The old formula *homo duplex* is therefore verified by the facts. Far from being simple, our inner life has something that is like a double center of gravity. On the one hand is our individuality--and, more particularly, our body in which it is based; on the other is everything in us that expresses something other than ourselves. [ Durkheim, 1973, p.152 ]

Durkheim's delineation appears arbitrary, but it is suited to aid his argument. His choice that the human body forms the base of *homo duplex* is interesting, especially considering that the human body is a product of evolution, that it is understood through a cultural matrix of interpretation and values, and that it is maintained through unified individual purpose. To assign our individuality to the material and physiology, is a curious choice. On one hand, our bodies have definite parameters, that is why all thinking is done only by separate minds, and any group mind or telepathy is by definition, impossible. On the other hand, the word 'individuality' is social in itself. Our belief in our individuality is in one sense cultural, as Western Civilization generally emphasizes the uniqueness and value of individual life. In another sense, our individuality is trans-cultural. The universal social-psychological familial bonds and interaction that

are present in all cultures are the means that create and transmit individuality: the names and ancestry we receive from our parents, and in a much broader vein, the language we learn and our sexual identity. The fact that we need parents and families to be ourselves and to be alive does not also mean that we need a large unified structured society with a collective existence to do the same. Individuality is built upon differences in variables such as sex, age, height, and abilities; differences which are realizable only in a social context. Differences do not create individuality, they are used by individuality. There is good reason to suggest that our own understanding and realization of our individuality is possible only if we are not isolated human beings, but that we are engaged in ongoing patterns of interaction. It seems more likely than not that our individuality comes from both innate and social factors [ Simmel, 1971, p. 265 ].

Durkheim assigned to the realm of the individual the 'egotistical' base of the *homo duplex*, the innate psychology and physiological qualities, personal defects, and residual unaccounted-for idiosyncrasies. Durkheim's paradigm is remarkably consistent, if open to attack. Considering that evolution is a product of the Human Race and not the individual, we could have had, like Spencer, assigned the psychological and biological to the domain of the societal. To limit the base of the individual to everything that is innate is somewhat hard to fathom. Life, after all, comes from life, and is not exactly innate. More importantly, the paradigm prevents the individual from bringing into his individuality and uniqueness any aspect other than that with which he has been born. Logic, aesthetics, language, and social identity is completely and irrevocably consigned to the social 'higher' aspect of *homo duplex*. The fault of this delineation is its ruthless fault line. Durkheim admitted that individuals contribute unequally to society [ Durkheim, 1993, p.108 ], yet he said that because the elements of society such as language, are imposed upon the individual, the individual then contains nothing of anything not innate in his or her individuality. If a single grain of sand fell into these gloomy gears of Durkheim's colorless pessimistic reasoning, the gears would screech to a halt. This paradigm is many things, but not pluralistic. If there was any theoretical alternative to any one of the steps, or an empirical case that did not fit, the theory would come crashing down.



Durkheim's paradigm is contingent on the idea that all aspects which are not innate are subsumed under the collective nature of society and consigned to the 'higher' social half of *homo duplex*. This is what reveals that Durkheim was working with a typology and not a methodology. He could not prove that a single aspect belongs to either half of the *homo duplex*. His paradigm was the product of typology embraced through scholastic reasoning and faith, not empirical evidence. Not only could he not show that *all* aspects of the self fit as he would have them in his hypothetical constructs, but he could not prove that a single aspect or any aspect fit his typology at all through any appeal to research, empiricism, and observation.

Durkheim's use of his terminology is interesting and pregnant in its implications. 'Individualism' is a social creation; 'individuality' and 'individual nature' refer to the apparent biological and psychological base of the individual. This would include, presumably, instincts, accidents of heredity, and chance physiological defects. The 'innate' would appear to include instincts and whatever weak powers of mind at the animal level that Durkheim was willing to attribute to biology and not to social interaction. 'Individuality' is also subsumed, apparently under the 'innate.' This is odd indeed, because it implies that what are 'individual' are the factors for which the individual can bear no responsibility: scars, innate flaws, heredity, and obscure instincts. Cognition and free-will are completely removed from Durkheim's category of 'individuality.' Durkheim appeared to have split the individual into the 'social' and the 'innate.' Neither the 'social' nor the 'innate' is actually particularly human. Only individual thinking with conscious free-will, and not genetics and herd-membership, is what makes us human. Durkheim made the individual as a unwieldy composite of elements created from biological and social determinism.

Durkheim's concept of *homo duplex* is religious in its delineation and in its gloom. Reading the following passage, we can see again just how much Durkheim was a part of the *fin de siècle* malaise which gripped the intellectuals of Europe at the end of the 19th century.

"his inner contradiction is one of the characteristics of our nature. According to Pascal's formula, man is both 'angel and beast' and not exclusively one or the other. The result is that we are never completely in accord with ourselves for we cannot follow one of our two natures without causing the other to suffer. Our joys can never be pure; there is always some pain mixed with them; for we cannot simultaneously satisfy the two beings

that are within us. It is this disagreement, this perpetual division against ourselves, that produces both our grandeur and our misery: our misery because we are thus condemned to live in suffering; and our grandeur because it is this division that distinguishes us from all other beings. The animal proceeds to his pleasure in a single and exclusive movement; man alone is normally obliged to make a place for suffering in his life.  
[ Durkheim, 1973, p. 154 ]

Durkheim based his paradigm for events in our culture on the conjecture that all human beings for all time felt the way he thought they felt without him having observed them. Such a belief contradicts Durkheim's own belief in cultural relativism. Durkheim could not prove that all cultures had all of their people feel the one way he described. If all cultures have their own rationality and set of values, then we cannot make any assumptions about any culture we have not yet observed.

One unnoticed problem with Durkheim's typology is that it can be subjectively rejected. I cannot prove that someone I have not observed is not *homo duplex*, but I can prove to myself that I am not, and therefore, not *all* human beings are that way. Durkheim, in contrast, assumed that his theory was valid for cases he could not study, a less valid theoretical postulate. In general, theory produced from empirical results based upon sound methodology can only be rejected objectively and not subjectively. Durkheim's theory is particularly weak, because it can be subjectively destroyed. If a single individual were to perceive that he or she was unified and capable of uncontaminated joy, even if for only a short period of time, then the whole theory falls apart. Fortunately for Durkheim, the theory does rest upon collective representations and culturally conditioned responses from its readers. As explained in the section on collective representations, the ideals of societies are often persuasive, regardless of their soundness, and frequently are convincing because they are false. Durkheim appealed to us to separate ourselves from 'animals,' and for us to drink from a cup of poisoned grandeur and voluntarily condemn ourselves to eternal suffering.

The static quality of Durkheim's *homo duplex* is marked. The two natures are *just there*. The creature is born with the innate self and receives the second social self from society up above. However, the experience of human life is change and action. People try to understand what they are, what their surrounding environment is, and how to best ascribe significance to the infinite details. It is unnecessary and unwise to invent normative content for human nature. Yet, if we remember what inspired the poets

and philosophers to use the term 'Man' rather than human, we see the role for dynamic action and self-awareness, however unevenly realized, that makes *Homo Sapiens* different than other species. Man is the sentient being which can see itself poised with its free will against the rest of the universe. Man is the creature who can visualize its own death, and who can laugh and who needs to laugh. Durkheim's earlier use of 'collective representation' and 'collective conscience' had emphasized more dynamism and interaction than his later conceptualization of human nature. In any case, Durkheim's *homo duplex* seems a wretch, a pathetic creature with no *potential* firm grip on reality, and without any hope of becoming something more except through doing violence to its own nature.

Morality, the social imperatives of any society at a moment in time, is frequently contradictory and shifting, like strong currents in the rapids. Both moral phenomena and the individual self cannot be understood apart from the fact that the individual tries to understand and perceive his surroundings and to make sense of it all. It is hard to imagine actions being moral and principles being followed as moral principles if they are perceived as senseless. This would appear to argue for the supremacy of cognitive models and methodological individualism in contradistinction to Durkheim [ Durkheim, 1982, p.171]. The individual may or may not sense contradiction and conflict in moral imperatives, but the nature of moral compulsion depends upon the individual knowing that *things exist* and certain consequences *must follow* from others. If either of these two premises are absent, moral phenomena cannot be recognized or felt. Durkheim did suggest a social epistemology which yielded the categories of thought resulting from the collective nature of society. However, Durkheim's paradigm of *homo duplex* is remarkably static: all human beings are exactly the same, and their innate and social elements are bound together in each individual in the exact same relationship. That is why one description for this approach to theory would be 'social metaphysics.'

Most importantly, the process of the individual mind in internalizing the social elements and in ordering and assembling them in a way that can make sense, is not perceived in Durkheim's paradigm. If the individual merely viewed passively the sensory information and made no attempt to submit it all to

rational scrutiny, the moral influence of society over the individual would be negligible. Even for the individual to be effected by wild appeals of emotional association, the individual must have an active mind and the ability to sort through the sensory information and to link the abstractions, no matter how primitive, in a way that made *some* sense. This is the reason why cognitive determinism must always be part of the study of moral phenomena. The individual builds up his or her understanding gradually, not only through interaction, but ultimately exclusively through the processing of thought. Beliefs can be contradictory, and moral imperatives can be emotional and logical, however, the link that is the foundation for the experience of the moral imperative is cognitive, rational, and is based upon acts of volition. Morality needs the understanding that something *is* good or bad, and that something *must* be done. If the individual self is purely static and the mind purely passive, then it is difficult to see how the individual can feel any moral imperative from any source, including society, in the Durkheimian sense.

It has now been demonstrated that Durkheim's moral imperative depends on the divided individual and that this notion of *homo duplex* does not necessarily result from the premises of its own reasoning, nor does it follow from methodologically contingent observation. Neither logic nor observation was Durkheim's source for his inspiration and commitment to the concept. Hence, this is why there remains an on-going debate regarding who influenced Durkheim: what combination of Rousseau, Kant, Schopenhauer, Pascal, Hegel, Renouvier, Boutroux, Wundt, Espinas, Comte, Saint-Simon, and Simmel explains his ideas? If Durkheim had built his paradigm up from empirical studies and observation, there would have been less need to attribute his ideas to people and more reason to attribute them to the facts. Durkheim built his entire paradigm on a leap of faith that followed his demonstration that society was more than the sum of its parts and individuals. His paradigm lies on the single coin, with 'social facts' on one side and '*homo duplex*' on the other. For bad coin and good, truth is the only touchstone. *Homo duplex* can be sufficiently and separately refuted on deductive and inductive grounds, but unless one addresses the source for the concept in Durkheim's particular understanding of social realism, the concept will pop back up again here and there, in the same paradigm and even in others.

Durkheim rooted his concepts in his definition of society itself and his contention that social life must be different than life without society.

*Let us begin by asserting a proposition which may be taken as axiomatic: If there is to be a true sociology, there must be certain phenomena produced in each society which are specifically caused by that society, which would not exist in the absence of that society and which are what they are only because society is as it is....If society were not to generate phenomena peculiar to itself and distinct from those observed in other realms of nature, sociology would have no subject matter of its own. (author's original italics) [ Durkheim & Wilson, 1981, p. 1061 ]*

It is unwise to build a whole scientific paradigm on deductive reason, but Durkheim's statement seems acceptable, though it might lead to a variety of interpretations. Durkheim seemed to want the reader to take the existence of sociology as a prior axiom. It should not matter *if* sociology has subject matter, rather what the topic matter *is* should be regarded as more important. Durkheim's axiom is not flawed, but it is a key example of his method of investigation. It is not methodologically grounded, and it is not grounded theory. His method of investigation is instead a chain of reasoning, which if any one part is flawed, the whole chain breaks. His theory starts with several plausible premises which are assumed rather than proved. Finally, there is a little concern over what Durkheim meant by 'society.' There are no people outside of society, which makes it impossible to see what phenomena society actually generates. Fish live in water, people live in society. Water does not generate fish, nor do fish generate water. It is easier to study fish and water than people and society because we can study fish out of their environment and study water without fish. The 'absence of that society' becomes in one respect, a theoretical absurdity, for if one society becomes absent, another will automatically become present —or there will be lack of phenomena to be observed and a lack of all observers. This is not to say that people do not influence society and society does not influence people, but it is to suggest that the absence of an alternate scenario to people living in society means that we cannot use the hypothetical scenario to prove anything about what is real.

Durkheim built *homo duplex* directly upon the social fact and the social fact upon social realism. It is not the endeavour here to attack social realism, rather it is to remove it from social holism and to provide for it an inclusive, pluralistic and completely logical basis. Hence, we need not deny that social life is more than or different than the sum of its parts. However, it is unproven and unprovable that to

acknowledge this commits one to Durkheim's paradigm or that it provides the proof that Durkheim

thought was sufficient. This is the link that Durkheim regards as sufficient to create the social fact:

A corollary of these propositions is the following: social phenomena do not have their immediate and determining cause in the nature of individuals. As a matter of fact if it were otherwise, if they derived directly from the organic or physical makeup of man without any other factor intervening in their elaboration, sociology would reduce itself to psychology... But if sociology can have a subject matter peculiar to itself, these collective ideas and actions must be different in nature from those which originate in the individual mind, and they must be framed in special laws. [ Durkheim & Wilson, 1981, p. 1061 ]

Durkheim appeared to use a narrow interpretation of psychology at this point, the study of the particular man's feelings and motivations. There is no necessary reason to pose a dichotomy between psychology and sociology. Psychology looks at the individual, sociology at "social phenomena." It is viable for a social-psychology to acknowledge that action comes from the individual, and that the social context is out of the individual's control. Durkheim's reasoning also reduces psychology to neuro-psychology and physiology. It is because of the narrow definition that Durkheim gives to psychology as the study of the mental qualities that result exclusively from the physical makeup of man, that sociology, his sociology, becomes more viable in contrast.

Durkheim built his sociology upon a narrow and unaccepted definition of psychology, and as a consequence, he created a similar juxtaposition between 'individual' and 'collective' ideas in his use of social facts. Durkheim posed a separation and exclusion of collective ideas and individual ideas, and the proof to support this does not exist. Durkheim made the mistake of tautology at this point. He stated that the ideas of society are collective ideas and therefore are not those coming from the individual. A better chain of definitions and reasoning would have been to state that there appears to be a population set of dominant and persistent ideas within society, and that these ideas should be examined directly and separately, but would be presumed to include collective ideas. This population set of society-wide ideas could also initially include ideas thought to derive from individuals. The ideas and sentiments should have been observed first, and the origins explored for each one. Even finding an origin for a 'representation' or 'idea' would not be sufficient to prove that it was the only origin. Durkheim was adamant that every social

phenomena or social fact must have only one origin —and this was taken on faith. It is not necessary or logical to insert statements of exclusion in a chain of reasoning, unless each exclusion is verified by either definition or through empirical observation. Durkheim might have argued cogently, even though proof was lacking, that these ideas had *not yet* included individual ideas. He did not prove that, and neither does his argument contain sufficient proof that the set of dominant ideas for society must only come from collective ideas and that this relationship could never change regardless of societal change.

Durkheim rejected cognitive determinism and fixed definitions of 'human nature' in a way that was clear and consistent, if questionable. Durkheim saw human nature as a flexible potential thirsting for sensation and did not believe that the individual was able to even judge the value of his own life.

In fact, only society can pass a collective opinion on the value of human life; for this individual is incompetent. The latter knows nothing but himself and his own little horizon; thus his experience is too limited to serve as a basis for a general appraisal.

[ Durkheim, 1951, p. 213 ]

It is somewhat misleading of Durkheim to sneak the term 'collective opinion' into his reasoning, because by definition, a collective opinion has to have a collective and not a common origin. Hence, it would have been less ambiguous if Durkheim had said instead 'general opinion' or 'intransigent opinion.' However, it is clear that Durkheim did not believe that the individual could generalize an understanding about human life. Also, Durkheim did not care to address the issue of 'relevancy' that Weber, in contrast, would use so emphatically with '*Wertbeziehung*.' Perhaps individuals do not merely need a generalized opinion of human life, but a generalized view of human life relevant to their own experiences and 'little horizon.'

Durkheim saw that only society can regulate and restrain our grasping human nature to such an extent that our lives are endurable.

It is not human nature which can assign the variable limits necessary to our needs. They are thus unlimited so far as they depend on the individual alone. Irrespective of any external regulatory force, our capacity for feeling is in itself an insatiable and bottomless abyss. But if nothing external can restrain this capacity, it can only be a source of torment to itself. Unlimited desires are insatiable by definition and insatiability is rightly considered a sign of morbidity. [ Durkheim, 1951, p. 247 ]

Again, it is unfortunate that Durkheim argued so much through definitions. He moved quickly from *infinite capacity to infinite desire to insatiability*. Perhaps Durkheim had in mind Shakespeare's Queen

Cleopatra who made men hungry with desire where she most satisfied. In any case, the process of mind is absent from Durkheim's work. The individual's development of his capacity for sensation and the development of his ability to pursue his stimulation is completely left aside. It would appear feasible that a rational man's capacity for sensation and his subtle discernment becomes greater with his development and application. There are different kinds of infinite capacities, some capacities are expanded only after being filled. Likewise, there are different kinds of infinite desires. Given an infinite lifespan, any human is capable of infinity. Some desires by virtue of being expansive appear to be infinite and others through the virtue of being long-lived appear insatiable. Finally, the capacity to perceive infinite desires and capacity in themselves is a little questionable regarding the qualities needed in the observer; it implies that the observer is Olympian and capable of perceiving infinity.

When we speak of the different ways Durkheim and Weber looked at how to study morals, let us remember that they had made different assumptions about values. It does appear possible that Durkheim's use of 'idea' is different than what is commonly understood in philosophy and sociology. Durkheim's avoidance of cognitive determinism is again relevant in that he provided no limitation for collective ideas such as having to pass through the abilities and limitations of the individual mind. That is to say, collective ideas are totally different than ideas held by individuals, and they are so different from our own commonsense understanding, that they appear almost transcendent. This decision in no way invalidates Durkheim's paradigm by his own premises, however, it does lead into the concern that 'ideas,' 'representations,' and 'ideals' will take on an ambiguous meaning. In reading Durkheim, it seems that sometimes these ideas are what can be comprehended by an individual mind, sometimes what can be in *any one part* comprehended by an individual mind, and sometimes, what is incomprehensible by the individual and is part of the collective nature beyond the individual's direct experience.

Durkheim's 1897 critique of the Marxist Antonio Labriola is relevant for discussing Durkheim's conception of knowledge and for arguing the case that he was a social metaphysician. Sociologists such as Dénes Némédi appear to have recently uncovered the significance of the following passage:



We believe it a fruitful idea that social life must be explained not by the conception of it formed by those who participate in it, but by the profound causes which escape their consciousness. We also think that these causes must be sought mainly in the way in which individuals associating together are formed in groups. [ Durkheim, 1982, p.171 ]

If nothing else, the passage shows that there is absolutely no room for a convergence between Durkheim's type of social realism and any form of methodological individualism. It would also appear that Durkheim's understanding of knowledge is different from other sociologists. Durkheim seems to have suggested that group life forms our consciousness and yet the consciousness people have from their group existence in no way necessarily enlightens them to the true state of their existence. It would almost appear that in this paradigm, not only could the individuals be considered automatons, but deluded automatons at that. It would seem that in this conception, not only are humans like ants in a colony toiling away in determined patterns without free-will, that they are also burdened by delusions of free will at the same time.

Durkheim divided the individual, granted society a unified and holistic existence, and left society with the sole moral imperative.

If we submit unresisting to the forces and mandates of society, it is not only because society is a more powerful being than we are. It is generally a moral authority which justifies all the outcomes of our activity and which bends our minds and wills. For everything coming from it is endowed with a prestige which inspires us in varying degrees with feelings of deference and respect... Individual undertakings directed against social realities, either with the aim of destroying them or of altering them, always run into strong resistance. These forces, moral or not, against which the individual raises himself, react against him and attest to their superiority with the usually irresistible energy of their reaction. [ Durkheim & Wilson, 1981, p. 1063 ]

The fact that society can bend people's minds is enough to give it the appearance of the social imperative, admittedly, but that this is as it should be or is necessarily acceptable, should not be the conclusion of the social scientist. If society 'bends our minds' so that we see more colors, consider more options, and practice better manners, this is acceptable. If society 'bends our minds' to make us cringe, until we say that we do not *necessarily* exist and  $2 + 2 = 2 - 2$ , then something drastically is wrong. The issue of 'bending the mind' brings up concerns of whether objectivity and truth is even impossible. Durkheim stated that rationality is culturally-specific and that all cultures were equally rational [ Durkheim, 1993, p. 26 ] as long as they reflected the collective nature(s) that existed and that which was emerging. This is not to say that he believed the essence of society is totalitarian, but it is to say that within his view there is no

apparent protection or domain for the individual's application of reason and objectivity in defiance of social forces. The individual can choose, but only as long as he chooses the rising social force.

Durkheim in essence conflated the social and the moral. He assigned to society all social action and the moral imperative. Society becomes the source of all moral phenomena.

In conclusion, social life is nothing other than moral milieu, or better, the sum of the various moral contexts which surround the person in calling them moral we mean that these milieux consist in a complex of ideas: as a result they are, with respect to individual minds, just as the physical setting is to living organisms. Both the moral and the physical milieux constitute independent realities, at least independent of one another to the extent that this can be in a world where everything is bound together.

[ Durkheim & Wilson, 1981, p. 1064 ]

Durkheim admitted that society produced conflict and problems as well [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 91 ], but because society is the sole source of morality, this means that even the unnecessary conflicts, violence, absurdities, and crazes would assume a moral character. In effect, poison and medicine are mixed in one flask, which is then labeled medicine because the only other flask remains empty. This insight of Durkheim's and the criticism of it as well, are not unjustified. Moral phenomena include events and things which observers judge either to be good or bad. It was wrong of Durkheim to suggest that this moral imperative of society is inevitable, universal, and justified. It is quite correct of Durkheim to see that all that is 'good' or 'evil' falls into the domain of moral phenomena. People can be forced into actions both 'good' and 'evil' by the moral imperatives of their social institutions and interaction. Collective forces create forces which intensify both good and evil [ Durkheim, 1973, p.150 ] and are always experienced as possessing a moral impersonal character beyond that of the individual.

Durkheim's paradigm fails because of several errors, but his paradigm is still quite useful for us to examine. Durkheim established academic sociology, and he sought to establish a legitimate alternate to the ideologies of Social-Darwinism, Marxism, utopian socialism, and the political theories based upon Rousseau or upon the Utilitarians. Durkheim does theorists a great favor by showing them a finely-detailed argument of social realism in its most extreme form. His very errors demonstrate the necessary mistakes one has to make to provide society with the sole moral imperative. His line of reasoning, once

critiqued, makes clear all the premises that have to be accepted to embrace cultural relativism. A critic's rejection of Durkheim would serve to clarify his own reasoning and premises.

The critique of Durkheim's theory of knowledge by Gerard De Gré would seem relevant. De Gré drew a distinction between the sociology of knowledge and the sociological theory of knowledge: The *sociological theory of knowledge*, as contrasted with the *sociology* of knowledge, however, is an epistemological position which attempts to infer from the findings of gnosis-sociology certain hypotheses concerning the relationship between propositions and *that which* the propositions are about. Of such a nature are the statements of Durkheim about the social locus of the referents of the categories and other ideas. If this position is pushed far enough it results in a kind of *social idealism* which posits that, although the "world" is not the "idea" of any specific individual, as some of the subjective idealists have maintained, it is a kind of "collective idea" and exists only in the "collective conscious." When Durkheim or other sociologists make statements of this kind they are no longer speaking *qua* sociologists, but *qua* epistemologists. Such epistemological statements must be carefully distinguished from the preliminary gnosis-sociological analysis that Durkheim makes of the social factors, such as religious festivals, kind and clan groups, the spatial arrangements of villages, etc., that influences the primitive conceptions of the categories of time, space, causality, etc. [ De Gré, 1970, p.666 ]

Essentially, De Gré would accuse Durkheim of confusing or at least conflating statements about social factors influence beliefs with how social factors determine the basis for knowledge itself. This concern has not been discussed often in the academic texts on Durkheim and may be worthy of further study.

Durkheim understood that there was a social basis for knowledge, especially in the ideas that had the greatest power over our lives. It is indisputable that society is greater than the sum of its components, nor can we dismiss the idea that there is a social basis for knowledge. The 'social basis' for knowledge, however, may be somewhat uneven. It may be more relevant for some individuals than for others, and may either exist for all time in the same way or be dynamic, or its most important contribution may need to be ongoing, or alternately, episodic. What we argue against is the attempt to establish the sole moral imperative to society as a collective holistic being and the attempt to invent a single and exclusive source for all categories of knowledge without proof. We turn to a closer examination of the foundation of knowledge in the next section.

## Chapter Five: Moral Action within Society as a Being

Durkheim founded his methodology in the conception of society as its own reality. Weber in contrast built his methodology up from individual action, which included individual behavior and the meanings that the individual, verbally or otherwise, attributed to them. This difference would lead to profound implications. We will return to Weber's position in a later chapter, after we examine the consequences of Durkheim's conclusions and Durkheim's theoretical error.

Durkheim's conception of society was that social facts were things that could be studied empirically, yet he almost seemed to will society as a coherent entity into existence.

It is clear that for Durkheim society has a reality, that objective and empirical descriptions of it are possible, but that it is neither material nor reducible. and there is a clear relation between representation and reality. Yet why is representation identified with reality? If there is no material base, as there is for Marx, is there a reality beyond representation? Durkheim denies that there is a thing-in-itself, lying beyond representations ([1898b] 1924a:29). The concept of thing indicates a non-material, irreducible reality. [ Jones, 1996, p. 48 ]

As was stated above in a previous section, Durkheim derived his understanding of society as a reality from his teacher Renouvier.

Renouvier thus defines being as representational or relational... By this he means that all attempts to demonstrate the independence of representations are doomed to philosophical failure, for they are necessarily have to use logical features of representation by which to identify or define a reality. Epistemologically all reality to be known and to be acted on has to be brought before the mind. This definition is independent both of material and idealism. [ Jones, 1996, p. 53 ]

Renouvier's sophisticated position avoided the annoying Kantian dichotomy between appearance and reality, and facilitated a somewhat cognitive understanding of society as all reality that was known by human beings. Durkheim rejected the premises of Kantian and German Idealistic philosophy, but in making society a being, he seems to have neatly refurbished the desired conclusions of Kantian philosophy welded onto a positivistic base.

Durkheim did not entirely reify society, but his extreme position did lend itself to misinterpretation. Durkheim is generally understood as having said that society was a level of reality prior to and superior to the individual. However, sometimes he had gone further. Not only did he say that society was a reality *sui generis* and that society was *like* an organism, but occasionally he said it *was* an organism. We see his statements to this effect at more than one stage of his career [ Durkheim, 1974b, p.198 ; Durkheim, 1982, p.129 & 243 ; Durkheim, 1973b, p. 60 ; Durkheim, 1981, p.66 ]. Durkheim's rhetoric facilitated misunderstanding. He seemed to move from saying that society was a reality, to saying society was like an organism, to saying that society was an organism.

Durkheim's use of organic metaphors and analogies is fascinating. There is an added consideration. On the infrequent occasions Durkheim referred to society as an organism, he did so at the middle or shortly after the middle of the lecture or article. On the many occasions he referred to society as a social reality *sui generis* he did so throughout the publications, the beginning, middle, and the end. Apparently, he considered his postulate that society was a reality to be beyond challenge and unproblematic. He used his assertion that society was an organism only after an extensive lead-up of analogies and before his main conclusions. It would appear that he used his statement that society was an organism not as a starting position, but as a means to argue for a forthcoming conclusion regarding morals once the reader had already accepted the chain of argument. He never claimed society was an organism as his starting position or as his end conclusion. Thus, perhaps we should not see Durkheim as a organicist, but as someone who dipped into organic metaphors to suit his purpose.

Though Durkheim believed that society was a reality in itself and was like an organism, he did not then assume that individuals had no role to play, or that individuals were not important. He took pains to distinguish that though he emphasized the collective nature of existence, he maintained a role for the individual. He believed all consciousness and the development of ideas is carried out through the minds of the individuals. Neither individuals nor society directly advance ideas; ideas are advanced through the interaction of individuals without any one individual knowing the full truth of the matters he or she is

involved with. As social solidarity is transformed through the division of labor, the individual as such would find a great role for himself, without disturbing the collective life of the group [ Durkheim, 1993, p. 108 ].

The error of universalists like Hegel and Schopenhauer is that they have not seen this aspect of reality. Since they make personality a simple appearance, they cannot attribute any ethical value to it. They do not perceive that while the individual receives so much from society, he or she nevertheless acts upon society. This is most apparent with great figures whose influence universalists of all schools are forced to deny. [ Durkheim, 1993, p. 108 ]

This statement is best understood keeping in mind that Durkheim rejected entirely the Kantian term "the thing-in-itself," whose use had threatened to turn the individual into merely part of the appearance of society without even being its content. Durkheim rejected the notion that individuals were just the appearance of aspects of society. Instead, Durkheim emphasized that the individual was the *substratum* of society, yet still existed as a tangible being irreducible to his brain cells [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 24 ].

The individual then receives more from society than he could ever contribute. The individual does contribute minutely though this contribution is so small that it is not the dominant characteristic of his relationship to his community. The contributions of one individual are virtually insignificant compared to the sum of all the other contributions over time of the past and contemporary individuals. All of the developments of society are that of past contributions of people who lived together in a social-framework that passed on these words, traditions, technology, and customs to succeeding generations.

No doubt the average consciousness borrows more from its milieu than it can return. Still there are people whose personal ability to react is so great that ideas and feelings which formerly were implicit and latent in society become concentrated in them and gather an extraordinary force which brings them to actualization. These people then become the living conscience of society which is itself transformed under their influence. It is to such great minds that the majority of human progress is due. If progress was left to the average mentality, nothing would change; since the average mentality is passive, it has neither the need nor the means to throw off the yoke of tradition and prejudice... Morality, therefore, must have a place both in the part and in the whole, both in the individual and in society. [ Durkheim, 1993, p.108 ]

Not only does the individual contribute, Durkheim recognized that individuals also contribute unequally. This qualification prevented Durkheim from falling into a greater individual versus society dichotomy, as many relationships are possible for the individual with the society that is around and within that person.

However, it does mean that the individual was to feel grateful to *society* for receiving past contributions from other *individuals*. Anytime we receive something from someone we do not know, Durkheim would have us believe we were receiving a gift from society as a social being. This is particularly poignant in that the individual ascribes his or her knowledge to a higher level of being when all that they do receive is from beings like themselves. However, it is beneficial that though Durkheim posited an universal relationship between the individual and society, he recognized that the content of that relationship varied depending on the choices, will, effort, and talents of the individual concerned. From Durkheim's point of view as a 'social metaphysician,' the forms of social relationships, in particular the subordination of the individual to society, were absolute, though their content varied from culture to culture, and varied somewhat regarding the individuals concerned.

Durkheim may have rejected the term "the thing-in-itself" in a metaphysical sense, because the term was used in Kantian philosophy in juxtaposition to the individual's perception of phenomena. He did not use the term "thing-in-itself" but he often seemed to imply an understanding of concepts relative to this term both in the Kantian meaning and in a more general way. Durkheim rejected individualistic means of explanation in all forms. As Durkheim rejected innate individual cognition and perception, he rejected the exact Kantian understanding of "the thing-in-itself" but created a new understanding in its place. The objects of the collective consciousness or alternately, the collective representations, were what we could call "things independent of the individual." These things would remain what they were regardless of whether they were observed, understood, known or chosen. Unlike Kant's "the thing-in-itself," these things could be studied empirically and were not to be understood relative to the individual but to the collective nature of society. He seemed to have considered the objects of consciousness which have a collective origin as having an existence separate from their manifestations. Durkheim believed that the manifestations of collective ideas (especially collective representations) have an existence apart from their appearance and can generally be perceived only partially by any one observer.

An alternate phrasing for the Durkheimian paradigm would be to say that though all consciousness in society is that of the individual, the objects of social consciousness are not in the individual consciousnesses. That is, the objects of consciousness are "things independent of the individual" and the individuals behold only parts of them at any one time. Therefore, the objects of consciousness can be studied empirically, but can only be perceived by the sociologist who understands that their true nature is not that of objects created by individual consciousnesses. Hence, a language is a "thing independent of the individual" and is not the words that any one individual might know, nor does the language come from individual consciousness, although individuals behold parts of it. Also, the individual cannot change what it is by choice. Consequently, the sociologist has to assume the concrete and collective existence of the objects of social consciousness before the objects can be studied empirically, and these things cannot be studied through their impressions on individual minds but only through their true reality in their totality which is never beheld directly by anyone. This paradigm is almost Neoplatonic in its assumption of some grand mystical collectivity.

Durkheim said that social facts were things that could be studied empirically. He makes this point in The Rules of Sociological Method:

The proposition which states that social facts must be treated as things - the proposition which is at the very basis of our method - is among those which have stirred up the most opposition. It was deemed paradoxical and scandalous for us to assimilate to the realities of the external world those of the social world. This was singularly to misunderstand the meaning and effect of this assimilation, the object of which was not to reduce the higher forms of being to the level of lower ones but, on the contrary, to claim for the former a degree of reality at least equal to that which everyone accords to the latter. Indeed, we do not say that social facts are material things, but that they are things just as are material things, although in a different way. [ Durkheim, 1982, p. 35 ]

This quotation may have different possible meanings. Our understanding of Durkheim in this paper has interpreted Durkheim's expression "degree of reality" to mean *concreteness* in the German neo-Kantian sense. They are empirical things. If our understanding is faulty, then our argument would require revision. He compared social facts to material things and said that they social facts have a degree of reality equal to or greater than material objects and that social facts are things just like material things. It seems



appropriate to believe that Durkheim meant that he thought social facts have a concrete nature of existence at least as concrete as ordinary physical objects.

It is interesting that Durkheim distinguished between the external world and the social world. Perhaps he meant that society is both inside us and outside us, so we do not have the same juxtaposition and precepts of reference as we do when we study something isolated in the laboratory. Re-reading the above quotation reveals something fascinating in Durkheim's argument construction. He moves up gradually from one level or declaration to another without proof for each additional step: "It is remarkable that he moves from arguing that social facts should be considered and treated as things to saying that they *are* things" [ Jones, 1996, p. 45 ]. Durkheim declared that social facts can be treated as things, must be treated as things, are things, and then finally, are even more thing-like than the material things we take for granted.

Durkheim repeatedly used terminology in explanation which a mathematician might call "nonnegative" or "greater than or equal to." To say that social facts have a concrete existence "at least as equal" to genuinely concrete objects, is pregnant in its implications and ambiguity. For such an argument to be true, all it would need to demonstrate would be that the two categories have equal concreteness. Yet this would imply that the social facts also have greater concreteness, which is a separate claim and is unproven by the proof for the first claim. If social facts did have a greater concreteness than normal perceptual reality then this paradigm is indeed 'social metaphysics,' and it would be the case that social relationships are the source of all stability and continuity, and not material matter, ideas, and human minds. Durkheim squares the circle by implying that if social facts are equal to normal things then therefore they are also superior.

To treat social facts as things is interesting. No doubt this can be done, but Durkheim conflated the two issues of whether this *can be done* and should *always* be done. It is fascinating where Durkheim drew this method: from the *Kathedersozialisten*. It is wrong and intellectually dangerous to mix conclusions from different theories which share incompatible premises. It does not appear that Durkheim

mixed incompatible premises when he borrowed ideas from the German academic socialists. but anyone who wishes to borrow Durkheim's methodological treatment of social facts as things should examine the premises of the German socialists who founded the perspective:

Wagner and Schmoller... For them... society is a real being which certainly does not exist outside of the individuals who compose it, but which nonetheless has its own nature and personality. Current expressions such as 'social conscience,' 'collective spirit,' 'the body of the nation,' do not have simply a linguistic value; they express facts which are eminently concrete. It is false to say that the whole is equal to the sum of its parts.  
[ Durkheim, 1993, p.64 ]

The *Kathedersozialisten* were completely right to say that they considered the *Volkswirtschaft* and social facts to be concrete, for they sincerely treated them as such. However, they may have made the error of the fallacy of misplaced-concreteness. A concrete is a lower-order abstraction, less abstract than a principle, but more abstract than a sensations or a product of object-perception. A concrete also exists in perceptual reality as well as being the recipient of abstract qualities. It has meaning in addition to how it is perceived by the senses, but it has to be capable of being perceived (even if only at times by contrafactual evidence). Hearing a train is a sensation. Perceiving a particular train as an entity (without knowing that it is a train as such) is an object-perception. Perceiving a train and knowing that it is a train (along with other different trains) is the identification of a concrete. To declare that 'social conscience' and 'the body of the nation' are concretes is questionable. They *might* be concretes, but as they do not exist that way for many people for more than an instant, and that they do not seem to be easily measurable, to call them '*eminently concrete*' is wrong.

We owe much of our understanding of how the *Kathedersozialisten* made mistakes in their conceptualization to none other than Max Weber. His book Roscher and Knies was a critique of people associated with the German thinkers who Durkheim found so congenial. These ideas and concepts are not "obvious," that is, among people who agree upon the facts but have different values, they would disagree whether these things were real entities and, even if they agreed, upon their interpretations.

It seems more likely that these ideas *seem* like concrete things, for only short periods on the basis of social relations. People chase notions like 'the body of the nation' and 'the collective good' in the same

way travelers in a barren desert chase after mirages of the oasis. The fact that these things are frequently seen does not give them that 'thing-like' quality of 'real things' other than how figments of our imagination are also 'things.' We reach out our hands for them only for them to disappear and for us to lose our ontological footing —yet we can refer to them and make them part of our symbolic landscape. In short, because these things have a regularly observed existence and an alluring effect on our view of the world, Durkheim attributed to them an uniquely concrete existence when in fact the evidence also suggests that they may be chimerical.

These *things*, these social facts, exist on the level of purely abstract phenomena and cannot be perceived directly. Yet as abstractions they are not principles such as mathematical formulae or moral axioms. They are not abstract yet precise phenomena like recipes, composed of particular and exact concretes. Rather Durkheim's social facts have strong intuitive elements. 'The body of the nation' may appear to be a unproblematic and concrete social phenomena to editors and politicians, but not to rural farmers immersed in tradition, or to urbane 'citizens of the world' with broad horizons and dual-citizenship. Social facts like 'social conscience' and 'collective spirit' seem to vary a great deal within the same society. Not only do they vary from context, they also seem to vary from the point of view of the individuals concerned who say that they behold them, while other individuals fail to notice them at all. Genuine concretes, such as a five-pound sack of sugar, do vary somewhat in use depending on the context and the individuals concerned, but it remains indisputable what they are, even though in this case a cook may see it as a bag of sweetener and the chemist as a pouch of sucrose. Yet the social facts of Durkheim and the *Kathedersozialisten* were to be treated *at least in equal* concreteness as bags of sugar, automobiles, glasses of water, and puffs of smoke. How does one measure a social fact or even behold it without implicitly taking it and its whole paradigm on faith and in addition using one's subjective feelings? Lest someone think that this is quibbling over details and that we are playing semantics with Durkheim's words, it is doubtful whether the *Kathedersozialisten* and other collectivists would have disagreed with this literal interpretation of the definition of 'concrete.' To collectivists, these things like

'social class,' 'class consciousness,' 'ideology,' and '*Zeitgeist*,' can be causal agents in themselves. *Something cannot be a causal agent for social change unless it has a definite existence.* Considering how much those who believe in the concreteness of these concepts can argue with each other, and how these concepts often do not exist for other people, it would appear that the concepts are problematic and not consistently concrete. Collective concepts remain vague and unmeasurable abstractions useful for analytical purposes but devoid of causal power. This mistake of misplaced concreteness made by these thinkers is frequently the flip side of the coin to their metaphysical conceptions and reification. Durkheim was given the nickname, 'the metaphysician' [ Lukes, 1972, p.33 ]. He consciously rejected metaphysics, yet in his identification of abstract social phenomena as concretes, he seems to have rendered 'society' as such with metaphysical attributes.

Many of the great 19th century thinkers were 'recovering' metaphysicians. Herbert Spencer assumed a metaphysical existence of evolution and social-evolution. Auguste Comte gave 'Society' attributes that smacked of metaphysics. Even Karl Marx, conventionally known as a materialist, used metaphysical conceptualization to assume the inevitable and unified existence of a proletarian class consciousness even before such a class consciousness emerged for the first time. Marx acted just like a member of "the Historical School of Economics" in assuming that the proletariat and the proletarian class consciousness were both entities.

There are correct uses for metaphysics within social science inquiry, and incorrect uses. Metaphysics, being the knowledge of things beyond physical existence as such, would appear to be the same for a physical scientist as for a social scientist. The social sciences, the *Geisteswissenschaften*, need different methodology than the physical sciences, but it would appear that every time the social scientists invent new metaphysical assumptions for themselves which would be untenable in the physical sciences, they err, and do so grievously. That is why in contrast, Weber's term of *Wirklichkeitwissenschaften* appears still tenable. The social sciences should look for explanation for social change only in things (people and objects) that exist, and the social sciences can be considered the sciences of concrete reality.

Metaphysics provide the boundaries for knowledge, but not the substance. The universe is metaphysically linked, yet not metaphysical in itself, but physical. Reality is girded by our metaphysical notions, but not metaphysical in its content. Durkheim was not a genuine metaphysician, but rather he attempted to transplant the metaphysical concerns from Idealist philosophical theories into an empirical social science. That is why it may be appropriate to consider Durkheim a 'social metaphysician.'

Durkheim said that the essence of moral action by the individual is that he pursues the goal through both being pressured into it, and seeing it as desirable [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 36 ]. He advanced this position in both 1887 and 1906. The element of desirability is present, but not free choice. It should be examined what Durkheim meant when he said that the goal of moral action should be seen as desirable by the individual. Desirability can be presumably either unconscious or conscious, and can either be desirable as well after the fact, or not. People often commit actions and then regret them. The key to understanding this point is that the coercion involved is immutable and that the element of desirability, though necessary, is malleable and mutable. Force is immutable. Either a person is executed for treason or not. That cannot be changed after the fact. In contrast, it is flexible whether a goal was seen as desirable or not. Society supplies both the force and the set of images and values the individual is supposed to uphold or choose among. As well, society projects the threat of force through the meaning the "group" will give to him for compliance or noncompliance, the threat of financial hardship, the loss of career opportunities, and the ultimate physical threat of imprisonment or execution. This creates a "stacked deck" of justice in which "society" is the judge, jury, and executioner, *and* is the legal defense, sympathetic demonstrators, and the minister who delivers the eulogy. But is society alive?

How a person sees an action as desirable is going to be affected by whether there is force or the threat of force arrayed against him. A person in Communist China during the Cultural Revolution might be berated and browbeaten by the entire village and the representatives of the Communist Party until the person signed a confession condemning his or her parents as 'aristocrats' for the 'desirable' glorious good of the common interest and the collective farm. Durkheim never separated these two elements from each

other in his analysis of moral action. As long as there is force, and at the same time, a desired goal, Durkheim's criteria are met. Whether that same 'desirability' would still exist in the individual's mind if the threat of force, whether ontological or of physical violence, was removed, is entirely another matter and Durkheim never addressed it.

Perhaps the element of temporality saves Durkheim's paradigm at this point. If a person commits an act out of social compulsion or constraint, and found it desirable at any instant for any reason whatsoever, no matter how faintly or briefly, then, according to Durkheim, the action can be considered moral. After all, if an individual is forced to do something *completely* against his will, then, according to Durkheim, the person can take no moral responsibility for that action. An example of forced compliance might be a political prisoner signing a 'confession' after being tortured. That would not be moral. However, many examples abound of individuals being pressured into actions when the individuals feel some kind of fleeting recognition of the desirability of that goal, such as from chances of personal promotion, envy of their neighbors, feelings of revenge, or just being caught up in an euphoria of 'collective effervescence.' For example, a young man caught up in the euphoria and excitement of his country declaring war might rush to enlist and then come to rue the decision. Yet in this case, if the young man had waited, war would have found him sooner or later, his country would have conscripted him –and he would have gone to war not to avoid execution necessarily, but to also avoid humiliation and shame. People comply then with the threat of force and acquiesce, so that absolute force to move each of their limbs is unnecessary. Generally, it only takes the presence of security guards and their suggestions to usher the condemned prisoner to the execution, and the prisoner rarely struggles, thinking it futile and seeing some dignity in passive compliance. Actually, there is no dignity in being a willing sacrificial lamb to principles and authorities we do not respect. Also, granting our own recognition of the "desirability" of our violation after the fact or after it becomes almost inevitable, does not grant us dignity.

The threat of force being applied to someone for noncompliance is generally sufficient to encourage someone to quickly rationalize some kind of benefit to himself or to society, if only as a mental

analgesic and soporific. Often, *we do not want to know* what kind of force may be applied against us, especially if it would crumble the view of authority and society that we are clinging to in the time of distress. We may think it desirable to cooperate willingly with the threat of force so as not to recognize our own cowardice and helplessness. Similarly, people who live in dictatorships often find that voluntary amnesia regarding the past actions of the state is useful to maintain day-to-day normalcy and to avoid responsibility and confrontation. A Soviet proverb was, "Nothing changes as often as the past."

According to Durkheim, we always live in societies which condition our minds with images and which constrain us or force us forward through forces *we cannot even necessarily understand*. Frequently the actions that the forces dictate are beneficial eventually to someone. Through a combination of chance and deception, we can speak of 'social needs' being met. Then from a critical perspective, the nature of societal morality is not to fool everyone all the time, but to merely fool them briefly when it matters. Society and conditioned associations create images and powerful sensations, some inarticulate and undefinable, others clear and named, whatever which will prove to be efficacious in creating a momentary weakness in the individual to make them vulnerable to social pressure. Even this critic's point of view would not deny that this societal morality does not bring many advantages and benefits, both societal and individual, but still, no complete accounting is possible. Many of mankind's worst barbarities still remain in the domain of moral phenomena. While we might say that our social environment 'conditions' our minds; this social determinism is unnecessary for social realism. A different perspective compatible with the basic facts and premises would be that our environment provides us with the material and conditions *for* our minds, but our minds themselves 'condition' themselves through the processes of thinking.

In Durkheim's use of 'desirability' as a necessary component of moral action, certain issues are left unresolved. Durkheim declared that neither the 'desirability' nor the 'obligation' were logically prior to each other, though he appeared to emphasize in particular that the obligation could not be traced back in origin to its desirability [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 47 ]. Herbert Spencer, in contrast, had suggested the opposite, and Durkheim had made it clear that he opposed Spencer on this point since he believed that

altruism could never come from egoism, as nothing could come from its opposite [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.47 ; Durkheim, 1993, p. 100 ]. It would appear unsubstantiated that altruism and egoism even as defined by the thinkers of the 19th century, were necessarily opposites, or even if they were opposites, were each other's *only* opposites. The two terms are certainly different, but things that are different and have *opposite or complementary* functions are not necessarily opposites in themselves, such as men and women, veins and arteries, and even light waves and darkness.

Durkheim's conception of moral action remains striking. He considered that all moral action, as conducted by the individual, appealed not to the individual's nature, but to a higher nature and that an individual's pursuit of morality was in conflict with his nature [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 45 & 93 ].

Following the collectivity, the individual forgets himself for the common end and his conduct is orientated in terms of a standard outside himself. [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 91 ]

The use of the term 'nature' is often open to multiple meanings, granted, but it is fascinating that even though Durkheim referred to the individual as *homo duplex*, that his idea of moral action would still be in conflict with the individual's nature.

Even when we carry out a moral act with enthusiasm we feel that we dominate and transcend ourselves, and this cannot occur without a feeling of tension and self-restraint. We feel that we do violence to a part of our being. [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.45 ]

Even though we are ourselves *homo duplex* with a dual nature, when we act morally we still violate our nature as a whole (or a part). If Durkheim was correct in his two premises that the source of the moral imperative was society and that our human nature came from society, it does not follow that morality would have to necessarily be an intrinsic violation of the individual.

Durkheim's belief that moral action was in conflict with part of the nature of the individual though held desirable by the individual, was merely a reformulation of the Original Sin. Christians believe that all human beings are fallen from a state of Grace and must break away from their own sinful natures to embrace God's redemption. This posited pre-Fall existence for humanity seems to be similar to what Rousseau used for his 'natural man,' and Durkheim seems to have unwittingly captured the metaphor. Durkheim attributed to society and not God or the individual as the source of morality. The individual is



created by society and received his nature as *homo duplex* and as a self-conscious individual from society.

But the individual is damned, and damned for eternity.

Each individual moral conscience expresses the collective morality in its own way. Each one sees it and understands it from a different angle. No individual can be completely in tune with the morality of his time, and one could say that there is no conscience that is not in some ways immoral. [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.40 ]

Then to be moral one has to continually follow the shifting demands of society whatever they are, to eschew absolutes, and even consistency of action and values. Durkheim can be damned for many things, but he could not be damned for inconsistency. His contention that all people are in some way "immoral" is tied to the very basis of his definition of social fact itself. According to Durkheim, no individual can actually even completely understand the ideal or accept it completely [ Durkheim, 1982, p.59 ]. Not surprisingly, one does not practice beliefs that one by definition cannot even fully grasp. Consequently, once one has accepted the premise that ideas people hold are incomplete manifestations of "real" collective ideals, one will most likely fall into secular versions of the Original Sin or that all people are "somehow" partly immoral.

A pity that in all of Durkheim's discussion of the superiority of the collective representation over the individual representation, he failed to discuss whether the collective conscience of society would be immoral if all the individual consciences were immoral. But he could not take his argument to its logical conclusion, and to damn society as immoral, because there can be no genuine consciousness of society. If all individual consciousnesses are immoral, society cannot be equally damned, because society does not have a genuine consciousness.

Durkheim left the consequence of moral action as individuals violating themselves and feeling a pleasure in fulfilling their duty.

We find charm in the accomplishment of a moral act prescribed by a rule that has no other justification other than it is a rule. We find a *sui generis* pleasure in performing our duty simply because it is our duty. [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.45 ]

According to Durkheim, all an action has to have to be moral, is damage to our character through obligation, 'desirability,' and that the obedience be pleasurable and desirable in itself. This is merely Kantianism, with a longer exposition and more variables. All Durkheim's addition of the element of

'desirability' has accomplished is 1) to water down Kant's use of duty as the sole element of moral action, 2) to explain why people obey even when the threat of force or obligation is somewhat removed or weakened, and 3) to make the topic of examination subject not to *a priori* rationalist inquiry, but to a sociological empirical inquiry. If someone wishes to whitewash Kantianism, let us remember that the Nazis at Nuremberg gave as their sole defense that, "Orders are orders," that they felt duty to authority was the only *needed* element in action.

Durkheim proved that society is irreducible to its components of individuals and he rejected *a priori* reason, but he seemed to have merely recycled the mystic theory of Immanuel Kant, albeit on different premises. He stated in "The Determination of Moral Facts" (1906):

If we cannot be bound by duty except to conscious beings and we have eliminated the individual, there remains as the only other possible object of moral activity the *sui generis* collective being formed by the plurality of individuals associated to form a group. Further, the collective personality must be thought of as something other than the totality of individuals that compose it. If it were only the sum it could have no greater moral value than its component parts, which in themselves have none. We arrive then at the conclusion that if a morality, or system of obligations and duties, exists, society is a moral being qualitatively different from the individuals it comprises and from the aggregation from which it derives. The simplicity between this argument and that of Kant in favour of the existence of God will be noted. Kant postulates God, since without this hypothesis morality is unintelligible. We postulate a society specifically distinct from individuals, since otherwise morality has no object and duty no roots.

[ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 51-52 ]

Kant created a circular theory with the unreal ( pure reason and experienceless existence ) as its premises and ended with the unreal ( God ) as its postulate. Durkheim gave society the essence of 'being,' and arrived at that conclusion from having dismissed out of hand the alternate possibilities, rendering his own theory circular. In Durkheim's earlier 1887 essay "*La Science positive de la morale en Allemagne*," he had discussed Wundt's conception that the moral worth of an individual life was zero, and that similarly to value the life of a number of individuals would be to value only a number of zeros [ Durkheim, 1993, p.110 ]. He had mentioned that he valued the individual more than Wundt, yet we see that Durkheim still had accepted the proposition that individual life was worth nothing in itself [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 50 ].

The neo-Kantian philosophical tradition may have been fruitful and productive in the questions it examined and the own scholastic rigor that it demanded, but Durkheim's own close allegiance to Kant's

conception of morality is not a suitable model for the sociological tradition. This was *not* the intended assessment for Durkheim's paradigm. A more favorable conclusion from Durkheim's conception of moral action would have been preferred, but the facts remain. Durkheim stated that:

Between God and society lies the choice... I can only add that I myself am quite indifferent to this choice, since I see in the Divinity only society transfigured and symbolically expressed. [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 52 ]

Perhaps, Durkheim should have then capitalized 'society.' Durkheim presented his paradigm then as a kind of Kantianism for atheists and agnostics. The fact that he was *indifferent* regarding what was to be his ultimate premise *and* postulate, is disturbing.

In a nutshell, Durkheim made the mistake of assuming that the collective nature of irreducible society rendered it into a genuine being.

In the world of experience I know of only one being that possesses a richer and more complex moral reality than our own, and that is the collective being.  
[ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 52 ]

The Comtean flavor of Durkheim's use of the 'collective being,' is remarkable. Comte had suggested that people worship a hypothetical Great Being as the collective spirit of society. Durkheim seems to have implemented this suggestion, and achieved a remarkable intersection of Comtean and Kantian ideas. If Durkheim had been right, and society was a being, then *maybe*, his theory would be tenable and not subject to this ruthless criticism. It is a fact that bronze is not irreducible in its characteristics to the characteristics of bronze, tin, and other ingredients, such as antimony. It is not a fact that bronze is a "higher" substance than its components by virtue of being an alloy. Copper and tin have no consciousness and no life, and neither does bronze. Brain cells have life without consciousness, yet the person has both characteristics. The human mind is not a collective consciousness, but an individual consciousness. To assume that society has being because it is in itself a moral reality ( possible ) and is made up of beings, is yet unproven. It is possible to accept Durkheim's contention that society is irreducible and it has a nature that is collective, but it does not then follow that society has being. Though we can unproblematically accept the notion of society as a social milieu, we cannot do so for the notion of society as an entity. If

society is not an entity it cannot be a being. Also, even if society had *being*, society would not then necessarily have *consciousness*.

To advance his case, Durkheim used the two medieval-scholastic debating techniques of "reduction to absurdity" and "elimination of all other options." These two techniques are useful, but they do not really *prove* anything. Durkheim stated that serving other people is absurd because 'people' means merely a number of individuals. Serving individuals is absurd as, he assumed, the individual is "a zero." Durkheim then stated he knew of no other option, other than to attribute the whole source of morality to society, the collective being. These two devices are debating techniques and techniques of scholastic philosophers, and are not the same as either a logical proof involving Laws of Identity or the empirical proof of observation. Laws of Identity are always true, though their use, either in honest mistakes, or in the delight of those who seek to undermine reason and human dignity, sometimes has led to the wrong answers.  $2=2$  is a Law of Identity.  $2=2$  *always*. To say that two cards appear to be the same as two other cards so therefore the two groups are the same, might be an error, and if it is, it is based on both observation and reason, but not on a Law of Identity. In the Laws of Identity, something either *is*, or it *is not*. Something cannot both be and not be at the same time in the same way or characteristic. If a pound of salt is found to weigh the same as a pound of lead, the weights are the same but the two items are not. "The same" always relates to a relevant value, and our understanding here is related to Weber's discussion of *Wertbeziehung*. Equivocation does not change what sometimes is, nor does it invalidate the laws of logic. Laws of Identity are always true, and given that  $2+3=5$ , it would then immediately follow that  $3+2=5$ . In the cases of applied reason, empiricism is our greatest proof, because the individual may have overlooked additional elements and variables relevant to that particular case. Reason is created through experience, used in experience and then tested in experience. Durkheim tested nothing, and he could not observe his matter directly. He had assumed that collective phenomena were concretes, and then assumed that collective phenomena had being in themselves.

Durkheim made the mistake of thinking that a chain of logic, which in all of its links are plausible will in the end create the correct result. To see how flawed these scholastic debating devices can be, consider the following: "It is raining," one person says. The scholastic asks, "What is 'raining'?" "When water precipitates out of the clouds in the sky and hits the ground." "Then raining is the act of water falling on the ground?" "Yes," the innocent victim of tomfoolery replies. "Then," says the scholastic, "it is raining more when more water hits the ground and it is raining less when less water hits the ground in a unit of time?" "Yes," says the person. The scholastic smiles and lunges for the kill. "Then in a single instant, how much water is hitting the ground?" "...uh..." the victim stammers, "some water is touching the ground and other drops are about to hit the ground..." "A-ha! Touching the ground is not the same as hitting the ground, so that in a single instant, the droplets of water that are still touching the ground are not hitting the ground. And in that single instant, not a single droplet of water is hitting the ground, correct?" "Correct," the baffled victim replies. "Then I have proved," the scholastic sneers, "that when you think it is raining, not a single drop of water is hitting the ground in the smallest unit of time, so therefore in a multiplication of such units for a longer time duration, not a single drop of water would hit the ground as well. Therefore, I have proven that when you think it is raining, it is not raining at all." Empedocles might have been proud of the scholastic method of debating, but this sophistry does not provide a suitable or single proof for the domain of sociological investigation. Wundt and Durkheim considered that the individual as such, had no moral value, and so therefore, no group of individuals could have moral value, only the collective nature of the group in itself.

Durkheim's concept of 'society' is complex, interesting, and unfounded. Durkheim had emphasized that for Comte there was 'Society,' and that for Durkheim there were 'societies.' He had maintained that all societies have equal forces of rationality suitable for themselves, and that morals are relative, not to each other, not to individual utility, but contingent upon the societies and the type of society which created them. All conventional interpretations see Durkheim as merely advocating that society was a reality *sui generis* and not an organism, yet we have seen that he advocated both positions

when he referred to society as a social being. Durkheim felt he had proven that society was a social reality and then he moved on to consider society a collective being. There is no necessary link between society as a social reality and society as a being. One does not immediately follow from the other. If there was to be a distinction between his use of "organism" and "social being," Durkheim never mentioned it.

Organisms and all beings have life. Life organizes otherwise inanimate material, that is why life forms are called organisms. Organisms conduct homeostasis and fight to maintain themselves in their original forms. Organisms as such do not change and evolve, though their offspring may be slightly different than their predecessors. All organisms have definite boundaries, and with all life forms we can say where one begins and one ends, whether we are talking about an epithelial cell or the macro-organism like a human being. But what qualities does Durkheim's 'being' have? Durkheim's societies evolve and develop, though they did not need to do so linearly in pursuit of some higher goal. Durkheim's societies are always continuous, unlike a tree which may die and be replaced by its own long dormant seeds. Finally, Durkheim's societies do not and cannot have definite boundaries. Durkheim appeared not to notice this latter point, perhaps out of Gaelic chauvinism and his entrenched political agenda. As was mentioned in the second chapter, Durkheim was part of a generation of French scholars specifically 'brought into the fold' by the Third Republic to teach pedagogy and civic instruction. These intellectuals came from previously politically enfranchised groups: Free Masons, liberal Jews, Protestants, and atheists. Scholars who might have had a different orientation and allegiance, such as Catholics, Orthodox Jews, Monarchists, Germans, and the English free-market economists, were not welcomed into teaching philosophy, pedagogy, sociology, and history. The Third Republic was willing to embrace intellectuals only if those intellectuals saw French society and the Republic as unproblematic. Any proponent of individual rights or even of Pan-European ideas would have suffered rejection. Durkheim did suffer some anti-Semitism because of his Jewish heritage and suspicion because of his German name and his interest in German ideas, but Durkheim had already been 'selected' through his primary orientation at the start of his university career. If Durkheim had asked unsettling questions about just *where* were the borders of the

society that the people who lived in France were in, *that* would have been a greater hindrance to his academic career than his ethnic background and dalliance with German ideas. To ask where the borders of French society were presupposes the existence of a French society. The people in France, French or otherwise, lived in society, but they could have also been in different societies. To ask how many collective holistic and culturally-relative societies existed in the *state* of France would have been to court academic censure. To put it succinctly we can say the following. Beyond all doubt, Durkheim lived in a society; he did not prove that he lived in a society with the meaning he used for the word in his paradigm.

Some members of the French intelligentsia and political elite might claim that French society has obvious borders, but this is not so. Strictly speaking, French society would be the society of French speakers, be they in Caledonia or Guyana. The society of France would be the nation-state of France. The society to which people in France belonged could be almost anything, with or without borders, with or without qualities similar to an entity or organism. Perhaps there is a "Western" society of which together French citizens make up a small part. This plethora of choices would be greatly increased if one did not assume without proof that all people in France belonged to the same society. Durkheim took 'French society' as unproblematic and a given. In contrast, Weber argued that our whole ability to see society as a totality in itself is a value-judgement and a product of individual consciousness [ Weber, 1975a, p.180 ].

Durkheim had insisted that the existence of societies be accepted on faith as a means to other ends. "It is not realized that there can be no sociology unless societies exist, and that societies cannot exist if there are only individuals" [ Durkheim, 1951, p.38 ]. This meant that Durkheim established his case better rhetorically and persuasively than logically and empirically. It is indisputable that people live in society, but it would appear questionable that societies have the same concrete and discrete characteristics that Durkheim ascribed to them. It is noteworthy that nowhere in Durkheim's works did he ever address the question of how to discern different societies out of intertwined social networks, nor did he ever examine directly how to determine the borders of societies in general. It would thus appear that Durkheim's use of 'social fact' was based upon a premature perception of societies as obvious and concrete.

The matter of whether definite and concrete societies exist depends on whether societies have definite borders. Whether societies have definite borders would be a necessary factor for societies to have a 'collective nature.' Societies do not have to be social beings for social facts to be viable, but presumably they do have to have borders. The moral imperative of serving society does seem to depend on society being a social being with an unproblematic existence. The moral imperative of serving society (or a divinity) does not recognize choice or pluralism, and hence, also fails if one is able to subjectively choose the limits and borders of one's relevant society. Durkheim believed that traditional societies were defined by people, contemporary societies by 'well-defined' territory [ Durkheim, 1992, p.44 ]. How territory was to be defined, Durkheim never stated explicitly.

In summary, to ask where were the borders of French society presupposes French society existed, but would have still been a politically loaded and controversial question. A better line of questioning, regardless of its political implications, would have been to ask how the borders of *any* society can be determined, how many societies one person can be in simultaneously, and whether all societies are all complete societies in the same way. Durkheim did not ask these questions, not only because to do so would have hurt his academic career, but also because his own choice of starting point prevented him. He had to assume the borders of societies to be unproblematic in order to facilitate his paradigm of social facts, collective representations and cultural relativism, and as well, *the concreteness of these phenomena*.

Finally, though it has already been demonstrated that society is not a being, even if it was a being of some kind, it would not necessarily possess the characteristics of consciousness and purpose. Purposes have to be chosen, they are not automatic or obvious. People can choose to live, and some choose to die. Even if societies were beings, there would be no necessary link to their having even potential purpose. If societies do not have purposes, that is, if they do not choose to have particular and definite purposes, then the whole paradigm of social functions and social utility becomes impossible. The Structural-Functionalists such as Talcott Parsons, believed that society could be understood and explained through the purposes, functions, and social utility of its different parts for the good of the collective whole [ Ritzer,



1996, p.64 ]. In contrast to both Parsons and Durkheim, from what we have examined here in this study, we can see that society has no necessary parameters. Society has no necessary being. In addition, though it sounds a little existential, it is true that being has no necessary purpose.

Durkheim was correct when he said that society is irreducible. But then so is an avalanche. To suggest that because the experience of an avalanche (its social reality if you will ) its terror, noise, and erosion, is irreducible to its component parts of pebbles, snow, gravity and dirt, and that therefore the avalanche is somehow *a being* is bizarre. Yet this is exactly the proof that Durkheim offers at each time it is necessary, by merely stating that society is irreducible. Herbert Spencer offered a better argument when he claimed that English society was like an organism, because people would die of starvation if the different towns of England were irretrievably separated [ Durkheim, 1984, p.103 ]. Admittedly, Spencer and Durkheim emphasized that society had specialized structures and interdependent parts, however, this merely extends the analogy from avalanches to sky-scrapers. Neither Durkheim nor Spencer proved that society is an organism or that society is a being. Durkheim merely made the jumps from *irreducibility* to *social reality to being*, and he missed his step after the second step.

The whole nature of purpose is beyond Durkheim's conceptualization. If a society is a being it does not necessarily have the potential for purpose. If a society has the potential for purpose, it does not necessarily have purposes. And if a society did have purposes, depending on what they were, the whole nature of individual action and the study of sociology would have to sharply adapt, because the purposes could include either self-immolation or self-preservation, or even a combination thereof of such conflicting purposes. The mere fact of society having a purpose in the hypothetical case it should happen, would not necessarily be enough to make Durkheim's paradigm work. Durkheim grounded the justification for socially-created moral codes on his assumption that society could have a purpose. Not only does society not possess purpose, even if it did, what the purpose is, its content, would be incredibly important.

To say that something is irreducible does not prove that it is a unified whole. To take an old example from classical philosophy, a pile of sand can be reduced one grain of sand at a time, yet still remains a pile of sand, until a point when it is just considered as several grains of sand together. A pile of sand is different from merely the sum of its components. Together they can be stacked, experience erosion, and absorb water, and the grains of sand at the bottom of the pile may be crushed and densely packed by the weight of the sand above them. However, a pile of sand remains a pile of sand with indeterminate borders. Any one of its components could be taken away without changing what we have classified it. A pile of sand is a thing and an idea separate from its separate components. Yet, no matter how much a giant pile of sand appears to be irreducible, it still is not a 'thing' as a complete thing in itself in the Durkheimian conception. Nor does the 'thing' that is a pile of sand have a collective nature. Human beings are not inanimate sand particles, rather we do have irreducible consciousnesses. No doubt we are found together, and we experience a cohesion through our interaction. Yet, there can be never any definitive proof that our society is a 'thing' in a way superior to how a mountain of sand and rocks is also a thing. There is no justification to consider a mountain a holistic thing with a structure that in its nature represents the thing as a whole.

### Being and Purpose

It may seem strange to discuss the abstract notions of what 'society' is, in what is an analysis of the treatment of moral phenomena by two different methodological schools. However, what is 'moral' does depend upon not just what is culturally-specific to a particular society, but also upon the social scientist's understanding of what a 'society' is in general. In the conceptual link between 'society' and 'morality,' Durkheim made several assumptions and leaps in reasoning which are untenable and which give then, by default, greater credence to less ambitious paradigms, such as methodological individualism, which do not make such errors.

Durkheim was most clear and explicit on the matter of the link between society and morality in his lectures on moral education or pedagogy. Most of his lectures were published in English for the first time in 1961 as Moral Education: A Study in the Theory & Application of the Sociology of Education. These lectures are among the less regarded part of Durkheim's work. In 1995, a formerly missing lecture was published for the first time as "The Teaching of Morality in Primary Schools." It is largely from these two publications that the following references are drawn for this critical analysis.

It may be beneficial to summarize Durkheim's weaknesses in logic before they are demonstrated. His weaknesses and errors include: 1) Using the political goal of having a formal sociology as an additional premise to make his argument more convincing. 2) Arguing from elimination rather than proof. 3) Creating new premises and assumptions in order to make the argument that follows from his original premises work.

The first point of contention is his view of the individual. Durkheim stated that individual life was worthless as a goal in itself and that morality entirely consisted of altruism. These two assumptions supported his extreme version of social realism, i.e., that society was both a reality *sui generis* and an organism, and that society was the sole source of the moral imperative.

If each individual taken separately has no moral worth, the sum total of individuals can scarcely have more. The sum of zeros is, and can only be, equal to zero. If a particular interest, whether mine or someone else's, is amoral, several such particular interests must also be amoral. Moral action pursues impersonal objectives. But the impersonal goals of moral action cannot be either those of a person other than the actor, or those of many others. Hence, it follows that they must necessarily involve something other than individuals. They are supra-individual. Outside or beyond individuals there is nothing other than groups formed by the union of individuals, that is to say, societies. Moral goals, then, are those the object of which is society. To act morally is to act in terms of the collective interest. This conclusion imposes itself in the wake of the foregoing arguments, which were successively eliminated. **Now, it is evident that a moral act must serve some living and sentient being and even more specifically a being endowed with consciousnesses.** Moral relations are relations between consciousnesses. Above and beyond me as a conscious being, above and beyond those sentient beings who are other individual beings, there is nothing else save that **sentient being that is society.**  
[ Durkheim, 1973b, p.60 ] ( my boldface )

This does not mean that he thought individuals were worthless in themselves but for themselves. Durkheim argued that the individual was not a sufficient end for moral action. We see the true links in

Durkheim's argument. It was because Durkheim assumed that morality was altruism and self-sacrifice that he would keep coming back to the conclusion that society was an organism. We see this elsewhere in Durkheim's writings where he said that society *must* be an organism because altruism is the only moral principle [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 51-52 ]. To put it succinctly, Durkheim was not so much a proponent of organicism as altruism.

Durkheim's reasoning, though convoluted, is actually impeccable. It is just that his premises are askew. In Chapter Seven it will be shown that Durkheim's 'proof' that individual life has no moral worth came down to his belief that it was never questioned. In a conventional argument, a faulty premise brings down the entire argument. In Durkheim's case, it would seem rather that his premises were sometimes merely rhetorical conveniences. In the above quotation we see that his logic is based on the two premises: that the individual is worth nothing and that morality is goal-oriented service to something other than oneself. Hence, for this observed morality to have worth in itself and not be held as the creation of fools and criminals, something other and greater than the individual *has to exist as a being*<sup>2</sup>. This being is not merely a reality *sui generis*, but a genuine being capable of purpose because it *has to have* a purpose. Elsewhere, Durkheim had not emphasized the living reality of society to such an extreme, and it is from his works in pedagogy that we see that he actually attributed to society not merely the traits of a being, but the life of a sentient being.

The second error in Durkheim's link between society and morality is his view of society. Durkheim continued to emphasize that society was a being. At the risk of redundancy, it is necessary to show additional quotations to display that this belief was not a simple rhetorical flourish or hyperbole.

To understand the significance of this major proposition, one must take account of the meaning of society. If we accept what has for a long time been the classical and widely held view, that society is only a collection of individuals, we are thrown back into the foregoing difficulties without any way of surmounting them. If self-interest has no moral value for me, it has no more among my fellows whatever their number, and, consequently, the collective interest, if it is only the sum of self-interests, is itself amoral. If society is to be considered as the normal goal of moral conduct, then it must

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<sup>2</sup> This is to say, society does not exist as only an abstraction or merely as a reality. Not only is society an entity, a thing that exists in its own right and not merely part of something bigger, but it is a living and sentient being.

be possible to see in it something other than a sum of individuals; it must constitute a being *sui generis*, which has its own special character distinct from that of its members and its own individuality different from that of its constituent individuals. In a word, there must exist, in the full meaning of the word, a **social being**. On this condition only is society able to perform the moral function that the individual cannot."  
 [ Durkheim, 1973b, p. 60 ] ( my boldface )

Again, we see Durkheim's argument by elimination and his conditional use of additional premises in the middle of a chain of reasoning. His original premise appears to be that the individual is a zero, his *conditional* premise, which is inserted afterwards, is that since society must be considered the goal of moral conduct, then it follows that society is a social being.

The third point of contention over Durkheim's link between society and morality lies in his misuse of logic. He frequently appealed to the academic and political hopes of his audience to transform a conditional statement into a belief taken on faith. Durkheim's use of conditional premises is wonderfully consistent, but represents a problematic feature of his reasoning, which must therefore be addressed directly.

Unless the system of moral ideas is the product of a general hallucination, that being with which morality links our wills and which is the principal object of our behavior can only be a divine being or a social being. We set aside the first of these hypotheses as beyond the province of science. There remains the second, which, as we shall see, is adequate for our needs and aspirations and which, furthermore, embraces all the reality of the first, minus its symbolism. [ Durkheim, 1973b, p. 61 ]

It is unproven that the sole alternative to his conclusion was that morals are the product of a general hallucination. It is unfortunate then that Durkheim used in effect the 'straw-man' fallacy. This accusation that Durkheim mixed debating techniques with logic does not prove that Durkheim was right or wrong. It does reveal that he cleverly set up alternatives to his paradigm, which he then could dismiss with a rhetorical flourish. Durkheim's use of the conditional is one of the more convincing parts of his argument, but logically also the weakest.

In order to cherish society, to devote one's self to it, and to take it as the objective of conduct, it must be something more than a word, an abstract term. A living reality is needed, animated by the special existence distinct from the individuals composing it. Only such a reality can draw us out of ourselves and so perform the function of providing a moral goal. [ Durkheim, 1973b, p. 251 ]

Here again, we see his reasoning. He took for granted that cherishing society with one's whole life is a premise comparable to the metaphysically-given, and hence, society has to be a being in order for the unproven and unprovable premise to make sense at all. We see his reasoning in its most simple form:

Man, we have said, acts morally only when he takes the collectivity as the goal of his conduct. This being so, there must be a collectivity. If society is considered only from a naively simplified point of view, nothing remains that may be called by this name.  
[ Durkheim, 1973b, p.256 ]

So, society must exist in the form that Durkheim assumed, because individuals already worship it. This is not the product of an adequate methodology. Weber would have strongly disagreed with this argument [ Weber, 1975a, p.78 & 180 ]. The sum of this reasoning is zero. Durkheim did not even state that society was observable but that it must exist in a particular way because his paradigm needs it to exist. Weber's methodological individualism, in contrast, relies only on what can be observed as possible causal agents. Durkheim was the quintessential sociologist, and he remains widely-read by sociologists of different beliefs, but for those who wish to accept his reasoning, they would do best to closely examine his use of linked premises.

The fourth point of contention is a development of the third. Durkheim often used the political need of his audience for sociology to be a science. French politicians of his time needed to reform the educational system and to borrow the equivalent moral authority of the Catholic church from a secular and scholarly source. Durkheim's audience of scholars in the social sciences needed to legitimize their profession. Durkheim seemed to inflate the conception of society to further elevate the prestige of the social sciences and to win over his audience through reassuring their own insecurity and inferiority. He stated in Suicide:

It is not realized that there can be no sociology unless societies exist, and that societies cannot exist if there are only individuals. [ Durkheim, 1966, p. 38 ]

He stated a similar corollary in his inaugural address at Bordeaux in regard to collective concepts:

But if sociology can have a subject matter peculiar to itself, these collective ideas and actions must be different in nature from those which originate in the individual mind, and they must be framed in special laws. [ Durkheim, 1981, p. 1061 ]

Pinning links of his argument on the personal vested interest of his audience was an effective rhetorical device, but it established nothing in regards to proving the soundness of his reasoning.

The fifth point of contention in how Durkheim linked society to morality is Durkheim's belief that moral action is intrinsically harsh to the individual and represents the voluntary subordination of the individual to a 'higher authority' which brings him pain. This fifth point brings together all the results of all his errors in his premises, reasoning, and data-collection. In Durkheim's lecture "The Teaching of Morality in Primary Education" there is a long passage which has previously been ignored by those who have written on Durkheim and morality.

... We desire moral actions as we desire other things; but moral objects are distinguished from all others. We can love honours, riches, fortune and glory; but in order to obtain these we need only follow the natural inclinations of our desires. Though we may use intelligence to guide these desires and reflections to direct them, we do not have to resist them and need only follow them. When we fulfill moral actions, there is on the contrary effort, pain and sacrifice. You indeed feel that the details of our everyday lives are made up of continual sacrifices. At every moment we are making sacrifices; even ordinary, down to earth moral life, implies efforts of this sort. We well know that a moral action which is too easy to carry out is not a moral action. In some measure and manner, we do violence to something when we perform a moral act. Yes, we follow our desires, but we repress some others and do violence to our nature. In this way we feel that by acting morally we raise ourselves beyond ourselves, we feel superior. If we did not do violence to ourselves in this sense, if we fell back to the level of our ordinary existence, then we could not act in a moral way. Within the moral good, there is something which exceeds us. No matter how we conceive of them, moral ends must be represented as transcendent compared with others. [ Durkheim, 1995b, p.29 ]

For Durkheim, moral action was the violation of the individual by the individual in the pursuit of a greater purpose. For Durkheim, morality was synonymous with the *disinterested* serving of the nature of the group, and not the individual serving himself or the other individuals in the group [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.52 ]. Durkheim understood that morality was something that served the purpose of a being, and so considered that the choice of moral doctrine was between serving a society or serving a deity [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.52 ]. He did not consider the possibility that because the individual was a being that the individual could be both the actor and purpose of moral action. According to Durkheim, the person was too small to be important, and hence was ready to sacrifice himself and others for a goal greater than individual life. This is a point of view which is compatible with the common term 'authoritarian personality.' It certainly does follow that once individuals accept that individual life is puny and can have no intrinsic worth that they feel they must sacrifice themselves and others for some greater transcendent

good. The final problem of the concept 'transcendent' is that, like an empty abstraction, it cannot be measured, and like a dumb idol, cannot be held to any account. Dumb idols, however, can drag us down.

Durkheim never ducked or watered-down the ramifications of his paradigm. He knew that the worst actions have frequently been committed in the name of morality, in the pursuit of some obscure transcendent good or god. "How is it then that at certain times men are willing to forget about their interests, even to the extent of sacrificing their lives?" [ Durkheim, 1995b, p.30 ]. Durkheim insisted that morality was not and never could be self-interest.

So we have not to concentrate each separate person upon himself and his own interests, but to subordinate him to the general interests of humankind. Such an aim draws him beyond himself; impersonal and disinterested, it is above all individual personalities; like every ideal, it can be conceived of only as superior to and dominating reality.

[ Durkheim, 1966, p.337 ]

Hence, we may conclude that behavior prescribed by the rules of morality is always behavior in pursuit of impersonal ends. [ Durkheim, 1973, p. 58 ]

Moral behavior has as its end entities that are superior to the individual, but that are also empirical and natural—as are minerals and organisms. These entities are societies. Societies are part of nature. They are only one separate and special compartment of it...

[ Durkheim, 1973, p.266 ]

Moral goals, then, are those the object of which is society. To act morally is to act in terms of the collective interest. [ Durkheim, 1993, p.45 ]

It was necessary for Durkheim to advance the position he did. It is necessary for the most extreme version of social realism and moral collectivism to be developed and then examined. Whether the individual sociologist wishes to accept Durkheim's moral paradigm is an individual decision. Morality is not altruism and the lack of self-interest as such. That is morality only from the point of view of the moral collectivist. It is also how morality has generally been described and advocated through history. This view has been championed by the moral leaders of tribes of head-hunters, of Europe in the Dark Ages, and of the totalitarian states of the 20th century. This is not a pejorative judgement as such. It is to say that professional moralists need to distill this position for the individual to judge for himself.

Durkheim had assumed that altruism was the essence of all morality. This is not true, but the simple acceptance or even rejection of this premise would obscure a second consideration. Altruism is a form of morality, one of several. It is difficult to draw up an exhaustive and unproblematic list, but we can mention several options. There is self-interest. Self-interest, like altruism, can be either rational or



irrational, long-term or short term. Irrational self-interest would seem to include sadism and the use of dictatorial means. Irrational *selfless* interest would have the same effects and a few others. Rational self-interest would include all self-interest that was rational and purposeful. It would not include clever means to attain irrational goals; it would be the pursuit of rational self-oriented goals. Other, more hypothetical, forms of moral principles would include apathy and nihilism. It is quite possible that the matter of what is moral need not be reduced to a consideration of what is in one's self-interest or not. The means and value-orientation of establishing moral principles could in itself be a moral principle. The means of the pursuit of goals are determined by the overall purpose. Rational purpose dictates rational means, but irrational purposes can be served by any means, both rational and irrational.

The opacity of this matter of what is moral is caused by the difficulty of any meeting of minds between those of different methodologies. Durkheim would argue that the moral principle was to be deduced from the nature of society and social solidarity. In contrast, a proponent of methodological individualism would build up a set of moral principles from what people actually have believed. However, these abstract principles are still merely forms of morality, and the heart of the matter is not so much the form, but the content and the process. Altruism-collectivism and self-interest are both merely forms of social relationships within morality. The content of such forms would probably be even more important. As there are a diversity of forms of collectivism, there are no doubt, a diversity of forms of self-interest, and the content of each form is ultimately the real experience of moral life. There would be a world of difference between someone who believed the ends justified the means and someone who did not, even if they outwardly shared the same moral 'form.' Similarly, there would be a complete difference between an altruist who took his belief on faith or transcendental feeling and an altruist who based his belief on experience, cognition, and logic. Likewise, a rational self-interested person with a genuine cultivated self would act and be completely different than a subjective "selfish" person who lacked a clearly defined self. Durkheim's continual interest in the forms of social relationships within morality revealed his preoccupation with abstract social forms in general. He does indeed seem to have been a 'social

metaphysician.' He saw the complete and idealized form of self-sacrifice and collectivism as the greatest expression of morality [ Durkheim, 1973, p.256 ] regardless of how such a belief was achieved, regardless of its cognitive basis or lack thereof, in short, regardless of its content.

In an incredible temporal reversal of logic, Durkheim suggested that the force of moral systems created inadvertently in societies held its own moral justification:

What is far more difficult, however, though not impossible, is to make the child understand at a global level precisely why he himself has duties, and why one must do violence to oneself or become detached from oneself in order to fulfill them. He must understand that there is something above him before which he must bow, rules he must obey because they command. These rules must be linked to a moral power from which they derive; and for the prescribed actions to appear as good, we must conceive of this power as itself being beneficent and good. [ Durkheim, 1995b, p. 30 ]

In other words, the child will be forced to be ready to hurt himself, and the child must value this as a good thing. The obedience to force is its own reward. We are forced to obey, and so we might as well consider what we are forced to obey as the source of the good. The adulation of the battered child for the abusive parent would appear to be compatible with this understanding in relation to Freud's insight that those that were abused often 'learned' to identify with their aggressor rather than with themselves and other victims. This point of view is not merely that of a parent telling a child to do something the child does not want to do for their own sake: something that the child would freely agree with later as an adult. This is someone forcing someone to do something regardless of utility and not for the benefit of the person concerned, or even for any particular individual's benefit, but forcing someone to do something, and then *forcing* them to both call it good and believe that it comes from a good authority.

The sixth and final point of contention here is how Durkheim misused the concept of purpose. The crucial link between Durkheim's conception of 'society' and 'morality' is that he assumed, not without reason, that all morality must have a purpose. Durkheim stated that moral action was always committed by the individual for purposes of an entity superior to the individual [ Durkheim, 1973, p.59 & 266 ]. If society is an entity that is purposeless, his solution fails. If society is not an entity at all, his solution fails. However, because Durkheim insisted that all moral action is purposeful, this is an enlightening and uncommon way of evaluating his argument and its alternatives. We see here how Durkheim connected the

collective origin of collective representations and their assumed collective function: "Through the very fact that these superior forms of human activity have a collective origin, they have a collective purpose" [ Durkheim, 1966, p. 212 ]. Durkheim assumed that the collective representations which are formed inadvertently through human interaction and dynamic density have purposes and hence, a unified society has to exist which is capable of possessing these purposes. He also made the mistake of assuming that collective origins yield *always and in the same way* collective purpose. Durkheim's reification of collective concepts is no less relevant for 'society' than it is for 'collective representation' and 'collective conscience.'

All morality, as it is commonly understood, must have a purpose. This is true whether the moral code is the result of the primitive savage's worship of a mystical god, the result of blind material forces and contexts, the result of the conflict and destiny of ideas, or whether moral codes are the result of the rational man's pursuit of his life and other goals. Durkheim accepted this assumption that morality always had purpose [ Durkheim, 1995b, p.29 ]. In fact, we see that he held this assumption more strongly than his proven facts. However, the statement that morality has purpose is philosophical and not empirical. He demonstrated that certain ideas, which he called 'collective representations,' had collective origins. He then moved automatically to assume that they had a societal function. While his proof that certain ideas have origins not in separate individuals is convincing, his belief in the necessity of purpose for morality is merely a premise that we all happen to share regarding what morality *should* be. Durkheim combined social pressures with a rationalist statement about morality. Durkheim labeled the social compulsion of ideas and the social pressures of conformity as the domain of moral phenomena, and then mixed in a philosophical premise. Durkheim's reasoning is otherwise well thought out, but this one mistake would explain why he conflated 'collective' and 'societal' and 'once collective in origin' with 'always collective in function.' In addition, anything that has (or is labeled as having) a collective origin would then confirm the existence of the collective which would then be the suitable end for moral action.

Durkheim called moral the results of social realism and the mental consequences of group life. For him, the moral and the social were synonymous. The necessity for value-neutral concept formation

becomes clear at this point. Everywhere, beliefs that societies generate are held to be moral; this is not disputed. Morality, by definition, is held to always have a purpose. This is also not disputed. However, these two statements involve different meanings of 'morality.' The first is an empirical generalization, the second a philosophical definition. We can see a difference between the meaning of morality referring to social forces that exist and to a moral code we hold to be philosophically legitimate. The social forces that hold people together in conflict and in cooperation are, indeed, frequently 'collective' in origin. These social forces and 'collective representations' appear moral to the people involved, but they are not necessarily legitimate in relation to the commonly accepted philosophical premise that morality has to be for something, to have a purpose. That some people feel an urge to kill their neighbors, some feel urges to sacrifice themselves, and some avoid eating meat on Fridays, would be empirical facts. The fact that such people do not question their actions but insist that they are moral may mean these actions are legitimate from a cultural point of view but not from a philosophical one. It is insufficient to equate these feelings and ideas that terrify and control such people with what we (as consciously-rational individuals) can indeed call a *legitimate* moral code. Moral practice is empirical and frequently traditional; legitimacy is a philosophical judgment. For a moral code to be legitimate, it must have a purpose, and for it to have a purpose, it must be conceived of by an entity that can have purpose. What does not exist cannot have purpose, and likewise inanimate matter is purposeless. Only what lives can have purpose. The final questions for the sociologist or philosophical moralist who posits a moral authority to *any* thing, is to ask, 'Can this thing have a purpose? Is it a subject?'

Morality is often thought of as an end in itself, but ultimately it always has to serve a purpose. The purpose of a moral code can be virtually anything, but is usually assumed to be for the benefit of a god, mankind, society, or the individual. Durkheim had mistakenly conflated 'collective origin' with 'societal purpose,' but had also given 'society' a concrete and holistic existence beyond what can be proven. These two mistakes make sense only in relation to each other. All morality is assumed to have a purpose. For morality to come from society, society has to have a purpose, and not only that, has to be a thing

capable of having purpose. Durkheim convincingly demonstrated a collective origin for many lasting and intractable ideas and emotions. He also made a strong case for social realism, that society is not reducible to the sum of its components and that it is a moral reality fully grown into which the individual is born. The possibility that society creates social pressures which exude a spirit of mandatory obligation is different from the possibility of society possessing purpose. In the first possibility, society would create symbolism and social pressure which would appear moral but would fail to be moral by the criteria of philosophy or rational analysis. In the second possibility, society would indeed have purpose, individuals would be obligated to pursue a moral code for the benefit of society even if they did not fully understand the moral code in question, and society would indeed be an organism.

If society is a thing which is incapable of possessing purpose, then however it may also generate symbolism and compulsion through social interaction, the moral codes that are created inadvertently and collectively through interaction are ultimately illegitimate. To say that societal-in-origin moral codes are ultimately illegitimate, is to say that they are not *intrinsically* legitimate, and nor can they be. This is not to say that these codes are all intrinsically immoral, foolish, or unwise. Many of the customs and morals that have developed over time have proven to be both somewhat useful and a solid basis for the individual to ground individual meanings.

To claim that morality must have a purpose held by a conscious being is at odds with the claim that morality is whatever serves as a source of social solidarity. The only way that Durkheim could make his traditional philosophical premise match his own sociological premise is by arguing when convenient that society was an organism. If society is not an organism, this does not mean that society is not a reality, nor does it mean that social life is not the most important source of moral codes. Rather, it does mean that society's moral codes can be judged from an intrinsic and immutable philosophical point of view by the individual should the individual choose to do so. The individual's acceptance of the purpose of moral codes is the sole means to make them legitimate.

It is possible that much of a society's morality is legitimate. Before part of a moral code can be dismissed, it must first be examined in itself and then in context. A society's moral codes generally consists of a mixture of beliefs that are collectively determined and beliefs that are the result of individual thinking. It is possible that the amount of necessary purpose comes from the individual and this is mixed into the moral realism generated by the society through collective forces. Durkheim recognized that moral codes formed through social realism needed to have coercion and desirability. Perhaps the notion of desirability in Durkheim's paradigm is the act of the individual granting legitimacy to the alleged purpose of the moral code. Society can threaten violence, society can provide a tapestry of symbolism upon which the individual is to position himself, but it is the individual who supplies the fiction of society's moral purpose.

Durkheim had said that morality was the individual's violence to himself for the sake of a 'transcendent' good [ Durkheim, 1995b, p.29 ]. He said that morality was more than duty or obligation but had to be seen as desirable in itself. This is a fascinating qualification, because it explains the vital missing component. Morality, as conceived by Durkheim, needs the sanction of the victim as well as a purpose. The individual supplies the belief in the purpose for an otherwise purposeless society. The individual recognizes a purpose beyond himself, and gives credence to the irrational belief that the society, the race, the religion, the god, or the community must be served. Society coerces the individual, and the individual's mind races through all the possibilities until it finds one that would have the coercion make sense. Then the individual would posit a hypothetical good transcendent enough, and far enough removed from him that his suffering will be justified.

Society is a thing that cannot have a purpose. Only individuals as far as it is known, be they hypothetical gods or individual mortals, can have purpose. Society creates a context for our decision making. Through the efforts of individuals, society gives us already developed languages and moral codes from previous generations. Society forces us to have interaction with our neighbors. A system of ongoing conflict and cooperation continues indefinitely. However, the purpose of each moral code is a product of

the individual's imagination and is the vital key for the individual's enslavement to moral systems that frequently demand his sacrifice and his self-sacrifice. For the individual to accept the moral imperative of altruism there must be the implied threat of force and the individual must imagine some kind of being with a purpose greater than his own purposes.

Durkheim acknowledged that morality in essence harmed the individual and asked the individual to harm himself. This is the creation of 'society' as it were, and of the social realism that is the result of a mixture of concepts and ways of thinking which then create collective representations or collective ideas not easily subject to individual thought. This has been the rule of past moral codes, religious, materialist, or idealist, which have had as their purpose something other than the life of the individual. This should not be surprising. The basis of these oppressive moral codes is the nature of the collective representations which exert tremendous influence over individual thinking. It would be hard to imagine such moral codes, built on irrational ideas, being intrinsically facilitative of the life of the rational individual. Only ideas controlled and processed by the individual in their entirety, that is, rational and objective ideas created by individuals, would be best suited to be the means for the end of individual life and individual rationality. Past morality has generally then always been ready to demand the sacrifice of the individual's physical body and the individual's mental rationality. This is the product of both social realism and of the shameless attempts by certain individuals such as dictators and holy-warriors to coerce others into beliefs which benefit only themselves through their sacrifices.

We see that Durkheim mixed two concepts, the nature of past traditional morality and the hypothesized 'essence' of morality. Morality has asked the individual to be ready to sacrifice himself as a means to itself for it follows a 'higher' purpose. However, this sacrifice is not the nature of morality, it is merely its past and present expression. The nature of conventional morality lies in the individual's experience of many different types of concurrent phenomena. These phenomena come from diverse sources and may otherwise have little in common except to contribute to the feeling of social compulsion. In experiencing these ideas and feelings from diverse sources, the individual feels there is a purpose that

must be served. The purpose can almost be anything, such as violence or peace, sacrifice or gain. The individual feels a great value for some *thing*. However, how we understand this will also mark what implicit understanding we have of social relationships. If we feel it necessary that the individual *must* value a particular type of *social* relationship for morality, then whether we are proponents of altruism *or not*, we would indeed also be 'social metaphysicians.' We must remember to avoid Durkheim's conflation of the moral with the social even when we reject Durkheim's theory and embrace a different moral principle or become pluralistic. The choice is not whether we serve society or try to make society serve ourselves: such a choice implies that morality remains exclusively a social relationship of the self to society. In contrast, I would merely say that the individual must feel a great value for *something*. The contents of moral codes matter as do the rational process that undergirds them; the social relationship that such a moral code takes is sometimes just a result and not a cause in itself. Also, the same moral code can be interpreted differently and be seen as possessing a different social relationship of the individual to society depending on the observer's point of view.

If the individual is subjected to the blind forces of social realism, the individual will generally be feeling a value he cannot fully control or understand, which binds him into valuing something other than his own cognition and his own life. His cognition has to be sacrificed. The ideas that are thrust upon him cannot be rationally understood, they manipulate his thinking, they frequently demand a leap of faith, and sometimes they make overt demands on what he must perceive to be true. Morality is not synonymous with altruism as Durkheim would have us believe. Rather, altruism is merely one of the many forms that morality can take for good or evil. All morality requires purpose to be effective and to fill the individual with an impression of its importance. If the individual faces the forces produced through social realism on that variable squarely, the individual can prevent himself from being unduly manipulated by the euphoria, passions, rages, and terrors produced in group living in general, and from societal events in particular. Society is a thing, but remains unable to generate purpose. Only living things can have purposes. If society fails the test to pass as a living thing, then it cannot have purpose. Only individuals can have purposes, be



they rational or irrational, self-directed or directed towards others, and achievable or intrinsically unachievable. The 'desirability' of morality come from the individual's willingness to believe in the hypothesized purpose long enough to commit himself to the action which the moral code demands.

Durkheim assumed that all moralities have purpose. This is not contested, but this statement can be restated. All *legitimate* moral codes have purpose. Durkheim's assumption, that all moralities have purpose, is not an empirical statement, but a philosophical premise. It is because of this unproven premise that he moved too quickly from believing that certain ideas have a collective origin, to believing that their origins and continued existence are only collective, to believing that these collective representations have collective functions and societal purpose. Once one believes that these ideas have societal purpose then the content of these ideas becomes automatically justified regardless of what the content is.

The necessity of desirability and purpose for all morality has implications for the practice of political control. Durkheim had said that no individual can be innocent [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.40 ], but those who take collective-altruistic morality to its extreme become either fools [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.86 ] or suicides [ Durkheim, 1966, p.219 ]. According to Durkheim, the grandeur and beauty of virtue was its *folly* [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.86 ]. Do we really want the moral code of society, the basis for all legitimate political action, to be a system in which those who adhere to it the closest end up impoverished or dead? If altruism is taken to be the exclusive form of morality, politics would end up being the spectacle of moral demagogues encouraging the masses to be moral, and those who do take up the call ending up ruined.

In Durkheim's defence, there is the argument made by Robert Hall. Hall wrote in his correspondence with this author, that this critique of Durkheim conflates 'function' and 'purpose.' One must not assume that because Durkheim thought that something had a function, that it necessarily had a purpose. This is quite so. However, Durkheim's stress on 'impersonal ends' and 'social being' seem to be more congruent with the generally held English definition of 'purpose' than 'function,' but this decision must be pondered by each scholar who examines the question. If Durkheim was concerned with function

alone, then this criticism of Durkheim is mitigated somewhat. However, as Durkheim had said in Moral Education that nation-states were the means for the development of the full potential of humanity [ Durkheim, 1973, p.207 ], this would suggest teleological action, albeit with a Hegelian flavor. Who or what would have such an endeavour as a purpose? If it is not the purpose of the individual, it would have to be the purpose and not only the function of society. Professor Hall may indeed be right, but as of this writing, he had not yet read the lecture "The Teaching of Morality in Primary Schools." This argument stands. Society creates intense forces which are held or perceived to be moral, yet all legitimate morality is always answerable as the means for a purpose, whether belonging to God, Society, the family, or the individual.

While this discussion concerning the necessity of purpose for all legitimate morality relates more to Durkheim, this premise applies equally to Weber. Weber's methodological individualism does not require criticism on this point because it did not and could not make this error on this key moral premise. Weber's methodology sought to explain events from the point of view of all entities that could have purpose and meaning, and these entities are exclusively individuals. Weber sought to find interpretive explanations for actions to understand the meaning the actions had for those involved, and meaning is the prerequisite of purpose. Weber had rejected history, society, Mind, and other hypothetical and collective abstractions as incapable of possessing purpose. Hence, in hindsight, after a respectful and sometimes scathing review of Durkheim, we can see the essential stability and strength of Weber's paradigm. Weber was unable to come to grips with certain aspects of social realism, but avoided making the error that Durkheim and many other thinkers have made: to ascribe to the abstractions that people create the qualities that apply exclusively to individual organisms.

## Chapter Six: The Nature of Collective Representations

Durkheim's entire theory is based upon the assumption that the values within a society are built upon the nature of that society. For simplicity's sake, we speak of the dominant images and values as the intense and recurring ideas that virtually make themselves understood and are shared by many people within a society, and this includes ideals of both conformity and deviance. According to Durkheim, the dominant images and values in any group of people, are the collective representations based upon the nature of the group itself. To put it succinctly, according to this point of view, the values of the people in a group are the values of the group as such. To use an analogy, we are talking about the difference between the players on a team and the team itself. If a group's existence depends upon specific individuals then it is not a group in the sense Durkheim meant. After all, teams lose and gain members but still remain teams. To continue this analogy, in Durkheim's view the good of the team is a much different thing than the good of the members the team happens to have at any one moment. If a group forms or dissolves upon the inclusion or exclusion of specific individuals then it is not a group in the Durkheimian sense and would not exercise collective power and have a collective nature. In a final use of this analogy, if the team players feel an obligation to perform for the sake of the team and not for themselves, then they are feeling a part of what Durkheim meant by morality.

Societies, cultures, tribes, nations, communities, and churches, all however have this collective power of forming these definite ideas which shape the individual's view of the world and become the source of the individual's strongest beliefs.

These ideas, however, do not originate with individuals. They are *collective representations*, made up of all the mental states of a people or a social group which thinks together. In these collectivities, of course, there are individuals how do have some role to play; but this very role is only possible as a result of the action of the collectivity. In the life of the human race, it is the collectivity which maintains ideas and representations, and all collective representations are by virtue of their origin invested with a prestige which means that they have the power to *impose* themselves. They have

a greater psychological energy than representations emanating from the individual. This is why they settle with such force in our consciousness. That is where the very strength of truth lies. [ Durkheim, 1983, p.84 ]

There are both collective and individual representations in Durkheim's paradigm. However, the individual representations would begin and die with particular individuals, and thus have none of the staying power and permanency of the collective ideas which do shape our lives such as in the areas of religion, economics, and sexuality. Durkheim delineated a limited role for individual representations [ Durkheim, 1974, p.1-34 ], and saw them only as things that were unique to specific individuals. Hence, it is not surprising that he viewed these individual representations as much weaker than collective representations, since by definition they were not shared, or infrequently shared, by more than one person. All significant social action could only be carried out through lasting ideas and through the coordinated action of many individuals. It is not surprising then that, since Durkheim viewed both permanency and the ability to be shared as intrinsic qualities exclusive to collective representations, he would see individual representations as a much less significant factor in explaining social change.

All collective representations are social facts and can be treated as *things* in Durkheim's paradigm.

When we said elsewhere that social facts are in a sense independent of individuals and exterior to individual minds, we only affirmed of the social world what we have just established for the psychic world. Society has for its substratum the mass of associated individuals. The system which they form by uniting together, and which varies according to their geographical disposition and the nature and number of their channels of communication, is the base from which social life is raised. The representations which from the network of social life arise from the relations between the individuals thus combined or the secondary groups that are between the individuals and the total society. If there is nothing extraordinary in the fact that individual representations, produced by the action and reaction between neural elements, are not inherent in these elements, there is nothing surprising in the fact that collective representations, produced by the action and reaction between individual minds that form the society, do not derive directly from the latter and consequently surpass them. [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 24-25 ]

It seems indisputable that social life has intransigent and intractable characteristics which cannot be explained and reduced to the separate individuals. However, Durkheim went far beyond this position in assuming that social facts exist in a collective and mystical way [ Durkheim, 1982, p.59 ]. Furthermore, he assumed the existence of collective representations before he began his use of analogy. He assumed that

society is a system and that the collective representations are also separate entities which weave themselves together. Strictly speaking, Durkheim wrote as if the existence of collective representations did not depend on one's point of view and one's values. This is amazing if cogent and coherent: if the collective representations exist in society and outside of individual consciousness then they exist unproblematically and then, of course, we social scientists do not have to worry about any fact-value distinction as we discuss them.

Durkheim's use of analogy was curious. He compared the relationship between collective representations and individual representations to the relationship between the individual consciousness and the billions of nerve cells in the nervous system. This is the crux of Durkheim's mistake in embryo. Collective representations have no consciousness, and there is no collective consciousness of any kind. It is indisputable that individuals as creatures of society are much superior to what they would be in a hypothetical existence as creatures outside of society. Still, no "higher" consciousness is created by human juxtaposition. The individual can never be compared to a brain cell of a social organism. The cell has no consciousness of its existence and no sentience, and conversely, it is the social organism which remains only an analogy, a creation of the individual mind, and lacks all sentience. The individual cell has no purpose, only the individual consciousness can have rational purpose --and that too is a volitional act which not only demands consciousness of an animal kind but self-consciousness and abstraction, which are exclusive to humans. Society and collective representations, no matter what *reality* they are, are devoid of consciousness and purpose --and of accountability to themselves or any "higher" authority.

All moral ideas according to Durkheim, are collective representations, though not all collective representations ( such as language, art, eroticism ) are necessarily moral. However, all morality, as do all collective representations, derive not from what is common to individuals, but from the collective nature of their society:

Moral ideas have the same character. It is society which forces them upon us, and as the respect inspired by it is naturally extended to all that comes from it, its imperative rules of conduct are invested by reason of their origin, with an authority and a dignity which is shared by none of our internal states: therefore, we assign them a place apart in our

psychical life. Although our moral conscience is a part of our consciousness, we do not feel ourselves on an equality with it. [ Durkheim, 1968, p. 298 ]

All of the moral consciousness exists within human beings, yet is derived directly from the proximity and interaction of the people concerned.

Our moral consciousness is like a nucleus about which the idea of the soul forms itself; yet when it speaks to us, it gives the effect of an outside power, superior to us, which gives us our law and judges us, but which also aids and sustains us. [ Durkheim, 1968, p. 317 ]

Durkheim was quite correct in this insight about the nature of morality. It is within us, and yet we experience it as something beyond our direct control. Morality is intimately familiar to us from our conscience to our "gut-feelings," yet also remains above us. In fact, it is interesting that when many people reject society's morals, they embark upon a course of nihilism. For example, a person may shrug off moral responsibility and say "Who is to know? Who is to decide what is right and wrong?" and then refuse to confront the moral issue at stake. The nihilist is quite right. If morality is indeed theological, metaphysical, or societal, then *no one* can, or should try to, decide what is right and wrong. Within the Durkheimian paradigm, the only response to nihilism is that "society" is always correct. Even when society makes mistakes, society is the exclusive source of the moral imperative. Alternately, one could advance the individualistic position and say that since all thinking is carried out by individuals who choose to think, the individual is to decide for himself. For such self-directed individuals, morality would not be a matter of free-choice, not if "free" is used to mean arbitrary, subjective, and whimsical. For these rational individuals, morality would have to be subject to their experiences, use of logic, and choice of values tenable within their premises. Such a conception is congruent with Weber's understanding of personal self-motivated ethical action within a framework of purposeful-rationality or *Zweckrationalitaet*.

Durkheim emphasized the idea that morality had to be studied positively, and that the domain of sociology was to study social facts. Social facts were *things* derived from society itself, and for social science to study morality, it had to do so empirically at the level of phenomena congruent to society itself.

There is only one way to understand collective phenomena, that is to study them in themselves... It is in the history of language, of religion, of customs, of civilization in general that we can discover the traces of this development of which individual consciousness contains and knows only the initial impulses. Four principal factors give

birth to morality: (1) religion, (2) customs, (3) the physical environment and (4) civilization in general. But the first two have been by far the most important.  
[ Durkheim, 1993, p. 92 ]

Durkheim may have liked to call himself a rationalist [ Durkheim, 1982, p. 33 ], but he always emphasized that there could be no use for logic without data, and that data came from experience. He rejected innate ideas and 'pure Reason,' but he did need to posit an origin for all ideas in something other than individual cognition, and for this he chose the collective nature and development of society itself.

Though it is unclear whether Durkheim believed in a "group mind" of society, it is clear that he thought that the individual mind did not think independently on its own terms in society.

From the fact that collective phenomena do not exist outside the consciousness of individuals, it does not follow that they come from this consciousness; they are rather the work of the community. Collective phenomena do not leave individuals to be spread through society; they rather emanate from society and are then diffused among individuals. Individuals receive them rather than create them, although each has collaborated in their production in an infinitesimally small way. [ Durkheim, 1993, p. 95 ]

Durkheim was not metaphysical in his treatment of ideas. He did not attribute to the ideas of society an objective existence without that society, nor did he say that individuals could not modify the ideas themselves. Rather, all ideas existed in the minds of people, and people maintained, modified and developed them through their use. The ideas did not originate, however, in the individual mind; they originated as incomplete parts from individual minds *in society* without any whole product being the sole creation of any one individual. Crucially, when Durkheim is discussing ideas and collective representations he is not assuming that these ideas are held in their entirety by any individual mind [ Durkheim, 1982, p.59 ]. Individuals work through their manifestations of society's ideas. Not only do individuals have whole ideas (including individual representations) in their minds, they have partial manifestations of collective ideas which they work through without understanding them.

Durkheim wrote many of his most vital statements about collective representations in his 1911 lecture "Value Judgments and Judgments of Reality." He emphasized the notion that the ideals of society and the other collective representations were not merely ideas and sentiments that individuals happened to hold in common. He appears to be in at least partial agreement with his contemporary G. LeBon who wrote The Crowd. The proximity of people in their group existence creates a new type of mental life:

When individual minds are not isolated but enter into close relation with and work upon each other, from their synthesis arises a new kind of psychic life. It is clearly distinguished by its peculiar intensity from that led by the solitary individual. Sentiments born and developed in the group have a greater energy than purely individual sentiments. A man who experiences such sentiments feels himself dominated by outside forces that lead him and pervade his milieu. He feels himself in a world quite distinct from that of his own private existence. This is a world not only more intense but also qualitatively different. [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 91 ]

So, when people are together ( and it is difficult to imagine plausible scenarios in which people are completely isolated ) somehow a greater mental life develops.

...in large gatherings of people an emotion can assume such violence. It is because the strength with which it is produced in each individual consciousness is reciprocated in every other consciousness. To acquire such an intensity for us, a collective sentiment need not even be felt already by us, by virtue of our own individual nature, for what we add to it, all in all, is very little. [ Durkheim, 1984, p.55 ]

At this point we can accept Durkheim's contention that a *different* mental life develops as individuals form large and stable communities, but we will have to explore in detail what Durkheim might mean by '*greater*.'

The fact that Durkheim knew that purely solitary individuals did not and never did exist makes that hypothetical possibility a convenient straw-man for juxtaposition. Durkheim shows that people outside of society would have little that we regard as human characteristics, but then moves his argument at once into abstract society. All people need parents, and so the case of the asocialized individual makes little sense. What would appear to have been more useful for research and study would have been the small group but we find this concept lacking in Durkheim's work. Durkheim made no distinction between small and large groups and did not appear to consider the case of the small group or the possibility that the small group has its own mental life distinct from large groups. On the occasions Durkheim talked about both small and large groups, he assumed that small groups were fully contained within the larger [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 25 ]. It never occurred to him that a small group might exist only partially inside one larger group. Durkheim assumed that group-life is synonymous with society, and because he conflated the two terms, his argument in this linkage is correct but also a little vague. In a small group there would be indeed no *necessary* difference between the collective and the common. If the number of people in the group was very low, they would not even need to create abstractions about the nature of the group life.



Durkheim's work in seeking to understand the nature of collective representations was pioneering and vital for any understanding of the forces of societal-wide morals. Yet, Durkheim may have been carried away by his own discovery. Collective representations seem to be phenomena particular or unique to society and not innate in the individual's mental life. Yet, no ideas are innate in the individual at all; the individual mind is a self-directing process. Two qualifications to Durkheim's theory seem necessary. First, it does not follow that our relationship as individuals to collective representations has to remain static. We are not 'social metaphysicians.' For all we know, the relationship of the individual to society can change, and new sources for ideas can arise or fade. Second, though Durkheim makes a convincing case for the collective origin of these phenomena, it does not then follow that they have potentially or necessarily a special relationship to society as a being. If collective representations exist, this would not by itself prove that society is a holistic being.

Collective representations seem to be combinations of idea and sentiment that, because of their origin in group life, have greater power than the subjective feelings held uniquely or chosen by individuals, greater power than real logic empty of sentiment, and greater power than ideas individuals hold by themselves alone [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 91 ]. One important type of collective representation is the ideal. The ideal is the siren-call that beckons the individual to leave his nature and self-interest and throw himself upon the submerged rocks of forces and "societal needs" that, according to Durkheim, are more important than the individual himself and beyond his simple comprehension.

Through the very awareness of itself society forces the individual to transcend himself and to participate in a higher form of life. A society cannot be constituted without creating ideals. These ideals are simply the ideas in terms of which society sees itself and exists at a culminating point in its development. [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 93 ]

For Durkheim society was not just a context or contract to serve the individual, nor could it be explained according to merely collective or individual material interests. Rather, all societies held magical or sacred feelings that throbbed through all social life, and these forces could be identified by the sociologist.

To see society only as an organized body of vital functions is to diminish it, for this body has a soul which is the composition of collective ideals. Ideals are not abstractions, cold intellectual concepts lacking efficient power. They are essentially dynamic, for behind them are the powerful forces of the collective. They are collective forces --that is, natural but at the same time moral forces, comparable to the other forces of the universe. The

ideal itself is a force of this nature and therefore subject to scientific investigation. The reason why the ideal can partake of reality is that it derives from it while transcending it. The elements that combine to form the ideal are part of reality, but they are combined in a new manner and the originality of the method of combination produces the originality of the synthesis itself. Left alone, the individual could never find in himself the material for such a construction. [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 93 ]

Here Durkheim gets to the crux of the matter and his insight gives one pause. Perhaps Durkheim can be faulted for seeing a static relationship between the individual and society, his conception of *homo duplex*. However, he was able to perceive that moral ideals are dynamic. The collective representations and ideals are formed through combinations and also form new combinations. It is the intensity and dynamism of the ideals which give them the coercive power over the individual. Here and only here is Durkheim's repeated disdain for static systems of ethics or 'virtue' best understood. The static systems of ethics are products of society, sometimes achieved through a particular individual moralist like Kant or Plato, but the life force of moral life is always changing, adapting, and building. Compared to the moral forces of society, systems of ethics are like the coral beaches compared to the coral colony.

No doubt there are many different types of ideals. Some ideals are intrinsically unrealizable, others are realizable. Some ideals, though they may be unrealizable in their totality, are nevertheless, humane goals, that is, one's pursuit of them does not throw the individual farther away from them, nor does this pursuit of virtue necessarily hurt the individual. Durkheim did not make this distinction. His conceptualization was that ideals are collective in origin, obligatory upon the individual, maintained and reproduced through interaction, and serve society's needs. He also stated that part of the nature of the ideal is that is unattainable [ Durkheim, 1993, p. 75 ]. How well a collective representation represents the true collective nature of a society in a particular moment would be of great interest to Durkheim, but not the absolute value and accuracy of the representations in of themselves, nor their intrinsic relationship to the individuals they impregnate and command.

There is some concern for the ramifications of assuming that ideals are simultaneously unrealizable and hurt the individual when pursued. The first condition would be a lot more viable if it was not paired with the second. There is an old Arab proverb: "All trees grow towards the sky." Trees do not

actually reach the sky but neither do they cheat themselves in apparently attempting to do so. However, societal or group ideals such as selflessness, the quest for *nirvana*, the sacrifice for the master race, the sacrifice for the class struggle, and the ideal of castrating oneself to achieve 'spiritual purity,' are all still with us today in the late 20th century. Only the monstrous would sanction ideals that hurt the individual as such or which command the individual to destroy himself. Suicide was the ideal for the Jonestown Massacre, the *Kamikaze* pilots, the suicide bombings of US military personnel in the Middle-East, and the Heaven's Gate Cult.

Durkheim was well aware that society itself, though he thought it the sole source of moral life, could command destruction. He identified the collective representations as the ideals and social forces of society, but he noted that social conflict always continued and sometimes appeared to make little sense:

At the same time, and owing to their theoretical nature, these forces are not easily controlled, canalized and adjusted to closely determined ends. They need to overflow for the sake of overflowing, as in play without any specific objective, at one time in the form of stupid destructive violence or, at another, of heroic folly. It is in a sense a luxurious activity since it is a very rich activity. For all these reasons this activity is qualitatively different from the everyday life of the individual, as is the superior from the inferior, the ideal from the real. [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 91 ]

Here we see that Durkheim does not deserve to be called a founder of Functionalism. He seemed to see that society did not develop to advance human happiness as such. If anything, there were certain social characteristics which needed to be expressed through symbolism and violence.

It is sometimes difficult to identify whether Durkheim moved in causality from society to collective representations or from collective representations to society. He had maintained that the whole could not be understood by its parts, but the parts had to be understood in relation to the whole [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.xxxix ; Corning, 1982, p.364 ]. However, the source for this increased or more intense mental life which transcends the individual is always the interaction of group life. The collective representation cannot exist without interaction or society. Yet in looking at Durkheim's perspective of collective representations raging at each other for other reason than to rage, one does wonder again about the relationship of the collective representation to the whole society and collective being.

Durkheim had always emphasized that society is a social and moral reality. He derived this concept from his mentors, Boutroux, Renouvier, and Wundt. According to Durkheim, there are no absolute rights and wrongs. Each society had its own rationality equal to that of any other society's rationality. According to Durkheim, all religions are equally real [ Durkheim, 1995a, p. 2 ]. No religions and institutions could be founded on falsehoods [ Durkheim, 1995a, p.2 ]. Consequently, all religious beliefs had to be real because they were believed. While it seems unprofessional that Durkheim would take these two latter points on faith as his premises, it is congruent with his understanding of society as a social reality. Right and wrong become specific and meaningful only within each particular society. Religions and gods merely reflect an abstract and personalized perception of a society. No completely objective or universal frame of reference is possible. Cultural universals are possible, but objective absolutes are not. This led Durkheim to undermine his own logic.

Durkheim was still proud to call himself a rationalist [ Durkheim, 1982, p. 33 ], but like all rationalists, he left logic and reason without a base in objective experience. This point is open to contention. Durkheim turned logic into particular *logics* grounded in particular social realities. Objective and genuine logic then is obfuscated by the societal forces of collective representations created through social interaction in group life. There is no obligation for collective representations to be genuinely logical or empirical:

In this way collective thought changes everything that it touches. It throws down the barriers of the realms of nature and combines contraries; it reverses what is called the natural hierarchy of being, makes disparity equal, and differentiates the similar. In a word, society substitutes for the world revealed to us by or senses a different world that is the projection of the ideals created by society itself. [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 94-95 ]

This is a key statement. It shows the origins of collective representations, and their epistemological nature. Collective representations are always true in a ghastly Orwellian fashion. Society is always the sole authority of morality. Though societies change, the individual is under an obligation to obey the society as an absolute [ Durkheim, 1974a, p. 40 ], not to obey morality under any other obligation save through the social imperative. Collective representations and ideals are always true, but the criterion is not true to life, true to fact, but true to the social reality. Individuals are not the source of collective

representations, the source is social interaction. Durkheim was brilliant in his understanding of the power of collective representations and his insight that they create perversions of fact and logic. He emphasized that the individual representation is weak and the collective representation is strong. The flip side of the same coin, is that it is the individual representation which is created through volitional human thought. Though individual thought can be irrational, it is the only option for any kind of objectivity, either empirical or logical. Collective representations are created inadvertently through human action, in a noncognitive process that uses individual cognitive thoughts only as raw material.

Durkheim even stacked social realities on top of each other. He had said that the individual must obey the morals of society as they reflect the nature of society and therefore, to deny them, would be to deny himself. However, Durkheim later revealed that these collective representations of a particular society could then create additional collective representations without paying heed to the collective nature of society and the particular interaction which created them.

But once a basic number of representations has been thus created, they become, for the reasons which we have explained, partially autonomous realities with their own way of life. They have the power to attract and repel each other and to form amongst themselves various syntheses, which are determined by their natural affinities and not by the condition of their matrix. As a consequence, the new representations born of these syntheses have the same nature; they are immediately caused by other collective representations and not by this or that characteristic of the social structure. The evolution of religion provides us with the most striking examples of this phenomenon.

[ Durkheim, 1974a, p.31 ]

So, not only can society wage violent war and inflame passions within itself for no reason or need according to Durkheim, the collective representations can reproduce themselves even without paying heed to social function and utility at all. This model of collective representations reproducing themselves madly after having gained their independence is analogous to what happened with the Sorcerer's Apprentice. The fledgling mage enchants tools to serve him, but then these objects keep multiplying because he cannot stop them, and they torment him and set on him.

Durkheim had emphasized the importance of collective ideals and collective representations, but he did not say that these collective phenomena were without contradictions or that they were always functional. His vision of ideals is not reassuring:

A society is not constituted simply by the mass of individuals who comprise it, the ground they occupy, the things they use, or the movements they make, but above all by the idea it has of itself. And there is no doubt that society sometimes hesitates over the manner in which it must conceive itself. It feels pulled in all directions. When such conflicts break out, they are not between the ideal and the reality but between different ideals, between the ideal of yesterday and that of totality, between the ideal that has the authority of tradition and one that is only coming into being. [ Durkheim, 1995a, p.425 ]

Durkheim acknowledged that there can be competing ideals in society, and different and contradictory dominant images. This reflects a concern for the transition and changes in society, but because Durkheim assumed that society is always right, even when society itself is in disagreement within itself, this leaves the individual hapless and without self-guidance. Durkheim addressed the concerns in Europe regarding its transformation from industrialization at the end of the 19th century. He clearly described the powers of the collective life over the individual, and his criticism of the Utilitarian and eudaemonic explanations of social life appear sound.

Though Durkheim advocated the monopoly of morality by society, and that the individual must obey society, it is surprising how much he showed that society itself is lacking somewhat in self-responsibility. Durkheim recognized late in his academic career that collective representations did not always represent the true collective nature of society [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.31 ]. He first started to describe this new train of thought in 1898 in "Individual and Collective Representations" [Durkheim, 1974a, p. 91] and then developed it in The Elementary Forms of Religious Life in 1912:

"The product of this synthesis is a whole world of feelings, ideas, and images that follow their own laws once they are born. They mutually attract one another, repel one another, fuse together, subdivide, and proliferate; and one of these combinations is directly commanded and necessitated by the state of the underlying reality. Indeed, the life thus unleashed enjoys such great independence that it sometimes plays about in forms that have no aim or utility of any kind, but only for the pleasure of affirming itself."  
[ Durkheim, 1995a, p.426 ]

This modification represents a significant step forward for Durkheim. This insight was completely congruent with his earlier work in other areas which had always insisted on a distinction between cause and function. Collective representations, once formed, were sometimes beholden only to themselves, and they did not have to continue to reflect the collective order; they could follow their own laws. New collective representations could combine with each other and interact. They did not necessarily represent

society as a whole, and if they did or they did not, the difference was not readily apparent to the individuals affected by them. These collective representations were completely outside of concerns such as utility and function.

We can attribute this insight of Durkheim's that collective representations are sometimes needless or needless in their actions to Durkheim working out the distinction between cause and function or alternately, to his work on collective effervescence. People's feelings intensify due to their mutual proximity and reaffirmation. The feelings and ideas (or partial collective representations) that people have make little sense to themselves at the time, they are irrational and hence, cannot be very well controlled. Putting them together creates an intense crowd feeling which needs to be expressed through either symbolism or violence. Individuals fuse into a crowd, perhaps, and as no one can easily control their feelings, the crowd arises and grows in strength and seizes upon a purpose. Doubtless this happens, but this seems to be merely irrational but intensely symbolic behavior which then is rationalized after the fact.

Durkheim advocated the ideological view that society was a moral reality which transformed the human raw material into individuals, but it would be wrong to see Durkheim as someone who thought that society made everything work out well at each moment. The Structural-Functionalist view of society as self-correcting is thus similar to Durkheim's [ Durkheim, 1995a, p. 371 ], but Durkheim did not maintain that this self-correction excluded pointless and counterproductive violence and aimless storms. In Suicide, Durkheim drew attention to the fact that, though society was self-correcting, there could be considerable 'lag-time,' and individuals could be tempted to commit suicide because society's constraints had receded without proper substitution in the short-run [ Durkheim, 1951, p.253 & 258 ]. Durkheim was not blind to the flaws of society, he merely continued to ascribe to society the exclusive right of morality and the only use of function and utility. That is to say, he acknowledged only the 'collective good' and not individual utility —or the individual's right to determine what is the 'good.' Durkheim accepted that society could be "wrong" but believed that only society got to be "right."

To summarize Durkheim's argument and its flaws we can say the following. Durkheim stated that individuals exist always in group life, and collective representations always emerge out of the nature of group life to dominate the individual. He posited that because these collective representations emerge out of the collective nature of society, they must be a part of the great collective being. He believed that because of their collective origin collective representations must then serve collective needs. Durkheim admitted that the collective forces of society, by virtue of being so powerful, do sometimes wreak destructive violence, and sometimes reproduce themselves regardless of the collective dynamic of the society. A second and more important cause for this irrational violence would be that these collective forces do not necessarily have to answer to any higher and real authority. Durkheim failed to demonstrate a link between the collective and the hypothetical great collective being, and he failed to demonstrate a link between the collective representations having collective origins and serving collective functions. To accept the premise that a group of people, such as a family, clan, or tribe, is greater than the sum of the same number of individuals ( presocialized or socialized ) does not actually prove that societies as holistic things, let alone beings, exist. Society is irreducible and may be a different and more complex reality than its components of individuals, yet this is not to say that it automatically forms a whole with purpose and without contradiction. Later on, when he wrote The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, Durkheim admitted that contradictions could exist in society but he continued to advocate a perception of society as a holistic social being.

The crux of the matter is that the concept 'collective' is not subject to observation or examination. We can call certain phenomena 'collective,' but this obscures the fact that we have no proof that different phenomena are 'collective' in the same way. Phenomena appear to be either 'collective' or not, and this shows the weakness of Durkheim's methodology. We can not measure 'collective' like a ratio number, nor can we ascribe to different collective phenomena an ordinal measurement. Society is collective and certain representations *appear to be* collective, but the term 'collective' seems to be amorphous. We can call something 'collective,' if it is collective in origin, in function, or in its experience, and this leads to



confusion. This imprecision in terminology means that whenever a phenomenon is labeled 'collective,' its true nature, what it is, becomes obscured, and it is assigned a nature commensurate with the theorist's understanding of all other collective phenomena.

'Collective' is a label which threatens to subsume otherwise different things. If an idea emerges from the interaction of five people in a group and is not reducible to the people involved, we can call it collective, just as we would similarly label an idea collective if it emerged from the interaction of five thousand people in the same group. However, these two ideas would possibly be 'collective' in very different ways. The label 'collective' erases differences in intensity and degree to such an extent that differences in type become lost.

The thinkers of the Enlightenment believed that society could be reduced to individual thought and action, rational and irrational. What they failed to understand is that what transforms a number of individuals into a society is not just the beliefs of its members or its implicit social contract, but the interactions of beliefs built upon different premises. Leaving aside the actual content of people's beliefs, the formal aspect of knowledge itself transforms even the most orderly cooperative set of individuals into a society with collective representations through interaction. People interact with each other through their beliefs, images and understanding, built upon different epistemological premises and levels of abstractions. This individual interaction creates collective representations outside of the direct control of the individual and with an intermittent, amorphous and yet pervasive existence that can *almost always* affect any specific individual. This influence of the collective representation upon the individual is felt as moral and ontological imperatives. The collective representations answer to no great moral force outside themselves, and no 'group mind' can ever emerge. The collective representations, fascinatingly enough, are felt and felt strongly by the individual, rather than viewed dispassionately – which while possible, is rare.

The individual associates the following elements with the collective representation:

1) an origin beyond himself and other individuals - hence attributed to Society or God,

- 2) a permanency that persists longer than an individual's changing moods and frequently longer than several generations.
- 3) the moods and feelings associated with these ideas on others ( family, people of status, and those who are both potential friends and enemies ) and the resulting behavior of these people back on the individual who must learn to anticipate them
- 4) a unique experience of a widely shared ideal ( which frequently inspires zealots, artists, and prophets )
- 5) a way to communicate with other people, and to articulate his beliefs and feelings to himself
- 6) an incredible super human elasticity.

This superhuman elasticity is a defining and potentially lethal characteristic of the collective representation. Because collective representations are built upon simultaneously competing premises and degrees of abstractions and complexity, to refute a collective representation through individual thought is always to refute it partially –unless the individual substitutes an opposing or conflicting ideal in its place, or rarely, if the person is a genuinely dispassionate philosopher. This incredible flexibility of collective representations can allow the individual to agree with and accommodate them in many ways, and at the same time, provides an obstacle to rejection. The collective representation can easily out-wait the individual who is subject to moods, a changing set of vulnerabilities, a periodic neediness to please, and an uncertain quivering disposition. A Puritan exclaims of King Charles I: "We can defeat him a thousand times and he is still the king!" An atheist sheds an involuntary tear at the desecration of a church, or cries out to God in a traffic accident. A Marxist intellectual admits that Marx was wrong with his facts and his logic but cries out that Marxism *must* work because it is a *higher* truth. A group of professionals can all believe one thing separately but when brought together can decide to implement the exact opposite. It does seem convincing that we are guided and tormented by ideals that have an origin in our group life and social context. It remains to be seen whether we will be dominated by them indefinitely.

The power of the collective representation comes from its diverse origins, its contradictions and its plethora of elements, and from the individual himself. Collective representations seem to have origins

in different forms of knowledge being continuously mixed together in irresponsible eclecticism through interaction. This results in a thick interwoven fabric of ideas and sentiment too dense for the individual mind to perceive in its entirety and to cut through. Logical and factual contradiction do not drain the collective representations of their power. Tautologies are effective. Big lies can be more effective than small ones. Faith does not merely reconcile incompatibilities, but makes them into a more dominant idea. A collective representation or social ideal can have so many different elements that any person is going to find something in it that makes the whole package seem palatable as it is swallowed. There is bound to be an argument among many in the set which the individual in question cannot at once dismiss or understand —leaving himself vulnerable to social pressure. These social pressures would include the needs to conform, to win approval, and to avoid acknowledging latent violence, as well as direct violent coercion. These ontological package-deals need only have one sufficiently desirable element to make the individual accept the rest —and also to legitimate the process in which the individual mind is mitigated in its efficacy.

Durkheim recognized that the individual played a key role in maintaining the coercive power of the collective representations and through that, the societal moral imperative.

We do not mean to assert, in addition, that social beliefs and behaviors insinuate themselves in invariant fashion to individuals. This would not accord with the facts. In dealing with collective institutions, in assimilating them, we render them individual, imprinting them with a more or less personal character, just as in apprehending the world of the senses each of us colors it according to his temperament so that we see many things differently, express things differently, deal with them differently in the same physical setting. This is why each of us, up to a point, formulates his own religious faith, his own cult, his own morality, his own ways of doing things. There is no social uniformity which does not admit a whole range of individual gradations. There is no collective fact which is imposed in a uniform manner on all persons. [ Durkheim & Wilson, 1981, p. 1065 ]

All individuals are different. All individuals perceive and experience a collective representation a little bit differently. Perception requires volition and effort. The individual struggles to make sense of the contradictory claims of an ideal, or of the contradiction between an ideal and the reality or the ideal's effects. Just as the individual may perform several mental feats to avoid acknowledging certain perfidious aspects of his reality and life, the individual may try to convince himself that the ideals being pushed upon

him by those around him, malevolent and beatific, *must* be rational, true, or at least meaningful. This is not to assume that *all* individuals experience any one thing in the same way. Durkheim understood that a collective representation is experienced differently by its recipients [ Durkheim, 1981, p.1064 ]. We could phrase this differently without rejecting what Durkheim meant. We can emphasize the possibility that at least some people make great mental efforts to find redeeming characteristics in the social phenomena that they are pressured into accepting. The individual mulls over the idea forced upon him by social pressure until he finds the way it is most acceptable and justifiable and believes that this is the essence of the idea. He would have found a different 'essence' to the idea if he had been in a different situation in which a different interpretation would have made better sense for the justification of the concept and the social pressure upon him. It is always better to accept something voluntarily than through force, and there are frequently rewards, real or imagined, immediate or long-term, for acceptance and conformity. It is because all individuals each experience social life a little differently that the structures of social life have their coercive ontological and axiological power. The little differences in life do not always reflect our freedom to think for ourselves, but are the key aspect in maintaining the coercive power of collective representations.

If all individuals experienced phenomena in only the same way, political parties, prejudices, religions, hysterias, crazes, and panics, would only appeal to the same types of people. Instead we find that educated popes and illiterate thugs can both indulge in intolerance and prejudice. The National Socialist party of Germany successfully appealed to members of the elites and the masses of the Weimar Republic for a period just long enough to seize power. Socialism in England frequently appealed to members of both the rich and the poor.

A collective representation is a mixture of ideas and sentiment that is incomprehensible in its totality and mixed premises; consequently individual minds can find some reason not to immediately dismiss it. Frequently the individual thinks that the fault of its apparent irrationality must lie with himself, his inability to see the "truth." Similarly, the individual will often avoid taking literally some of the

components of an ideal or doctrines of an ideology, because they are so incredible or evil that the individual assumes they must have a different meaning than what seems obvious because the belief *must* be wise, however incomprehensible or convoluted the belief then appears. We are more charitable to our enemies than to ourselves. Few will ever want to say of an ideology that it is *simply* wrong. Rather some weighty justification must be found for it, or at the worst, some paranoiac conspiracy theory.

All the effort in maintaining the collective representations and social ideals is performed by the individual. Sometimes the individual benefits, sometimes he is harmed. If the individual did not make an effort to find a way, however briefly, to make sense of an illogical or untrue ideal, the ideal could not be accepted. Sometimes the collective representation is experienced by the individual as a carnival of jarring sounds and flashing lights –for all it has to do is to provide a reason for the individual to step inside one booth or one tent *once* –and the individual must find his own reasons for doing so. Collective representations are permanent, but not consistent. They are permanent not only because they are formed out of on-going societal interaction that is irrespective of the individuals involved, but also because their coercive axiological and ontological power sometimes need only to be made manifest for brief moments.

Collective representations pass through patterns of integration and reformation but these processes are different than what would be expected of intrinsically rational-individual ideas. All collective representations have little necessity to avoid internal contradiction, as it is their super-human contradiction at the base of knowledge which gives them their natures. Also, the ideal and sentiment that are associated with it can remain dormant if 'external' conditions are unfavorable, and wait like a land mine for someone to trigger them. Collective representations can pass through periods of rationalization, which chiefly affect their content more than their nature. In a society, there is even less necessity for the different collective representations to avoid external contradiction between themselves. Collective representations may have internal contradictions but this is not a weakness for them but a strength, and when they contradict reality and each other this does not generally weaken their credibility. After all, when there is a conflict between two collective representations either they both grow in strength or one

wins and the other loses. When the individual exercises choice, it is usually to choose one collective representation over another when the social compulsion is finely balanced or weak, not to reject them.

Ideas that are meant to be scrutinized by the individual mind have to be rational and potentially understandable by the individual, yet they can certainly be flawed or incomplete. Collective representations, in contrast, do not have to be rational and potentially completely understandable by the individual mind. There is no necessity for the individual to understand a collective representation in its entirety. They must merely accept it and obey. With regard to their existence, not merely in the individual but in society, collective representations have a second 'degree of freedom' away from rationality in that they can contradict each other or not, and opposing collective representations can be accepted by different people in the same society. Collective representations can also be accepted by the same people in different aspects. However, it is necessary to point out, that just as an idea that was meant to be submitted to the scrutiny of individual rationality can be faulty, the collective representations can also be 'true' as well. Certainly they do provide a common framework for communication and understanding, and for the sake of argument, can be 'true enough.'

There are grounds to question how collectivities and collective representations can claim an exclusive privilege to moral authority if the individual *qua* individual cannot make any claim. Durkheim seemed to assume that a government and society can exist as moral forces even if all the individuals are faulty and incomplete in themselves. Governments and societies can be moral forces, but in such a situation where they are composed out of a population of warped or inadequate individuals, the institutions would be no better than the individuals. It is possible for a government to be as good as some of the 'best' individuals, but not for a government to be necessarily on a 'higher' plane of moral action than the individual. There are grounds to suggest that a society and a government would in fact be morally inferior to many of the individuals in a population, provided that there was diversity, not just on the normative content of beliefs, but in relation to the cognitive and epistemological roots of people's beliefs. In any compromise between Good and Evil, Evil always wins. In any compromise between Good and Evil,

Good has to create its own rationalization to disguise its loss. Compromise is not possible in regard to moral absolutes, but as Weber observed, compromise is necessary for politics. Even leaving compromise of virtues alone, compromise of cognition would have great potential for harm. Collective representations are not merely ideas that help people reach mutual accommodation over empirical matters of substance, they are also ideas that bind as well as facilitate the reasoning powers of the individual. Political compromises may be desirable, whereas compromises of epistemological clarity would appear to be only destructive.

## Chapter Seven: The Social Foundation of Knowledge

The question of the nature of society is connected to the nature of knowledge and the nature of the individual. If society does exist as an entity or even an organism, this would have great consequences for our understanding of objective knowledge and the abstract individual. Durkheim sought to show that society was an unified entity, and he thought this would justify his advancement of cultural relativism and altruism.

Perhaps for the sake of argument, we could agree that some societies as holistic entities do pursue their own needs, such as stability and orthodoxy, but if so, these goals scarcely seem to be functions of growth, personal happiness, intellectual freedom and progress. Much of the joy and progress of living in society comes precisely from not living in a society that is either an entity or a holistic thing, but from living in a social milieu which is built upon both the ideas of more than one past society and the free exchange with other contemporary "pseudo-societies."

Durkheim thought that truth was culturally-relative and that moral codes were relative to particular types of societies. This position would seem to have unpleasant consequences. Durkheim's paradigm could be applied to the case of Socrates who questioned the morals of Athens. He was sentenced to die for blasphemy. He refused to try to escape, and he quietly took the proffered hemlock. Socrates ultimately accepted the 'moral obligation' of the society in which he lived and thus he died. In a society in which exile and escape were not possible, very little development of logic, morals, and literature would be possible. Durkheim's paradigm suits a geographically isolated society very well –and the judges who condemned Socrates. In such a society, if a poet dared offend the political masters in the ruling elite or the rabble of the streets, the poet would have to recant or die. 'Truth' and 'rationality' would be indeed specific to the particular society and culturally relative.



Fortunately for the human race, key thinkers have been able to escape social constraints and the 'obligation' to serve society through creative means. Great men sold their services to the highest bidder and escaped the flames of the sacrificial bonfire in their former cities; and it is striking to see how many writers were named 'Anonymous.' Durkheim had accepted that individuals did not contribute equally to the maintenance and development of society's ideas. He meant that some people think harder than others, and some are more charismatic than others in their ability to have their ideas heard. He had assumed that all individuals were equally bound by the constraints of their society. The mere fact that free-thinkers have sometimes been able to physically escape and could write their ideas down, meant that the relationship of the individual to the moral imperatives of society in such instances were absolutely different than that in a holistic society. A society of xenophobic head-hunters or a totalitarian society like North Korea is a very different situation than the city states of the ancient Greeks or the Italians of the Renaissance. It would seem that where there is progress there has also been choice and a measure of individual freedom.

That Durkheim posited one relationship of the individual to society is not to say that Durkheim equated all societies. In particular, he differentiated societies based on the nature of their social solidarity, mechanical or organic. In all cases he assumed that morals were culturally-relative to the composition and type of solidarity, that logic was specific to a societal context, and that the individual had an obligation (and pleasure) to obey the social imperatives of the collective nature of his society. He maintained that the role for free-action by the individual was greater within organic solidarity than in mechanical solidarity, but regardless of the society, the individual had to obey the society's dictates. It just so happens that in organic solidarity-based societies, there are more likely to be constitutions, civil law, due process, democracy, and civil liberties than in mechanical solidarity.

One of the paths of development for societies to become peaceful and free were the very cracks in their borders. Durkheim would have argued that the advance in the division of labor reduced the collective conscience in society and allowed freer rein to the more sophisticated collective representations. In part this is true, but this seems to be an effect more than a cause. I would argue that one of the vital causes for

societies to develop has been their association with other societies which reduces the hegemony of each culture, and which allows vital individuals to leave. Crucially, this association between societies is not something that happens at the societal level, but at the individual. It is due to the fact that individuals could change their frame of reference for judging dominant ideas that they could decide to flee tyranny. People have generally fled for freedom as individuals and championed oppression as part of groups. Due to the actions of a small proportion of individuals who are willing to act to ensure their freedom, their opposition, those who speak in the name of society and the mob, have had to accept restraints on their will to subjugate their neighbors. It is not surprising that in the 20th century, every society that has attempted to exist as a society without also being a collection of individuals and to subjugate the individual life completely to society, has had to seal off its borders. Only when individuals cannot flee, does the societal imperative reign untroubled.

Modern organic-solidarity based societies tend to have greater freedom for the individual, precisely because they are not close to being collective beings and cannot be mistaken for them. These free societies are not separate entities, and their borders are more porous to individuals. Also, the threat of exodus by the self-aware skilled workers and entrepreneurs is more dangerous to a society with an advanced division of labor based on personal achievement and personal goals, than a society with a primitive division of labor based on caste, sex, and age. The fact that societies are not impermeable facilitates political freedom for both the individual who can leave or enter, but also for those who are not so mobile and for the society as a whole. A philosopher, banker, painter, or revolutionary can easily cross political borders and continue to work. Not only does the threat of such an exodus leave an impression on the community, but this is also the product of the broader world-view for those people. Societies, as a whole, 'progress' because a minority lose their 'provincial' and socially-specific outlook and gain a broader *Weltanschauung*. Universal ideals, objectivity, and universal logic are developed by individuals with access to the products of more than one culture. Often states eventually understand that they cannot control the individual's point of view. The political institutions of various states frequently recognize the

futility of absolute censorship and control, and are simultaneously marked and modified through the universal or trans-cultural ideas that had been developed. The societies that Durkheim had labeled 'organic' did not have increased freedoms for the individual simply because they had more developed divisions of labor. Rather, they were societies with greater individual freedom because they were less like 'societies' and less separate and distinct from other societies. The freer the individual in the individual's relationship to society, the freer some individuals are to expand the division of labor and political freedoms for other individuals. In any case, societies with the greatest freedoms are also those that are the least culturally-relative.

Some of the greatest advances in history were made by those individuals and small groups who rejected the moral imperatives of the society in which they had been living. We emphasize "small groups" again to suggest that social realism must make the distinction between small groups and society. Society does not "evolve" and grant more rights to the individual and to small groups, rather the individuals and small groups make their freedom a reality and then a legitimate society-wide necessity. The Huguenots left France, the Puritans left England for New England, and Jews left Spain and Portugal for Holland and the Ottoman Empire. German Jews and intellectuals fled National-Socialist Germany. Black slaves fled the slave states to the North in the 'Underground Railroad.' Chinese left the oppressive and chaotic situation in China to settle in British Columbia and to help build the C.P.R. Any country that wants to keep people who are valuable and free-thinkers will have to let them keep a measure of freedom because it is difficult to enslave people and to keep them productive and independent thinkers, and it is difficult to keep the same from trying to escape from such tyranny. Finally, on occasion, states have been founded or re-founded based upon universal principles of human logic, objectivity, and human rights, and the question of how to make the 'best social use' out of such individuals never even arises.

If no man is an island, neither is a good society. A pleasant society to live in today is one that does not cut itself off from the rest of the world's different opinions. All societies have power elites that are judgemental, but societies which cannot cut themselves off from the rest of the world's development of

ideas and from any growth in the tolerance of ideas become more tolerant and civilized, especially if the power elites accept this limitation that they cannot rule their society as if it were entirely removed from the rest of the world. It is a civilized society today that will carry out its own rule of law and yet still worry and wonder what its violent actions look like to the rest of the world.

From the view of the ideology of individualism, "good" societies are those that are unlike Durkheim's model. That is, the less a society is like a holistic entity, the more pleasant it is bound to be for its inhabitants. If a society is peaceful and does not attempt to create ideological conformity, things generally work out. Ideological conformity is generally attempted only out of the delusion that society is a holistic entity and then consequently such conformity is possible and necessary. It is unlikely that any society can be an entity much less an organism, but those that are the least like Durkheim's model of a society being an entity that is an organism are usually the most open for ideas, tolerance, and diversity. The idea of a society being its own moral reality *sui generis* is a chimera, and those that do not pursue this dangerous and elusive goal do not require ontological and axiological coercion over the individual.

Durkheim believed otherwise, but he seems to have been in error. "To desire a morality other than that implied by the nature of society is to deny the latter and, consequently, oneself" [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.38 ]. This interesting hypothesis, like many of Durkheim's, cannot be tested and depends again on his conceptualization of how society is irreducible. This is not to say that society is reducible to its exact components or to refute all interpretations of social realism. Durkheim did believe that modern societies with an organic division of labor became increasingly less rigid and more flexible than primitive societies based upon mechanical solidarity. However, he does not prove the direction of causality between solidarity and freedom and between the division of labor and solidarity. Perhaps, it is precisely because individuals and small groups can decide to accept a morality different from the one that follows from the nature of society, that the social "nature" has to change to accommodate them —or use force to destroy them.

In contrast to Durkheim's position, a case can be made that the individualism in modern individualistic societies is not a collective creation, but the societal accommodation for the small minority of people who are willing either to fight for freedom, withdraw their support from 'society,' or to emigrate. No doubt, people who support their domestic freedoms amplify their ideals and power when working in concert with each other --a characteristic of Durkheim's collective representations-- but if these people were rational and were ready to support their freedom without social approval, then the case to call this 'collective' and 'societal' is greatly weakened. If a group of individuals acting together does what they would have otherwise done as individuals, then the members of the group are acting as individuals with individual rationality --and are not under the control of collective representations or 'crowd-feelings' such as panic, hysteria, or rage. If a sociologist believes that individual rationality is a collective product of society and is created through collective representations, this is a valid rebuttal, but it has to be taken on faith that individual rationality is merely an effect and not a cause of social interaction. However, in either case, there remains a world of difference between a group of people acting as a group and a group of people acting together as individuals appealing to each other's individual rationality and individual values.

The question of society's borders leads into the question of the significance of cultural universals. The attempt by some individuals to judge themselves by a point of view other than that of their society and to create an objective frame of reference leads into the discussion of cultural universals as well. Similarly, the individual creates objectivity through the manipulation, testing, verification, and use of the different and competing points of view manifested within the same society. Finally, universals are important for creating and understanding the ontological and axiological imperatives within a single society. The social scientist may attempt to find truth by finding a cultural universal, and the individual citizen may try to find 'Truth' by discerning what 'everyone' (as far as they can see) in their own society understands to be true.

Durkheim employed a key and ancient technique dating back to Socrates for understanding cultural universals and culturally-relative morals. If everyone believes something to be true, then it is true. In order to understand Durkheim's initial metacritical position, it is important to remember that he was a student of Wundt. What Wundt taught Durkheim is what he teaches anyone who reads his *Ethics* with care, namely, the principle that the test of truth is universal consent. Socrates was right, Wundt states in a passage that could have been penned by the young Durkheim, "in beginning his search for an ethical principle by trying to find out what all men thought on the subject.... [for ] we shall never obtain a higher test of truth than that of universal consent. What every normal consciousness, under conditions of sufficient enlightenment, recognizes as self-evident, we call certain." Hence, the first problem in the search for valid ethical principles is to answer the question: What moral standards are universally, or at least widely, recognized as moral? It is this approach that underlies not only Durkheim's critique of other ethicists for neglecting generally recognizing moral phenomena, but his positive assertions that various principles are right because they are 'undisputed,' 'everywhere' acknowledged, 'generally considered to be moral,' 'common to all moralities.' [ Wallwork, 1972, p. 160 ]

Durkheim employed this device throughout his work. He frequently made his entire argument by stating that 'it is undisputed.' To say that something is undisputed, however, does not actually *prove* anything. Durkheim may have misunderstood just exactly what Socrates was doing. Socrates was challenging the people of his day to *prove* what everyone believed. Socrates and Plato used the criterion of universal belief as part of their philosophical discussions, not as their conclusions. After all, we could all be in a mental cave, staring at the shadows produced on the cave wall in front of us, thinking that these phantoms of social dictates are the only truths.

There is some necessity for this short-cut to truth, because if no one has any options, then the thinker might as well, for the sake of argument work with what everyone believes. However, human progress has often rested upon the individual in defiance of 'everyone.' If everyone in one society believes that the sun revolves around the earth, then indeed, it is the 'truth' relevant to that society. If people in all societies believe that the sun revolves around the earth, then this indeed would be accepted as the 'scientific' and the religious truths by the most learned members of the most advanced society. However, what if everyone but one person believes something? He would still be confronted by the statement, "...but everyone believes...!" because that would also imply, "...everyone but you believes so why stand out from the crowd?" As a result of the communication between societies and the potential ability for individuals to

think for themselves, there can be people by whose rational beliefs and pursuit of knowledge render the beliefs of everyone else insupportable by the appeal to universal belief. The mere fact of a person questioning society is to render all the 'proofs' that Durkheim offers through this method of universal consent shriven and cut apart.

Durkheim used this test of universal belief to prove precisely the most contentious parts of his theory. In his 1887 essay "The Positive Science of Ethics in Germany" he stated:

When one directs one's efforts toward oneself, the intended goal amounts to one thing, self-preservation. But **everyone agrees** that there is nothing moral about self-preservation for its own sake. Life has no value on its own; it is only valued accordingly to the use one make of it. It is only a means to an end. [ Durkheim, 1993, p. 109 ]

In 1902 he taught pedagogy at the Sorbonne and he used the same 'proof' in his lectures:

Not only is there not today, **but there never has existed** any people among whom an egoistic act—that is to say, behavior directed solely to the interest of the person performing it—has been considered moral. Hence, we may conclude that behavior prescribed by the rules of morality is always behavior in pursuit of impersonal ends. [ Durkheim, 1961, p. 57-58 ]

In 1906 in his essay "The Determination of Moral Facts" his reasoning and conclusion is still the same.

The italics are Durkheim's, the boldface is my own.

The qualification 'moral' **has never been given** to an act which has individual interests, or the perfection of the individual from a purely egotistic point of view as an object... from which we conclude that, *if a morality exists*, it can only have as object the group formed by the associated individuals —that is to say, society... [ Durkheim, 1974a. p. 37 ]

It is difficult to reason with contrafactual evidence, and sympathy is owed to Durkheim for the ambitiousness of his project. However, this method of reasoning and argument can be easily disrupted by a single unwanted fact. Durkheim was not being arbitrary. In fact, this method of argument flows logically from his notion of 'positive facts' and of how a sociology of morals would have to be conservative in regards to knowledge [ Durkheim, 1984, p.xxviii ]. Unfortunately, it appears that Durkheim overlooked data which would contraindicate his argument. In a lesser mistake, Durkheim seems to have implied that his proof of a key link in the understanding of moral phenomena lies in the possible ignorance of the people involved. That is to say, if it is not known whether any society has tried something or allowed

something to continue, then it is impossible. To a degree this protects the social scientist from falling into utopian thinking, however, it also restricts the sociological imagination.

For one society or even group to stand up and say that the individual's pursuit of pleasure, long-life or personal excellence is moral, would destroy Durkheim's assumptions about the nature of moral action by his theory's own premises. That declaration had been made before Durkheim's birth in the American Declaration of Independence, and in the works of Epicurus and Aristotle, and John Locke. Also, religions such as Christianity and Judaism have emphasized the sacrosanct nature of individual life regardless of utility to society. It was sound of Durkheim to use the test of universal belief to ground his theory. This, however, is a way to argue that does invite challenges. If no challenges can be made, the theory is tentatively accepted. But as challenges have been made before and after Durkheim's premise, we can safely conclude in the least, that for Durkheim's theory to be true, it must rest upon different and better proofs.

As Durkheim's theory rested on the assumption that the one moral principle of altruism was the exclusive moral principle and a cultural universal, we can pause to consider the full ramifications this would have for any theory constructed to come to grips with moral phenomena. Moral collectivism as a means of explanation is associated with the moral doctrine of altruism as both the social *form* (the relationship between one individual to another) and the axiological *content* of moral codes. Durkheim said that altruism was never found in a 'pure' state [ Durkheim, 1973b, p.214-217 ] but that altruism was the central, necessary, and absolute moral principle [ Durkheim, 1973b, p. 271]. For Durkheim, society was the only goal of moral conduct [ Durkheim, 1973b, p.93 ]. Weakening the case for social realism and moral collectivism would seem to weaken the case for altruism. This is not to say that if social realism is completely disproved that then altruism can never be seen by *someone* as moral, far from it. Nor would it be to say that all good things and admired actions *labeled* as altruistic would have to lose their luster if altruism loses credibility.



Moral collectivism is dependent upon the moral doctrine of altruism. Altruism is generally defined as the moral imperative which believes that unselfish devotion to others is the sole and exclusive moral principle of all human beings. Altruism is generally and naturally associated with pessimism, as can be found in the works of Tolstoy, Schopenhauer, and Durkheim. Altruism has also been the moral principle of choice for the philosophers who were fatalistic, or at least stoically resigned. These would include both the Idealists and the Stoics. It is quite possible that altruism is the moral principle most likely to be created through irresponsible collective social interaction for a multitude of reasons, such as the functional survival of a savage tribe and the latent conflict between religious leaders and their subjects. Perhaps, need, suffering, and dependency are more congenial to representation in symbolic form than independence, beatific pleasure and more rare emotions. Durkheim suggested the latter possibility, that even if happiness and suffering existed equally that the suffering was more likely to become represented in symbolism through the collective interaction of the group [ Durkheim, 1995a, p.317 & 405 ]. After such emotions are reified through symbolism they can then take on a life of their own and affect the symbolic development and communication of the group in perpetuity.

The terms used to label morals tend to be somewhat ambiguous and full of implicit value-judgements. We particularly see this confusion with the term altruism. In all of its forms, altruism generally suggests that individual life is insignificant in itself and hence, must be sacrificed for something else. Sometimes this is seen as the sacrifice of one individual for another, for the greatest good of the greatest number, or for an aspect of the human group itself. Durkheim rejected the first two types of altruistic action, and embraced the third. Rightfully, he dismissed the first possibility as a logical contradiction, and the second as Utilitarianism –which in itself is a social product and not a potential universal source of moral action and feeling [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.42 & 50 ]. However sound was Durkheim's understanding of altruism, he did not prove his case for moral collectivism and altruism.

Unfortunately, there has been a certain corruption of our understanding of moral principles due to the accidents of language and word connotations. Sometimes altruism and self-interest are used

neutrally with specific meaning and denotation, and sometimes they are used more vaguely with emotional connotations. It is too easy to involve one's audience's prejudices with an implicit suggestion that a particular principle is unproblematically and exclusively moral. From the fact that certain associations have been given to these terms, our ability to interpret actions we approve of as being concomitant with these principles is greatly distorted. Those people who assume altruism to be moral will look upon actions they approve of as having to be moral, and hence, also having to be explained as altruistic. This problem exists with all moral principles: one's ability to rationalize an action which one finds pleasing is tied to the moral principles one thinks one must attach it to. So, the proponents of self-interest and the proponents of altruism could conceivably look upon the same action with approval, label it as moral –and then justify it as upholding their favorite principle. Neither would be able to understand the other side's contention. Hence, proponents who explain what they like as moral by connection to their favoured combination of moral principles generally consider other explanations as specious. It is necessary to specify that what one person thinks of as altruism and self-sacrifice can sometimes be seen by someone else as self-interest and vice-versa. This problem would appear to enhance the case for methodological individualism. If we accept our right to explain an action as moral because it upholds a certain principle insofar as we understand it, even a principle collective in form or function (such as serving the group) or collective in origin, we are implicitly upholding methodological individualism.

Durkheim used the term altruism unerringly and clearly, but in a strict way that a modern audience may not immediately understand. To make it clear, altruism is defined as serving other people at one's expense as a *goal* in itself, regardless of the qualities and interests of one's own and the dangers this poses to one's cognitive self. The *effect* of helping other people, in contrast, can hypothetically be created through any action, whether justified through self-interest, sadism, or altruism. The act of a parent helping a child can be self-interest or altruism. It is *helpful* in its effect regardless, and "helpful" is not a synonym for "altruistic." The act can only be altruistic in its motivation and moral principle if the parent genuinely does not like the child and would rather be doing something else but helps the child out of a

love for duty alone or a fear of social sanction. When you help your child because it is your child and you derive happiness thereof, that is properly best seen as self-interest. When you help a neighbor's child as you would your own, that is altruism, even if it means that your own child goes hungry. When you give money to the beggar on the street whom you hate and despise, *that* is best seen as altruism because it is motivated by a principle detached from your own individuality and self-interest and has nothing to do with who you are and who the beggar is. Durkheim's uses and definitions of altruism are completely without contradiction. Unfortunately, he did assume that altruism was the exclusive moral principle, and tried to hang his definition of morality upon it. Still, there are no grounds to suggest that Durkheim's definition of altruism was flawed. His error relates only to his conflation of the term altruism with *moral*.

If holism could be proved, Durkheim's paradigm could be saved. If altruism could be proved to be the only moral principle in all societies, this cultural universal would also buttress Durkheim's theory very well. Similarly, if Durkheim could have proved that social facts and collective ideas existed in the way he said they did, or if had proved that all people were indeed *homo duplex*, his theory would have been saved. It is interesting that Durkheim's theory, being a matter of faith and paradox, only needs one proof to justify the others. (It needed only one proof to justify itself from its own point of view, a lesser challenge than proving itself to those who have different initial points of view.) The final way Durkheim sought to ground and prove his theory was to demonstrate that societies as societies had a source and an origin, and this source and origin was its first religious rites. If Durkheim could have proved beyond all doubt that what transformed *people* into *society* was their social interaction, he would have established a basis for social facts and collective representations. He would also have gone far towards proving both *homo duplex* and that society was an entity.

Durkheim sought to show that the first religious rites created both the nature of society and all forms of conceptual thought. He relied upon the facts he had collected about Australian and North American aboriginals but did not conduct original research himself. His analysis was original, but his contention that rites transformed a group of people into a society and created concepts seems to be wrong.

One of the most striking features of Durkheim's paradigm was that he provided a solution to the question of how categories of thought and symbolism were created if they were not innate in the human organism. However, his solution is not based on a firm methodology and it is in error. However, the method of its error does give us some additional insight into both the problems and the potential benefits of speculating on the origins for the cognitive and ontological basis of moral phenomena.

Durkheim emphasized in The Elementary Forms of Religious Life that logic and the categories of thought were created through the practice of religious rituals, irrespective of their content.

At the root of our judgments, there are certain fundamental notions that dominate our entire intellectual life. It is these ideas that philosophers, beginning with Aristotle, have called the categories of understanding: notions of time, space, number, cause, substance, personality. They correspond to the most universal properties of things... Now, when one analyzes primitive religious beliefs methodically, one naturally finds the principal categories among them. They are born in and from religion; they are a product of religious thought. This is a point that I will make again and again in the course of this book. [ Durkheim, 1995a, p.8-9 ]

Durkheim gave a list of the categories of thought. Instead of positing for them an innate existence in the human mind or in physical reality, Durkheim attributed them to religious practices. This led Durkheim into several quandaries. He explored the religious practices by Australian aboriginal *men*, which begs the question of the relationship of women to reason in these societies in which religious practices were conducted exclusively by men [ Fields, 1995, lix ]. He also assumed that religious practices preceded religious beliefs and were not coeval. He does not state that directly, but that is the judgement of the translator Karen Fields [ Fields, 1995, p. xxxiv ] and Durkheim did give evidence to support such an interpretation [ Durkheim, 1995a, p. 220 ]. Such an assumption is breath-taking, but becomes more understandable when we remember that what we call religious rites were labeled retroactively. Durkheim labeled particular behavior as rites regardless of the meaning they had for the individuals concerned at the time, and so he applied the same label to the same behavior before the start of the religion as he applied to the behavior as part of the religious worship.

Durkheim's assumption that religious rites preceded religious beliefs also shows Durkheim's contempt for individual thought and his rejection of the ordinary causal link of thought leading to action.

The materialists believe that religion reflects the material interests of a society's dominant class or the material life of all its members. The idealists believe that a religion's ideas embody in mystic form the ideas of that society. To posit that people practiced religion before they had any understanding of the categories of human thought such as time and space *and* that they started practicing their religion before they had any religious beliefs, is truly phenomenal. A close examination of Durkheim's wording shows an ambiguity as to whether these religious rites were coeval with concept formation (and were then also practiced to help maintain it) or preceded it. It is clear that he saw religious rites as actions which preceded religious beliefs, and it is clear that he saw the formation of a primordial concept, the distinction

between the sacred and profane, as having been created *after* the collective effervescence of the rite:

It is not difficult to imagine that a man in such a state of exaltation should no longer know himself. Feeling possessed and led on by some sort of external power that makes him think and act differently than he normally does, he naturally feels he is no longer himself. It seems to him that he has become a new being. The decorations with which he is decked out, and the masklike decorations that cover his face, represent this inward transformation even more than they help bring it about...Especially when repeated for weeks, day after day, how would experiences like these not leave him with the conviction that two heterogeneous and incommensurable worlds exist in fact?...The first is the profane world and the second, the world of sacred things. It is in these effervescent social milieux, and indeed from that every effervescence, that the religious idea seems to have been born." [ Durkheim, 1995a, p.220 ]

So, the primitive men whoop it up for a long period, wearing masks, dancing, and violating themselves, and then come to think that there must be something sacred and holy counterpoised to their regular boring life. Ordinarily, most people would not go to so much effort unless they already believed in a religion.

It is possible that Durkheim posited a teleological evolution of religion in the archaic fashion of 19th century evolutionary theory. Some out-dated theorists had argued that all organs gradually evolved, sometimes to serve the purpose of a later stage. Today, evolutionists understand that every step in an evolutionary chain has to be viable in itself, a sort of punctuated equilibrium. For Durkheim to believe in an evolution of religion which becomes only comprehensible in its later stage where it renders religious beliefs possible, would suggest a teleological argument. Perhaps, if religions always respect the social reality, a pre-societal society could create a pre-religion religious ritual. But as categories of thought are

social creations and yet categories of thought are necessary for society. Durkheim's argument is left in a quandary.

There is another possible interpretation of Durkheim's view of religious rites which avoids teleology. He assumed the prehistoric existence of groups of people without any capacity for conceptualization, who go through the motions of rituals first, and then learn enough to actually start to think like human beings. This suggests that religious practices were created through human interaction before people had *recognizable human* minds. This is not completely absurd; it is the one interpretation which avoids the teleological argument. In essence, Durkheim said that the basic concepts of the *human* mind were formed by the spastic effervescence of creatures whom, though genetically similar to ourselves, we would have to consider *subhuman*. Basically, it means that *homo Sapiens* became human because *by chance* they had the *biological flaws* that allowed them to experience the intense emotions that come from collective effervescence. This is not so much absurd as somber.

In this way, Durkheim actually emerges as an interactionist, rather than an idealist as one might imagine him to be. A striking similarity to John Dewey's philosophy of education can also be noted. However, the nature of human life is in the mind, which is not to suggest idealism. Durkheim needed to avoid both materialism and idealism, while avoiding any concession to 'cognitive determinism' or the belief that human beings can think. Consequently, Durkheim had to postulate some kind of origin for human thought outside of human beings, and he located it in their social relations and in the cumulative effects of their behavior.

Seen in this light, Durkheim is contradicting his own methodological premises, and explaining the superior by the inferior, and explaining the human by the subhuman. People without categories of thought are not what we would recognize as human. Durkheim's theory thus argues that subhumans created human religious rituals which turned them into human beings --and then the new human beings persisted in following the religious rituals that were created by creatures which were in every way different and inferior to themselves.

Durkheim did not act as a true empiricist and interactionist at this point. He did not empirically measure the different mental effects of diverse social relations and the different social relations caused by chance interactions. Instead he was looking for definite immutable relationships between interaction and social relations and beliefs. He assumed that certain social relations had an immutable power or origin for types of thought. Durkheim in an acute sense was a 'social metaphysician.' Primitive religious rites and the founding of society were to Durkheim what the 'Philosopher's Stone' was to the Alchemists. However, even if Durkheim had been right about social realism and social forms, it would also be true that we cannot prove his theory. The data needed to prove his theory appears to be either open to opposing interpretations or at risk of being forever unknown.

Durkheim's holistic version of social realism was an argument that had to be made. For us to see what social realism is, we need to take it to its logical extreme. Durkheim's argument is untenable because of the common-sense mistakes he made in his reasoning. He had advanced his ideas as a line of reasoning because he did not start off with a valid methodology. He did not look at empirical phenomena with value-neutral concepts and definitions before plunging into ideology. His methodological limitations ensured that he would be unable to catch his own mistakes. He had assumed that altruism was the exclusive moral principle. He also assumed the existence of collective ideas before he first used the term collective representations. He saw that individuals are ontologically and axiologically coerced in society –and built his theory as a justification of this coercion. Durkheim resorted to organic metaphors and analogies to advance his argument after it was already underway. He assumed the existence of a great social being because his theory needed it to make sense. He then had to move to the "opposite end" of his reasoning and investigate the basis for society itself. He provided a plausible solution, and argued that the nature of conceptual thinking and society itself had come from primitive religious rites. None of these separate elements and notions of Durkheim's theory make sense on their own, but only as part of his overall work. Not only did he end up having to believe in a "social being" once he accepted altruism and collective

ideas. he had to speculate on the nature of the first society once he accepted monocausation and also chose to believe that all concepts were socially created.

In effect, Durkheim's theory of religious rites invented hypothetical stages for human beings. He needed to create his theory of religious rites to justify the rest of his paradigm. However, the facts and analytical constructs he used for this justification had less credibility than the facts and concepts he used them to justify. It was unwise to invent hypothetical stages based on speculation to justify theories which are meant to be empirical. Durkheim should have listened to his own notion of 'positive facts' [ Durkheim, 1984, p.xxviii ] at this point and only generalized from observed objective facts.

It would be highly interesting to find the origin of the categories of intellectual thought. It does not necessarily follow that this will be relevant for how we live our lives today. From what science is able to tell us, life comes from life, but life nevertheless arose in a lifeless universe. There is always cause for every effect, but still, there may have been no 'cause' for the creation of the Universe in an ordinary sense. As the astronomer Carl Sagan once remarked, people seem to be uncomfortable with the simple and sufficient explanation regarding what existed before the 'Big Bang' —*Nothing!* We do have categories of thought, but I suspect that the search for First and Final Causes for existence will always be fruitless. The search for First and Final Causes always leads into theology or metaphysics, and has no place in social science. There is no need to even assume that there was one cause for the origin of mental categories. Would social scientists similarly assume that there had to be one cause for the human race, one origin for fire, and that there had to have been a *first* human being? The notion of a first human being outside of theological circles is an absurdity.

The philosophers have asserted a static basis for individual epistemology; the sociologists have asserted a dynamic social basis. It would appear that both exist and both are relevant to social explanation and causality. Durkheim's theory has taken the social origin of cognition to its point of greatest development. It fails, and Durkheim was forced to posit absurdities in the origin of categories of thought. However, Durkheim amply demonstrated the power of the group and the collective over ontology and



axiology. The coercive powers of the group can both twist and develop individual thinking, but to express it this way, reveals that individual thinking is a cause of its own and is not completely an effect of the individual's membership in group life. This by no means is to argue in favor of 'atomic individualism' or the theory that individuals came together to form society. Rather it is to say that reality is reality, and that individuals learn different ways to perceive the world, some being better than others. The completely isolated individual, like the completely holistic society, is more of an ideal-type than a genuine reality or a cause in social explanation. Societies do have ways to 'socially-construct' the appearance of the world, but the world remains what it is independent of our observation of it. The final arbiter of the conflicting visions of the society, as well as the arbiter of the conflict between the visions of society and those of the individual, remains the individual mind. If a primitive 'society' in its collective representations or social-construction believes that the sea is the domain of death and one hearty individual goes to see for himself, it is not the 'society' acting as a society, nor the individuals in the 'society,' but the sole individual who actually explored the phenomenon in question who will make the final determination.

It is unknown whether collective representations exist. As Weber said, our own values and research goals will affect whether we perceive any collective phenomena [ Weber, 1975a, p.180 ]. However, if collective representations do exist, it is quite possible that the basis for them lies not in any collective nature of a holistic society which Durkheim assumed, but in the social and mental life created through social interaction in general. In particular, the basis for collective representations which seems the most plausible is in the social accommodation of epistemological pluralism.

It appears quite possible that an epistemological pluralism exists, and this diversity creates collective representations which then fuse together different epistemological processes and creates some kind of stability. This epistemological stability, though created through interaction, would not mean that epistemology (and mental categories of thought) are *necessarily* created through interaction, only that they are consolidated. The apparent stability of epistemological processes, a stability created through their own diverse origins, would be sufficient to encourage philosophers to posit an innate existence for the

categories of mind and as well for interactionist sociologists to suggest that these categories arise exclusively out of interaction.

Human beings are social, but all thinking is done by individual minds. People live in a social milieu and this allows them to develop their potential to think and perceive. This does not mean we have to reify the chance collective representations that are unwittingly created through social interaction. It would appear that we can speak of both epistemology for the individual and the dynamic images created both deliberately and unwittingly through social interaction. All sociologists and philosophers who have attempted monocausal explanations for human thinking appear to have been misled by their own initial insights. It appears more likely that in any one society there can be a diversity of origins for how people think. This diversity does not make reality arbitrary and relativistic, nor does it facilitate a pragmatic ontology. Rather, it would appear that the strength and coercion of social epistemology lies in its diversity. If we needed to find a basis for 'social fact,' there would be no need to go farther. It would be unnecessary to rob the individual of all powers of independent cognition.

An adequate basis for 'social fact' lies in the continual immersion of the individual in epistemological diversity. We cannot prove that this diversity exists, but it cannot be disproved, and as it is unlikely that any one source of epistemology will be proved, and one cannot assume that all people think the same way, an acceptance of the possibility of epistemological diversity would seem sensible. This epistemological diversity is a creation of both different and independent individual minds, as well as of society and dependent minds. This diversity would thus facilitate patterns of interaction within the social compulsion of ideas. These "patterns" would make collective representations appear real by making the nature of thought within society completely different or "higher" than the initial or innate nature of thought in the individual. If this diversity is reified into being "good" simply because it exists and it underlies the nature of society as we know it, this would have grievous consequences on the rationality of the individual mind. However, this does not have to be so. We can simply say that for all we know, a likely reason why people think differently in society than they would otherwise and why society has what

appears to be its own forms of thought. is that individuals think differently to begin with. Different innate or initial differences could lead to strong social and collective patterns which become imposed on the individuals. Individual cognitive differences create social patterns of cognition. There is no proof for this theory of epistemological pluralism but it seems that it cannot be disproved and that it is more likely than not. In society, the different forms of thought (if they exist) from all the different people would be welded together and would then indeed have a reality in itself irreducible down to the individual natures of the people concerned. This is not exactly what Durkheim had in mind with his notion of social facts, but it is one way to explain social life as its own reality different from each of the initial individual realities without having to lapse into holism, or believe that society is an entity, or necessitate the creation of *homo duplex*.

Until proven otherwise, we cannot believe that human thinking is reducible to any one form or origin. This simple statement reinforces both methodological individualism and social realism. It makes methodological individualism even more relevant, because the only way to fully understand events and social action is to empirically study the role of the individual and to perceive the individual's point of view. Until we can prove that there is one origin for human thought, or that one explanation of social epistemology applies to everyone, we cannot assume that all human beings think the same way in their form or generic process. Our conceptual life is real, our speculation on the origin of concepts remains only speculation. We cannot prove the case for epistemological pluralism. The evidence for it lies in that it requires fewer unproven premises than the alternatives. If epistemological pluralism does exist, this in itself would be a sufficient explanation for why concepts are not reducible to individuals without assuming that society exists as an entity with a single collective nature. The view that concepts are not reducible to individuals has not been proven, but if it were true, there would be more than one explanation.

In summary, there are grounds for reservations concerning Durkheim's theory of holistic social realism. Not everyone has believed that altruism is the only moral principle and that people cannot live morally for themselves. No one has proved that societies are entities, much less organisms. Human nature

does not appear to be *homo duplex*, and Durkheim's use of social facts appears just too mystical for conventional tastes. However, there appears to be an alternate way to provide a basis for the social facts which are created by the juxtaposition of human beings which are irreducible to the people involved. Durkheim abhorred psychological reductionism of social and moral phenomena, and he had some good reasons to do so, it is just that better alternate hypotheses are possible.

In short, though there may not be a way to make Durkheim's social realism compatible with methodological individualism, a fact we shall explore in greater detail in a later chapter, there is every possibility we can offer a new theory which avoids psychological reductionism and yet is compatible with both social realism and methodological individualism. Whether this hypothesis of epistemological pluralism is true remains a matter of speculation, but it does seem more credible than taking any one epistemological position on faith and declaring that no other alternative is possible. The very diversity of ways of thinking may be what creates most of the binding forces of social interaction which threaten to mystify 'society' into a collective whole. Not only is the individual a product of society, but the societal-wide meanings are products of individual meanings and of the accommodation of differences of opinion and differences of conceptual thought.

Individualistic methodology can be used to understand the experience of the individual in moral phenomena and does not make the mistake of assuming that all human beings think the same way, have the same cognition, the same epistemology, and the same potential. Methodological individualism avoids these errors by and large because it avoids assuming fixed relationships of the individual, epistemological concepts, and human nature to social groups. Its practitioners are largely uninterested in First and Final Causes. Methodological individualism avoids positing any one fixed relationship of the individual to society, and so avoids all mistakes associated with "social metaphysics."

We have exited holistic social realism only to arrive at methodological individualism. The problems that holistic social realism appears to have are not those shared by methodological individualism. Holism seems to be a chimera and a dead-end, yet some of the reasons why holism was

posited remain viable. Society is more than the sum of its components; this is beyond contention. However, social realism and collective concepts need not be seen as exclusive to holism. The question of the existence of collective concepts can be divorced from social holism, and the contention that social life is not reducible to individual life does not require acceptance of the assumption that society is an entity. The concerns of social realism do not seem to be incompatible with methodological individualism. It remains to be seen how efficacious methodological individualism is as an approach to examine moral phenomena and as a basis for inquiry and hypothesis formation. This will be discussed in subsequent chapters. As for social realism, in its broader and less controversial variants it seems to be incontestable, but because it lends itself to many different interpretations and facilitates more and undemonstrated assumptions and *implicit* value-judgements, it does not seem to be the best choice for a starting position to study moral phenomena. The recommendation must be that one must start with a methodology that one can defend, and then seek an intersection on its own terms with social realism. This intersection would be conducted through the explicit value judgements and interests of the researcher. We now turn to an examination of Weber's methodological individualism in the following chapter.

## Chapter Eight: Weber's Methodological Value-Relations

The discussions of Durkheim in the previous chapters would not have been possible without drawing upon the works of Weber. Durkheim advanced the sociological study of moral phenomena more than any other theorist, but the exposure of Durkheim's theoretical weaknesses is derived from Weber's methodology. Weber's methodology was more advanced and subtle than that of the 'moralists'. These 'moralists' include disparate schools of thought: the Saint-Simonians, the Comteans, the Social-Darwinists, and the German Idealists, especially the neo-Kantians. These 'moralists' wished to construct hierarchies of values which were to have a scientific or metaphysical basis and a universal validity. Weber valued Western civilization for its unique construction of universal ideals, but rejected the possibility that science could create norms, ideas, and world-views with universal validity. The roots of Weber's qualifications and reservations for any 'project' of morals or normative answers to questions within the study of moral phenomena lie in his methodology.

### The Influence of the *Methodenstreit* upon Weber

The *Methodenstreit* was the debate about the differences between the social sciences and the physical sciences. It is unnecessary to give all the particulars, but some details are relevant to our discussion. In Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics, Weber stated that the premises which the cultural sciences would need to form laws of history were untenable. The cultural sciences needed a different methodology than the natural sciences. Social action was built upon values and variables different from inanimate physical reality. Therefore, social science was also built upon values different than the natural sciences. Chief among these value differences was that the intention of the social actor affects the nature of the social action. As well, the values and intention of the social scientist affects

the interpretation of social action. In addition, the social sciences have to avoid mystic intuition and nonvalidated belief in collective concepts. We can see here that Weber, in his first great methodological work, separated himself completely from both the Positivists and the Historicists.

There may be a certain confusion in how the Historicists are understood. Not only have Karl Popper's writings emptied the term *historicist* of its precise meaning [ Carr, 1961, p.119 ] but Popper's detractors have done much worse to obscure matters. We are not here to talk about Popper or his critics. In any case, the works of these diverse scholars were not changed retroactively by the mere fact that the scholars were stuck with the same label for easy reference. When we talk about the Historicists we do so exclusively from the point of view of Max Weber who always politely referred to these people by their proper names or as "the Historical School." The Historicists have generally been misrepresented in the scholarly discourse, especially by those scholars who cannot seem to get beyond either their reflex of vitriolic against Popper or their excessive reliance on E.H. Carr.

When we refer to the Historicists here we mean the advocates of collective concepts and of especially the intuitive "special German character." This group of thinkers that Weber criticized in his methodological writings appear to be diverse yet they were consistent proponents of the methodological assumptions that Weber disdained. These thinkers include Wagner, Schmoller, Roscher, Knies, Sombart, and Wundt. Other Historicists would include Comte, Hegel, Marx, and Spengler, thinkers that Weber criticized in print to a lesser extent. Yet to refer to these thinkers one moment as "the Historical School of Economics," then as the *Kathedersozialisten*, then as the Historicists, and then by their separate names, would appear to add needless confusion as much as it would expedite technical accuracy. For example, Wundt was not known as a Historicist, but we might as well *implicitly* include him in this group because Weber's criticism of him included in Economy and Society is so similar to his implicit criticism of Schmoller in Roscher and Knies. Labels seem to be somewhat a matter of tradition. Durkheim referred to Schmoller as a member of the *Kathedersozialisten*, yet Weber exclusively refers to him as a member of "the Historical School." Here, when we criticize the "Historicists" we are *accidentally* drawing close to

Karl Popper's much criticized use of the term because the secondary sources Burger (1987) and Huff (1984) use the term "Historicist" consistently in a way which refers to what Weber meant by "the Historical School." This is not to suggest we are starting with Popper's position nor do we agree with it, but we end up alongside it rather unexpectedly.

Weber had rejected many of the methodological elements of the Historicist and the Positivist positions, and although he rejected the possibility of finding 'laws' of human conduct, he did not otherwise narrow or limit the scope of investigation in social science. Weber did *not* say that prediction and the creation of patterns of regularity were impossible in the cultural sciences. Weber did *not* say that because human beings had free will that therefore human action was unpredictable. Weber never denied people had free will. Human beings certainly did not need unpredictability, irrationality, and absurdity to be free. After all it is reason, values, purposes and truths which allow us to have free will at all. Instead, Weber said in Roscher and Knies, that even if human behavior was predictable, even if every person put in the same context responded with the same reaction and behavior, that this would not be a historical or social law, even when restricted to these exact and basically hypothetical parameters. If people committed the same action for different reasons, then this had to be viewed as different social action [ Weber, 1975a, p. 129 & 137 ]. The predicting of behavior was not the same as predicting social action and its meaning. Weber did not champion an attack on Menger who had argued for a pursuit of laws of economic behavior. Rather, Weber took a somewhat more sophisticated view of knowledge; knowledge of human social action depended upon the value-relations of the researcher and the meaning of the subject-actors involved. Menger had wished to discover empirical laws regarding "real types" [ Weber, 1977, p. 18 ], and Weber looked instead for Ideal Types relevant to specific investigation.

Weber's methodological writings contained his position in relation to several other disputes. 1) Weber adapted the method of *Verstehen* from Dilthey and changed it from being confined to psychological significance to being sociological. As Weber was fond of saying, one did not have to be Caesar to understand Caesar sufficiently well for causal explanation. 2) Weber's position on objectivity was similar



to that of Rickert and Menger. and he believed that objectivity was both possible and desirable in the social sciences. However, objectivity was not a force in itself, nor a program that a person could switch themselves onto, but it was a conscious continual achievement of the individual who worked outwards from his own subjective point of view. 3) Weber agreed with the emerging consensus that a science free of presuppositions was impossible. This last point is the more critical for our examination. Weber argued that facts and norms must be kept rigidly separate as can be: though it is a struggle, it is a rewarding one. He also said that science itself was in some respects like a religion and the process of scientific investigation depended on certain norms and premises that could not be proved or demonstrated by the scientific process itself. It was because of the differences between the social and the physical sciences, and the similarities and interdependent premises within the social sciences themselves, that Weber referred to the latter as the *Geisteswissenschaften*.

Weber's methodology explicitly rejected the positions of the Historicists, and this meant that implicitly Weber also rejected Durkheim's position. In his 1887 essay "The Positive Science of Ethics in Germany," Durkheim had praised the German 'socialists of the chair' and the other social realists for emphasizing the inductive method of establishing historical processes and laws. Weber wished to use abstract concepts to study particular concretes. The 'Historicists' had been famous for saying that events could only be understood as part of the stage in history or their historical-specificity. Yet the concept of 'historical specificity' assumed certain value-judgments about history. The Historicists had rejected universal historical laws and a Positivistic view of history, yet in Weber's view the Historicists' own position still retained the flaws of the very paradigm they had rejected. Weber stated:

Economic phenomena in their (relative) concreteness can be grasped only through an historical treatment. The assumption made by the Historical School, that through the proper use of induction laws can be established which conceptualize the historical character of social phenomena, is a contradiction in terms. [ Burger, 1987, p. 153 ]

Weber was neither a Positivist nor a Historicist. Durkheim in contrast had been an avowed Positivist and had accepted the Historicist position that induction could establish historically-specific objective social processes.

The positions of Durkheim and Weber to the Historicists can be compared. Both men rejected metaphysics, yet Durkheim's conclusions were startlingly metaphysical. For example, Durkheim went on record as saying that the highest goal of ethics is to treat all other human beings without difference and to put aside all self-interest [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.51-53 ]. Durkheim believed that *all* ethics *must* have a painful purpose in something beyond themselves and beyond the individuals concerned [ Durkheim, 1995b, p.29 ]. These are not empirical statements. Durkheim appeared to have combined the belief that ethics had some 'objective' existence with the empirical study of ethics. Arguably, Durkheim could have arrived at his points that seem the most metaphysical by following an argument that they were cultural universals of a *type* of society. However, such an argument appears tenuous. In contrast, Weber rejected any such axiological judgement. Durkheim criticized the *Kathedersozialisten* for over-emphasizing the role of the state in society [ Lukes, 1972, p.89 ], but then said that the state was the 'highest' part of society [ Durkheim, 1983, p. 166 ]. Both Durkheim and Weber disregarded the 'Great Man' view of history, but Durkheim saw individuals as created by society, and Weber saw individuals as cognitively independent actors working within a framework of cumulative social processes, such as rationalization.

Weber and Durkheim were both influenced by the Historicists, and rejected some of their points, albeit in much different ways. Thomas Burger in Max Weber's Theory of Concept Formation listed four points of difference between Weber and the Historicists:

German historicist historiography combined four major features against which Weber reacted: a metaphysical foundation; an emphasis on the development of the state as the central, historical development that comprehends everything else as subordinate, conditional, dependent, or incidental; absence of a comparative perspective; and a focus on individual events, persons, and decisions. [ Burger, 1987, p. 210 ]

Examining the points of difference between Weber and the German Historicists that Burger lists, we are struck by the fact that Durkheim rejected the fourth point altogether, that the social sciences should look at individual decisions, and that Durkheim distanced himself from the first three.

There are reasons to suggest that Durkheim was closer to the Historicist tradition than might be readily apparent. Durkheim did use a comparative perspective, concomitant variation, but he had divided societies into *types*. This meant that he never looked at individual decisions and rarely did he study

particular social events. Durkheim had even classified the Arunta Australian aborigines and the North American Iroquois not only as the same type, but treated them as the same society at different points of time [ Kapsis, 1977, p.364 ]. The Historicists and Durkheim had failed to look at concurrent or parallel societies directly. Though Durkheim admitted that there were different societies of different types existing at one time, he treated them analytically as species within different stages of a fixed temporal relationship. That is to say, he adhered strictly to a simple typology: primitive-type societies evolved to modern-type societies. That several types of societies could develop into several other concurrent types was not a possibility that his paradigm could anticipate or even perceive. In a second matter, Durkheim, like some of the historicists, especially Hegel, sought to delineate *the* precise nature and role of the state and use it as a step in subsequent theorizing. Durkheim had not reified the state directly, but had given the state a unique moral quality. In his lectures Professional Ethics and Civic Morals he had recommended that all intermediate associations (such as guilds, unions, associations) be tied ultimately to the state, with the state ready to use physical violence to enforce the decisions made by the intermediate associations [ Durkheim, 1992, p.39 ].

Durkheim shared more assumptions with the Historicists than one might have thought. The Historicists considered the borders of societies unproblematic, and believed that each society was an entity which possessed its own values and ideas. The Historicists presumed that ideas and values were relative to the society and not the individual, and that the ideas of the individuals within a society were manifestations of the overall idea of that society in that particular era or "type" of society. Durkheim and the Historicists considered collective concepts unproblematic. They also relied on intuition to delineate these collective concepts, to deduce the overall content of ideas, and to see that ideas of individuals were merely manifestations of a broader set of "historically special" societal ideas. Durkheim's methodological error was precisely that of the Historicists. He failed to see that his values and what he wanted to see affected his definitions, his use of concepts, and his interpretations. Without being sensitive to concerns of *Wertbeziehung* Durkheim failed to achieve a value-neutrality or *Wertfreiheit* which would have made his

interpretations comprehensible and legitimate to someone who did not share his concerns and values even if he agreed with him on the observable facts.

Durkheim's method of dividing societies into types based upon variables and their nature of solidarity was not as original as might be thought. Wundt and Roscher did something similar in their delineation of societies into those early or aging, and those in different stages of economic development. Durkheim believed that the content of norms was relative and that there were universal laws regulating how norms relative to different society-types were established. When expressed this way, this position is remarkably congruent with that of Wilhelm Roscher whose theory Weber criticized on these very points [ Weber, 1975a, p.87 ]. Roscher and Durkheim both sought to find a universal and objective foundation for how norms were relative to specific cultures, types of economic development, and stages of cultures. Whether we call the label "stage" or "type" it appears to be basically the same method with the same methodological flaws. The delineation of stage and type, as well as the "whole" of a society, is based upon intuition and implicit value-judgements. Few people will agree on what the "whole" is, so the concept becomes problematic.

Finally, and most importantly, Durkheim's rejection of metaphysics was not complete or sufficient. Though Durkheim rejected idealistic metaphysics and metaphysical mystical terms like noumena, nirvana, and the Dao, he did attribute to social forms and society an existence which came close to the metaphysical and mystical. In particular, his conflation of "God" with "Society" was unusual but inevitable. He also seemed to have replaced the metaphysical assumption of free-will with an assumption of a fixed relationship of the individual to society, which, although it changed in content, maintained the same form during social development. Durkheim's use of collective and holistic entities became for all intents and purposes, metaphysical. He attributed to them the power of causal agents. Not only did Durkheim consider all collective phenomena as things which could by themselves cause historical and social change, he considered much more consistently powerful and relevant than individual minds, even when the phenomena in question could not be observed. "Society" was always there, always moving

forward, always following its interest, regardless of individual observation. Even if this concrete existence of society and its development could not be observed, certain qualities of society were assumed to be always developing in a particular direction. This leap of faith was something that Weber could not make. Durkheim's main point of congruence with the Historicists was that they believed in the development of forces or holistic entities, even when they could not be observed. In contrast, Weber believed only in historical events and processes which could be observed at a given point. To believe in things happening because we want them to happen, is a leap of faith that conflates facts and values, and ends *Wertfreiheit*.

#### Values and Facts

There is a distinction between values and facts, between normative statements and empirical ones. Weber criticized Schmoller among many others for failing to make this distinction. The unqualified combination of facts and values would lead to ideology and perverted science. Both facts and values needed a basis in premises, Weber emphasized. Values were, in part, chosen. Weber proposed an interesting theory of knowledge in his essay "Objectivity' in the Social Sciences." According to Weber, facts are statements about objective reality but they are not automatically objective; they depend on value-relations. Facts have to be "worthy of being known" [ Weber, 1949, p.72 ]. Why we bother expressing a tiny part of reality one way through one fact and not another depends on what we wish to know. With equal justification we *could* describe a certain object as a pile of wood, a couple of walls, or a house.

According to Weber, both facts and values depend on premises that can not be completely proven by the process of scientific investigation. These premises can be proven consistent, useful and noncontradictory, but cannot be proven from an external frame of reference. Similarly a choice in values and starting-premises could be proven to be contradictory. In a later chapter we will refer to "Munhausen's Trilemma" and the concern that some points of view attempt to base themselves on their own conclusions. There is a primordial necessity for finding a valid starting point for scientific investigation. After all, as Weber said, "truth is only that which claims to be valid for all those who want

truth" [ Bendix, 1989, p.5 ]. Science cannot prove that we must want truth or make us want it. Science exists, good starting points can be chosen, but the process of science in itself does not yield norms of how we must value science or of how we must apply our results. Neither does science prove and validate its own starting points. Scientific reasoning and observation can prove that one's premises are consistent with one's results and it can prove that certain alternatives can be discarded as intrinsically incompatible or inconsistent with the facts. Science is not dead, objectivity is possible. It is just that Weber emphasized that science itself could never be greater and more moral than its practitioners.

The practice of science is carried out exclusively by human beings, and little deliberate action can ever be achieved without personal values and purpose. Science is a great human institution, but it remains prone to the foibles, conceits, and aspirations of the human beings involved. The practice of scientific investigation can only follow after we accept the following set of premises: that we want truth and that we take on metaphysical confidence (or a leap of faith) that truth is possible and that the universe is objective and noncontradictory. This is not to attribute causality to metaphysical concepts, but it is to rely on some kind of metaphysical stability in which cause and effect remain meaningful. All action within science is purposeful and directed by the agent's values. This is why Weber used the term *Wertbeziehung* to emphasize that the practice of science can never be removed from the values of the scientists.

The value relation (*Wertbeziehung*, not value relevance as it has been translated) suggests that one can pose questions only after one has become clear in one's mind as to why one wants to ask them. That 'why' refers to subjective considerations, the personal sense of what is important. [ Bendix, 1989, p. 124 ] ( translation in brackets provided by Bendix.)

It would be folly to assume that scientists could read their own premises and purposes off the dials, as it were, from the great computer that they built and served. After all, the computers of science would be programmed by the same human beings. All sustained action requires purpose, and the purpose of scientific investigation cannot be garnered or gained from the results of the process.

*Wertbeziehung* relates to Weber's paradigm in two particular ways. First, Weber emphasized that rationality was advanced and that man's action in society was maintained through individual cognitive determinism. That is, people tried to make sense out of their own lives and experiences. Religions,

philosophies, and sciences were advanced through this effort. We can look back through history at more 'primitive' cultures, and wonder why they did not discover certain scientific facts, such as heliocentrism or evolution, or invent aspects of jurisprudence and politics that we thought should be self-evident, such as democracy and human rights. However, people struggle to advance their knowledge only of what they think is important or worth knowing. The Hellenistic engineers and scientists of Alexandria made toys and curiosities function with steam and hydraulic power; they did not *fail* to invent the steam engine, they had other concerns. The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake may be relevant for one culture or scholarly institution, but not for others. Second, Weber saw the universe of knowledge and human history as infinite [ Weber, 1949, p.78 ]. We behold the universe and the world around us as infinite in size, scope and details. Yet we can always reduce what we choose to see, like through the paradox of Empedocles, into more smaller points and details. In the pursuit of knowledge, the scientist has to demarcate a portion of this infinitude and make it his field of study. This simple act of practical expediency is also an act of personal *Weltanschauung* and greatly facilitates the prospects for new knowledge.

Heinrich Rickert had emphasized this infinitude of knowledge and its ramifications. Values and concepts are needed for one to grasp a small portion of knowledge for any scientific investigation [ Oakes, 1988a, p.61]. Weber's Ideal-Types are sometimes said to be the application of Rickert's paradigm [ Morrison, 1997, p.270 ]. Weber was not a student of Rickert, rather he and Rickert had read the same material and shared similar concerns. Both were part of the neo-Kantian movement which sought to find a scientific way to study ethics and politics without projecting a false claim to objectivity or making a leap of faith into a scholarly ideology. Ideal-types had no empirical concrete existence, they were abstractions which eliminated information spurious for the purpose of understanding causality. Ideal-types were means to give us better insight into unique as well as generic phenomena. Abstractions help us both better perceive and explain. Through deliberately creating nonempirical concepts, our use of Ideal-Types avoids assuming that the concepts are an intrinsic part of the phenomena themselves, a concern that Aristotle shared when he said, "I see dogs everywhere but no Dog." The Ideal-Types can only be formed after the

investigator has some concerns and values to initiate and form the scholarly investigation. The Ideal-Types methodological device then relies firmly upon Weber's term *Wertbeziehung* and, less obviously, on *Wertfreiheit*.

Weber emphasized the difference between statements of fact and statements of value. He did not want to keep facts and norms rigidly separate in application, after all, some norms were needed for the study of facts. Instead, he wanted to keep them always clearly distinguished from each other. Weber thus differentiated himself from both the Positivists and the Historicists. Unlike the Positivists he saw science as never being free from personal concerns and values, nor could he grant any credibility to the idea of a 'neutral' science in itself without consciously neutral and self-clarifying human practitioners. Positivism was a fading force in Weber's time, and it became increasingly limited to the physical sciences; it was against historicism that Weber spent more effort clarifying the fact and value distinction.

In opposition to the historicists who thought that historical studies would uncover 'valid' or legitimate values, Weber consistently maintained that values were necessary for the constitution of facts but that knowledge of the facts could never provide an answer to questions about what we *should* do or which values we *should* believe. The point that Weber is making is *not* that facts and values are dichotomous, as he has sometimes been interpreted. Instead, Weber asserted that values were necessary for the constitution of facts, but facts were, so to speak, contaminated by the values that constituted them and could *not* then be used to substantiate a value-stance because the fact itself presupposed the particular value-stance one hoped to validate. For Weber, ultimate values had no empirical ground, which is to say, could not be proved empirically valid. [ John, 1984, p. 94 ]

Weber was a neo-Kantian who consciously rejected all Hegelian concepts and premises. There is nothing that is necessarily dialectical in history, or within the relationship between ideas. Ideas also do not have an objective existence in themselves. Values were created by human beings. Values were needed to create facts. We can use empirical knowledge in order to implement and clarify our values, but our ultimate values are products of choices which are not determined by empirical knowledge. *Some* of our assumptions within our value-systems are built upon empirical knowledge, but others are not.

At the end of his speech "Science as a Vocation" in 1919, Weber stated that a certain disillusionment with science had set in. This disillusionment was pervasive and part of the challenges of modernity. Some scholars had resigned themselves to passivity, some to nihilism and relativism, and



others hoped for what one might call a 'quick fix.' This 'quick fix' would come from either *the* longed-for discovery which would illuminate everything, or it would be a paradigm given by a charismatic leader. Some willfully naive proponents of science still waited for a new formula to be given to them to re-establish the credibility of science and the possibility that it could show them the right way to lead their lives. Weber likened this desire for scientific values to an eternal quest or the waiting for the Messiah.

If one wishes to propound new religions without new, genuine prophecies, then something profoundly similar occurs with even worse consequences. And academic prophecy will create only fanatical sects, never a true community....Integrity however forces us to state that, for the many who are waiting for new prophets and saviors today, the situation is the same as in that beautiful Edomite watchman's song from the period of exile which is included among the oracles of Isaiah....From that we should draw the lesson that nothing is gained by yearning and waiting alone, and we should act differently. [ Weber, 1989, p. 30-31 ]

Interestingly, Weber in a letter written to his friend Wilbrandt in 1913, had used a similar metaphor:

The realm of values is dominated by insoluble conflict, hence by the necessity for continuous compromises. Nobody can definitively decide how the compromises should be made, unless it be a 'revealed' religion. [ Schluchter, 1981, p. V ]

Science was a religion in some respects. Science, like religion, was based upon certain values and assumptions that were products of choices and were not self-evident. Some of the proponents of science have occasionally forgotten that science itself is not free of value-judgements and that it requires a little faith in the validity of the process itself. Not only are the premises of science built upon a mixture of doubt and certainty that seem to outstrip themselves, but the practice of science brings its own special burden. The practice of science entails doubt, a doubt no less perplexing in that it is not a necessity but that it is inevitable. We wait for solutions that may never come. We need to maintain professional integrity in this vigil. To use religious metaphor, we keep our faith despite our absent Messiah *because* the Messiah is absent, for if he were here, we would not need the faith.

If Weber had emphasized the personal integrity needed to prevent science from becoming amoral opportunism and ideology, Durkheim had advanced a more optimistic stance. In Durkheim's inaugural address at Bordeaux, he supported a more positivistic view of science and moral phenomena than the Germans would have accepted after the *Methodenstreit*:

We can thus conclude by saying that we have to choose between two positions: either recognize that social phenomena are amenable to scientific investigation or admit,

without reason and contrary to all scientific induction, that there are two worlds in the world, one ruled by the laws of causality, the other ruled by arbitrariness and contingency. [ Durkheim, |1887| 1974b, p. 195 ]

Durkheim and Weber were talking about slightly different programs when they separately examined the possibility of an empirical study of moral phenomena. Durkheim was a social realist, and he classified societies into types on the basis of variables. From the study of social facts and objective society-wide characteristics he thought moral phenomena could be explained and then clarified and recommended for particular types of societies. Weber examined different societies and different religions, but he did not accept the delineation of societies into real types, nor did he ever state that societies were like organisms or had obvious unproblematic boundaries. Durkheim retained a positive view of facts and a rather positivistic view of the program and agenda of science. He was writing in a more naive milieu than the Germans had experienced after the *Methodenstreit*, and Durkheim linked his optimistic and unproblematic view of science with his social realism and society-holism:

Of all the elements of civilization, science is the only one which, under certain conditions, presents a moral character. That is, societies are tending more and more to look upon it as a duty for the individual to develop his intelligence by learning the scientific truths which have been established.... Science is nothing else than conscience carried to its highest point of clarity. Thus, in order for society to live under existent conditions, the field of conscience, individual as well as social, must be extended and clarified. [ Durkheim, 1964, p.52 ]

Weber was unwilling to grant any moral status to the practice and institution of science as such. Instead, Weber advocated increased personal moral responsibility for all scientists, physical and social. Scientists had a responsibility to seek out and examine 'inconvenient facts' which might contradict their own positions. Scientists had to suffer stoically any angst they might feel as a result of not having ultimate answers. Scientists had to make their biases and prejudices clear and to identify them to their audience and to themselves. Most importantly, scientists had to use empirical knowledge to clarify their own positions. This clarification would root out all inconsistencies, so that the scientists could make their ultimate decisions clearly and then would be compelled to do so.

In "Science as a Vocation" and other writings Weber did mention that he wished science to be protected from ideologues such as Treitschke [ Weber, 1975, p.119 ] and Schmoller, but his overall thrust

was not merely to protect science from value-judgments. Science without value-judgments is impossible. Weber had emphasized that values were necessary before truth and results could even be desired. More important than protecting science from ideologues, Weber wished to protect the realm of values from the claims of those who wrapped themselves in the mantle of scientific credibility.

Both Bruun... and von Schelting... correctly emphasize that Weber was more concerned with protecting the sphere of values against the false claims of science than he was of protecting science from potential detrimental effects of values. [ Portis, 1983, p.41 ]

Weber considered scientific ideologues easily identifiable, and hence, less harmful than other dangers.

Of those scholars who believe they should *not* deny themselves practical evaluations in empirical discussions, the most passionate ones – such as Treitschke, and in his own way Mommsen as well – were actually the easiest to endure. For the very intensity of the emotional emphasis at least enabled a student *for his part* to gauge the subjectivity of his teacher's evaluations in its influence upon a possible tarnishing of his statements and thus to do for himself what the temperament of his teacher had not been granted.

[ Weber, 1975, p. 318 ]

Weber criticized classroom demagogues and suggested that the professor who imported his own values should reserve these speeches and tirades for audiences who could answer back. Students in large lecture halls in particular, and insecure students in general, did not have this option. Weber did not argue that he had some higher and 'objective' viewpoint himself, only that he had a passionate regard for the truth and objectivity. In regards to academia, Weber argued for people to gain their positions solely on merit, regardless of sex, religion, nationality, and political affiliation, and regardless of whether they had 'social credentials' such as a reserve officer commission. In particular, he supported the attempts to gain chairs by his colleagues who were tainted with controversial politics, such as Robert Michels, who was not a reserve officer and whose children were not baptized.

A greater concern for Weber than the professor who consciously and deliberately misused his position by inserting his personal value claims into his lectures, was the professor who hid behind the lectern and insisted that he was solely objective.

But the true teacher will guard against imposing any attitude on the student from the lectern, whether explicitly or through suggestion. 'To let the facts speak for themselves' is of course the most unfair method of all.' [ Weber, 1989, p. 20 ]

People can pretend to themselves and their audiences that they were more objective because of their vocal adherence to science. Claims to absolute objectivity were false and deceptive, and deception of others has

always been facilitated by self-deception. Any professor anxious about his own credibility and objectivity would work harder at convincing himself that he was faultless in his perspective and knowledge through either shrilly berating the nonbelievers in the audience or deluging them with disproportionate empirical data. There is nothing wrong with empirical data, it is merely not a substitute for conceptual clarity or objectivity.

Weber would have dismissed the possibility that a purely objective *starting* position was possible. Instead he wished for scholars to pursue objectivity, not to claim it. Objectivity was not something that one assumed out of the lack of values or from one's prejudices, certainly not from one's claims of impartiality. Objectivity was something that could increasingly be approached, like the curve of an asymptote approaching a linear line. Objectivity was not the mantle of credibility for scholar-mystics to assume in a new secular religion, but a goal of simplicity, clarification, consistency, validity, logical perfection, and self-responsibility. Objectivity was not something to be taken, nor an independent factor, but it was the effect of on-going scholarly effort and self-criticism. True objectivity perhaps could never be achieved, yet it exists as a goal for us to orient ourselves towards. All trees grow toward the sky. Without the sky there could be no growth for the trees, but the trees never actually *get to* the sky.

Weber's wish for ethical-neutrality in science is always linked to his term *Wertfreiheit*. There is some debate over what exactly Weber meant.

Weber's methodological essays are all polemical, and his targets were almost always those who claimed that their specific evaluations were scientifically demonstrable. He did not think this possible, but the issue in these essays is never whether a non-normative theory is possible. This assertion simply was not encountered in German social thought at this time. Weber used the term 'value-freedom', but he made it clear that he was referring to freedom from practical evaluations rather than from all normative commitments. [ Portis, 1983, p. 26 ]

Weber used the term '*Wertfreiheit*' which has sometimes been translated as 'value-freedom.' *Wertfreiheit* is better understood as a term to free science from a long list of dangers resulting from covert politics, a lack of sense of proportion and a lack of personal responsibility. These dangers include hidden premises, multiple and overlapping definitions, conflicting values, false objectivity, and the undermining of a position through insinuation and veiled attacks. Undermining includes the invocation of a norm through

suggestion, word association, and half-truths, and from interrupting other people's statements with false humor and insincere questions.

Weber had grounds for his concern that some professors would co-opt science. After his death more events would come to pass that would prove him correct. The National-Socialist Party in the Third Reich tried to educate Germans into believing that science had proven the existence of racial hierarchies. The Nazis tried to condition their subjects to believe that there was a 'Nordic science' which furnished its own truths for the Aryan race [ Peikoff, 1982, p.64 ]. Lysenko in the Soviet Union tried to create a 'dialectical-materialist' science of genetics [ Werth, 1971, ; Heller, 1988, p.56 ]. Some Soviet Marxists derided the universal concepts of time as 'bourgeois.' Some American students in the 'Politically-Correct' movement of epistemological nihilism voiced their belief that nonlinear concepts of time and space were inherently superior to the 'white-patriarchal-capitalist' perspective. Similarly there have been demands in literature, science, and sociology that the sum contributions of members of both sexes be given equal weight. In New York, Professor Jeffries uses the lecture podium to advocate African racial superiority. Today, in television commercials, it is noteworthy how many consumer products are hawked and promoted by actors wearing white laboratory coats.

Science was vital and ethic-neutrality was desirable, yet perfect objectivity continues to appear always elusive.

Today one usually speaks of science as 'free from presuppositions.' Is there such a thing? It depends upon what one understands thereby. All scientific work presupposes that the rules of logic and method are valid; these are the general foundations of our orientation in the world; and, at least for our special question, these presuppositions are the least problematic aspect of science. Science further presupposes that what is yielded by scientific work is important in the sense that it is 'worth being known.' In this, obviously are contained all our problems. For this presupposition cannot be proved by scientific means. It can only be *interpreted* with reference to its ultimate meaning, which, we must reject or accept according to our ultimate position towards life. [ John, 1984, 93-94 ]

Science is not an idea that springs to life from the head of Zeus fully formed. Science is not obvious. Science is the rational, methodical and empirical investigation of phenomena, yet it remains a human creation.

Weber sought to protect the diminished cultural spheres of life from the onslaught of bureaucratization and *blind inadvertent* rationalization. In many institutions that advanced rationalization for whatever particular reason, people worked like little cogs systematically advancing their immediate institutional goals. As the means and the institution became increasingly important in their minds, this increased autonomy of the means threatened the direct pursuit of what had been the institution's goal. Weber hoped for a renewed commitment of moral responsibility from the 'little cogs' in military, civil government, business, and religious institutions in a way that might not be immediately obvious. The individual cog could make a commitment to 'excellence.' This excellence was not technical excellence, but a commitment to personal excellence, which emphasized self-responsibility and awareness of the importance of decision making. The individual must not only make decisions competently but to *make* all *necessary* decisions: one must accept moral responsibility for all actions and inactions. There would be qualifications, and tests would be conducted to encourage the *attitude* needed for technical excellence, the same attitude of personal excellence and commitment to values which is the necessary building-block for moral action. The person would take responsibility for his direct petty bureaucratic actions and maintain the point of view that these actions were ultimately directed for purposes outside the institution itself. The person would work in a vocation, not a job. This vocation meant that the person worked for the work itself and not merely for its rewards. People would not merely work as an end in itself, but for the particular work and the attitudes and commitment required for it. The rewards of work had become increasingly monetarized, and the fact that people hold jobs for a pay-cheque should not be allowed to blind them to additional and even more important reasons for working at that particular profession. For example, all doctors should be paid for working, but only those who would save someone's life for its own sake can be said to be working in medicine as a vocation and can be trusted with the responsibility and credibility of ethical decision-making. If doctors performed life-saving operations exclusively for a pay-cheque then medical-ethics would become impossible. Money and materialism did not corrupt, but they could not substitute for human values and purpose, self-identity, and self-responsibility. A person was considered to

have a vocation if his performance in that profession was undeterred and unaffected by *both* rewards and punishments. These people could not be bribed, and could never be successfully encouraged to work below their ability.

By being conscious even to an uncomfortable level of the consequences of their actions, their performance, and their purpose, individuals would have continual need to clarify, maintain, and support their connection to their values, *whatever they might be*. Weber did not suggest we could solve moral malaise by telling people what values and norms to believe. Rather, we can insist that we work in such a way in our vocation that we strengthen our relationship to our values and the foundation of our values themselves. This ties together vocation with value-freedom (*Wertfreiheit*), then to value-relation (*Wertbeziehung*), and then to the process of making decisions in one's personal conduct of life (*Lebensfuehrung*). The results of such decisions in the *Lebensfuehrung* are the life-style (*Lebensstil*) and life-philosophy (*Lebensphilosophie*), and the method of stability within them as they are adapted to a changing world. The *Lebensstil* and *Lebensphilosophie* then help determine the type of probable, but unpredictable outcomes, the life-opportunities (*Lebenschancen*). This way Weber reconciled value-pluralism with ethical responsibility in a way that avoided moral relativism and nihilism.

In the epic movie "The Bridge On the River Kwai" (1957) the English colonel remarked that there was no surer way to kill a man from the inside out than for him to chose to work ineffectively. This seems to be congruent with what Weber had meant in "Politics as a Vocation" and "Science as a Vocation." (1919) People who do not care for little details probably will not care for bigger and more abstract issues in anything more than a subjective or arbitrary way, if at all. This does not mean that people who are attentive to details will always act ethically. Rather, it is to say that people who are attentive to details and who work conscientiously will be more likely to be more committed to their chosen ethical affiliation in a rational way. These people will not merely make ethical claims, but will be much more likely to be *zweckrational*, to weigh means and ends, and to be conscious of their methods of evaluation. People with a commitment to excellence, who cultivate a sense of proportion, and who are

attentive to small details, will understand their personal commitment to ethics and will not be subject to arbitrary whims or give up easily. We cannot say or prove that Weber supported all of these points directly, as this discussion involved extrapolation, but it does seem a reasonable interpretation.

Weber did not oppose rationality and science but spoke of their limitations as part of his attempt to promote a sense of responsibility and a sense of proportion within science. Religion and old traditions were fading but did not need replacing by a new cult of science. Weber did not wish to create new gods to replace the old ailing ones. Rationality is a good thing, but there were limits to the results of logical analysis and scientific investigation:

On the other hand, I am emphatically opposed to the view that a 'realistic' science of morality, in the sense of a demonstration of the factual influences exercised on the ethical convictions which prevail at any given time in a group of human beings by their other conditions of life and in turn by the ethical convictions on the conditions of life, would produce an 'ethics' which could ever say anything about what ought to be the case... [ Weber, 1978c, p. 80 ]

As stated above, the limits of science in the study of moral phenomena, were not caused by any irrationality of the world or inevitable contradictions in knowledge. The limits of science came from the finite knowledge that any one person could seek out and wield from an infinity of potential facts, from the leaps of faith (or confidence) one needed to have in certain assumptions, and the fact that one needed to base the scientific enterprise on a particular valuing of knowledge to begin. Science and religion had certain assumptions in common: they both assumed that relationships of cause and effect existed and that the world was in some sense ultimately understandable [ Weber, 1978a, p. 400 & p.407 ; Weber, 1946, p.273 & p.281 ]. If we are to cast aspersions on religion for being irrational, we must understand that religion also provided the conduit for the process of rationalization and that science too, depends upon assumptions that are not thrust upon the individual, but which the individual gathers unto himself.

Weber said that the social sciences depended on, among other things, the need to understand the meaning of the individuals involved in social action. Our investigation cannot give us results about what we must believe as such, but it can yield certain results. Investigation can show us what we must believe in



order to believe something else. The examination of what people meant by their actions can give us insight into the why and how they made decisions.

The one and only results which can ever be achieved by empirical psychological and historical investigation of a particular value-system, as influenced by individual, social, and historical causes, is its *interpretative explanation*. That is no small achievement. Not only is it desirable because of its personal (though not scientific) by-product, of making it easier for the individual to 'do justice to' those who really or apparently think differently. But it is also extremely important from the scientific point of view, in two respects: (i) for the purpose of an empirical causal study of human action, in learning to recognize what are really its ultimate motives; (ii) when one is engaged in discussion with someone who (really or apparently) has a different set of values from oneself, in determining which value-positions are genuinely opposed. For this is the real meaning of any debate about values: to understand what one's opponent (or oneself) really means, in the sense of the value which really, and not just apparently, is important to each of the two parties, and in this way to make it possible to decide one's attitude to this value in general. [ Weber, 1978c, p. 80-81 ]

Weber's methodological individualism sought to realize two goals: for we social scientists to understand the meaning and motives of the people we study, and for we ourselves to choose, in his words, between Apollo and Aphrodite, between God and the Devil. Certain values are opposed and others are not. Sociological analysis can show us which values are exclusive, which are compatible, and which are interdependent.

Objectivity is possible, but not easy. We start the scientific investigation with a confidence in metaphysical concepts such as causality, truth and linear time. Our experiences are different from those of others. The process of scientific investigation is built upon the assumption that we experience the same world as everyone else, but that our own experiences always differ. If we were to exchange the knowledge gained from our experiences for what are called 'higher truths,' we would be throwing away our own power of observation and logical analysis for second-hand truths delivered by the prophets of religion, ideology, and science. Yet it is only through understanding other people's points of view and taking advantage of the knowledge gained through past scientific endeavors by other people, that we gain scientific objectivity.

Any empirical consideration of this situation would as John Stuart Mill remarked, lead to acknowledgement of absolute polytheism as the only metaphysic which would fit the case. A non-empirical approach, concerned more with the interpretation of meanings (in other words, a genuine moral philosophy), would go further than this: it could not fail to do justice to precisely that aspect of the situation which is most decisive. That is to say,

it is in the last resort always, and again and again, more than a mere matter of choosing between alternative values: it is rather a matter of an irreconcilable struggle to the death like the conflict between 'God' and the 'Devil'. Between these rivals there can be no question of relativism or compromise - or not, as must be insisted, in the real sense. For, as everyone finds in the course of life, such compromises are made in fact, and so in outward appearance: indeed, they are made at every step. The different domains of value are entwined and entangled in virtually every single important attitude which real men adopt. It is here that we find the levelling effect of 'everyday life' in the truest sense of the word: in the context of every day routine a man does not become aware (above all, does not even *want* to become aware) of this partly psychological, partly pragmatic confusion of mortally opposed values, and evades the choice between 'God' and the "Devil" and the decision, which ultimately lies with him, about which of the conflicting values is under the sway of the one and which of the other. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, so disturbing to human complacency yet so inescapable, is nothing but this recognition of these oppositions, and of the consequent necessity to accept that every important individual action, indeed life as a whole, if it is not to slip by like a merely natural process but to be lived consciously, is a series of ultimate decision, by means of which the soul, as in Plato, chooses its own destiny, in the sense of the meaning of what it does and is. The crudest misunderstanding to which the intentions of those who argue for an ultimate conflict of values are occasionally subject is thus that contained in the interpretation of their view as a form of 'relativism', or in other words as a view of life which is based on precisely the opposite conception of the relations between the different value-spheres and is only meaningfully tenable (in any coherent form) on the basis of a metaphysic which is structured in a very special ('organic') fashion. [ Weber, 1978c, p. 84-85 ]

Empirical investigation of moral phenomena can show us the meaning of what people do, and it can lead us to the information that would clarify the choices that we must or can make.

The fate of an epoch which has eaten of the tree of knowledge is that it must know that we cannot learn the meaning of the world from the results of analyzing the course of events, be the analysis ever so perfect; we must rather be in a position to create this meaning ourselves. General views of life and the universe (*Weltanschauungen*) can never be the product of increasing empirical knowledge. Hence the highest ideals, which move us most forcefully, are always formed only in the struggle with other ideals, which are just as sacred to others as ours are to us. [ Weber, 1978c, p. 121 ]

We are faced with a world of irreconcilable values, yet we must choose between values that are mutually exclusive. We must grant other people tolerance and grant them respect for making their own choices, but we must stick to our own.

To hold our ideals as sacred is not to uphold them blindly. Even if the religious acolyte does not call upon his God to test his powers, he still applies them nevertheless in genuine action against the forces of the rival Gods. The scientific acolyte, that is the man who submits his values to the greatest rationality, not only can apply his values, but can seek out 'inconvenient facts' and 'test' his values in what is still a

common way that is open for almost everyone. These tests are not a monopoly of the scientist, but neither are they 'perfect.' These tests cannot prove true as much as they can prove false and the tests themselves can be no more infallible than their practitioner. We can test our value choices to see if they are contradictory or contradicted by new information. We can, with this new information, more carefully delineate our *claims* of the values we hold, as well as see better how to decide between options. However, if our values are "completely correct," we cannot rely on empirical information to prove them. If our values are "completely correct," we could act upon them and then find to our pleasure that we lack cognitive dissonance and evidence to contradict our position, but this is still not sufficient proof. We cannot always rely automatically on empirical information to reveal our own inconsistencies and our mistakes. For example, we cannot rely on new information about the process of evolution to prove or disprove the existence of God, but we *could* use such information to disprove any notion of a hierarchy of races —if we apply the information correctly, which is not a given. Even if our values are "correct" and their use is efficacious, we cannot then necessarily convince other people of the veracity of our values.

If we were to diminish the importance of our values to ourselves, we would summon greater dangers. As it stands, we understand our own values, value them or, if you like, sanctify them, and then respect other people's commitment to their own values even if they are different from our own. From understanding our commitment to our values, we understand how other people with whom we disagree maintain their value commitments. However, this balance between conflicting value positions can be easily upset. If we cease to hold our own values as sacred, we summon a spectre worse than that of the Inquisition of Orthodoxy, the desolation of nihilism. If we lessen the respect we hold for our beliefs, we will lessen our responsibility for their on-going clarification and internal consistency. In addition, any lessening of our axiological commitment will lessen our respect for other people's commitment to their values. The children who care little for their own clothes, will care little for the clothes of others, and will ridicule those that do care for their own. Those of us who hold all values to be expedient will not submit to scrutiny *what* values should be expedient *for* —and will without comprehension submit our more careful

neighbors to grievous risk. Those who demand expediency of themselves will demand expediency of other people. In such a situation, if there is the possibility that force will be employed, those who value their beliefs the most, may indeed have the most to lose. Those who damage their own axiological commitments will demand of others that they damage their own as well. Not only are those who worship expediency dangerous to themselves and to others, they will encourage more people to be dangerous to themselves. In summary, tolerance of other people's opinions is not the result of losing one's respect for one's own beliefs. Tolerance of other people is often the product of intolerance of our own contradictions, lapses, and mistakes, as well as a product of the dignity we place on consistency and our respect for all the rational processes (logic, value for truth, and volition) that underlie belief systems. Tolerance for the products of thought (ideas and beliefs) ultimately come from the respect we have for the means and processes of thought.

Weber first addressed this point of expediency versus moral commitment early on in his academic career. In 1887 the German monarchy reversed its previous discriminatory policy towards German Catholics and Bismarck ended the *Kulturkampf*. Weber had opposed the *Kulturkampf*, but disliked the fact that it ended out of simple political expediency [ Weber, 1975, p. 120 ]. If it was the case that the *Kulturkampf* had been conducted solely for political expediency, ending it on the same grounds — though the termination was a good thing— *consolidated the moral impoverishment* of the German state.

If it is true that for us it was not a matter of conscience but only one of expediency, then we really have done violence to the conscience of the Catholic people, as the Catholics say we have, for reasons that were of an external nature. For most of the Catholics it surely was a matter of conscience, and in that case it was not a matter of conscience against conscience, as we always reminded them. We have acted *without* conscience, then, and are the losers morally as well. This is the worst part of our defeat, for it prevents us from ever resuming the struggle the way it must be resumed if it is to lead to victory. [ Weber, 1975, p. 121 ]

Weber was not opposed to a democratic nation creating a national compulsory universal and secular educational system. Weber was not opposed to the state forcing a confrontation with the Roman Catholic Church or any other institution, provided that this was not done on the basis of expediency. Expediency,

after all, relates to only the timing, circumstances, and possibility of success. Expediency, regardless of its exactitude and preparation, is always limited in its ability to question and defend its own purpose.

It is surprisingly ironic that Weber has been called a relativist by some such as Allan Bloom. Weber emphasized value-relevance (*Wertbeziehung*) and value-freedom (*Wertfreiheit*). Values are relative, relative to our lives and the choices we make, provided we identify them and make the choices. Values are not relative in the sense that they are all equal, rather all values are relative to individuals with concerns and purposes. Values are relative to our perspectives. To assume the direct relativism of all values as such, we would have to assume that all people are of the same value to themselves, and that all perspectives are equal. Empirical knowledge played a key role for Weber in the process of controlling value-relativism. Empirical knowledge cannot tell us what to believe, but we can use it to discover whether our positions are untenable, contradictory, and inconsistent. Furthermore, we can determine if our positions are changing. Clear knowledge of science and ourselves can show us when we will have to choose between one paradigm and another. Knowledge consists not only of details, but also of the consistency between facts. The arrival of new and additional knowledge can scarcely *make us* decide between competing and exclusive *Weltanschauungen*, but we can use it when we make our choices. We can use knowledge to determine when we are making a leap of faith, when we can make a leap of faith, or when we cannot make a leap of faith without contradicting something else we believe. Knowledge is not power, nor does it by itself create new ideologies, but the arrival of new information certainly has in its effect the modification of existing *Weltanschauungen* and our choices between them. Of course, this does not imply that knowledge has an independent causal power. The same knowledge can and most probably will be used differently by different people in our modern world.

To become intensely rational or *zweckrational*, we must admit that our knowledge and values may not be perfect and may need to change, but at the same time we must apply our knowledge and our values, in consistent purposeful-rational action. To call our values relative is somewhat simplistic, because we must understand our devotion to scrutinizing our values, our commitment to rationality, consistency,

and action, as absolutes. To be a relativist, one must say that everything is relative, including relativism, or one would be in a contradiction –a fact of internal inconsistency and a mental quagmire which bothers some people and not others. Weber suggested instead that the scientist's commitment to ethical responsibility be an absolute, and that the scientist act upon his most consistent and rational values as if they are absolutes. It is wise to anticipate changes in our values, and some changes no doubt will ensue from their very own application. However, allowing doubt to stop someone from acting upon his own axiological achievements, whatever they may be, is definitely not something Weber suggested. We will always have some doubt, but we have an obligation to act and fulfill our normal responsibilities with either our greatest rationality or faith.

There is a fluid aspect to the increase of knowledge, but Weber was no pragmatist. Scientific knowledge is provisional and ideally, always expanding in additional details and greater accuracy. We may make and unmake new axiological decisions in the future. We are not only faced with a world of changing facts and norms, but we choose to face them and to make the changes. Weber's vision was subtle. We must not act upon our values as if they are merely relative; we must act upon our most rational and carefully considered values as if they are completely true.

It is true that we regard as *objectively* valuable those innermost elements of the 'personality,' those highest and most ultimate value-judgments which determine our conduct and give meaning and significance to our life. We can indeed espouse these values only when they appear to us as valid, as derived from our highest values and when they are developed in the struggle against the difficulties which life presents. Certainly, the dignity of the 'personality' lies in the fact that for it there exist values about which it organizes its life; –even if these values are in certain cases concentrated exclusively within the sphere of the person's 'individuality,' then 'self-realization' in *those* interests for which it claims *validity* as *values*, is the idea with respect to which its whole existence is oriented. Only on the assumption of belief in the validity of values is the attempt to espouse value-judgments meaningful. [ Weber, 1949, p.55 ]

Weber appears to have always emphasized that rationality was a subjective process in an objective world. Values were vital as part of both the means and ends of both rationality and cognition. Weber's relativism is not so much conventional relativism, that last step before various possibilities of nihilism, cultural determinism and irresponsible subjectivism, but value-relevancy. Facts are relative to what we understand is worth knowing. If we were to embrace 'blind relativism,' the belief that we should doubt our beliefs and

never think that what we think is right, we would end up with a paradox and complete scepticism, and without rational action. This is not to say that we should automatically assume that what we think is true because it is we who believe it. That would eliminate the process self-clarification. from it. Rather, we must scrutinize ourselves and make sure, as rationally as possible, that our values are valid, and then act upon them as if they are true –while being open to new possibilities. We accept the fact that our values and facts will need regular examination, clarification, and re-thinking, but this is not to stop us from acting on what we think to be true.

Marianne Weber wrote her husband's biography and summarized his research goals better than he had expressed them himself. We can interpret his writings with greater significance after having read his biography. Max Weber had written in his Economic Ethic of the World Religions (known as the WEWR essays) in "*Zwischenbetrachtung*," how there is tension between the development of increasing rationality in the world and our commitments to both religious values and all ethical absolutes [ Weber, 1975, p.323 ]. This tension is not inevitable, and Weber may have overemphasized the extent to which religions are, or need to be, 'other-worldly.' However, he saw that this tension between ethics and reason, though uncomfortable, is not nearly as dangerous as ignoring it. In Marianne's words:

However, the situation does not often arise, for most people cannot bear even a glimpse of this state of affairs, and they manage to live in accordance with very contradictory principles. The superficiality of everyday life consists precisely in the fact that a person does not become aware of this intermixture of bitterly hostile values and, above all, does not want to become aware of it; he evades the choice between 'God' and 'the devil' and his own ultimate decision as to which of the clashing values is dominated by one and which by the other. Even though the attitude of the man of action who is always ready to compromise and adapt may be unavoidable, the thinking that gets to the bottom of one's structure must penetrate even the covering by means of which such a person protects himself from insights that are hard to endure. [ Weber, 1975, p. 323 ]

Weber's attitude was not fatalistic. He may have shared Nietzsche's concern about the superficiality and decadence of modern life, but Weber never saw anything as inevitable. Things will never automatically get better, but neither will they necessarily get worse. The individual who waits for a 'new historical epoch' to improve matters will either wait in vain or not deserve any benefits he receives. Rather, as Weber liked to emphasize, we can get on with our lives and meet 'the demands of the day.' Avoiding

either our mental responsibilities of ethical clarity or our physical responsibilities of action will be sufficient in of themselves to prevent any improvement in our situation. Times are difficult, yes, but we can always advance our own mental clarity and *Zweckrationalitaet* —or failing this, make an 'intellectual sacrifice' and go back humbly to one of the long-enduring and patient Churches that will always receive us [ Weber, 1989, p.30 ].

There are different possible choices regarding our use of reason, as well as choices we make within a reasonable *Weltanschauung*. We can embrace faith completely and use the products of reason, like a barbarian shaman with the atom bomb. We can embrace faith or otherwise choose ethical goals and stick to them, and then use the processes of reason to select our own immediate methods and choices in value-rational activity (*wertrationale Handlung*). In such a case, our rationality is merely our cleverness and efficacy in pursuing means for our unscrutinized goals. Or we can eschew faith completely and move into rationality of both means and ends (*zweckrational*), never free of some self-doubt and self-scrutiny, but always working to the greatest consistency with our empirical knowledge and the consistency of our value-choices. Weber saw the union of purposeful-rational (*zweckrational*) thought and faith in salvation as completely impossible [ Weber, 1975, p. 323 ]. It would be pleasant if this were not so, and there are scientists today who retain a commitment to faith. However, for the sake of his paradigm and the exploration of this investigation which cannot and will not assume theological foundations and assumptions, we understand rationality and faith to be fundamentally different. An individual can try to unite them in whatever fashion seems desirable but the results, even if subjectively pleasing, would ultimately rest on contradicting premises. For our analytical purposes, such 'solutions' would appear like suspensions of oil and water which can be combined but eventually separate again. How faith and reason are to be combined, remains an individual choice.

Even if this choice to accept or reject faith and dogma is made without difficulty, other decisions must follow. Some people may choose to accept inconsistency between values, or to avoid contradictory information, or to avoid self-clarification. For other people who wish to pursue a rational course of action,



inconsistency between the facts and between the values must be persistently ironed out. New inconsistencies will arise later and new choices will have to be made again. Life is full of choices. We all have to choose between values at some point. Sometimes we can have both choices if the choices are inclusive. For example, we can choose to value both Brussels sprouts and reproductive freedom. Some other choices are exclusive and contradictory. It would be impossible to be both Pro-Abortion and Pro-Life. We can choose between choices, and for those of us who want clarity, the circumstances and processes of our choosing are not of our own choosing. A commitment to rationality and making choices commits us to new unanticipated circumstances and choices in the future.

In some respects, any choice we can make, must be made. Weber understated his case somewhat by not discussing this aspect. Weber was conversant with Nietzsche's concerns about decadence and nihilism, and should have mentioned this problem. The pursuit of science, provided we choose to pursue it and choose to do so objectively, will give us substantial empirical knowledge. We can use this knowledge to clarify what choices we *must* make *if* we want to end inconsistency and falsehood. In any compromise between Good and Evil, Evil will always win. When poison is mixed with food, the result is not "moderation" but poisonous food –and the end of any commitment to rationality. Evil wins through compromises, because compromises themselves sacrifice values to expediency, delay, and ambiguity, and ultimately ignorance. Not only will Evil delay any just reckoning, it will have achieved moral equality with the Good, if only through the destruction of the scales of justice. Finally, the latter act can only be achieved if the proponents of the Good voluntarily sacrifice their sense of judgement and their personal integrity for the short term compromise, a victory for Evil that Evil by itself would be powerless to achieve. Weber emphasized that the human sciences can give us the information to find the necessary decisions but will not make them for us. Science can find when a fork in the path of values must be taken, where one path of the fork leads to 'God' and the other to the 'Devil.' This is not to say that the human sciences can give us the information to identify which path is which; that has to be an informed and value-

relevant choice of the individual. Will all choices be made? Our will sometimes fails us. Knowledge is not power. Knowledge can clarify decisions, but it will still take values, purpose, and *courage* to make them.

Though scientific knowledge and rational clarity can help us understand when choices are to be made between irreconcilable values, individuals do not always make these choices. The source of the will and determination to clarify irreconcilable values is obscure. There is always the possibility that people in an epoch will succumb to a kind of axiological decadence, and refuse to make decisions, even if they view them as necessary, and even if they have the courage to make the choice. Some will worship at more than one shrine. The fate of these "ontological dabblers" is uncertain. They indulge in false metaphysical tolerance, refusing to make a commitment to any deity. There are those that walk the path to values as a goal in itself and do not wish to reach the end, or any end. To call them "polytheistic" would be misleading if they understand that the philosophies/gods that they play off against one another are inherently incompatible and that one choice is indeed 'God' if the other is the 'Devil.' These "dabblers" seem to have more of the appearance than the substance of *Zweckrationalitaet*.

### Collective Concepts

Weber promoted a view of social science as *Wirklichkeitswissenschaft* and *Geisteswissenschaft*. That is to say, the social sciences were the study of concrete social phenomena in a paradigm which accommodated the uniqueness of human experience in a different way from the physical sciences. The natural sciences were interested in laws and generalization. The social sciences are interested in explaining and describing particular phenomena. Reality does not serve the abstract concepts. Human beings invent abstract concepts to better describe human phenomena and to explain causes and changes. We are not interested in expounding like Hegel *the* "Master-Slave relationship," and we are not interested in the use of deductive logic alone without empirical facts. Instead, we study specific cases of a phenomenon such as slavery, we create concepts and types to better perceive the cases with which we are concerned, and then we apply the concepts to these real cases for greater explanation and understanding.

Chemists are interested not in dissolving particular molecules but in the chemical in general. Social scientists, in contrast, might be interested in why the Protestant Reformation started in Germany when it did. Reliability in the social sciences is intrinsically different than reliability in the physical sciences for nothing in the social world is ever as it was. As we practitioners of the social sciences are in 'the sciences of concrete reality,' we are interested in abstract principles made manifest exclusively in particulars. To paraphrase Aristotle, we study breeds of dogs and individual dogs, but not Dog itself.

In addition to the issue of concretes reducing the reliability of social science investigation, the matter of meaning adds greater complexity. Unlike chemical molecules, all human beings are different from one another and the meaning of their behavior not only leads to different subsequent behavior, but it alters what their behavior *is* –insofar as what the social researcher is attempting to learn. The meaning of an event is determined by the actor's values and in addition, by their value-relations. It is through having both values and value-relations and a process for deciding among values, that human beings can have purpose. Unlike molecules, human beings can have purposes. However, there is no purpose to history and no collective spirit of the people [ Jaspers, 1989, p.94 ]. Weber's choices of terms for the social sciences were always to sharply delineate his position from metaphysical historicism and Positivism.

At various times Weber had emphasized that his purpose as a social researcher was to protect the social sciences from those theorists whose social holism or metaphysics obscured the very matter which was under consideration: individual social action. In a letter to a friend, Weber wrote:

If I am now a sociologist (according to my official position) then it is so that I can put an end to the ghostly enterprise of those who work with collective concepts. In other words, even sociology can only be pursued by proceeding from the action of one or more, whether a few or many, individuals. It is, therefore, strictly 'individual' in method.'  
[ Portis, 1983, p.28 ]

The above statement clarifies what Weber meant when he referred to the entire *Entwicklungsgedanke* as a giant swindle [ Hayek, p.384 ] and when he said that methodologically, there was either Hegel's way or his own [ Grumley, 1988, p.21 ].

Weber's methodology is far superior to that of Durkheim. Weber rejected a Positivist view of knowledge and rejected the Historicist view of history. He denied the possibility of a science free of

assumptions and personal values, and he revealed the limitations of the *application* of empirical generalization. Weber in no way denied that empirical generalizations existed in social phenomena. In fact, Weber wrote several discussions of the whole nature of different types of empirical generalizations in his critiques of Knies and Stammler. Weber carefully made a distinction between "law-like" generalizations and social laws. Social laws are a chimera, but we can use "law-like" generalizations to understand the cumulative effects of individual interaction. Weber sought to demonstrate how the meaning in people's lives frequently had continuous and long-term consequences. This is the purpose of his writings on the Protestant role in economic development. Weber similarly examined the effects of the Moslem belief of predetermination, the Calvinist belief in predestination, and the spread of economic and religious practices from one culture to another. Weber criticized Menger for believing that "real types" of social phenomena existed. Weber did not deny that Menger and other economists could predict (within limited parameters) social phenomena, but he did deny that social events could be confidently predicted through either universal or historical-specific "social laws." Not only did Weber not believe in universal laws, he did not believe in social laws specific to a particular stage in history –for stages of history themselves were in effect mere Ideal Types and creations of the historian. Even if an event could be successfully predicted, the meaning and interpretation of such social events could not be predicted at all. Weber completely rejected the position of both Durkheim and the Historicists that societies had a certain "overall" idea or set of values which made them holistic and gave them a destiny or separate reality.

Weber did not criticize Durkheim directly. It seems that Weber was familiar with Durkheim's writings, but that the French school of sociological inquiry was regarded by Weber and the other Germans after the *Methodenstreit* as somewhat naive and methodologically primitive [ Segre, 1986, p. 158-159 ]. Durkheim drew a large part of his intellectual heritage from Comte, and Weber saw that Comte had false claims to objectivity and that Comte's paradigm rested on an unfounded belief in historical stages. Durkheim did not explicitly hold himself to the premises of his mentors such as Comte, but neither did Durkheim explicitly deny them. Durkheim was writing in a somewhat earlier milieu than Weber, and for

a different audience with a much different political agenda. Durkheim seemed, in hindsight, to have adapted the conclusions and content of his mentors to a more empirical base. Weber had no such need to adapt the content of paradigms to an overall *Weltanschauung* or to 'update' them. Weber started afresh, working on specific problems in legal and economic history, notably on his study of agricultural practices east of the Elbe River. Only after finishing substantive research did Weber turn to methodological issues. Durkheim was a professor of Pedagogy and Sociology who wished to inculcate civic morality and political views in the next generation of students. In contrast, Weber was critical of professors selling their students *Weltanschauungen* at all. Weber suggested in "Science as a Vocation" that scientists should only make available to their students technical data, the means to acquire technical data, and ways to build views of the world. Scientists were not to tell the student the views of the world the student should hold; they were not to use the podium to inculcate *Weltanschauungen*. Rather, the scholar should uphold personal intellectual responsibility and help the student clarify and develop their own processes for forming views of the world. Weber's methodology was much more developed and subtle than Durkheim's. Weber's clarity in developing these tiny steps in logic and concept-formation prevented him from ordaining himself as a prophet of the coming era and from making grandiose claims.

There are grounds to compare Weber and Durkheim with regard to how they conceptualized the experience of moral phenomena by the individual in their time. This is not to say that their theories were methodologically compatible, nor that they had exactly the same concerns, but they both understood the ongoing pain and angst in modern society. The individual, according to Durkheim, could never be truly moral [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.78 ]. Weber's own words on the subject could almost be Durkheim's, for he too, understood the pain and loneliness of the individual tormented by ethical ideals out of reach and buffeted by moral forces:

The ethical values are not *alone* in the world. If they demand sacrifices, they can make human beings who have incurred guilt *small* and they can lead to insoluble conflicts where guiltless action is *impossible*. Then (ethically speaking) there must be such action that the people involved suffer the smallest possible losses in their human dignity, in their capacity for kindness and love, in their fulfillment of duty, and in the value of their personality, and this often is a tall order. [ Weber, 1975, p.387 ]

Durkheim saw the lack of external regulation, both ontological and axiological, as the great cause of individual angst and suicide. While this is dependent on Marianne Weber's interpretation of her husband's life, it is noteworthy that Weber saw the new civil and sexual freedoms of his time as worrisome and difficult for many, but happy, erotic, and wholesome for others [ Weber, 1975, p.388 ]. Weber disliked how so many people were quick to 'invent' new rights for themselves based upon their feelings and desires. It is hard to say whether this meant that Weber appreciated the powerful individual will triumphing over reason or that Weber objected, as a lawyer and a historian, on epistemological grounds to people inventing metaphysical rights based on their feelings. In any case, Weber understood, as did Durkheim, that the individual was trapped in moral forces of a society that was beyond his control. Unlike Durkheim, however, Weber seemed to value personal freedom and individual happiness at least to some small extent, as ends in themselves.

The single most important methodological element that Weber possessed that Durkheim did not, was that Weber understood the problematic nature of collective entities. This point needs to be clarified in several different respects and we will examine each separately.

Weber saw culture and human experience as being part of an infinitude. We look at an infinite fraction of a greater infinity whenever we behold the world around us. We invent collective concepts only after we have selected reference values in our gaze. Weber linked *Wertbeziehung* to his rejection of collective concepts as real things in themselves.

But consider cultural evolution as a whole or a 'totality,' in the scientific sense of this expression. That is, consider it from the standpoint of 'what we value as worth knowing.' Scientific knowledge of the 'totality' is possible only through synthesis, only by progressing from a 'monocausal' to a 'comprehensive conception.' Such knowledge can never be established through the futile attempt to represent historical structures as if they were exclusively determined by artificially isolated elements that are merely products of fabrication. [ Weber, 1977, p.65 ]

Our knowledge of collective entities themselves such as 'the social good,' 'collective conscience,' and 'Society,' is not limited by these concepts being social constructs as much as by the fact that they are value-relevant constructs. The relevance of this may not be obvious. The differences between Durkheim and Weber can be rendered on this one point. Weber worked with *genetic* explanation to explain causation of

*particular* phenomena. Durkheim worked with *variable-type* classification to explain generic causation of social types. A question that Weber might have asked would be, "What were some of the causes of the Protestant Reformation?" Durkheim might have asked, "What was the cause of secularization? What was the effect of urbanization? What was the one cause of modernity?" Weber, unlike Durkheim, never assumed monocausation. Durkheim classified social phenomena by types through different variables. In contrast, Weber used Ideal-Types to better perceive unique phenomena. Weber rejected the view that claimed *types* of societies naturally existed. Types of societies depended on both the belief that whole societies existed as concrete entities, *and* on the notion that types of societies could be sorted through variables and that their social forces that were obvious and real in themselves. Our choices of variables are not 'obvious,' nor are they arbitrary. After all, if our choices of concerns and values were arbitrary, our thoughts would be so chaotic that we would scarcely call ourselves human beings. Rather, when we choose variables to group societies by type, we similarly choose *why* and *to what end* we wish to conduct such an enterprise.

Concepts are made by human beings to understand the reality around them. If we should ever lose sight of this basis fact, we would subvert the entire scientific enterprise. Reality would become the basis to serve our concepts, and facts would serve our fictions. Weber emphasized that concepts are used to explain particular effects and to help us perceive things in a way more clearly relevant to our concerns. The type of concepts having the highest prestige, i.e. scientific laws, still remains tied to both our minds and reality. This is not to say that minds and reality are exclusive or wholly separate, but that we choose to examine what exists in the scientific enterprise, and this investigation can never be conducted without both the universe and our will to see. Scientific laws are credible and reputable, and they seem 'perfect.' However, scientific laws are the explanations and generalizations of how physical phenomena will react in certain conditions on average. The dissolving of a solute assumes enough particles of solute and solution to make the experiment possible. It is impossible to dissolve one molecule in another, and our standards of how much salt can dissolve in so much water in so much time depends upon certain minimums of time,

solute, and solution to prevent 'erratic' or unpredictable results. If we should alter the conditions by a fraction or through the introduction of another variable, such as radiation, air pressure, or kinetic energy, and then receive a result different from the published scientific law in the textbooks, we do not violate the scientific laws nor have we altered the forces of physics and chemistry. If we alter the conditions of an experiment and get an unexpected result, we merely have to add more delineating parameters to the existing scientific generalizations. We assume reality remains reality, that  $A=A$ , and that our scientific laws were *incomplete*, rather than wrong. Scientific laws remain generalizations of reality that are true under certain conditions most of the time. We say 'most of the time,' not to imply that the 'Law of Gravity' is true today and not tomorrow, but to emphasize that the results may differ when new variables are introduced that we cannot control or measure, or when we are dealing with amounts of the variables below which a generalization is possible. After all, the motion of a single particle is impossible to predict by scientists in a laboratory, but every child knows how to melt a marshmallow in hot chocolate. Thus we can see that though causal explanation is simpler in the physical sciences than in the social sciences, it still depends upon methodological assumptions.

The preceding paragraph expounding the implicit limitations of scientific knowledge will seem more relevant to our exposition of Weberian methodology once we see that Weber made this issue clear: Nevertheless – and the debate on radioactivity shows this – the validity of these hypotheses remain dependent upon their 'empirical confirmation.' They are always subject to 'empirical verification.' Even a student in the first semester of logic is expected to know that these generalizations have not acquired the logical status 'formal' *a priori* principles of knowledge - the status of epistemological 'categories.' They can never occupy this status. [ Weber, 1977, p. 81 ]

For Weber, epistemological categories and the Laws of Identity could be taken as absolutes. However, for Weber, the amount of knowledge we could learn from merely applying these epistemological categories and Laws of Identity by themselves to our own observations was strictly limited. For all scientific investigation we require both personal values and concepts. Concepts help us perceive reality, but in any dispute between concepts and reality, reality always wins.



We can see that Weber's discussion in Roscher and Knies that societies were not unproblematic is the same argument from the opposite direction. He said that societies and their borders in particular and collective concepts in general are not the same to different people. They cannot be submitted to empirical verification at all [ Weber, 1975a, p.180 ]. Furthermore, even if they could be submitted to verification and be confirmed as empirical generalizations, this would not make their status and existence as unquestionable as the logic and facts that confirmed them.

Real types of societies then do not exist, but we do currently live in a type of society that arose after previous types. Relating the changing social milieu to certain of our own wishes and premises, we can say that we are living in an era which is 'modern,' and in regard to its internal dynamism and flux, is unlike all earlier eras. Most human beings wish to see a stable and unified 'world' around them, hence the terms *universe* and *cosmos* to describe all that there is. However stable the nature of the *cosmos* is, our conceptions and scientific information about it are certainly not stable. We assume an order and unity to the universe as a premise for ourselves to be sane. Yet our expanding knowledge of the universe has certainly shaken not only our preconceptions and prejudices, but our ability to assume that any new information will be definitive enough so that additional information will not shake our view. Weber's concerns about modernity was not based upon historical stages, nor was it built upon the assumption that 'contemporary' life was superior in terms of meaning to that of previous generations. Rather, Weber examined modern life from the point of view of his own paradigm, which we can call both cognitive determinism and methodological individualism.

Modern life is not the effect of a change of the universe, but of our expanding knowledge of it experienced through our increasingly more autonomous institutions which in the process of increasing rationalization, increasingly demand more *Wertrationalitaet* of us all. The *Wertrationalitaet* of modern life seems to be characterized ironically by the means of action rather than the ultimate goals, such as those which characterized the *Wertrationalitaet* of traditional society. The pursuit of short-term or institutional goals became our new ultimate values.

Modernity, for Weber, was characterized by the disappearance of a harmonised hierarchy of values. Science, art, religion, politics, the economy, in sum, all the various spheres of cultural value now asserted a real autonomy and resisted subordination within a religiously ordained hierarchy. These autonomous value spheres were set on independent courses determined only by their own internal structure and the logic of their specific forms of action. [ Grumley, 1988, p. 25 ]

As human beings advanced the 'spheres' of knowledge, this threatened to fracture our own view of the unity of the universe. Human beings could only behold a small fraction of the infinitude at any one time. Modern life was the era of the specialist, who was busy with small details of *what* and *how* and not *why* and *for what end?* People increasingly devoted themselves to one aspect of life. The possibility of a 'Philosopher-King' is long dead. Our current politicians are professionals who manage crises generically as managers rather than as crusaders and specialists, and almost always lack personal experience and direct contact with the subjects and matters over which they wield power. Specialization brings many benefits, but it does not facilitate a unified view of the world, except perhaps for small groups of specialists. In "Science as a Vocation," Weber put forward the idea that if this process of specialization was better understood, the dangers of its advancement could be mitigated. However, in the last analysis, Weber at the end of his career had not changed from the position he had taken at its beginning: "In truth it is the old general types of human ideals which we bring to the material of our science" [ Weber, 1975, p. 308 ].

The characteristic then of modern life is that no one stable set of answers can be presumed to the basic ethical questions which people experience. In fact, we have even endured a change from *Man* to *people*, the former concept emphasizing metaphysical unity, the latter, diversity. Weber's insistence that we see culture and life as infinite, must be clearly understood.

Culture is a finite segment of the meaningless infinity of the world process, a segment on which human beings confer meaning and significance. [ Saran, 1977, p. 32 ]

Weber was preaching neither fatalism nor nominalism. Rather, he insisted on individual responsibility for how the individual sees the world. Ontology could depend on social supports and collective ideas, but especially in a modern society the individual had to choose between values and choose to see.

The fate of an epoch which has eaten of the tree of knowledge is that it must know that we cannot learn the meaning of the world from the results of its analysis, be it ever so perfect; it must rather be in a position to create this meaning itself. [ Saran, 1977, p. 32 ]

No doubt Weber's prognostication that people must create their own meaning can be misinterpreted, especially if we keep in mind that all interpretation depends upon a certain *Beziehung auf Werte*. For those of us afraid to be personally responsible for both our views of the world and our personal values, such a statement seems daunting and pessimistic, bleak and colorless. The child grasps the proffered item, bites, and cries in despair that it is not food. Perhaps not, but the item is not food in itself, but a tool. Little children are given Pablum, older children are given can-openers. Weber understood that modernity appears in itself colorless to the individual, but the individual can color it in for himself.

Weber's relationship to collective concepts can then be summarized as follows. Weber rejected the real existence of collective concepts, but he recognized the power they might have over the minds that adopted them. Historians need theory to explain history as well as to describe it. Collective concepts did not exist in themselves. Individuals tried to understand the world --and any attempt necessitated individual initiative, self-responsibility, and an assumption of rationality and unity in the universe. Weber did not bother to discuss hypothetical states of nature or to speculate upon 'primitive' thinking. Though the individual's grasp of the world involved individual effort and this brought about cognitive determinism, group ideals are in no way rejected by Weber's paradigm. Weber's methodological individualism did not assume the nominalism of individuals. He would study the ideas, or representations if you will, of a group exclusively in terms of how they are and can be understood by the individuals concerned. A group can certainly have ideas that would not occur to its individuals separately, but Weber would reject the idea that a group's ideas have a cohesion and unity independent of how they are understood by the individuals.

Weber rejected the existence of collective concepts yet did not mind discussing them nor did he mind other people using them *as if* they were real. We see that Weber's repeated criticism of those who believed in a special "*volk*" character [ Weber, 1975a, p.74 ] was a rejection of both the existence of societies as entities with indisputable characteristics and borders and a rejection of the belief that societies could be the manifestation or development of a *holistic* idea or value-system. He did study societies, he did study value-systems, but he studied societies as agreed-upon conventions and he studied values as those

held by individuals. Weber agreed that collective concepts could be used profitably as heuristic devices so as to aid interpretive explanation but in no way were collective concepts were to be accepted as real until they could be proved to someone starting with a different set of values without taking their existence on faith or intuition [ Weber, 1975a, p.180 ]. Only in this light do we see what Weber meant by his misunderstood remark that the causal explanations produced by the social sciences of Europe should become value-neutral and verifiable enough so that even a "Chinese" could understand them. Collective concepts can be used profitably, but the use of a collective concept presupposes a certain value-relatedness, goal, or orientation of the researcher which has to be made explicit and then circumscribed.

Weber understood that collective and holistic concepts *in the way they usually were studied*, were not and could never be value neutral. His wife Marianne Weber described his position as follows: Weber sees a new difficult problem of historical logic in the fact that not only certain aspects of phenomena, but also the *ideas* that are active at a certain period in scattered form, are fused into the concepts of ideal types. Concepts with which history operates, such as Christianity, liberalism, socialism, democracy, and imperialism, are ideal types—something like the combination of the basic elements of an economic epoch. But their application is made more difficult by the fact that frequently people read into them not only something that exists but also something that ought to exist—namely, that aspect of theirs which is of permanent value from the standpoint of the *historian [Darsteller]*. But as soon as this extrascientific element is present in the application of a concept, this concept loses in cognitive value, for then theoretical 'value relatedness' [*Wertbeziehung*] and practical 'value judgment' [ *Wertbeurteilung* ] intermingle imperceptibly. Then the ideal types change from logical aids to *ideals* by which the extrascientific significance of concrete phenomena is measure. The result is a logically untidy telescoping of the subjective and the objective, of believing and knowing, which diminishes the cognitive value of a historical presentation. [ Weber, 1975, p. 315 ]

In other words, those most interested in studying events to see the workings of an ideal or a materialistic force, are the most capable of willing it into existence through the lens of examination. The concept catches fire under the magnifying glass of the politicized scientist, but is not capable of spontaneous combustion.

Marianne Weber's quotation concerns us here in regards to two points. The first point concerns abstraction. Sometimes the very act of looking for the workings of what is an abstract process facilitates our own confusion. We can forget that what we are examining is an abstraction and not a concrete. A concrete has a 'real and separate' existence, as well as having abstract qualities created by the observer in

order to be comprehended by the observer. Weber's dismissal of Freud's disciple Otto Grosse bears some scrutiny. Weber disagreed with the Freudians that *Eros* was a force in itself. After all, *Eros* could only be manifested as part of people's relationships with people and things and could never be found by itself [ Weber, 1975, p.376 & 378 ]. Freudian-inspired theories tended to reduce one's mind to nerves or to raise up the abstractions we create into metaphysical entities [ Weber, 1975, p.376 ]. When we study a historical process we must remember that it does not have an existence like a living thing. The second point concerns not our confusion, but our distraction. If we were to pour through the historical record looking for the birth and growth of a process such as democracy or socialism, we must not put on ideological-blinkers and interpret the significance of historical events only in terms of what we want to find. That is, we must remember to look for the meaning of the events for the people concerned. After all, when Scheidemann proclaimed the German Republic in 1918, he dismissed his own statement as only a figure of speech. Events become retroactively interpreted after subsequent events have happened, and the historian's concerns may distract him from seeing just what the people involved were busy doing.

Totalities and collective forces are patterns of things that the human mind puts together. Collectivities are made by people. It is the individual human mind alone which moves from observation of concrete things to form a picture of an abstract totality [ Weber, 1975a, p.180 ]. In some sense, if people regard these things as causal agents they are being idolatrous, attributing life to the lifeless products made by human beings. Weber understood the power of images and ideals, but did not wish to see science, the rational study of events, follow such biases, faiths, and generalizations. He argued that the scientist must distance himself from applying such ideals in his study. Also, and more important in regards to this thesis, Weber's position of methodological individualism insisted that all concepts for the interpretation and understanding of social relationships and history must be based upon the objective circumstances of the action and the meaning and thinking of the individuals involved. That is, collective and holistic entities are not granted causal power —unless of course the existence of collective entities could be proven

from historical study which did not assume that those entities unproblematically existed as its premise, a possibility which remains only hypothetical.

In Weber's methodology, all concepts had to be able to be operationalized at the level of individual meaning in order to be used.

As regards the alleged 'certainty' – in the sense of scientific 'validity' – e.g., of 'feeling,' every conscientious scholar must conclusively reject the following appeal : an appeal to 'feelings of totality' –e.g., to the 'general character' of an epoch, a work of art, etc. – which have not been translated into precisely articulated and demonstrable propositions which would verify them; that is, translated into 'conceptually' constituted 'observational experience.' [ Huff, 1984, p.66 ]

Weber was quite willing to use holistic terms to describe what people thought. For example, a poet might consider himself 'the spirit of the age' and say that he 'served the Muse of Society.' The use of such terms did not mean that such flowery terms could ever be assigned either an independent concrete existence or be attributed causal power.

Weber's methodology is not the arbitrary combination of concepts, but rather it is consistent. Weber had certainly read and praised both Rickert and Simmel, but his methodology was original and carefully separate from that of his colleagues. His methodological individualism is built upon Ideal-type abstraction, but without Rickert's metaphysical foundation. Rickert had assumed a certain hierarchy of metaphysically objective values, but as this could never be proven, Weber rejected the belief held by Rickert and others, that there was some formal set of values out there outside human activity. Neither did Weber take Simmel's short-cut by assuming an 'objective' understanding of certain social situations [ Weber, 1975, p.313 ], or a metaphysical transcendence to link differently experienced meanings together. Weber's rejection of metaphysical-transcendence appears linked to the limits he placed on the use of intuition. Weber rejected intuition as an alleged means for the social scientist to claim greater objectivity. Also of interest in this concern, is Weber's prefatory note to Economy and Society in which he mentioned that his work's purported strength lay in his sharp clarification between types of meaning. Unlike Simmel, Weber had differentiated between the subjectively-intended and the objectively-valid

[ Weber, 1978a, p.4 ]. Meaning could be that of the subjective concrete meaning of a real person, or the 'pure type' of subjective meaning for a hypothetical type of actor in a given type of situation. In no way could meaning refer to an objectively-correct or metaphysically-true type of meaning that the sociologist could bestow on the actors in an act of reverse-interpretation [ Weber, 1978a, p.4 ].

The precise method of Weber's rejection of metaphysics, interestingly enough, was sufficient for him to also disregard both Idealism and Materialism through both *Wertbeziehung* and his process of abstraction in Ideal-Types. His rejection of metaphysics prevented Weber from making the fallacy of misplaced-concreteness and from reifying the concepts historians used into real entities. If the social scientist understood that Ideal-Types were abstractions with no agenda and no intrinsic value of their own, the social scientist could prevent his own value judgments from interfering with his work. After all, it is not the values of the scientist which distort science, but the scientist's so-called 'practical judgments' which can interfere with his ability to view reality dispassionately without creating axiological bias.

Weber's rejection of metaphysics, his rejection of the intuited belief in an objectivity that could never be proven but assumed, and his understanding of *Wertfreiheit* and *Wertbeziehung*, meant that Weber had to have been opposed to collective concepts. Weber's rejection of collective concepts was not merely a choice among many other independent choices, but it resulted from or alternately, determined, the rest of his methodology. John Portis stated:

For the same reason, a mistaken belief in the correspondence of collective concepts to real entities *ipso facto* results in covert evaluation. The initial task in studies which labour under this misconception will be to label reality, such as determining whether a regime is 'totalitarian,' 'democratic,' or 'authoritarian.' Inconvenient facts can then be ignored as unessential aberrations, and patterns of action considered more appropriate to other types tend to remain uninvestigated. The partisan nature of such exercises is apparent to all but the partisans. Such concepts are scientifically useful only if their ideal-typical nature is recognized and the subsequent questions concern the degree to which specific situations conform to them. Given the normative nature of collective concepts, the assertion that they correspond to real entities inevitably leads to covert value-judgements, to the detriment of objective empirical knowledge. [ Portis, 1983, p.42 ]

Ethical neutrality maintained the proper self-conscious scrutiny of value-relatedness and this prevented a distortion of methodology. Weber's methodology cannot be understood except with regard to his concerns

of *Wertfreiheit* and *Wertbeziehung*, for without value-neutrality the abstraction process becomes distorted and the scientist loses sight of the fact that he is using Ideal-types to understand reality. With any breakdown of this critical but subtle understanding, the scientist introduces the same bias into both the premises and the conclusions.



## Chapter Nine: Rationality and Cognitive Determinism

Individuals advanced rationality, but they did not advance reason through their own idiosyncrasy, unique personality, and individual whims. Throughout Weber's work there is an understanding and concern with rationality, yet not once did Weber anthropomorphize reason. Neither did Weber assume that reason has to advance through any particular course through historical stages. Weber made it clear that reason is advanced by human beings. People advance reason in the direction of their concerns though reason and the historical processes of cumulative rationalization cannot be subject to individual whims. Weber did not turn to metaphysics as did Rickert, Simmel, Kant, and Hegel. Weber insisted upon an objective-potential for reason. Reason did not exist outside of human beings, nor did it have a destiny. Rather, human beings who consciously advanced reason had as their concern and objective a universal reason. The scholars of different cultures advanced reason in different traditions in a sufficiently similar direction, so that, as an often unintended result, the different institutions and traditions of rationality influenced each other. Weber's emphasis on the similarities of concerns and values of the proponents of reason was sufficient to yield a framework for understanding rationality which is both individual and social, and both subjective and objective. The universe is infinite in its details, but those of us who seek to understand it will find ourselves working in similar directions, with our paths at one moment parallel, then converging, and then diverging in an on-going process. To advance rational action we must advance our empirical knowledge and our self-clarification. In doing so, we advance our own chosen positions into greater consistency, both internally and externally.

Not once in Weber's cross-cultural comparison of the different developments of rationality did he assume that reason is culturally-relative. All reason is relative to the individual's concerns, values, knowledge, and goals. There are differences of opinion and empirical knowledge within all cultures. No

culture can exist with everyone knowing and believing the exact same things, much less engaged in the realization of the exact same personal purposes. There are different culturally-specific developments of rationality, and we can speak of the differences between Hindu and Greek philosophy. However, there is no one relationship between an idea and the culture in which it arose. Similarly, an idea or ideal can be seized upon with greater elective affinity by individuals in circumstances far removed from those who originated it. To say that a process of rationality or an ideal is purely culturally-relative, would be to assume that all the individuals in that culture experienced it sufficiently in the same way, with one type of 'average' or 'perfect' relationship between the two both possible and real. Though there are similarities within cultures and differences between cultures, the reverse is also true as well, especially when we look for similarities and differences among the individuals concerned.

There is always a danger in theory construction for one to use an idea but to forget that it depends on premises that one has rejected. Fortunately, Weber seems to have avoided making that mistake. He has sometimes been labeled a "neo-Kantian," but his concepts do not appear to require Kant's premises. Weber developed his ideas on rationality and rationalization without implying metaphysical premises. Weber perceived objectivity as a process contingent upon rationality. Weber accepted Nietzsche's view that science was not objective, that is, not objective in a static sense, and that science could not give us values for the social and moral sphere. Weber substituted for both relativism and metaphysics the notion of objectivity as an ongoing dynamic process contingent upon the application of increased rationality. Objectivity was potentially obtainable, and not a premise or an absolute given. Weber could take the view of the world essentially for granted, but made this contingent upon further observation and the continual development of reason. This separated Weber from direct Empiricism (as in Sextus Empiricus or Hume) and Nominalism. This also highlights why he saw in "empiricism" the observation of concretes [ Weber, 1975a, p.123, p.126, p.136 ], and not the mere perception of nominalistically-unique objects. This also shows that a sociological conception of ethics can be held contingent on a sociological understanding of knowledge, which is not to suggest that it is contingent on the diffuse theories known as the Sociology of

Knowledge held by both Mannheim and the "Frankfurt School." Weber's view of the taken-for-grantedness of the world is virtually Aristotelian, in that we do not have to prove our own existence. The stability of our view of the world is contingent upon our own future thought and personal rationality. Weber saw the chain of human events occurring through subjective meaning and objective circumstances. This ongoing struggle towards objectivity would supply the basis for future change in values and ethics as individual minds work to find meaning and consistency within a context of other people's irreconcilable values and within the bloodless institutions permeated with rationalization.

Weber appears to have put the greatest emphasis of moral experience not on elaborate systems of ethics, nor on cultural supremacy, but on individuals' needs, volitional or otherwise, for perceived ethical ideals. Ethical ideals are necessary for a stable view of the world [ Weber, 1975, p.364 ]. Given that Weber's writings appear not to be congruent with the premise of the primacy of consciousness, especially his essay "'Objectivity' in Social Science," it is unlikely that he saw mental life as will and representation or otherwise innate in the forms of thinking. Also, this need of the individual for ethical ideals appears not to be created through social determinism, nor is it biological. Rather, the need of the individual for his ideals is a somewhat volitional need of individual to understand life, the world, and experience. Without 'right' and 'wrong' the concepts 'true' and 'false' are also threatened. If the individual is to throw away what he *thinks* to be 'right' and 'wrong,' the individual loses all confidence in his ability to think at all. The individual is not ready to sacrifice his happiness or life for any one world view *in of itself*, but for the belief in his mind which affirmed the ideal. In this light, we can understand Weber's respect for the uncompromising sincerity of the religious and his respect for the flexibility of the politicians. The latter were forced by necessity to compromise but were sometimes no less sincere than the former. We love our ideals because they are *our* ideals<sup>3</sup>. The religious zealot is not so much different from the secular scientist or the pragmatic politician as might be supposed. Our ideals can be both irrational and rational, but our hold on them is the product of our desire for a stable ontology and an accurate cognitive process. Granted,

<sup>3</sup> We choose our ideals to a degree but also our ideals become the basis for our own cognitive process –an inevitable consequence of the problem of the Munchausen Trilemma.

there may be other reasons for our desires for ideals. Blind faith exists, but it does not seem congruent with Weber's understanding of the relationship between rationality and "irreconcilable value-differences." Also not compatible is the expedient man who makes no demand on his own mind for veracity. Such a man becomes the ideal subjectivist, not believing in things because he thinks they are true, but insisting that what he believes must be true. It is sufficient to say here that Weber's understanding of the individual in the turbulent social milieu was that of cognitive determinism, and that the power of our ideals came from the individual's mind. People sometimes have a commitment to their beliefs (value-systems and world-views) as static goals in themselves, sometimes as means to other ends, and sometimes they have even a greater commitment to the rational processes which determined them. Some people hold their beliefs as sacred because they implicitly also hold even more sacred their rationality.

Now that we have established Weber as a proponent of cognitive determinism who did not rely on metaphysics or relativism to get himself out of theoretical quandaries, we must see the ramifications of this approach. Weber has been misleadingly labeled an idealist or a materialist. It is better to let his own words speak for themselves:

Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the world-images that have been created by "ideas" have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interests. 'From what' and 'for what' one wished to be redeemed and, let us not forget, 'could be' redeemed, depended upon one's image of the world. [ Weber, 1946, p. 280 ]

People *do* work to keep themselves alive, and people frequently conduct actions out of routine, conformity and because they do not want to think about and be responsible for alternatives. However, this is not sufficient to explain human behavior as being chiefly either materialistic or the product of socialization. We actually have two processes at work, not simply materialism and idealism as such, but *continuity and change*.

Most of our *direct* actions are based on simply following material and ideal interests. This is not in itself damning or disparaging. Instead of "material and ideal interests" we can speak of "material and ideal goals" if the word 'interests' is ambiguous. Weber's metaphor of train tracks for the role of materialism and idealism in our lives is enlightening. Materialism and idealism provide a tremendous

continuity in our lives. Without continuity we would have no past and no future, and consequently, no direction. In fact, continuity itself allows us to bring about greater force and determination in our lives, by building up our efforts, specialization, and investments, in a stable direction. But Weber was neither an idealist nor a materialist. His work in examining increased materialism in modern life which was in his judgement inadvertently intensified through the Protestant Ethic, is best understood as ambiguous and dependent on *whether the reader wishes to see a decline in idealism or an increase in materialism*. The relative power of materialism in modern life increased through the 'disenchantment of the world,' which reduced, at least for a period, competing idealistic influences. One of Weber's greatest concerns was that the consequence of this relative increase of materialism occurred at the expense of idealism.

Weber's paradigm rested upon assuming neither idealistic nor material causation. Weber had a concern with the apparent increased materialism of his times, but he understood it as the consequence and effect of the *implementation of ideals* in much earlier times. The materialism of the "iron cage" or "steel housing" was not its own cause, but rather an inadvertent consequence of those people in past generations who had *chosen* to work in a calling from the ontological and axiological effects of the Protestant Reformation. Neither idealism nor materialism was *the* cause behind historical change, yet they were both important for how we lived our lives. Without materialism and idealism we would not have enough continuity and stability to make meaningful change possible.

In Weber's famous quotation about ideas being the switchmen and the tracks of one's life being determined by both material and ideal interests, there is potential for ambiguity. Weber here clearly identified 'ideal interests' as being separate from ideas. 'Ideal interests' appear to be synonymous with what Weber frequently termed the 'ultimate values,' 'the ethic of ultimate disposition,' and one's ultimate goals in general. Weber's use of 'ideas' included all ideas, and in our understanding of Weber's prose, we have to understand that we are talking in particular about *relevant* ideas. For example, we could see the doctrine of Evolution and Darwinism as a set of ideas, and not 'ultimate values' and 'ideals.' In contrast, the beliefs in 'Nirvana,' the Marxist class-struggle, and Salvation would be 'ideals,' and though they would also be

'ideas.' we would not call them 'ideas' in the same way we would call our facts and new speculations about Evolution, 'ideas.' Our ideas about Evolution certainly have affected our ideals about Christianity, and yet Christians are directly motivated more by their day-to-day material interests and their ideal of Christianity than by Evolution. The material and 'ideal' interests supply the motivation and the overall goal, yet the cunning of reason and the rationalization and advancement of our 'ideas' certainly switch us from one track to another, and can swing us gradually in a different direction from what we had initially chosen. Ideas do not directly govern men's conduct, but they certainly affect the means we use to pursue our material and ideal goals, and the unintended consequences therein. Technically, all 'ideals,' both idealistic and materialistic, are ideas, but it is more useful to make this distinction between 'ideals' and 'ideas' in order to understand the processes of both rationalization and overall historical change.

Weber studied the effects of both materialism and idealism in the same way. The pursuit of materialistic and idealistic goals meant the advancement of rationality as human beings tried to make sense out of their lives and to pursue their initial and ultimate goals.

For Weber, however, not the power of ideas through their persistence but the dynamic of their own logic makes them the switchmen in history. Certain ideas under the compulsion of an inner logic (*Eigenlogik*) develop their rational consequences and thereby effect universal-historical processes; this is the import of WEWR. [ Tenbruck, 1980, p. 336-337 ]

Weber thus is best seen as neither a materialist nor as an idealist. Rather Weber's paradigm was cognitive determinism. It explained change in social life through the efforts of individuals to understand their world and to act upon their new understandings. The social actors are continually spurred to greater efforts by new challenges, opportunities and information --though these very things are 'ethically neutral' from the point of view of the social scientist, though not for the actor himself. Meaning and rationality have their own 'inner logic' so to speak. This 'inner logic' entails that these challenges can only be 'solved' or pursued in the framework of rationality only in certain directions because the individual involved is already in pursuit of meaning, truth, and consistency.

The degree to which Weber consistently emphasized the inadvertent effects of rationalization may need to be reviewed. In The Protestant Ethic Weber showed how Puritans had advanced rational

processes of economic gain until it became possible for this rational-materialism to become autonomous of its original goals and become an end in itself. In his subsequent essay "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism" [ Weber, 1978c, p.136 ] he emphasized how the pluralism and competition between Protestant sects allowed these competing churches to appeal *not* to the lowest-common denominator of humanity, but to those laity most capable of applying the most stringent ideals [ Weber, 1946, p.305 ]. The development of a laity and the strict entrance standards for new churches caused converts to develop their character and careers in a way greater than was needed for the satisfaction of accepted material goals. The creation of a network of churches with voluntary membership also facilitated a much higher degree of trust among businessmen than otherwise would have occurred, an issue which was later also explored by Francis Fukuyama in his book Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity. The voluntary aspect of church membership in America had, as its consequence, an increased commitment to rationality, not just in regards to faith and dogma, but within the economic work of day to day life.

In his lecture "Science as a Vocation" Weber hoped that the commitment to excellence by the specialist would maintain the scientist's on-going ethical responsibility. In his speech on socialism Weber showed that a materialist agenda of politics would bring about its own intrinsic terrors. If a nation embarked on a course of action dictated by materialism, the citizenry would never be free of the materialistic forces that it itself had summoned through the destruction of the competing influences of the other 'autonomous spheres' of social life. Weber's final work on the subject was his 1919 lectures, published as General Economic History. This work did not deal with Protestantism directly, but discussed the processes of rationalization in the market. Though some might see this as evidence that Weber changed his argument for the development of capitalism and its economic boon to the human race, this is not the simplest interpretation. (All things being equal, the solution with the smallest number of steps and variables is probably the correct one.) The General Economic History dove-tailed nicely with his earlier writings on Protestantism from 1904 to 1906. His earlier publications had demonstrated that the Protestants had tried to implement their notions of the 'Fair Price' and 'fair' wages, 'fair' being a code-word

for socially-decided and static, but had discovered that their commitment to both work and productivity made this impossible. Hence, *because* the first Protestants had initially upheld the 'Fair Price' more than their Catholic contemporaries, the implementation of their particular work ethic and its consequence of rationalization ultimately destroyed the notion forever.

Individuals try to understand their world even though the world is always changing and to a lesser extent, so are their concepts. Not all people advance their own understanding, however, just as not all men and women advance history.

The need for an ethical interpretation of the 'meaning' of the distribution of fortunes among men increased with the growing rationality of conceptions of the world. As the religious and ethical reflections upon the world were increasingly rationalized and primitive, and magical notions were eliminated, the theodicy of suffering encountered increasing difficulties. Individually 'undeserved' woe was all too frequent; not 'good' but 'bad' men succeeded -even when 'good' and 'bad' were measured by the yardstick of the master stratum and not by that of a 'slave morality.' [ Weber, 1946, p. 275 ]

In this passage Weber referred obliquely to Nietzsche's conception of different understandings of morality for people in the same culture based upon whether they saw themselves as fortunate *and* whether they were willing to take pride in their circumstances. Weber was appreciative of Nietzsche's contribution to the study of morality, but departed from Nietzsche in that he did not see Christianity as being the embodiment of a 'slave morality,' and he saw the dichotomous conception of 'slave' and 'master' standards as being too simplistic. All people can try to make sense out of their lives, and a situation can easily arise in which both the fortunate and unfortunate are faced with ontological challenges.

#### Individual Rationality and Meaning

Weber's key process for understanding social change was not idealism or materialism, nor was it rationalism. It was cognitive determinism. People look at the world and apply reason in order to understand their existence. In doing so, they advance rationality and they clarify, change, and advance the content of meaning with which rationality entwines.

Rationality is the basis for responsibility. With reason we can foretell the possible consequences of our actions, and we can examine our chosen ends.



...the historico-sociological foundations of Weber's ethics of responsibility. It signified a robust wager on ethical subjectivity as the principal bulwark against the increasing power of the impersonal processes of rationalization. It was a view of ethics which *radicalized the element of choice* in social action but also emphasized the weight of these choices by driving home the fact of *individual responsibility* for the foreseeable consequences of self-chosen actions. [ Grumley, p.26 ]

Rationality is sometimes presented as some kind of denigration of personality. The German Romanticists, in particular, Stefan George and Friedrich Nietzsche, seemed to feel that rationality was robbing Europe of its grand meanings. The concern of the Romanticists was largely misplaced —especially in regards to the *Wertbeziehung* of our current day. Some of the so-called Romantics were rational and passionate men, others such as George and Nietzsche, were notably irrational. Irrationality, taken to its extreme has no coherence and no more free will than has the delirious madman. Religion in contrast, is generally viewed as a persistent and natural process of irrationality —yet has often served as the basis for reason with its fixed metaphysical assumptions and its patronage of learned theologians. Pure irrationality is inhuman. Yet it is possible and necessary for a distinguished human to be eminently rational. The rational person can even believe in God, provided he has reasons. The dying madman is purely irrational, yet men of Reason have included Einstein, Mendel, Galileo, Abelard, and Aquinas, men with marked religious faith.

As Weber recovered from his mental illness in 1902-1903, he wrote in Roscher and Knies that free will depended on a sound mind and rationality:

The freer the action...i.e., the less it has the character of a natural event, the more the concept of personality comes into play. The essence of personality lies in the constancy of its inner relation to certain ultimate values and life-meanings, which, in the course of action, turn into purposes and are thus translated into teleologically rational action.  
[ Grumley, p. 27-28 ]

Free will is not part of the mind, nor does it depend on the material or the spiritual. Free will is the quality of mind itself that turns a brain into a mind. Not surprisingly, the neo-Kantians such as Rickert, emphasized this understanding, and built their theory of cognition on the fact that people chose to see the world [ Morrison, 1995, p.260 ]. Do people have free will in exactly the same way? No. That cannot be the basis for any sociological theory which wishes to avoid an additional and unnecessary metaphysical assumption. Free will and rationality exist as potential. Free will needs to be exercised to be expanded, and rationality needs to be achieved.

Not only free will but our freedom depends on rationality.

We associate the higher measure of an empirical 'feeling of freedom' with those actions which we are conscious of performing rationally—i.e., in the absence of physical and psychic 'compulsions,' vehement 'affects,' and 'accidental' disturbances of the clarity of judgment, in which we pursue a clearly conceived 'end' through 'means' which are the most adequate according to our empirically grounded knowledge. [ Levine, p. 19 ]

Rationality gives us the means to evaluate our means and ends, and to behold the process of rationality itself. Value-rationality (*wertrational*) gives us greater control over the means to our ends, but it is purposeful-rationality (*zweckrational*) which was the basis for Weber's insight into how ethics are developed.

Weber presents a broader definition: action is *zweckrational*, he writes, 'when the end, the means, and the secondary results are all rationally taken into account and weighted. This involves rational consideration of alternative means to an end, of the relations of the end to the secondary consequences, and finally of the relative importance of different possible ends.' [ Levine, p. 11 ]

Reason fulfilled through action then becomes the basis for further development of reason. Reason could be developed without action, but action shows us the unexpected or unintended consequences of our decisions and conveys our understanding to other people. Freedom is impossible and irrelevant without action, and our feeling of freedom both physical and mental comes from our purposeful-rational action.

In other words, as actors become more conscious of and deliberate about the means and ends of their actions—as they become increasingly *zweckrational* in their subjective orientations—so accordingly do they experience a greater subjective sense of freedom. [ Levine, p. 19 ]

Freedom is not just subjective, and our sensation of it cannot be maintained for long through wishful thinking. Freedom comes from our increased ability to understand our environment and to act upon it — and transforming the barbarian to the businessman or philosopher— to understand our understanding. The barbarian is content to burn a city to declare himself free. The rational man seeks not only to act upon his environment according to his wishes, but to understand and to control his wishes themselves in a rational manner.

Weber's commitment to rationality and his concern with understanding events through cognitive determinism ensured that his paradigm excluded the fashionable proponents of irrationality at the time. Not only did Weber respectfully distance himself from Nietzsche, he contemptuously kept the Freudians at

bay [ Weber, 1975, p. 375 ]. The proponents of irrationality have included both Idealists such as the mystic of the spirit, but also the mystics of matter. Some irrational material mystics worshipped numbers and resources, and this group included the Marxists. Others material mystics worshipped biological determinism, the notion that biology was destiny. Weber was usually disgusted by both materialistic and idealistic reductionism. Our 'drives,' sexual or otherwise, were only abstractions [ Weber, 1975, p. 382 ].

Weber rejected theories of the unconscious and also those that divided the human mind within itself. The fact that Weber advanced the position that the human qualities are the means to understand human action, was enough to keep him away from those who sought to explain the human by the inhuman. He shared nothing with those who sought to understand the thoughtful painter with the paradigm of the divided mind and infantile potty-training, or those who explained the life-saving surgeon by suggesting that the person became a doctor because of insatiable needs to hurt and mutilate. It was not merely that Weber was against the unconscious and the human drives as the means to understand history, he rejected their very premises.

We have seen that Weber was critical of psychologies of the unconscious. The basic principle of these psychologies, which embrace virtually all of the theoretical positions within psychoanalysis and clinical psychology, is that character is structured by childhood experiences which persist as unconscious determinants of behavior in adult life. Weber might also have criticized what would be called 'sociological' psychologies that derive character in some way from the structure of society. These psychologies would include perspectives on man ranging from Marx, to Durkheim, to Mead. Thus Marx understood 'consciousness' to derive from 'social circumstances' rather than vice-versa. Durkheim in his study of *Suicide*, and in his concept of the 'Homo Duplex,' stressed the role of social organization and the 'collective consciousness' in the structuring of 'altruistic' and 'egoistic' forms of the self. Mead conceived of the self as an 'organization of roles' communicated by the action of the 'generalized other' through the intersubjective agencies of language and gesture. Despite their great divergences on the nature of man and society, these positions all agree on the principle that, in one way or another, society shapes character. Weber would doubtless admit the partial truths of both the psychologies of the unconscious and the 'sociological' psychologies. But in the elaboration of his sociology of religion he developed a psychology of 'religious man' that utilizes a concept of cognitive determinism. The commonplace observation that Weber stressed the determinative role of ideas in human behavior hardly suffices to describe the nature of this Weberian psychology. [ Spencer, p. 252-253 ]

Weber emphasized that we always potentially behold our social realities as breathtakingly infinite. We need to exercise our will just to limit the world around us to sufficient detail so that we can

behold it and perceive the objects that we wish. However complicated the world is and how many parts we have in our bodies, we ourselves are all singular. We can lose our limbs, and still be human; what is human is not the collection and juxtaposition of our various parts. The life force comes from within the whole organism. Limbs can be replaced with prosthetics, but the unity in origin of the being is unchangeable. What makes us human is that we have minds. The brain can be surgically operated on, but the product of our brains, our mind, is not necessarily divisible into parts. We are always in some kind of social milieu, or for the lack of a more common word, society. We are affected by society and are a part of it. Yet, no matter how we phrase the fact we are immersed in social interaction, we cannot split the human mind or the individual self --not with any theoretical credibility. Though the world is outside and inside us at the same time, it is as unnecessary to divide ourselves into two parts as it would be to divide the atmosphere into two parts --that which is inside our bodies pushing out and that which is outside pushing on us.

The issue of free will must not be shelved as Durkheim suggested [ Durkheim, 1974b, p. 195 ], or rejected as the advocates of determinism seem to have implied. We have a measure of free will, not the freedom to use it all times admittedly. We have the *metaphysical potential* to develop our free will. There is nothing that can stop human beings from having free will at some later juncture short of killing them; there is nothing to stop *some* individual from exercising his free will, even if others choose not to. We can choose to perceive, and we can choose to think. We can choose not to think --and to kill ourselves. We choose to think more or to think less, and there are limits to what and how much we can think in either extreme. The world exists, and though subjectively understood, it has an objective existence. Our minds grip the world like wheels grip solid ground.

The social word is part of us only insofar as we have made it part of us. Our minds have processed all of the information we know; there appears to be no innate knowledge. Everything that is 'social' has been the creation of human minds and the consequences of perception, understanding, and memory. Human beings use their power of mind to understand the world, and to say that our ability to

have understood our experiences necessarily divides us into two or more warring entities is a grim jest. In order for the individual to get to the point which Freud or Durkheim would render him divided, he would have to be unified in the first place. Durkheim did not consider this an obstacle to his paradigm, rather he regarded the initial pre-social individual as the psychological self and 'lower half' of the *homo duplex*. However, there is for all intents no such thing as a pre-social human being, it is a contradiction in terms and of our experience. Rather, there is unified cognition of the individual. We choose to perceive and process the stimuli of the world around us. We do have elements from birth and socialization, but this is no more mysterious than a computer having elements of hardware and software. Ironically, this nonhuman example of the computer is convincing in demonstrating the unity of the human individual. Humans have a unity and a potential unity that far outstrips that of the mere artifacts we manufacture.

#### The Limits of Relativism

Weber was not a relativist, but this point should be addressed when discussing Weber, if only because so many people have seen fit to discuss the possibility. Weber said that he did not have the ultimate answers as to how we should live our lives, and for this simple modesty he has been labeled a relativist. If Weber had been grandiose and unaware of his own limitations, he could have championed any arbitrary selection of values on faith and would not have had to endure the charges of relativism. Instead, it was Weber's insistence that people must go their own way, and choose to see and to make meaning for themselves, that Weber has sometimes been unfairly smeared as either a pessimist or a relativist.

Weber did advance some values strongly. For us to have tolerance of each other's opinions we must value our own. For us to make any sense out of our lives we must have a passion for truth. "*Das Wahre ist die Wahrheit,*" would be Weber's maxim according to his friend Karl Jaspers [ Jaspers, 1989, p.126 ]. Politicians and scholars needed this passion for truth even more than did other people. Weber

emphasized that both scholars and politicians needed to work in their occupations, not only for extrinsic rewards, but for their calling.

Although he spoke of the politician's 'unconditional' duty to truthfulness and a duty to resist 'evil by force'...Weber also spoke of 'ultimate values' pursued in politics whose existence beyond the reach of reason and rational justification hardly suggest that they are self-evident or noble. Still, Weber proposed that a 'sense of proportion' or prudence is a good antidote to the 'demons' contained in these values...Hence, there are good reasons to believe Weber was not the crude relativist that Strauss (1953:35-80), the Straussians (Bloom, 1987:194-221; Pangle, 1988:11-24), and MacIntyre (1981:24-26) have made him out to be. [ Stone, 1990, p.673 ]

Without truths there can be no personal responsibility, and no sense of proportion. As reality is infinite, a sense of proportion is vital for both the scholar and the politician.

Weber never proposed a set of values in any hierarchical fashion, nor did he ever give a statement on the ultimate content of ethics. He was a champion of reason, and therefore, he was a champion of individual reason. A person thinking for another is a contradiction in terms. A person can order another about, but a person can never think for another human being. Weber showed that reason did not easily set us free, and that reason gave us no easy answers, but rather instead, sharpened our awareness of uncomfortable choices. In doing so, Weber showed how specific beliefs are relative to each other, but he never advanced the position of value relativism with all values being equal. Equal to what? Equal for what? Equal for whom? If we conflate definitions, if all values are equally equal, they will be equally different as well.

Attempts to show the limits of reason do not make one a relativist: historically, an ethics of virtue has been proposed to skirt the problems inherent within absolutist, principle-based ethics on one hand, and the problems of relativism on the other. Aristotle was attempted to show the limits of Socratic-Platonic reason with lapsing into the skepticism of the sophists. Similarly, Weber saw the problems inherent within a Kantian-styled world view but he wanted to avoid Nietzschean nihilism. [ Stone, 1990, p.673 ]

Weber was associated with the South-German School of Neo-Kantian thought, yet his conclusions would gradually distance himself from his philosophical influences. He distinguished himself carefully from Menger and Rickert, though in doing so, he also emphasized the similarities of their concerns and premises to his own. He rejected metaphysics, and in doing so, his rejection of a metaphysical hierarchy of values and of any absolute "Good" should be seen as part of his methodology. Weber even rejected the

Aristotelian idea of a transcendental "Good" such as *eudaimonia* as the object of individual lived life or of life itself [ Stone, p. 673 ].

All individuals think for themselves, in different ways, and with different efficacy. The basis of methodological individualism is that we understand actions by the meaning of the actors involved. Events can certainly arise which were not intended by their participants, but to explain the causal-relationships we always have to find the likely relevant meanings of the people involved. Not only it is that people can manufacture their own meaning for their lives, but they must, for no one else can do it for them. People can live meaningless lives, and some may try to find meaning in doing so, but the significant meanings that have survived and are important enough to endure are consistent within themselves and consistent with what a person in those circumstances might *see* in the world.

Weber's colleague, the neo-Kantian methodologist Heinrich Rickert, had been an influence on Weber, and his analysis of Weber's point of view is revealing. Rickert was theoretically close to Weber, and in such an intellectual relationship one would expect small differences to be enlarged upon. Weber never adapted Rickert's metaphysical assumption that certain objective values existed, and if Rickert had felt slighted by this, there would have been provocation and grounds for Rickert to charge his old acquaintance with having become a relativist *from his point of view*. Yet this is not so:

...But Weber was convinced that there was no way theoretical research could deal with the question of the validity of values... This was the starting-point from which he shaped his scientific ideal. In doing so, he kept his distance from everything that nowadays goes under the name of relativism, indeed he emphatically rejected relativism. He had recognized early on the absurdity of the old, oft-repeated and nowadays again very popular attempts to call the value of science into question from within science itself, to relativize truth by means of thoughts which themselves want to be taken as true, and thereby, like Baron von Munchausen, to pull oneself into the air by one's own pigtail. But within science he recognized *only* the value of *truth*; this he regarded as a self-evident 'presupposition.' This was enough to put his mind at rest as a specialist researcher. The *philosophically* important fact, that there does not exist, even for the pure theoretician, a *completely* value-free 'standpoint', was not one whose philosophical consequences he needed to pursue any further. He quite rightly restricted himself to stating that the specialist researcher must distance himself from all ethical, artistic, religious and above all from all political evaluations. Weber absolutely hated all attempts at making 'prophecies' in academic disguise, particular when made by professors from the lecture-dais. In science all that matters is the 'expert' who has learned his stuff, and whose highest goal remains -conceptual clarity.

[ Rickert, 1989, p.79 ]

Those conceptually close to Weber, who were familiar with the concerns and the humility of the neo-Kantians, never called him a relativist.

The rejection of Weber as a relativist is in one way relative. Other people's values are relative to those of another. If one does not have strong values, this understanding of the relationship between values breaks down, and one moves into complete relativism and then nihilism. If one does make the commitment to maintaining, scrutinizing, and advancing their life-meaning and value system, then they can perceive the world as genuinely relative—as relative to their own goals and understanding. Without the strong commitment to finding those 'inconvenient facts' and for rooting out contradictory premises, chaos emerges and in fact, nothing has ever been. The person loses the ability to see the world and this confusion would threaten to become retroactive.

Karl Jaspers had been a student of Weber, and he was awed by the moral commitment to the truth that Weber embodied. It was not only the facts themselves that Weber valued, but the commitment to the processes of finding them.

His requirements for perceiving were seeing, without illusions, what is real and valid in rational consequences, and what is a causal factor and what unavoidably occurs under given conditions. But this requirement of the separation of valuation and objective insight did not signify indifference to life and seclusion in an aimless subject, not 'death with wise-awake eye,' not a rest cushion of contemplative watching. True seeing was without illusions and at the same time a stimulus for intensive valuation to him.

[ Jaspers, 1989, p.10-11 ]

We desire truths for themselves and for their application. Weber's writings in politics demonstrated his commitment to the truth as well as to its premises and consequences. Weber's writings on agrarian policy showed a man fighting against the self-deceptions advanced by the Prussian Junkers, and Weber managed to stop one important agrarian bill by showing that it was based not only on falsehoods, but false claims to its intentions [ Weber, 1975, p.327 ].

Marianne Weber summarized her view of her husband's position of how metaphysical absolutes were linked with the smallest individual's meaning.

We cannot know, but only believe in, the timeless objective validity of values which are recognized. Anyone who denies the value of scientific truth, art, patriotic feelings, or religion cannot be convinced by any logical arguments. And universally valid instructions for practical action are even less possible—if only because an *identification*



*of cultural values with ethical imperatives is impossible. Speculative philosophy is, to be sure, a science in method, but it has no object that science can lay hold of. It conveys unverifiable knowledge. [ Weber, 1975, p.321-322 ]*

Granted, Marianne is not Max, but we can see here Weber's keen understanding of the mechanism and the basis of cognitive determinism. Methodological individualism fails completely if in its conduct the researcher assumes that all individuals think about the same way or merely have differences in degree between them in how they value or relate to a particular variable. There is a metaphysical grounding for individual thought, like the frame for a motor. We cannot alter the nature of reality. This is not a restriction, but the basis for understanding anything that is. We can understand what exists, because things either exist or they do not. We cannot make the world what we want it to be, nor will we ever be able to know all of what is, but we can, within limits, choose our values. However we make our decisions, we will always be living with people who make other decisions. Cultures are made up of individuals, and though cultures have great permanency and intractability, complete cultural relativism is impossible.

For people to follow Weber's program, they would have to hold passionate personal values, and these values would have to be compatible and consistent with each other. They would have to not only have values, but would have to be able to see the world through their values, and sometimes, without the filter of their values as well. Hence, Weber's understanding of the tolerance of values was part of his methodology. The personal commitment to conceptual clarity and respect for the facts comes from having a value-free epistemology in addition to one's private *Weltanschauung*. People do have to make decisions between values, and then act upon them. Science by itself does not *force* people to make decisions in the sphere of values [ Weber, 1975, p. 321 ], it can only *indicate* the choice. If a person accepts the desirability of truth and accuracy and wishes to strengthen the consistency of meaning, then scientific information can help a person identify the decisions which he can make when the choices are mutually exclusive. But the choice must be done through individual effort and on the basis of its own desirability. A person cannot be bribed to have meaning or to value something as opposed to valuing nothing. A man who values nothing can never be trusted and can be bribed. Truth and life have to be their own rewards; for some they are large, for some they are small.

### The Starting-Point Confusion

Finally, we must explain the confusion concerning the starting point of the commitment to subjective rationality. A general misunderstanding that Weber was some kind of irrationalist would be the basis for any suggestion that Weber was a relativist. This point of view was presented in the article "The Limits of Reason and Some Limitations of Weber's Morality" by Regis Factor and Stephen Turner.

Weber argued that ultimate end-choices were non-rational. This doctrine does not follow directly from the fact value-separation. Mill adhered to the fact-value distinction, but nevertheless argued that certain philosophic but non-scientific modes of proof enabled one to show a certain ultimate end to be uniquely valid. Weber claimed that there existed certain ethical conflicts that could not be reconciled by reason, either philosophic or scientific reason. [ Factor & Turner, 1979, p. 305 ]

It is unfortunate that Factor & Turner do not show where Mill proved that the fact-value distinction could be both recognized and that certain morals could be proven. While John Stewart Mill was one of the greatest minds of the 19th century, Mill's own writings do not seem to bear out this happy estimate of him by Factor & Turner. Mill considered it self-evident that children, barbarians and undeveloped races did not deserve freedom and needed to be forced to be improved [ Mill, 1993, p.12-13 ]. There appears to be little in such a belief to demonstrate that Mill kept facts and values separate and proved his own values. If anything, the matter seems to confirm Weber's discussion of 'irreconcilable ends' as Mill affirmed liberty for white European adults as an apparent act of faith, but also assumed that barbarians needed to be improved and were inferior. No doubt barbarians *are* inferior to the civilized, by the values of the civilized, but that in no way solves the fact-value distinction.

In any case, Factor & Turner seem to be mistaken about what Weber meant by the irreconcilability of values. There are choices between values. Some values are compatible with certain others and completely incompatible with others. For the rational man seeking to clarify the meaning of his life, there will be choices in which he will have to choose between the 'God' and the 'Devil' if he wishes to remain rational and moral. Just what is the 'Devil' and what is the 'God' will have to be determined by the individual for himself and not by one individual for another.

Factor & Turner argued that because Weber said that ultimate values could not be proven, that they were nonrational. First, what is "nonrational" is not necessarily "irrational." Weber said that ultimate ends could not be rationally proven, presumably from one individual to another. Second, Factor and Turner do not understand that we are dealing with both individual cognition and communication. The individual must choose and then prove his choices to himself and if he wishes, to then attempt to prove them to others. Weber merely said that the ultimate values we hold cannot necessarily be proven to other people who hold different values and starting premises. A Jehovah Witness cannot prove his position to the atheist Marxist, nor vice-versa, given the differences in their assumptions. Yet the criterion for proof as we experience it, is always proof to ourselves. There is proof for ourselves and the proof we need to convince others. The Marxist can prove rationally his values to himself and the Jehovah Witness in a feat of no lesser rationality and intellectual clarity can prove his values to himself as well. But can this 'proof' be made to someone who does not share the same premises? Our arguments may convince our audience, but if they stick to their premises without attempting to hold our own, however briefly, we will not prove our argument to them. What is nonrational is not necessarily in essence irrational, nor does using the term nonrational create some kind of irrationality as a kind of causal force or essence.

Most of what Factor & Turner state about Weber is consistent enough with his original writings.

The articles by Factor and Turner are highly insightful, but certainly leave more room for discussion:

Weber does not claim that reason is irrelevant to value. The relevance of reason to evaluations is, however, limited to three functions: the formulation of internally consistent end choices of 'value axioms,' the deduction of implications of ultimate choices for action in specific situations, and the determination of means. [ Factor & Turner, 1979, p.306 ]

While the three concerns are correct, Factor & Turner's insistence that Weber's theory is nonrational also leads them to over-emphasize the internal aspect of reason, as if the choice was either that Weber was a rationalist or an irrationalist. Weber was neither.

The need for an ethical interpretation of the 'meaning' of the distribution of fortunes among men increased with the growing rationality of conceptions of the world. As the religious and ethical reflections upon the world were increasingly rationalized and primitive, and magical notions were eliminated, the theodicy of suffering encountered increasing difficulties. Individually 'undeserved' woe was all too frequent; not 'good' but

'bad' men succeeded -even when 'good' and 'bad' were measured by the yardstick of the master stratum and not by that of a 'slave morality.' [ Weber, 1958b, p. 275 ]

Here in this famous passage, Weber showed that people, regardless of their initial choice in moral-orientation as either aristocratic or levelers, would experience doubts regarding their moral beliefs through their experiences and their application of reason *in* the world. Weber was a neo-Kantian, but not in the sense of the exclusively internally-subjective and mystical Kantian theory. The 'disenchantment of the world' and the rationalization of all 'life-spheres' happened because of engagement in the world and the increase of knowledge and were not products merely of the application of 'internal reason.' The 'internal logic of ideas' seems not to refer exclusively to the effect of ideas within ideas, but also to the interaction between ideas and objective reality in the practical development and application of the ideas as well.

It is plausible to think that Weber thought the 'disenchantment of the world' came about simply on account of progress, science, and economic prosperity, but this is not so. This 'disenchantment' would not be possible and the increase of empirical knowledge would not be relevant if the individual did not have a personal commitment to creating meaning and in having a rational view of the world. Regardless of whether an individual believed in religion or was superstitious, nearly all individuals seek a rational view of their world, and the significance of things and themselves. 'Rationality' is not used here as a synonym for unemotional or scientific-atheism. Rather, what we wish to say is that people try to make sense of their experiences. There is a kind of 'inner logic' to ideas, that is, our acceptance of information and beliefs, *provided* we continue to make sense of our lives and seek to make our beliefs internally-consistent, will take us down routes which are neither anticipated nor inevitable, but chosen and necessary. Neither our beliefs nor our materialistic relations destine our futures or control our fates. The paths we choose are not predestined, but the circuitous routes of the paths themselves are beyond our choosing. Rationality is perfectly compatible with choice but our commitment to rationality as well as our previous choices will determine the perceived feasibility and desirability of subsequent choices.

Factor & Turner insisted that if Weber saw certain values as incompatible that this somehow made his theory non-rational. They also seem to regard nonrational as synonymous with irrational:

But the defense of a valuative position on rational grounds, such as John Stuart Mill, and such sociologists as Durkheim, Hobhouse, and Mannheim attempted, is excluded as an epistemological impossibility *before* it is attempted. It is significant that Weber does not base his rejection of these arguments on an exposure of their specific logical defects. His insistence that valuative 'arguments' are ultimately non-rational at their base is warranted by his doctrine of the 'irreconcilability' of values.' [ Factor & Turner, p.307 ]

To understand Weber's position, one has to remember that Weber was part of the neo-Kantian movement which had rejected Positivism and Historicism. Weber had always emphasized that reality is potentially infinite, and that people chose to see parts of the world around them, and *so thus* a detached Olympian perspective is impossible. The examples Factor & Turner list are famous, but not convincing. Weber did not say that sociologists could not rationally defend their valuative positions. He said no one can use logic without values to prove values (which would remind us of the Munchausen Trilemma) , and no one can prove their valuative position at some Olympian level of objectivity, because the latter does not exist. Perhaps we can prove our positions to ourselves, but proving our positions to people who hold different values is a formidable challenge.

Factor & Turner displayed a basic misunderstanding for the small crux at the root of Weber's paradigm. Perhaps they understood Weber in the same way that Weber understood himself. Weber was aware of the limitations of his approach and (being ruthless in his self-criticism) may have over-emphasized the importance of these limitations. I would argue that there is room for an interpretation of Weber which is more optimistic than Factor & Turner's conclusion and Weber himself. It is not necessary to gloomily consign Weber to relativism and irrationality.

To decide between these alternatives on the basis of the 'facts' or the 'truth' of the alternatives is impossible, because to speak of 'facts' or 'truth' involves presuppositions, so in attempt to base a decision on some particular 'truths' or 'facts' we have already 'decided' to accept certain presuppositions. One way to cut this Gordian knot is to accept the fact that one must make these 'decisions' about fundamental presuppositions nonrationally; this was the way out that Nietzsche took and Weber chose with respect to 'valuative' presuppositions. [ Factor & Turner, p. 309 ]

The irrational is necessarily a smaller set than the nonrational. The distinction between the nonrational and the irrational is not made clear. There is also a more important, but related consideration. Weber had addressed the key point that truths are relevant only to those people who want truths [ Grumley, 1988, p.33 ]. Factor & Turner display sophistry in their love of word play. Yes, the belief in truth is a

presupposition, but Weber's goal was never to create a science free of values and presuppositions. It is possible that Factor & Turner misunderstand Weber through problems with the English translation. The goal of science is to pursue truths through a rational manner. Factor & Turner seem to suggest that our presuppositions are inherently irrational or nonrational. Are they? Our presuppositions include the belief that truth exists and the belief in our own existence. To prove our own existence without drawing upon our lived experience, that is our very lives, would be a rationalist exercise suitable for someone like Descartes, Kant, or a madman. We cannot have existence without experience. There is no need or basis for proving our experience without drawing upon experience. The fact that we are alive is an empirical matter. Logic is the process of noncontradictory identification of empirical phenomena. Logic is impossible without life. The problem of some 'sociologists' is that they fall into philosophical sophistry. The fact that we exist is self-evident and that truth exists is our automatic belief as we have in our first experiences. Our definition of truth is what we philosophers invent either to describe our relationship to reality or alternately, to play word-games. Perhaps we cannot necessarily, rationally prove our existence to someone else, but our confidence in our existence is the root of our rationality.

Factor & Turner insist that our presuppositions must be nonrational in Weber's paradigm. This belief results from the confusion about both "presupposition" and "rational." Our assumption that we are alive is a presupposition. Why would it be any more rational to believe the opposite once we are alive? It is also a presupposition that truth exists. However, we have no 'proof' to the contrary, i.e., that truth and facts do not exist. Such a belief cannot be presented to us rationally.

What we see in Turner & Factor's line of reasoning is their assumption that all choice, especially of presuppositions, is somehow nonrational. Such a belief confounds any understanding of rationality and its boundaries. Rationality is the deliberate pursuit of the truth through proper observation and identification, which weighs means and ends, critically but not obsessively, examines its own goals and assumptions. In the rational pursuit of truth we periodically return to our starting assumptions (but not necessarily our initial assumptions) and try to find ways to search out inconsistency, falsehood, and

unnecessary choices, and perhaps to try better choices. If choice is nonrational, then free will becomes nonrational, a belief that Weber strongly rejected. Choice is neither rational, nonrational, or irrational. For us to say that choice is nonrational would beg the question, "What choice?" Finally, certain things may indeed be self-evident, depending on one's definition of presuppositions. Our existence is self-evident, and few genuinely need to 'prove' the fact that they are alive. The wife of Benjamin Franklin might be such a case: upon sleeping in, she heard her husband play music on a glass harmonica, and thought she must have died in her sleep and ascended to heaven. Upon opening her eyes, the fact that she was alive became self-evident.

Factor and Turner are quite right to focus in on Weber's use of "objectivity" and his use of the term "presuppositionless." They seem to understand Weber quite well, but they seem to give him as short a shrift as he mercilessly gave himself. Weber saw Olympian objectivity as presuppositionless and completely separate from axiological relations [ Weber, 1975a, p.115 & p.119 ]. However, is it necessary to define objectivity in a way which will guarantee that it is impossible to attain? How can one speak of the "Olympian" frame of judgement as being divorced from values? That belief would suggest that neither gods nor Man can have values and be objective. Weber went to great lengths to show that he was not claiming some kind of universal objective position and that he was not dispensing a "revealed religion" which falsely claimed objectivity. The probable root of this matter is Weber's own Rickert-like understanding of the subject-object relationship with its *Wertbeziehung* concerns. (Alternately, the source of the matter may have been a conflation of "irreconcilable differences" between people with the axiological value-judgements and presuppositions necessary for perception.) If Rickert's concerns of how values obfuscated objectivity could be shown to be not quite as great as he imagined, or if Weber had defined objectivity a little differently, we would also be able to demonstrate that Weber's paradigm is capable of somewhat more objectivity than he thought.

Durkheim had made several methodological errors in his ambitious project to initiate a 'science of morals.' We have turned to Weber's writings to supply the means to criticize Durkheim though Weber

did not mention Durkheim directly. Instead, we find the methodological ideas of Weber that are relevant to a criticism of Durkheim in his criticisms of those other scholars who had either influenced Durkheim directly or who had for reasons of their own made similar mistakes. Weber was under no onus to disprove Durkheim because Durkheim's own position was regarded by the German sociologists as being methodologically primitive [ Segre, 1986, p.158 ]. Weber also heartily criticized the same German thinkers on whom Durkheim drew, such as Wundt, Wagner and Schmoller. Weber did not have to disprove all the people who disagreed with him. He rejected their own premises and hence, their arguments were largely irrelevant to his own —a fact which is the very application of his own theory of knowledge. He did not want to give a 'revealed religion' to the social sciences and attempt to gather followers, nor did he attempt to found his own school of thought. Similarly, with what we know of the physical sciences today we know that magic is impossible, and it remains up to the supporters of magic to prove their position to us rather than vice-versa. If physicists are to accept 'magic' they must do so only on their own terms without switching positions in an act of blind faith and wishful thinking.

We cannot always prove our assumptions, but frequently we disprove enough of some of the things we once believed to give us confidence in the rational process. This confidence is not faith, but rather an appreciation of the effectiveness of our own cognition. We cannot always prove what we believe, nor can we count on always finding our mistakes. However, the fact that we have done so upon many occasions and have learned to do so, gives us confidence in our rationality. The processes of disproving ourselves when we are wrong and finding corroboration for correct facts and assumptions are viable given time and correct information, but we cannot count on proving the proper assumptions. Assumptions cannot be proven unless they are already held. This reasoning is not mysterious. If we do not assume we are alive, we can never prove it. If we do not hold the world to be self-evident, we can never prove the existence of reality beyond all hypothetical doubt. Similarly, we can always make the mistake of tautology or circular reasoning if our presuppositions are also our postulates or if our conclusions are also our premises. However, human beings are capable potentially of great rationality. We can assume for the sake



of argument that certain premises are tenable, and then see if evidence can be found or manufactured to corroborate them. If not, we can then discard those premises as not hypothetically viable under known circumstances.

It might be necessary to discuss how the nature of the "nonrational" then relates to *Wertfreiheit*. *Wertfreiheit* is a methodological condition to minimize bias in research; it does not create some kind of "value-free objectivity." If the condition of *Wertfreiheit* meant that we had to discard all initial presuppositions and assumptions, then nothing could be accomplished. Rather, according to the principle of *Wertfreiheit*, we use clear definitions that people of potentially different "ultimate dispositions" and axiological assumptions can agree upon. We do not assume the existence of such things as totalities and collective concepts unless the facts indicate them without us having already assumed their existence *beforehand*. Indication and proof are different. Within the clarity of *Wertfreiheit*, we do not have to insist that all of our assumptions be proven or we would merely end up back at either the "Munhausen Trilemma" or at ruthless skepticism. Certainly, it would be unscientific to insist that anyone prove their assumptions without using any of them.

It is not necessary for science to prove all of the premises of investigation. If the detractors are unable to advance premises of their own, much less prove theirs, then the worth of the doubter to the investigator is nil. The investigator chooses a starting point and initial premises, then gains new information, and upon receiving information which contradicts the premises, submits the premises to scrutiny and revision before processing new data. The fact that we choose our starting points, both epistemological and axiological, in no way necessarily invalidates our scientific investigation. The social scientist must take criticism into account, but the specter of endless doubt is no more than a chimera. We do have potential doubt of our facts and premises, but until we can find any evidence of anything better, we act as if they are true, but we are attentive for anything that suggests otherwise.

## Chapter Ten: A New Perspective on Collective Representations

We speak here of collective representations as if they exist and do not exist. That is to say, we do not disprove their existence, but do not accept them unproblematically, either. We offer a different understanding of collective representations, one which does not rely on accepting either holism or Durkheim's own original interpretation of the importance of primitive religious rites. Finally, it does seem that we are attempting to have our cake and eat it too. Considering that we have rejected the existence of collective concepts, it might appear odd that we are now discussing in all due seriousness the proper role and definitions for collective representations. However, there is a simple answer to this otherwise appropriate objection. We speak here of collective representations *as if* they exist, and we speak of them as hypothetical constructs suitable for guiding research. If someone can prove their existence, that would be a tangible achievement within social science. We speak of collective representations as ways to describe, label, and explain the patterns of interaction between people and individual beliefs. We can look at the patterns of interaction that we have created in our perception through our own values and our efforts to look at the subject matter *as if* these patterns exist in their own right. There is no harm in doing so as long as we remember they are hypothetical constructs. Collective representations are useful to show us how ideas are ideas in interaction, that certain sets (package-deals) of ideas can be created through the reconciliation of otherwise irreconcilable points of view. They also remind us that as people conform to the ideas of their society that conformity would not be possible if people first did not have different points of view and lots of value conflicts. However, because when we study collective representations we do so through the actions and thoughts of people and not in some "pure" state, their limits and parameters tend to blur and breakdown in some confusion, and the distinction between individual ideas and collective ideas may not always be clear. Alternately, collective representations do exist, but we can never properly

behold them but we assume their existence as an act of faith —a position which does not really render their borders any clearer than if we treated them as hypothetical constructs.

Durkheim has done the sociological enterprise a great service by exploring the possible collective nature of some of the ideas and social forces that affect us greatly in society. This is not to say that his reasoning is tenable. This is not to agree that because collective representations have collective origins, that they have collective functions. Neither is it to agree with his belief that because a collectivity is *like* an organism that it *is* an organism for practical evaluation. Durkheim did reveal that many of the powerful images, ideals, and attitudes are not a matter of individual choice. This is not mysterious. After all, Weber would have said that mathematics can be pursued in different ways but mathematics is not a matter of individual choice. Though it can be shown that Durkheim's paradigm of social facts is inadequate and that societies are not collective entities but merely things, his notion of collective representation cannot be dismissed as easily.

Durkheim based his theory of collective representations on their collective origin in society. He felt it necessary to posit a single origin for collective representations in the 'collective nature' of society, a term that has to be accepted uncritically before being used. Durkheim thought he had found the origin of the collective nature of society in the initiation of religious rites. This provided him with a tidy answer and would serve as the base for the edifice of the rest of his theories. However, it is impossible to prove Durkheim's theory of religious rites, and it is possible, upon relatively plausible assumptions and presuppositions, to sufficiently disprove it. It was an *assumption* on Durkheim's part that collective knowledge and collective phenomena *must* have a single unified source. That assumption led to Durkheim's decision to label a group of phenomena by their hypothesized origins rather than by their concrete characteristics and common effects. Methodological individualism does not automatically recognize collective phenomena, but neither does it posit any unprovable source for any kind of knowledge. Durkheim's reasoning erred in positing one source for all things. It is interesting that this one

false assumption by Durkheim would be sufficient to keep his own theory from moving towards methodological individualism, and hence removed social facts from *any* individual explanation.

Durkheim may have used a static model for the individual, but his understanding of collective representations was more dynamic than may be supposed. Durkheim saw the collective representations of a society's moral life as dynamic and not subject to individual rational scrutiny. Perhaps Durkheim's understanding of these two points is underappreciated because they are in fact one point. Collective representations are dynamic because they cannot be processed by the power of the individual rational mind. This, in part, is due to the complexity of the phenomena, which sometimes possess more details than any one mind can hold. More importantly, the collective representations are dynamic because they are 'package-deals' and contain contradictions and mixtures of rational and irrational elements. They are also transformed by setting and circumstance and combination. The individual picks up the collective representation, tries to internalize it, and fails to do so in any permanent and universal way. The individual turns the collective representation around to find the way that it most makes sense to the individual given his experience, what he knows, his values, and his current situation. The individual supplies the energy to deal with the collective representations, animating them and giving them their life, in a frequently vain effort to come to grips with them in either their totality or in their essence and existence in a rational world. The individual may fail to make sense of an ideal until a particular juncture of time, setting, and association occurs, and then the individual assumes that if the ideal appears to be 'right' and real at that one point, that it is somehow *always* real and 'right.' This interpretation of Durkheim's concept of collective representation is not his definition, but it is an interpretation which emphasizes the role of individual cognition. Durkheim remains quite right in showing that the collective life of a society *cannot* be solely the deliberate product of the individual minds. We can quibble judiciously about how much of the social life and moral milieu is created by individual minds thinking *as* individual minds. We can also reject Durkheim's conflation of the 'social,' the 'collective,' and the 'societal.' However,

Durkheim's conception of collective representations remains unrefuted, and poses a challenge to paradigms based upon methodological individualism.

If they exist, collective representations do have a 'collective' origin, but not in some single point, or Garden of Eden, or in the world's first religious rites. Collective representations are simply the ideas, ideals, images, and attitudes that require more than one person to sustain them and which are not reducible to individual thought, nor answerable to individual rationality. Also, collective representations, unlike real ideas, are subject to time and place and numbers of people for their veracity, perspicacity, and opacity. That is to say, their apparent truth emerges from circumstance and does become indistinguishable from genuine truth.

Durkheim recognized that collective representations were interdependent with individual representations or thoughts but were not reducible to them. He hoped that a new discipline called social ideation would begin the investigation of the complex relationships between collective representations and the individual's views of them [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.32 ]. Durkheim saw the collective representation as something completely distinct from the beliefs held by individuals, even the beliefs formed by collective action or society. Apparently, no one can necessarily behold any collective representation in its entirety. Social ideation has not been investigated, although this would be a promising field of investigation open to both social realists and the proponents of methodological individualism. Methodological individualism does not need to recognize the concrete existence of collective concepts, but it would seem profitable for it to recognize the *potential* existence of collective concepts, albeit with a *different* quality of concreteness than normal things.

We can use collective representations as real things, or *as if* they exist, or we can dispense with them completely. We can use them to explain the social compulsion of ideas, but if we find ourselves using them *as if* they existed, we should remind ourselves that their usefulness does not prove their existence and that we can find alternate means to describe and explain the same phenomena. If we took such an approach, we would say: "There appears to be a social compulsion created through interaction and

the nature of certain sets of ideas. This social compulsion seems to arise from the differences of both closely-related and mutually exclusive ideas among people and from the magnification of group solidarity. This social compulsion may appear to indicate the existence of social forces and collective ideas as entities in themselves, but it is unnecessary and unwise to assume that this is the case without further proof. The question is, 'Can we explain this apparent social compulsion of ideas from our present methodological position without further ado?' After all, we wish to keep our methodological position as simple as possible, and we do not want to add additional premises every time we study a new type of phenomenon."

Thus, there are three different methodological positions. We can assume collective concepts exist. We can pretend that they exist and use them as heuristic devices *as if* they exist. Or we can do without them altogether. If collective concepts do not need to be used to study a phenomenon, they should not be used. If they are to be used, unless they are proved first, they are to be used *as if* they exist rather than used unproblematically. The use of collective concepts as a heuristic device is a short-cut which allows people to cut simply to the heart of the matter and to formulate questions faster than otherwise. However, the use of collective concepts is not unproblematic.

'Collective' seems to have multiple meanings. On one hand, it is used holistically and metaphysically, on the other, it is used merely to indicate a quality that is not reducible to the individual personalities involved. If there is one and eternal collective origin or nature of society, what color is it? If it does not have a color, how do you know that? *Nothing* can be known about the great collective nature of society other than that its reified ideal becomes an agent of causal explanation. Furthermore, it is assumed that all (or most) of the collective representations 'somehow' reflect the collective nature. This is why this perspective is 'social metaphysics.' We can make assumptions about the relationships between social forms and assume that there is a 'collective nature' and an 'image' of the 'collective nature,' but these terms are merely hypothetical constructs. The collective nature can never be examined directly, and hence, its existence becomes metaphysical in effect. However, the broader and simpler definition of collective appears methodologically viable. We do not appear to have the grounds to dismiss the existence of all

collective concepts at this point: neither should we assume that if one collective concept exists, that other hypothetical collective concepts exist as well.

We can certainly use collective representations in sociological theory, or in various ways account for their alleged effects without using the term itself. There are some reservations about how the concept of collective representation can be used, even if it is potentially useful. The use of any "collective" concept tends to facilitate an inadvertent and implicit holism because "collective" has multiple definitions. At one moment, "collective" can mean *irreducible*, and at another, *societal*. Sometimes the researcher may see collective phenomena as making up or forming society, and then inadvertently switch into the perspective that believes that society makes the collective phenomena.

We can simply describe the rise of collective representations without resorting to holistic assumptions. The interaction between Person A, Person B, and Person C may indeed lead to ideas being shared by A, B, and C, which are not reducible to the ideas they had before. In the first instance, the ideas present are A1, B1, and C1. They are in conflict, and a new set of ideas emerge which we call D. Instead of the final values being one of the first ideas adopted by the other two members of the group, the final ideas are different than the initial ideas and are of a different quality. They are package-deals which are contingent on time and place as well. In the final instance, the ideas of these three people develop as follows. Person A has D1, Person B has D2, and Person C has D3. Now, are all D1, D2, D3, separate manifestations of a true idea, a social fact and collective representation called D-prime? We called the new set of ideas D simply because we put all the effects (with which were concerned in a *Beziehung auf Werte* sort of way) in the same group. But are all the D ideas separate manifestations of D-prime which is also different from each of the separate D ideas? If we answer yes to either of these two questions, then we believe in collective representations. We do not have to answer yes, however. We are quite capable of seeing how A1, B1, C1 could lead to D1, D2, and D3 without we researchers believing in the existence of some kind of D-prime. As a methodological individualist or a neo-Kantian we would refer to these ideas as part of the set of D, not as manifestations of D-prime. However, there is no need in either case to posit a

collective nature and a collective whole of society, and no need to believe that society has unproblematic borders like an entity.

The concept of "collective representations" offers an interesting way to think about the social compulsion of ideas. Whether they exist to a researcher will depend on the researcher's value-judgements, but they are a useful way to express the social compulsion of ideas. Collective representations are powerful and can be dangerous. They are sources of reason but they are not the only source. They do not appear to be able to totally overcome individual rationality. With great effort an individual can wrestle with them, and evict them from his inner life but not from his neighborhoods. We can say that we are rational men, and we need not the restless and irresponsible demons that knock on our doors. Individual reason is sufficient to identify and to deal with collective representations, but the will falters, curiosity beckons, and the context changes. We turn and then we open the door for them. We do so for only a moment but it is sufficient to let them into our domiciles again. We continue to celebrate Christmas, to say that 'love conquers all,' and we scan our astrology column in the daily newspaper.

As Weber once said in Economy and Society, the majority of our lives is not markedly rational [ Weber, 1978a, p.25 ]. He saw two types of nonrational<sup>4</sup> action in particular: traditional and affectual. Weber was willing to accept that society was composed of both rational and nonrational processes and beliefs, and because collective representations represent the dynamic irrationalism of social life, we could see how a follower of Weber might consider using collective representations *as if* they exist or consider a way to take their possible existence into account. An understanding of collective representations would seem to be a useful addition to theories based on methodological individualism. In conventional form, methodological individualism cannot see 'collective representations,' perhaps because these things are more apparent than real, and their power derives from their lack of genuine concrete existence. Perhaps the social compulsion of reality stems not from the existence of social forces as real and concrete entities, but from the ephemeral qualities of social forces. Social forces are intermittent; they are virtually

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<sup>4</sup> Or possibly, irrational.



irresistible one moment and absent the next. They affect the form and content of ideas without being accountable to anything or anyone.

The phenomenon in question, whether we call it "collective representations" or "the social compulsion of idea," is not subject to rationality. Its power stems from its very irrationality and elusive qualities. It can be fought by rational analysis, but such an endeavour would be difficult. This phenomenon always seems to afflict us at our weakest moments. Collective representations converge upon the individual, and sometimes prove satisfying, sometimes decorous, and sometimes agonizing. It is solace for a grieving mourner to believe in religion and Heaven. It is ornamental for those with holiday spirit to put the star or hat on the Christmas tree. It is painful to torment oneself with fears of hell and terror of one's sexual identity and instincts. Murder is frequently conducted in the greatest of emotional turmoil of someone's twisted sense of justice which they feel is imposed on them from without. As Socrates is reputed to have said, people do not do what they think is bad but only what they think is good. Whether this is wholly true may be doubtful, but it is true enough for our purposes. People frequently do things that disgust them convinced that they must serve some 'higher' truth than what appears reasonable and normal from their individual standpoint [ Durkheim, 1995b, p.30 ].

Social myths such as that of the 'Bermuda Triangle' or of racial superiority die hard. They have a social support structure of ritual, crowd euphoria or panic, and receive reaffirmation through the like belief of other people. *In addition*, they are based on a dynamic of irrationality within the individual mind. This dynamic is the belief's process of change in its explanation and rationalization, a process which incorporates both rational and irrational elements, and both facts and fictions in whatever way to maintain the belief. Once a 'collective representation' has been established in a person's mind, the person would have to fight against the feelings and the diversity of explanations and reasons for having the belief. In addition, the change in the individual's context and circumstances can then start the process of sorting through the explanations all over again, rekindling the belief. The explanations and reasons can all be wrong for racial prejudice or for the 'Bermuda Triangle,' but as long as *one* reason appears convincing at

any one time, the intransigent belief will continue. The moral-vampire or confidence man will use many entreaties to be invited into a person's house, and as long as one is accepted that is all that will be needed.

One interesting way to look at the social change of ideas is to see how one person's rationality can affect another. As Durkheim said, the individual experiences the ideas from his society as coercive and demanding. Yet, these ideas are all-powerful because they are "package-deals" created from the interaction between other people's beliefs. Should these other people become more rational in relation to each other, submitting their belief systems and their demands on each other to rational thought, then the potential for "collective representations" to rise out of this is reduced, and if they do emerge, then their intensity and nature would be much different than otherwise. The point here is that if "collective representations" or patterns of the social compulsion of ideas exist, then they do not have to remain static indefinitely. There is always the possibility that new communicative technologies and an increased commitment to rationality could greatly change the nature of these entities.

Once we ascertain what ideas, sentiments, and ideals are subject to individual rationality and what are collective representations, we can live our lives a little more rationally, with greater axiological and ontological clarity. The values we have are ultimately subject to potential irreconcilability, though no doubt many disputes are merely the products of inadequate rational development and empirical information. This holds true for us when we act as citizens and also when we act as social scientists. We may have something to gain in our understanding of social action once we are able to identify which beliefs and differences of opinion are the results of 'collective representations,' as opposed to those that fall within the domain of individual rationality and individual choice. Human beings make decisions and can choose to advance their own rationality and understanding, but they are always in a social milieu not of their own choosing, in which some of the most powerful and dominant ideas are inherently paradoxical, contradictory, and are not held to logic or fact.

## Chapter Eleven: Conclusion

Social realism and methodological individualism are not intrinsically at odds and it would be fruitful to create for them a common frame of reference. Durkheim advanced an extreme form of social realism which we can call social holism. This paradigm remains opposed to methodological individualism and no common frame of reference is possible between the two.

Durkheim's holistic social realism is based essentially on the two assumptions: upon the idea that societies are entities if not also organisms, and upon his almost mystic notion of the "social fact." Much of Durkheim's argument for social facts is questionable and based on inadequate reasoning. The notion that society is an organism must be rejected, and the notion that society is an obvious or unproblematic entity must also be discarded. Societies appear as entities to some people under some conditions, and not to others under different conditions. Durkheim's concern that new methods must be devised to deal with the social nature of moral phenomena appears justified, but his theory as a whole is not.

Weber's paradigm is not as obviously moralistic, but appears to offer a sturdier platform for all sociological investigation. Methodological individualism seems to risk fewer mistakes in its methodology and to be more open to scrutiny in relation to bias and "value-freedom" than does social realism. It is less obvious how it would deal with the effects of epistemological pluralism and the apparent existence of collective concepts. There appears to be grounds for a meaningful dialogue between the two paradigms which may prove useful for sociological investigation but there are no grounds for *rapprochement*.

Societies are not as simple and obvious as Durkheim liked to believe. Not only are the boundaries of 'societies' less obvious and more permeable today than they appeared to be in the 19th century, there is an acceptance that society itself is somewhat subjective in its boundaries. It is all a matter of individual meaning and understanding. Without unproblematic borders, society cannot be a clear entity, and if it is

not an entity (a thing in its own right and separate from its surroundings) it cannot be an organism. If it is not an organism it cannot have a consciousness, will, purpose, and personality. However, there is not just a dichotomy between anarchy-chaos and society-organism, and we might look at an alternate way to perceive the same matter of social interaction and the social compulsion of ideas.

That we live in 'society' in some way is incontestable. We are always in a complex social milieu and we always have had relationships of some kind with others. We rarely initiate action and decisions as 'blank slates' or as completely rational and cognitively self-sufficient individuals. Around some people and not others, we feel more like ourselves. We become aware of certain concerns in certain contexts more than in other settings. Finally, we often find our own forms of logic and expressions of sensation through our participation in discussion and communication. As Weber pointed out, not only are there ideas, but there is also an 'inner logic' to ideas and consequences for having beliefs. Not only do our material circumstances affect our ideas and our ideas affect our material circumstances, but our beliefs oblige us to take on further axiological and epistemological commitments. Any new apparent contradictions and inconsistencies can give us the anxiety or concern that will urge us to develop our ideas further. Our beliefs are not entities or demons, but they can have a 'daemonic' -like aspect in that they can be like silent gargoyles on signposts in the mist beckoning us further down roads in which we cannot necessarily see the final destination. In contact with certain ideas, emotions, and sensation, we find ourselves choosing additional experience of them for clarity, insight, and stable understanding. The consequences of having certain ideas are like holes in social fabric through which (like capillary action) we choose to advance our mental processes. We choose to take advantage of these opportunities in part because they are there to be explored. In short, there is truth to that old adage, "In for a penny, in for a pound." Even if "society" should pressure us into believing certain ideas, the consequences of believing these ideas and submitting them to rational use and scrutiny will include possibilities different from what "society" had intended.

Durkheim did give us insight into social phenomena by showing that people do not react as solitary individuals in moments of collective effervescence in particular and in society in general.

However, Durkheim had tilted at windmills of 'straw men' put up by certain philosophers and economists. Part of Durkheim's error lies in his strenuous attack on the notion of 'atomic individualism' championed by the 'Manchester School' and Frederick Bastiat. These philosophers and economists, because they had made universal assumptions about human nature based on local prejudices and evidence, had then made blanket statements about the individual rationally engaging in economic behavior solely out of 'self-interest.' As Weber would later point out, the notions of rationality and of self-interest are neither obvious nor universal. Both the saint and the sinner can be said to be acting out of different kinds of self-interest – or not. The method of interpretive explanation accepts that people could have different meanings for the same actions and could express the same motivation differently as well. This diversity of interpretive explanations may seem at first to be a handicap by adding complexity, but it prevents the necessity from having to explain morality as a fixed social relationship. Some sinners and saints are selfish, some are selfless; what matters is the meaning for the individuals concerned.

Durkheim's error rests in the expression of his insight through the lens of Rousseau. People do not act as solitary individuals in society, but that is insufficient ground for us to say that society is any meta-reality or holistic entity in itself. The notion of the solitary individual is itself a 'straw man' with no basis in empirical fact. Finally, it would appear that in effect Durkheim wished to give the altruistic ethics of Kant and Rousseau a social basis and create for this new theory a new social-epistemological basis as well. He went a little too far. Though he showed that moral codes are social products, his speculation on the origins of ideas, his assumption of monocausation, and his assumption of pursuing the one nature of group relationships, were together sufficient to make him appear to be a "social metaphysician."

Durkheim explored the stability and power of social life over the individual. He erred in assuming mechanistic or biological parallels between disparate phenomena of incommensurate qualities. Durkheim used the analogy that just as a cell is part of the greater and more worthy macro-organism of the human being, the individual is part of a greater organism 'society' [ Durkheim, 1974a, p.24-25 ]. This 'society' is the source of answers to questions regarding the purpose of the individual just as the human

organism dictates the purpose of the cell. Oddly enough, Durkheim's analogy is insufficient in itself, because he did not believe that the human organism could genuinely dictate purpose at all, but was only a level of abstraction beneath the collective entity. Even if Durkheim had been correct in his use of analogy, an analogy is not proof. Durkheim was writing in an era steeped in the love of Darwinism and of biological analogies. Today in a milieu of much different discourse, his analogies are left bare and unconvincing. Durkheim was quite right in assuming that society was more than the sum of the individuals. But as nonsocial individuals do not exist, finding the sum of a society's individuals at all would be problematic. Society is greater than the sum of the individuals, but neither is quantifiable.

Durkheim was quite right in certain elements of his paradigm. 1) All societies have a moral reality. 2) Morality is never a matter of deductive axioms. 3) Morality is not something for the individual to decide as such *out of whim*. 4) 'Human nature' is not the proper starting point for the study of morality. Moral forces determine and create the different understandings of 'human nature' and 'human nature' is a dependent and not an independent variable. However, these four points need qualification and cannot be considered automatic and self-evident regardless of human experience and the observations of social scientists. These statements are generalizations, and like all generalizations, they should not be used to decide reality, only to help understand it. Moral reality in its boundaries is subject to becoming subjective and fluid and a matter of debate. Morality is always affected by circumstance, but is not something that is determined by circumstance. People, resources, setting, time, history, are all possible circumstances, and the list can be considered for analytical purposes to be virtually endless. People have different concerns depending on their circumstances, and people also experience their grasp of humanity differently through different circumstances. The concerns and questions that people ask are not obvious or fixed or predictable.

Finally, what is moral is what any individual can prove is moral to another. Who gets to decide what is moral? Anyone who can prove it —to you. Morality is not a whim, and it is not something that people can choose freely, any more than people can arbitrarily choose the answers to calculus problems.

That is, though the individual makes choices and can explore moral options, he cannot arbitrarily will what is moral anymore than he could will a circle to be square or change the beliefs of his neighbors.

The difficulties of how one can determine what is moral are a product of a combination of limitations that are much different in kind and quality. First, one presumably wishes to stay within the boundaries of logic and known truths. Second, one then has to communicate one's insight to other people. We can prove certain things to ourselves that we cannot prove to other people. Communicating our ideas to other people is often a slow and difficult bottle-neck. The task of determining what is moral and sharing the result has all the limitations of all the steps in the process. We do not suggest that morality be reduced to the verdicts of the court of public opinion, but still, being able to argue and prove one's case in public is an important part of the process. Insights that are not shared will vanish without a trace. Finally, there is the matter of the inadvertent or unexpected effects of one's ideas. One may indeed very well "prove" one's ethical theory in the court of public opinion only to have that decision open the flood-gates for much different decisions later on.

This last matter is something of which Weber appears to have been more cognizant than Durkheim. Weber emphasized that people had different material and ideal interests, but that there was an inner logic to ideas. If a person 'picked up' an idea, he might choose to examine it further, to play with it, to develop it, and to use it, and in so doing so, commit himself to the results of such effort, both expected and unexpected. Weber displayed a keen understanding of social-psychology in his WEWR essays "*Einleitung*" and "*Zwischenbetrachtung*." For example, if a person became a Puritan, he would take on more than the direct content of the ideas involved. Assuming the person wished to make sense of the world and to implement the ideas involved, the person would also have to make a commitment to a rational understanding of the world, whatever the circumstances, through the lens of the set of ideas. The person would find that taking up one set of ideas made other ideas more and less relevant to his concerns. To implement ideas would entail increased *wertrational* action and a commitment to rationality. This would entail certain emotional consequences, attitudes, and *Wertbeziehung* concerns. The mental

consequences of Puritanism are a different matter than just the content of the ideas themselves. Yet the mere fact that ideas have somewhat unanticipated consequences in no way proves or demonstrates that life is determined any more than does the example of a person choosing to walk down a path after reading the sign post. The person may not know all that there is on that path, but the person takes responsibility for the choice of walk, nevertheless. Finally, to further develop this analogy to illustrate Weber's social-psychology, the pedestrian walking down the path can make the ground firmer with his foot steps, and then lengthen the path at its current end by breaking in new ground.

Finally, rationality and social action take place within the opportunities and limitations of making meaning clear to, and accepted by, other people. There is no universal and objective meaning, and there is no transcendence. Communication is partly subjective and partly objective. Weber's understanding of communication is more subtle than might be supposed. In contrast, Simmel, for example, had a more subjective emphasis and then had to rely on objective meaning, transcendence, and metaphysics to unify his paradigm. Similarly, G.H. Mead looked at the act of communication as exclusively pragmatic and subjective, and hence, then had to assume universal objective meanings in order to have unproblematic communication within his paradigm of Social Behaviorism [ Mead, 1964, p.213 ; Collins, 1985, p.273 ].

Weber's understanding was more subtle and had neo-Kantian overtones. People choose to try to communicate, and communication is neither automatic nor determined. People advance their ideas through their commitment to the content of the ideas themselves, their 'inner logic,' and their social-psychological and value-relatedness consequences. The act of 'external communication' then depends upon subjective rationality and subjective meaning and acts of will. However, communication has different limitations and opportunities than thought itself. Communication depends on subjective thought, but has its own forms. Individuals need to communicate their ideas with common frames of reference and symbols for which they hold sufficiently similar meanings and associations. Communication can last longer than individual thought and the lives of the individuals. For example, two people who have an enlightening correspondence can leave their letters to their children and posterity. The letters might not



have the same value-relatedness and meaning to the next generation who read them, but the letters would involve a commitment to express the ideas in concrete form which can then possibly affect other minds in future years. Communication then depends on thought, but also has its own forms and discipline. Weber and certain others influenced by the neo-Kantian movement disregarded metaphysical absolutes within communication and thought, but avoided both the flux-like character of reality given by the pragmatists and the absolute abstractions of the neo-Hegelians. Weber's depiction of ideas in his treatises on music and culture showed in all cases that ideas can only be developed in certain ways and not others. People choose to develop ideas, and they can choose to develop them in different directions, but they *must* choose only among certain directions *if* they wish to maintain consistency, rationality, and efficacy.

There is no one origin for knowledge. We have knowledge, and we think, and in some respects, that is enough —considering that, if we should pursue the definitive origin of knowledge, any wrong answer would be potentially damaging. Durkheim was not wrong to speculate that religious rites were the one origin for conceptual knowledge; he was wrong in basing his entire theory on something that could not be proven. In addition, Durkheim's cognitive base was distant and unrelated to individual cognition in the present. We have people who already think; it is less necessary to find a theoretical beginning point than to accept and understand the obvious.

All philosophers and the sociologists who cared to speculate, assumed that there was a single type of cause for the basic concepts. For all we know there may be diverse and overlapping sources. The questions that have been asked whether concepts come from this source or that may have to be rephrased. Perhaps, some concepts have only one source and others have several. Though we cannot prove that this is the case, it cannot be disproved. We reject collective holism because it cannot be proved, and conversely, we have to accept the *potential* for epistemological pluralism because it cannot be disproved. Not only can people who advocate a single source for concepts not prove that their one source is *a* source, they cannot

prove it is *the* exclusive source. It is unfortunate that the cause for the basic concepts is generally a matter of faith; as long as it is so, we could do worse than to be tolerant and multi-denominational.

People think. People think in different ways. This facilitates differences between social institutions such as cultures, and individual cognition. The interaction between different ways of thinking may tend to create or favor ways of thinking that would not, or less often, result without it. It is unnecessary to believe in forms of 'social metaphysics' which have destinies and absolute but unobservable relationships to each other and the 'collective nature.' No doubt patterns of interaction can create ways of thinking which facilitate and constrain individual thought, but it is unnecessary to believe in absolute relationships such as those between the 'collective nature' and the collective representation. Finally, it is unnecessary to believe that these hypothetical constructions are parts of a holistic social being.

Durkheim made the 'mistake' of basing his paradigm on a single origin for society and a single origin for conceptual thinking because he could not accept either individualism or epistemological pluralism as the basis for sociological theory. He could not accept the belief that the individual was the source of society, and nor should he have done so. After all, the abstract individual is not the source of any society: every society draws back to pair-bonds between men and women. Durkheim was right to have reservations about basing a theory for group behavior, as well as stable and complex social forms, on the abstract individual. After all, abstract individuals do not exist, only real people exist, and these real people always have sexual identity, consume food, have parents, have language, and specific concerns. The contention of this investigation has never been to suggest that Durkheim was a fool. He erred in reifying his constructs and in making his theory so extreme that it could only be accepted as an act of faith in collective entities. Durkheim was right in rejecting doctrines of so-called 'atomic individualism.' Such theories seemed more suitable for philosophy than sociology. These 'individualistic' theories included those of Hobbes, Rousseau, and the Manchester School. In addition, he rejected Spencer's 'Social Darwinism,' most likely because he understood it inaccurately to be only individualistic in its concerns [ Gray, 1985, p.251 ]. The single and crucial flaw with these 'atomic individualist' theories is that they

assumed a universal human nature and the abstract individual as the basis for social explanation. All assumptions about human nature and the nature of the individual have been socially-grounded, that is culturally-specific, generalities.

In addition, the role of *Wertbeziehung* is always relevant. Even *if*, for the sake of argument, a universal human nature existed, the individuals attempting to describe it would have not only different values, but different concerns, and consequently, they would identify and perceive different aspects within the same thing. In other words, if the pessimist describes the glass as half empty and the optimist describes the glass as half full, then regarding the infinite number of potential qualities within human beings an almost infinite number of descriptions can also be made of the same thing. In no way did Weber's methodology necessarily mitigate realism and objectivity. In contrast, Durkheim's rejection of all individualistic means of explanation and his exclusive reliance on collective concepts and totalities distorted his methodology from the very beginning as he did not understand that what he wanted to see had to affect what he saw.

The necessity to reject 'atomic individualism' as the starting point for sociological explanation did not necessitate organicistic or social fact types of causality. Nor did the rejection of perceiving the individual as the source of society necessitate eschewing the individual as a unit of causal explanation for present on-going social action within established society. In some respects, we will never know the origin of 'society' and our explanations will always be coloured with value-judgments, especially religious beliefs and current theories of evolution –which are sometimes themselves nothing less than 'revealed religions.' Our search for causal explanation does not depend on speculation on the origin of all things. Our verifiable facts give us grounds to speculate on First and Final Causes if we should want to do so, but it is these facts and not our speculations which must remain the basis for theory.

Methodological individualism does not depend upon universal assumptions regarding the content of human nature. Methodological individualism is the set of methodological theories which explain human action by the meaning of the action for the individuals involved and which examines their

decision-making and their awareness of their circumstances. Methodological individualism is the only theory which is tenable under the circumstances. We cannot prove any division of the human psyche into components of mind. *'Homo Duplex'* remains a useful way of examining social life to locate new concerns for investigation, but not only is it unproven and cannot be proven, it is based upon a value-judgement and a leap of faith. It is indisputable that human beings are socialized. It is unnecessary to think that this then divides our minds into socialized and nonsocialized components any more than the fact that an engine being fueled becomes divided into fueled and nonfueled components. In spite of the diverse content of human nature and the disparate value-relations and *Weltanschauungen* of both different cultures and the individuals within these cultures, methodological individualism retains its efficacy. Not only can methodological individualism accept differences between cultures and societies, it avoids the reification of these abstractions. Not only do different cultures and societies exist, *they exist differently for the different people within them.*

There appears to be significant cause to support Dennis Wrong's argument that sociology has overemphasized the socialized nature of man at the expense of recognizing the cognitive and consciously-directed aspects [ Wrong, 1961 ]. At the end of the 20th century we have seen the failure of several totalitarian regimes, including the D.D.R., the U.S.S.R., and Romania, which tried to not only maintain absolute control over its citizens at their own expense, but to create a new type of 'Communist Man.' It is not necessary to accept Rousseau's dictum, "Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains." Freedom, both cognitive and political, is achieved through individual effort, and nothing is freely given. Bursting the chains of political tyranny will not return men and women to a state of freedom. Ending slavery is one thing, but freedom is painfully earned a step at a time.

No doubt people are socialized, but if we were entirely products of socialization with our 'morality' determined by our society, change would have occurred much less rapidly. If human beings were entirely social-constructs, change would still be possible (if glacial) if 'society' changed for whatever reason, such as through an accidental or inadvertent increase in the division of labor or population, but

this seems to be entirely insufficient. Societies have experienced both evolution and revolution. If societies were able to determine their citizens' beliefs there would have been no need to purge dissidents and persecute heretics to maintain social stability. We see the role of individual thought at the most extreme moments of social change, but it is also crucial to see the role of human thought at the level of day to day work and leisure. People who are not irretrievably insane act on things according to the meaning these events and circumstances have for them. People create different meanings under similar circumstances, but people work to create their own meanings nevertheless. The act of 'socialization' itself, in its most extreme form of receiving orders and value-statements, is dependent on individual thought and one's determination to understand and to make sense of what one is experiencing. Individuals choose to understand orders and to make sense of them based upon cognitive and even metaphysical assumptions. In the same way, people attempt to make sense out of the information they glean, when not being directly coerced, and to establish some kind of stable meaning for their lives. We all think differently, and we make different commitments to meaning and rationality. Some of us are more rational than others, and more determined to achieve self-clarification of our values and goals. We are all different, yet we all think. Methodological individualism remains the most viable method of explanation of human action because it can take all of these concerns into account as the intrinsic concern of its paradigm.

Methodological individualism needs no eclecticism and alliances with different methodologies to understand all individual events and actions. Methodological individualism is a methodology which by itself offers a common framework of causal explanation and understanding between different disciplines and subjects. Methodological individualism is in fact the only frame of reference possible in the social sciences. There are different organistic and 'divided mind' theories, but they themselves are incompatible with each other. The assumptions of '*homo duplex*' are not the assumptions of 'Ego, Id, and Superego,' or of 'the I and the Me.' The organistic theories do have premises and conclusions compatible with each other, and the 'divided mind' theories have premises and conclusions compatible with each other, but this is insufficient. These two sets of paradigms have no common frame of reference between themselves. The

theories of one type cannot create a mutually-meaningful set of information and a frame of reference between themselves much less between themselves and the theories of another type. For example, some people may be drawn to combine the theories of Marx and Freud because they are both compatible to their purposes and to their view of the human mind, but proponents of these theories really cannot communicate between each other and provide information which can be used by both theories.

The theories which together are compatible within methodological individualism share a common method of explanation: that we examine the individual as the smallest unit of social investigation and we explain the individual's action by the meaning and understanding of the individual involved. Additional premises can be added to different theories and they can examine different subjects and address different concerns, but with this common method of understanding, theories do not have to share the exact same premises and value-judgements. It is in this way that the theories of Rational Choice, the Austrian School of Economics, Max Weber, Robert Merton, William Thomas, Randall Collins, and even practitioners of Symbolic Interactionism such as Blumer and Couch, have something in common. All of these theorists examine the meaning that the actions have for the individual actors, and seek to understand how individuals create and establish meaning. All of these theories use the individual as a sufficient unit of causal explanation.

The similarities between the organicists and between the 'divided mind' theorists are also significant in goal and in purpose, but lack compatibility. These theories are frequently combined, but they are not "compatible." There appears to be little possibility of a common frame of reference being created for them to inform each other without intrinsically adding and increasing biases. They cannot be combined without accepting paradox and conflicting premises. Theories which talk to each other through a common frame of reference will not necessarily be congruent and their proponents will not necessarily agree with each other. However, their differences will be meaningful through their mutual method and their ability to orient their arguments to a reference point. Theories which are intrinsically incompatible can still have common enemies. "Incompatible" theories may also share common methods, especially if

these methods include subjectivism and leaps of faith, but their differences cannot be meaningful to each other (except through opposition to a common enemy) and true agreement is impossible.

There may be many different theories which are part of or connected to methodological individualism, but they all have something in common which link them together so that they can always form a meaningful dialogue. Methodological individualism explains social actions by the meaning of their participants. Historical events are built up of such social actions in processes and contexts of which their participants may not be entirely aware. We then interpret the subject meaning of the participants through the lens of our own value-relations as well. This emphasis on individual meanings does not exclude a recognition of the inadvertent and cumulative effects of action, far from it. To recognize that people's actions facilitate and reinforce other actions that they did not necessarily foresee does not bind one into accepting collective concepts. It does not necessarily exclude them either, but they have to be proven to exist from a point of view within the methodology.

Methodological individualism will refer to collective entities and to "spirits" and attitudes of the group, but only in a particular way. At each stage of explanation, the only values that the researcher recognizes are the values that human minds can grasp, and the only minds involved are those of individuals. For example, Weber talked about the "spirit" of capitalism which was an attitude that arose inadvertently from people of certain strong religious beliefs applying their beliefs to economic activity. However, each step of the reasoning in Weber's The Protestant Ethic focused on the set of diverse meanings among the individuals concerned. Weber did not start off with the "spirit" of capitalism and show how it entered people's minds. Rather, he said that we *could* interpret certain attitudes of economically prosperous people *as if* they constituted the "spirit" of capitalism. Weber was careful to refer to "spirit" as something that did not truly exist. It was a hypothetical construct useful for historical explanation. We can explain the real actions of real people by showing how their real attitudes and beliefs have something in common in their inadvertent effects and we can speak of these attitudes *as if* they formed a hypothesized set called the "spirit" of capitalism. At no point did Weber say that the "spirit" was

real, or had a will and purpose of its own. Referring to the "spirit of capitalism" made clearer the inadvertent effects of rationalization upon initial value-judgements that Weber wished to explore and reveal.

Methodological individualism can work with collective sentiments, cultural attitudes, and "spirits of the times" but the only causal agents recognized are the real beliefs and values that people hold<sup>5</sup>. Methodological individualists would not speak of people holding different parts of something real that existed independently of these people and whose form and content were different and autonomous from the beliefs the people held. In order to understand what Weber was doing with The Protestant Ethic one need only remember his position vis-a-vis Menger, Schmoller and Dilthey. Weber's use of Ideal-Types rejected the real existence (as independent of people) of concepts and types without falling anywhere near nominalism. This is a neo-Kantian analytical method which is a little subtle yet free from distortion. The sets of attitudes called the Protestant Ethic have more in common than the fact they are in the same group: what they have in common is that we put them in the same group for the same reason due to our own *Wertbeziehung* and our research goals.

From the point of view of methodological individualism, the use of collective concepts by Durkheim and the German Idealists was like the parable of four blind men describing an elephant. In the case of the four blind men who come to hold much different ideas about the elephant from touching different parts, they had someone else to tell them they were wrong and that the elephant existed in the first place. The proponents of collective *Vorstellungen* and collective concepts have no one who can see the whole entity for them. They assume that their different experiences are merely different manifestations of one much bigger and unified concept. Those who rely on collective concepts unproblematically will no doubt have a great deal in common with one another in what they are trying to do and in their views of the

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<sup>5</sup> We do not mean to imply that all historical and social events are created in their entirety as products of the conscious and deliberate intentions of their participants. We do mean that what we understand as a whole event (or whole society) is always a product of our intuition and implicit value-judgements, and hence, it does not have an independent existence of individuals and does not create itself. When we explain events as being created by causal agents, the causal agents with which we are concerned are individuals, and not any agency of the whole society, event, *volk*, *Geist*, or social organism.



individual mind, but they will be in a dialogue much like the four blind men. If a collective concept cannot be beheld by *anyone*, its uses as a starting point for research and as a touchstone or yardstick for conclusions, are limited. It would seem more plausible that collective concepts can be used as a heuristic device to ask questions, to ask "what if?" and to sensitize the researcher into explaining patterns of behavior as if the patterns had a level of reality of themselves. However, the existence of collective concepts cannot be assumed at the starting-point of social-scientific investigation, and unless proved, cannot be the measures by which one determines one's conclusions. Though they *can* be used, one cannot use unproved collective concepts in one's conclusions in a way that can be submitted to the scrutiny of one's peers with different values and research goals. There may indeed be another or a larger role for collective concepts in sociology, but if so, this examination of the differences between Durkheim and Weber has not found any such possibility. It is possible that a sociologist may strongly uphold an ideology with its collective concepts as an act of faith, and may indeed show others that events may make sense if one believes these concepts are real, but still, there will be, in Weber's phrase, too much of a "revealed religion" about the matter.

There is a need for sociology to terminate its past obsession with finding one source for knowledge. The goal of the historian should be to get the facts right and not to prostrate the facts to imagined starting points of universal history. It was unnecessary to invent a hypothetical starting point for human life and civilization such as Freud's hypothesized patricide and Durkheim's religious rites. In addition, methodology needs to take a similar step. German neo-Kantian methodologists, notably Rickert and Weber, used a starting point for the grasp of knowledge, but not knowledge itself. Rickert and Weber had held that before people see the world, they are also choosing to see and hence, must value something to be seen. In other words, the neo-Kantians largely believed that a person's values preceded the information the person gained about the world. To a large extent, this is true, but it is not an empirical fact that is always true. It merely seems evident that it happens at least some, if not most, of the time. Just

as we cannot prove or disprove the starting point for all human knowledge, we cannot prove and should not invent hypothetical starting points for individual knowledge which will then be used as the base of our own theories. To do so turns speculation into the foundation for our facts, and we put our precious observations on a flimsy pedestal. It is possible that our choice of what to see has always preceded what we have seen, but this is unprovable. Also, it depends upon the same assumption that we make when we see two repeating infinite series of "...+1-1+1-1..." and "...-1+1-1+1-1+" and we assume they are merely the same series viewed at different points. It would be better to limit our conceptualization to the *least* number of unprovable assumptions and presuppositions.

It would be wiser to assume, until we can prove otherwise, that our individual knowledge has a basis in a pluralist epistemological relationship: sometimes we choose to see before we see and sometimes we observe first. (This is not to be confused with a previous suggestion that epistemological differences might yield collective representations.) This would be more in accord with a historical understanding of the human being. We start off as babies thrust out of our mothers' womb. We experience a great discord and cataclysm of information before we are fully ready to process it and to identify what we should try to perceive. The Rickertian assumption that we *always* choose to perceive before we actually perceive should be discarded. In doing so, we do not throw away the concepts of *Wertfreiheit* and *Wertbeziehung*. The concepts remain relevant definitely *some* of the time, and *potentially* relevant *all* of the time. If the basis for knowledge is indeed pluralistic, without one starting point for all people, these two concepts remain vital and relevant. In any case, if Rickert's theorem is true at least part of the time, these two concepts will be needed for that reason alone. It seems likely that Rickert's theorem is true much of the time, but it cannot be proven to be true and relevant for all of the time. Consequently, the limitations that Rickert and Weber accepted for "objective" knowledge as a result of the subject-object relationship might not hold true in every single instance as well. Hence, epistemological pluralism would seem to be a more viable basis for theory than any reliance on monocausal assumptions about the source of knowledge. This

epistemological pluralism can be the basis for methodological individualism without limiting its efficacy, and it also makes a contribution to our understanding of collective concepts as well.

Summarizing this modification of neo-Kantian methodology, we can state the following. We know of no one explanation and one starting point for all consciousness. It does seem logical that consciousness needs an object before the consciousness can be an object to itself. Hence, the consciousness can be its own object only after sensory experience. Be that as it may, once consciousness is already established, we then choose in some fashion, clear or muddied, energetic or quite passive, to perceive something as part of our process of perceiving. Perception is not passive, nor entirely 'realistic' in the sense that the mind is an 'unclouded mirror' to reality. This appears to be true much, if not all, of the time. However, a definite and true determination of the process of perception will quite likely elude methodologists indefinitely. Hence, theories should always emphasize the potential pluralism of epistemology at the same time epistemology should remain true to realism.

It appears that we can reach a conclusion in this broader discussion of individualism and collective concepts. Weber's paradigm of methodological individualism and cognitive determinism remains tenable for the investigation of moral phenomena. We understand action from the thinking of the people involved. The rational aspects of decision making are more easily examinable by the social scientist who wishes to establish causally-valid judgments for social action. The irrational is less easily viewed logically by the social scientist. Participants of social actions may sometimes feel ambivalent or uncertain about the meaning they have for the events. Not all of a society's collection of ideas are fully suitable for rational scrutiny. These 'collective representations' or 'convergent precepts' quite possibly are in fact the creation of the juxtaposition of the differences in the forms and starting points of knowledge between people's cognition in different places, or between those with different premises, or between those at different points in time. Only in this respect do the 'collective representations' represent the 'collective nature' of society, insofar as 'society' is a group of people with much different points of view who had to compromise in order to live together.

Methodological individualism must be the means to study moral phenomena, but this does not bind us to nominalistic considerations exclusively. People create generalizations and symbolism, and people encounter these creations as much as they encounter other people. The ideas of any social milieu can be of long or short duration, but in either case are processed through individual minds. However, if the very nature of an idea does not facilitate its reduction by the mind, but is based on the fact that people have different notions of the 'same idea' and is part of a 'package-deal' with other ideas, then the idea can threaten to have coercive power over the individual in a way different from that of any idea reducible to unambiguous objective reality. Methodological individualism is the best paradigm for the examination of moral phenomena, because it is the only paradigm which keeps levels of abstractions delineated and which will distinguish between 'value-neutral' concepts and non-neutral judgments. There is a role and a need for values in the social sciences. It lies in the ethical responsibility of the researcher, in the lenses to help us see the world, and in the step after 'value-neutral' concept formation, within the application of the concepts.

Methodological individualism informed by the Weberian paradigm will provide sufficient means to potentially avoid all evitable axiological distortions and to understand as well moral phenomena as they are experienced. However, the case for 'social realism' will not go away. Despite its distortions and its inability to distinguish between concepts that are and are not 'value-neutral,' social realism comes to immediate grips with a direct examination of the coercive feeling behind morality. However, for this social realism to be efficacious, it must be held subordinate to a framework of methodological individualism and cognitive determinism. In any conflict between collective concepts and methodological individualism, it is the former and not the latter that must concede. This is due to the fact that collective concepts can never meet the criteria of *Wertfreiheit* and *Wertbeziehung* and that collective concepts do not gain all their power from their concrete existence, but from their lack of determinate concreteness. The individual must be examined as a social unit of causality even though the temptation will always be there to directly and exclusively examine the nature of the group. This temptation results from the fact that

morality's ontological and axiological coercion is brought about by the dynamics of group life. It seems so much easier and more direct to examine the group instead of the individual as the source of moral sentiment and ideals.

Social realism is partly compatible with methodological individualism and insofar as this is so, remains a viable paradigm and especially a suitable source for the finding of research questions and concerns. The future of cognitive determinism on the other hand, will need to examine how ideas sometimes have the ability to thwart individual rationality at great human cost. Individual rationality is not all the same, and the irreconcilable differences between different modes of thought seem sufficient to create 'convergent precepts' which make us feel like small individuals juxtaposed to the moral edicts of some 'society.'

We must rely on methodological individualism until we ascertain a better understanding of epistemological pluralism and are able to prove collective concepts. Durkheim's social realism paradigm cannot be wholly dismissed, but is unacceptable as a whole. Methodological individualism by itself *cannot* yield a *complete* understanding of moral phenomena, but it can yield a *sufficient* understanding. In particular, it yields an acute understanding of individual social action which cannot be achieved by holistic paradigms. Methodological individualism is to be preferred to grander designs simply because it best avoids making mistakes. To follow the Durkheimian paradigm would be to risk losing ourselves in our own speculation of a mystical past and the mystification of collective concepts. However, Durkheim's work has revealed that methodological individualism by itself is unable to show us the whole picture of moral phenomena. It is the recommendation of this research that methodological individualism be the preferred approach for the study of moral phenomena until certain other theoretical problems and disputes can be resolved. By itself it is a sufficient paradigm. Also the research data it yields can be used by divergent paradigms, but not vice-versa. In other words, the information yielded through Weber's research by being methodologically sound can be used in a more collective-oriented paradigm as well as by individualistic theories in other disciplines, but methodological individualism cannot accept as such any

data or conclusions in return from the other paradigms. The road to hell is paved with eclecticism. Research can be conducted in one paradigm informed by the concerns and questions poised by another paradigm, but the results cannot be mixed together.

Durkheim's contributions to the study of moral phenomena cannot be dismissed, but must be divorced from collective holism. No doubt under certain conditions such as isolated tribes, holism could very well be tenable, but this not going to be a common occurrence. The Durkheimian concepts which can be divorced from holism seem to be useful for research. It would appear that the final arbiter in the sociological investigation of moral phenomena must be methodological individualism, but that does not mean that there can be no role for collective concepts. Collective concepts can be used between social scientists and their patrons who share the same *Weltanschauungen* and value-relations as long as they understand that they are participating in a kind of 'revealed religion.' Collective concepts can be used *as if they exist* as heuristic tools and question-generating devices by the proponents of methodological individualism. In any case, the argument for collective holism seems to be unmade.

We can summarize the conclusions of this paper as follows:

- 1) There is no proof for collective holism, and what proof Durkheim offered, was found to be faulty.
- 2) There is no proof for collective concepts in general, but they have not been disproved, either. Their use will be a matter of personal values with the risk of personal bias, or they can be used as analytical devices to aid interpretation and explanation.
- 3) The case for altruism being a primordial or exclusive moral principle is weak and does not appear tenable.
- 4) Collective representations appear to be a useful concept, but certain qualifications are relevant for their use. If such concepts exist, they do not represent a "collective whole." Finally, there is no one source for collective representations. It is a useful concept as it emphasizes the interactive basis of cultural ideas, but there appears to have been a temptation to assume a single cause for all collective representations.

- 5) There is a case to be made for epistemological pluralism. We cannot prove that there is a single cause for epistemological concepts. If there were indeed multiple and overlapping sources for epistemological concepts, the interaction between people of different epistemological bases would in itself be a sufficient explanation for the existence of collective representations.
- 6) The evidence to consider Weber's paradigm as facilitating relativism and subjectivism appears to be less convincing than originally thought. Weber emphasized all the potential limitations of his own approach, but these limitations would be reduced somewhat if people have fewer irreconcilable value differences, and if the subject-object linkage is moved a step away from Rickert's static model. If there are exceptions to Rickert's model of the subject-object link, then these exceptions will facilitate greater objectivity rather than greater subjectivity.
- 7) There is potential for collective concepts to be used within methodological individualism as ways to highlight the existence or potential existence of sustained patterns of interaction and aspects of the social compulsion of ideas which have characteristics of entities.
- 8) There is no known possibility to reconcile Durkheim's paradigm with methodological individualism. There is no possibility of bringing methodological individualism into Durkheim's paradigm. There is the possibility of bringing in aspects of social realism divorced from social holism into methodological individualism if the qualifications noted elsewhere in this thesis are observed.

It has been unfortunate that the study of moral phenomena has often been conducted in a manner which was not methodologically sound. Perhaps the faults of the research itself have led to a reduced interest in the study of moral phenomena and, as well, pedagogy. Much work is being published on related topics, but the methodological and conceptual problems involved are frequently not addressed. Disputes have occurred and there have been new positions. However, the disputes have not turned into debates, and the new positions seem to reflect eclecticism and personal opinion more than social science. This has meant that theorists who have written directly on societal morality have frequently come across

as ideologues. Without explicit premises open to examination, the facts serve the theorist's conclusions and prejudices and the conclusions do not have to be respected by opposing points of view. Without clear methodology, the conclusions of different works cannot be directly compared. Without the resolution of methodological problems, differences of opinion, will remain differences of opinion without a common frame of reference, and the subject of moral phenomena will remain with the moralist more than with the social scientist.

We are not part of any 'social whole,' nor is there any metaphysical necessity for the individual to care about sacrificing to some reified 'Society.' Morality is both collective and individual. The moral forces arise through groups and circumstances and yet all experience and final judgments remain exclusively that of the individual. Individuals are buffeted by 'collective representations' beyond their control, which are intrinsically dynamic and coercive to individual thinking. Yet the individual can gain clarity and freedom somewhat by recognizing this discordance between these moral forces and his potential logic and objectivity. The application of individual logic can lead the individual away from the full impact of the powerful and often irrational and irresponsible social forces, but can also lead him deeper in. The individual can gain axiological and ontological freedom, but there are considerable limitations. The individual's ability to defy society is frequently more a product of the division within society and its lack of unity than the power of the individual mind, yet this is not necessarily the case. Finally, as moral experience is both collective and individual, (subjectively irrational and rational) the chances of one individual creating morality for another is low, unless the recipient is in some way mentally deficient or uniquely vulnerable. In summary, the realm of pedagogy is not the philosopher dictating to the student; though this is a part of moral life, it is a small part. Moral life is the conflict and cooperation between the individual's cognitive processes, rational and otherwise, with the encircling collective forces beyond control of the individual and *ultimately, beyond the control of anyone or any thing, even society.*

There appears to be a resilient and intractable reality to social interaction which will continue to



underlie theories of social realism. Societies appear irreducible to their components. It does appear that "societies" have certain needs that become manifest in their moral codes. That is, for people to get along under different conditions, their morals have to contain particular types of rules. However, Durkheim's research into social realism completely disproves of any chance that moral codes can be reduced to Functionalist or Utilitarian considerations. In part, the moral phenomena created by "society" seem to have to include elements which are spurious, destructive, or just plain needless. In all cases, it seems that the moral reality created by "society" exudes a strong coercive effect on the individual. Durkheim was also completely right in holding that all moral systems had to exist for the purpose of "some kind" of life *if they were justified in their coercion over the individual*. His mistake was in reversing the direction of this relationship. Durkheim believed that the purpose and authority for morals was a choice between a human-made deity or society. Durkheim was wrong in how he tied up the loose ends of this reasoning. He made society an entity which held purpose and thus would completely and automatically justify all the moral codes which it created. Thus, all the demands upon the individual became justified by the fact that they were demands and by the belief that society existed as an entity. The moral rule of altruism is the very embodiment of society making a demand upon the individual; its request is for the individual to pursue selflessness for the sake of something other than himself, especially for society. The overall thesis of this research is that Durkheim was right in showing that society makes coercive moral demands upon the individual, but because he was wrong about how these demands were made, he was wrong in assuming that these demands are automatically justified. The individual remains the only level of life that exists in society, and it is for the individual to choose to decide issues for himself or not. Consequently, since methodological individualism avoids the mistakes of Durkheim's holistic social realism and since an examination of social realism leaves us with the individual potentially as the final judge of moral phenomena, the case for methodological individualism is further confirmed.

More important than diversifying the notion of moral principles is how such principles are to be understood. It would appear that the ultimate judge of moral principles would remain the individual.

Methodological individualism reveals no weaknesses in accepting the diversity and dynamism of the process of symbolic cognition for the individual. Methodological individualism can work with all moral principles, including altruism, but does not presuppose them or presuppose any hierarchy of values. There appears to be no methodological evidence to suggest that altruism is of necessity the exclusive moral principle or that it exercises a special prerogative over the others. Throwing away altruism as the exclusive moral principle would also open up the possibility of defining moral principles without having to resort to such dichotomies of altruism and self-interest which bring with them so much ideology and political baggage.

Methodological individualism is the preferred paradigm for studying moral phenomena as it lends itself to fewer mistakes than collectivist paradigms and extreme versions of social realism such as organicism. However, methodological individualism appears not yet to be equipped to deal fully with the source of moral life in collective group life and in divergent epistemological pluralism. Hence, research can also be informed and guided by questions poised by paradigms more suited to the examination of collective phenomena. Eclecticism in conclusions is to be avoided. Advances in methodology are possible. The current state of methodology appears adequate, but still deficient in regards to any one paradigm dealing completely with the full range of moral phenomena. The best prospects appear to be in the advancement of methodological individualism in such a way that does not incorporate conflicting premises, but which gives it greater ability to deal with the axiological coercion placed upon the individual created through dynamic social interaction. It may indeed be justified to incorporate into methodological individualism a recognition of collective concepts as real, or potentially real, or as heuristic devices. Though this will indeed lead to value-judgement considerations which will have to be dealt with explicitly, this does not seem to be necessarily an insurmountable difficulty.

We can close with words of Max Weber from 1909.

We know of no scientifically ascertainable ideals. To be sure, that makes our efforts more arduous than those of the past, since we are expected to create our ideals from within our breast in the very age of subjectivist culture; but we must not and cannot promise a fool's paradise and an easy road to it, neither in thought nor in action. It is the

stigma of our human dignity that the peace of our souls cannot be as great as the peace of one who dreams of such a paradise. [ Weber. xxxiii. 1978a ]

I believe the 'fool's paradise' that Max Weber speaks of represents the desire of the moralist to create a formula for ethics and ideals that will render all future thought on the matter unnecessary. There are no 'scientifically' proven ideals, especially as our idea of what science is, is not unproblematic. Neither is science meant to be a substitute for individual thinking, much less individual responsibility. No formula for the form of ethics, e.g. altruism (other-worship), conquest (other-destruction), or selfishness (self-worship), will ever suffice. Ethics cannot be reduced to any one self-versus-society relationship, no matter what form, if by "reduced" one means to avoid the necessity of personal accountability and purposeful-rationality of both means and ends. Following a formula is not the same as proving it to oneself. The individual needs to scrutinize both the form of the social relationship of ethics and the content therein, and as well the individual's cognitive relationship to that content. All rote formulas as such fail as fail they must, because the final judge is the active, self-aware and responsible individual mind, or in other words, the voice of rationality and the louder silence of reality. The utmost responsibility in the realm of ethics will always continue to be that of the individual. It is the individual who must prove answers to himself and to develop the dignity to accept the self-doubt and confidence, pride and humility in this eternal process. We do not totally succeed in our endeavors but this does not make our efforts futile.

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