

Three psychological theories of a classical sociologist¹

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The sociological classics have not ceased to inspire sociologists. Today, as ever before, they are interpreted and reinterpreted and their theories are being tested and retested. Salient among this group of classical authors is Emile Durkheim. During the last few years alone, scores of new books and articles on Durkheim have appeared (for example: LaCapra, 1972; Wallwork, 1972; Lukes, 1973; Nisbet, 1974; Webb, 1972; Pope, 1973). In part at least, Durkheim's prominence derives from the fact that — for many of his admirers and detractors alike — his work is a symbol of 'autonomous' sociology, a bulwark against encroachments (or criticism) from psychology. One frequently quoted passage of Durkheim's epitomizes this interpretation of his work: 'every time that a social phenomenon is directly explained by a psychological phenomenon, we may be sure that the explanation is false' (1938: 104).

Yet, not only is there a host of statements by Durkheim himself that sharply qualify this famous passage (for example: Durkheim, 1933, pp. 348ff; 1938, pp. lii,8,111; 1951, p. 312; 1953, p. 34), there is hardly any sociological classic that made as explicit use of psychological theories as Durkheim. Neglect of these theories is costly. It inhibits interdisciplinary research (see Sherif and Sherif, 1969); it minimizes the impact of new developments in psychology on sociology; and, worst of all, it leads to many grossly simplified reconstructions that are at best tenuous on empirical grounds (see Webb, 1972) at the same time that they belong to the core of the sociological imagination. Durkheim's share in this core is

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considerable and it would thus be a worthwhile undertaking to probe into all of his psychological theories and assumptions connected with his sociological propositions. However, the aim of this paper must be more modest than that.

Three psychological theories² of Durkheim's are extracted, and parts of his work are then interpreted as applications of these theories. The purpose is to show that a good — and in my opinion the best — part of Durkheim's writings is taken up by formulating and applying interesting psychological theories. At this point, no effort is made to formalize these theories and their derivations or to criticize them in the light of modern research. Still, much may be gained from a demonstration that somebody can be a creative sociologist on the basis of being a creative psychologist. In short, it is attempted to plead for an occupational model of what it means to be a sociologist, by showing that one of the greatest recognized sociologists conforms to that model.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

Vitality Theory

In his *Division of Labor in Society*, Durkheim spends a chapter on mechanical solidarity as part of his effort to determine the function of the division of labor. In this chapter, he introduces what may be called a theory of vitality. In reconstructing this theory systematically (as with all other reconstructions), it will be unavoidable to sharpen the argumentation at points and to deviate from his wording.

Vitality in Durkheim's use can best be interpreted to refer to a state of coordination of energy of various physiological centers (Durkheim, 1933, p. 97, mentions cortical centers, motor centers, sensorial centers and vegetative functions). The first hypothesis involving vitality can be succinctly paraphrased.³

Vitality Hypothesis: the human body attempts to maintain a high degree of vitality (1933, pp. 96f).

In other words, the human body strives to maintain a high degree of coordination between arousal, perceptions, movements etc.; it will react against everything that threatens this coordination.

Sentiments are for Durkheim beliefs with an affective component; they

are by definition the stronger, the more intense their affective component. The second hypothesis concerns these sentiments:

Sentiment Hypothesis: the stronger the sentiment, the more it will affect the various physiological centers in a coordinated way (1933, p. 97).

This means that a strong sentiment will produce a high degree of vitality by strongly coordinating the various physiological centers.

Next, Durkheim assumes that a sentiment and its degree of strength can be communicated to others. This is a basic assumption, since it underlies his concept of *representation*. Communication of a sentiment causes a representation in the other, affecting all of the other's physiological centers. This is expressed in the next hypothesis:

Representation Hypothesis: the stronger the communicated sentiment, the more it will affect the various physiological centers in a coordinated way.

Thus, according to Durkheim, our representation of another's sentiment functions like our own sentiment 'although less lively', as he is quick to add (1933, p. 97).

A number of hypotheses follow from these three basic hypotheses:

Gain Hypothesis (derived): we can gain vitality from being exposed to sentiments of others and the stronger the others' sentiments, the more vitality we can gain from them, provided they are not contrary to our own sentiments.⁴

Loss Hypothesis (derived): the representation of a sentiment contrary to one of our own [coordinates the physiological centers in a way contrary to our own sentiments and therefore] lessens our vitality in proportion to the strength of our own sentiment and the strength of the represented sentiment.

Avoidance Hypothesis (derived): The stronger both our own sentiments and some contrary sentiments, the more we will attempt to avoid representations of the contrary sentiments.

Reaction Hypothesis (derived): if we cannot avoid the representation of a contrary sentiment⁵, we will react against the ensuing reduction of

vitality in proportion to the strength of our own sentiment and the strength of the contrary sentiment.

In addition, Durkheim introduces two auxiliary hypotheses to the Reaction Hypothesis:

Exposure-Reduction Hypothesis (auxiliary): if our vitality has been reduced through the representation of a contrary sentiment, we will attempt to reduce exposure to the contrary sentiment in proportion to the reduction of our vitality.

In his words, 'we run away from it (the contrary sentiment), we hold it at a distance, we banish it from our society, etc.' (1933, p. 98).

Exposure-Increase Hypothesis (auxiliary): if our vitality has been reduced through the representation of a contrary sentiment, we will attempt to increase exposure to sentiments similar to our own in proportion to the reduction of our vitality⁶ (1933, p. 102).

A third possibility, viz. adapting our own sentiment to the contrary represented sentiment is not considered by Durkheim as a possible reaction against reduced vitality. To the contrary, he assumes (1933, pp. 98f) that the emotional energy, such as anger etc., released through the representation of the contrary sentiment, may increase the affective component of our own sentiment and thus even strengthen it (boomerang effect, as it is called today). As can be seen from the next section, adaptation of sentiment to represented sentiment takes place only if there is some similarity between the two sentiments.

Duality Theory

The attempt to increase exposure to sentiments similar to our own in an effort to counteract reduction in vitality leads Durkheim to formulate an additional theory which, for want of a better word, may be called 'duality theory'.

In *The Elementary Form of Religious Life*, Durkheim proclaims: 'man is double' (1915, p. 29), 'an individual being . . . and a social being.' This pronouncement in his last work is explained in his first major work, *The Division of Labor*, where he talks of 'two consciences' instead (1933, pp.

105, 129f). The idea of two consciences is based on an assumption about fusion of sentiments expressed in the next hypothesis:

Fusion Hypothesis: if a represented sentiment is similar⁷ to one of our own sentiments, then a. our own sentiment will incorporate the represented sentiment to form one new sentiment; b. the strengths of the represented sentiment and of our own sentiment are added together in our new sentiment (1933, p. 99).

In other words, our own sentiment and a similar sentiment of others communicated (and thus represented) to us will fuse together in a new and stronger sentiment which will, on account of its increased strength, also provide more vitality than our sentiment before the fusion. The consequence of this is spelled out in the next hypothesis:

Separation Hypothesis: the more frequently our sentiments are fused with represented sentiments, the more they will a. separate themselves from our 'personal' sentiments (that are not the result of fusions or the result of fusions of lesser frequency)⁸ and b. appear to us as transcending all personal sentiments (ours as well as others'). (1933, p. 100).

Attribution Hypothesis: We attribute every sentiment and representation to some source (1933, p. 100).

Thus, since impersonal sentiments (separation hypothesis) cannot be attributed to ourselves or others as persons, they are attributed to some impersonal source such as a god, a totem, a group, or a concept.

The Fusion Hypothesis explains what Durkheim means by 'collective origin' of a sentiment (see also Durkheim, 1938, p. lvi), viz. the fusion of our sentiment with those of others represented in us.⁹ The Separation Hypothesis and Attribution Hypothesis explain together what Durkheim means by 'collective conscience',¹⁰ viz. the set of our sentiments that are of collective origin, separated from the set of our personal sentiments (individual conscience), experienced as an 'impersonal' part of our overall conscience, and attributed to some impersonal entity.

Thus, 'man is double', fitted with two kinds of consciences. But what about the relationship between collective and individual conscience? It follows from the duality theory that the two consciences can vary according to volume and strength (1933, p. 153), but Durkheim introduces

an additional theory that considers an interactive aspect of collective and individual conscience.

Deliberation Theory

Throughout his *Division of Labor* (1933, pp. 108, 130, 152, 167, 171f, 287f, 302, 400), Durkheim alludes to a theory that he elaborates only late in the book (pp. 287ff) under the heading of 'Progressive Indetermination of the Common Conscience and its Causes'. This theory can be summarized in three hypotheses.

Environment Hypothesis: the more a number of people are exclusively exposed to and equally affected by the same physical environment, the higher the likelihood that a. their sentiments are similar and b. their similar sentiments pertain directly to this environment.

Durkheim thus assumes that the physical environment is an important source of sentiments, the more so the more a particular physical environment is the only one to which we are exposed.

Immediacy Hypothesis: if we act to the basis of a particular sentiment in a given physical environment, then the more this sentiment pertains directly to the given environment, the less deliberation our action is likely to involve.

Personality Hypothesis: the more deliberation our actions involve, the more importance we afford to our individual conscience.

If the duality theory is added to this deliberation theory, we arrive at a hypothesis that links two consciences:

Environment-Immediacy Hypothesis (derived) if a number of people develop collective consciences by fusion of each other's sentiments, then the more these people are exclusively exposed to and equally affected by the same physical environment, the more their collective consciences will pertain directly to this environment; hence, the less deliberation will be involved in their actions guided by their collective consciences and

the less importance will be afforded to their individual consciences. This concludes the reconstruction of Durkheim's psychological theories. Next, their application in his work will be demonstrated.

MECHANICAL SOLIDARITY

Durkheim combined all three theories for his concept of 'mechanical solidarity'. His reasoning can be summarized as follows:

There is one major source for the strength of a sentiment, viz. its collective origin (Fusion Hypothesis); and a strong sentiment 'dominates' us in the sense that it strongly coordinates our psychological centers and thus our action (Sentiment Hypothesis). Thus, if we have dominating sentiments at all, they are most likely of collective origin. This thought can be found consistently throughout Durkheim's work, although in later works he does not supply the psychological background explicitly.

This domination, however, is unmitigated only to the degree that the sentiments of collective origin pertain directly to our physical environment (deliberation theory). If, on the contrary, they are abstract and far removed from the environment within which we act, they have to be 'applied' to particular situations with the help of deliberation.¹¹ Deliberation, in turn, increases the importance we give to the individual conscience, which reduces the exclusive domination of the collective conscience.

Thus, for the collective conscience to dominate 'mechanically' (i.e. without the aid of deliberation), a number of conditions have to be fulfilled. *First*, people must be compelled to fuse their sentiments. This can come only from recurrent reduction in vitality, that is, exposure to contrary sentiments, within a group of communicating people. *Second*, the collective consciences must pertain directly to the physical environment; otherwise, deliberation becomes necessary and reduces the mechanical domination of the collective conscience.

This can come about only if the group is exclusively bound to the same environment and if it is so undifferentiated that this environment affects everybody equally. For instance, the local rainy season affects herders and peasants differently and will create few, if any, similar sentiments in both groups.

To the degree that these conditions are given, to that degree members of the group will a. depend on each other for the maintenance of their vitality (vitality theory); b. tend to act and react similarly and with little deliberation (deliberation theory); and c. attribute their collective con-

sciences to the same source, such as a god, a totem, the group itself, a principle etc. (duality, theory). This is what Durkheim calls 'mechanical solidarity.' It is *solidarity* because people depend on each other and because they have a common source for their collective consciences; this solidarity is *mechanical* because people tend to act and react similarly and without deliberation 'as molecules of inorganic bodies' (Durkheim, 1933, p. 130).

Taken by itself as 'solidarity based on likeness', mechanical solidarity becomes a rather uninteresting concept, viz. a highly simplified 'type' of society, and Durkheim's main 'theory' in his *Division of Labor* is reduced to a historical trend analysis in which societies are said to change from solidarity based on likeness to solidarity based on differences. Durkheim indeed applied his three theories (and others) in his historical trend analysis, but he also applied them in his study of suicide, religion etc. There is a difference between a theory and its application. The application is possible only under additional assumptions, and if the result does not stand up, it is often difficult to say whether the theory, the assumptions or both should be rejected. But equally often it is quite easy to isolate the assumptions as the source of trouble.

For instance, as Nisbet points out (Nisbet, 1974, pp. 128f), Durkheim's assumption that 'in primitive societies . . . law is wholly penal' (Durkheim, 1933, p. 76) does not stand up to test. This severely damages Durkheim's use of penal law as an index for the strength of mechanical solidarity. Either it is not true that mechanical solidarity is strongest in primitive societies (Durkheim himself had doubts about that, see Durkheim, 1933, p. 181) and/or it is not true that a strong mechanical solidarity gives rise to a strong penal code.¹² In any case, the argument does not affect any of Durkheim's three theories since it does not follow from the theories that 'primitive' societies are necessarily high in recurrent threats to vitality or necessarily restricted to one and the same physical environment; nor do the theories say anything about the codification of collective consciences.

THE VICIOUS CIRCLE OF INDIVIDUALISM

Much of Durkheim's 'sociological' theorizing consists of a combination of the three theories with various structural assumptions that jointly/form a *social process*. For instance, Durkheim claims that suicide depends on social causes rather than on the organic-psychic constitution of individuals (Durkheim, 1951, pp. 145ff). This does not mean that the thereby discards

psychological considerations. To the contrary; at the heart of his explanation of suicide lies a social process that may be called 'the vicious circle of individualism.' This process is clearly an application of the three theories under certain structural assumptions.

The vicious circle of individualism can be described as follows. Assuming there is an increase in one or more structural variables, such as social differentiation, horizontal mobility, communication among formerly isolated groups; then, according to the deliberation theory, we would get a reduction in environmental restriction, an increase in deliberation, and thereby a heightened importance afforded to individual consciences (whether this importance is given political expression, as in democracy, or not). If this increase continues and if communication is structurally possible, a curious phenomenon develops: the content of collective consciences refers largely to the importance of the individual conscience. In other words, the collective conscience becomes an agent for the individual conscience.

This process is 'dialectical' in the sense that vitality operates against itself, for the following reason. Deliberation involves by definition the consideration of alternatives which, in turn, include representations of contrary sentiments. These representations reduce the level of vitality (see vitality theory) which spurs communication with like-minded others. Vitality is thereby increased, since common sentiments are mutually reinforced and 'collectivized'. Yet, many of these sentiments have not only little direct relevance for action but are also confined to mere affirmation of the importance of the individual conscience (see deliberation theory). Durkheim thus observes that 'it is still from society that it (the collective conscience) takes all its force, but it is not to society that it attaches us; it is to ourselves. Hence, it does not constitute a true social link' (Durkheim, 1933, p. 172). As a result, individual deliberation becomes even more necessary, vitality is further reduced and the vicious circle starts anew. In the process, the individual conscience becomes entrenched as the seat of sentiments relevant for action, but individual sentiments themselves are not much strengthened through communication. This leaves room for, and even encourages, the development of individual aspirations but leaves them without collective regulation.

An assumption on the 'desire to live' constitutes Durkheim's link between the vicious circle of individualism and suicide. The adult human being needs to be attached 'to some object which transcends and survives him', he needs 'some purpose justifying life's trials' (Durkheim, 1951, p 210).

This attachment is based on sentiments that are attributed to an impersonal source (see Duality Theory). Unable to set his own limits, the adult human being also needs collective regulation of his individual aspirations (Durkheim, 1951, p. 248f). To the degree that both these needs remain unsatisfied, to that degree the desire to live dwindles and suicide becomes more likely

Since the vicious circle of individualism diminishes strength and scope of collective consciences, it also reduces impersonal attribution of sentiments and collective regulation of aspirations. Thus it advances the incident of suicide. Where the scope of deliberation is large and aspirations play only a moderate role (such as in 'intellectual careers', see Durkheim, 1951, p. 258), lack of impersonal attribution of sentiments will make itself most strongly felt (egoistic suicide). Where aspirations play a major role and the scope of deliberation is only moderate (such as in the 'industrial and commercial world', see Durkheim, *ibid.*), lack of collective regulation of aspirations will be prominent (anomic suicide). But on the whole, both shortcomings 'have a peculiar affinity for one another' and 'they are usually merely two different aspects of one social state' and thus 'should be found in the same individual'. (Durkheim, 1951, p. 288). Both are consequences of the same social process, viz. the vicious circle of individualism.¹³

Durkheim also talks about other types of suicide. He distinguishes three forms of *altruistic* suicide (obligatory, optional, acute; see Durkheim, 1951, p. 226), all of which he opposes to egoistic suicide; and he mentions *fatalistic* suicide opposed to anomic suicide (p. 276). He says that while egoistic suicide derives from excessive individuation, all forms of altruistic suicide derive from insufficient individuation; and while anomic suicide is the consequence of insufficient regulation, fatalistic suicide is the consequence of excessive regulation. These neat symmetries suggest that he has an explanation for all four types. This, however, is deceptive. He can predict that with an increase in individuation and/or a decrease in regulation the suicide rate will go up (egoistic and anomic suicides). But he can make no such prediction about altruistic and fatalistic suicides. While a high degree of individuation and a low degree of regulations are each a *sufficient* condition for a high suicide rate, a low degree of individuation and a high degree of regulation are each only a *necessary* condition for certain types of suicide (altruistic and fatalistic, respectively) to occur. Durkheim's theoretical contribution for the explanation of altruistic suicide is restricted to the question: 'how is it possible that, *given* obligatory or supportive norms for suicide, people will actually follow

these norms?' He does not explain why in some societies there are such norms.

His theoretical contribution for the explanation of fatalistic suicide is unclear. He states the possibly interesting but unelaborated idea that all of us need collective regulation but not all of us have the same need for such regulation. As example of this, he observes that marriage, which imposes a certain amount of regulation, counteracts suicide for men, but very young husbands kill themselves more frequently than unmarried men of the same age 'because their passions are too vehement at that period and too self-confident to be subjected to so severe a rule' (1951, p. 275). The very young husband's suicide is thus interpreted to be the consequence of a mismatch between his needs for regulation and the regulation he encounters.

Durkheim dismisses fatalistic suicide because 'it has so little contemporary importance and examples are so hard to find aside from the cases just mentioned that it seems useless to dwell upon it' (1951, p. 276). Had he been more explicit about his own psychological theories in suicide, he may have made a more interesting case for fatalistic suicide. For instance, with the help of his theories one could construct conditions for a particular form of fatalistic suicide that does not derive from excessive regulation per se but from a certain form of regulation. Durkheim could have argued as follows: if there is a high rate of transmission of sentiments (Gain Hypothesis, see not 9), but a low rate of collective elaboration of these sentiments (Fusion Hypothesis), these sentiments will provide vitality (Gain Hypothesis) and thus control action. But they will not be impersonalized (Separation Hypothesis) and thus not attributed to an impersonal source but attributed to the source(s) of transmission (Attribution Hypothesis). This may result in what Durkheim (1951, p. 276) calls 'moral despotism' and it may be related to what Piaget (1951, pp. 410f) calls 'moral realism'.¹⁴ *Moral despotism* is a situation in which a morality remains 'external' to those who follow it because it remains attributed to particular sources that are not impersonalized. Egoistic suicide is based on the inability for impersonal attribution, but there is no other source of sentiments than the individuals themselves. Fatalistic suicide, based on moral despotism, also derives from the inability for impersonal attribution, but this time the source(s) of sentiments are particular others.

Moral despotism, just as the egoistic and anomic condition, may also increase though the vicious circle of individualism. As we have seen, this process reduces vitality. This makes it more likely that people are receptive to sheer transmission of sentiments (Gain Hypothesis). At the

same time, the vicious circle reduces collective elaboration and impersonal attribution, thus creating for those with the highest need for transmission the condition for moral despotism. For example, diffusion of sentiments through mass media or schools and lack of collective elaboration of these sentiments may spread moral despotism among those who for want of vitality are very receptive to transmission of sentiments.

The stress on individualism may render moral despotism especially depressing. Individualism requires persons to be their own source of sentiments; but these persons find themselves dependent on particular other sources and unable to shake this dependency since the vicious circle makes them both receptive for transmission and unsuited for collective elaboration of sentiments. This is the depression of 'inauthenticity' or despair, long before Durkheim's *Suicide* described by Kierkegaard (1954) as 'sickness unto death'. Yet, within Durkheim's theoretical framework, inauthenticity is not an existential problem of man, but a social problem generated by a particular social structure.

In addition, individualism stresses recognition of individual needs, while moral despotism, through lack of collective elaboration in which the individual participates, is inflexible with regard to these needs. Moral despotism in the context of individualism thus places individuals in a double contradiction: they are supposed to generate their own sentiments, yet depend on sentiments of others; and they are supposed to recognize their own needs, yet they are guided by sentiments unresponsive to these needs.

With this interpretation of fatalistic suicide, Durkheim could even make a prediction about the changing rate of fatalistic suicides, predicated on the vicious circle of individualism and transmission of sentiments. But it is clear that we cannot elaborate the three different types of suicide about which Durkheim can make a prediction without more detailed structural analyses on interaction patterns, typical needs and sources or lack of sources of transmission of sentiments. The reconstruction of Durkheim's psychological theories would allow such a focused structural analysis, and at the same time it would permit us to check on the psychological theories themselves. This may yield more insight than global tests of summary propositions such as 'the higher the rate of technological growth, the higher the suicide rate' (See Miley and Micklin, 1972).

In sum, while the three psychological theories are not explicitly elaborated in *Suicide*, they are clearly an integral part of Durkheim's social explanation of suicide. They also form an important part of many of his other works, foremost among them his social explanation of religion.

RELIGION

Durkheim argues that religion can be defined neither by the 'supernatural' nor by the 'mysterious' nor by the 'idea of devinity' because in each case the definition would not cover all forms of religious life. Instead, he suggests, religion can be defined by beliefs and practices shared by a community and based on the distinction of 'sacred' and 'profane' (Durkheim, 1915, pp. 52, 62). Again, Durkheim formulates 'social processes' in his effort to explain the phenomenon at hand (religion). And again, these processes are based on the three theories and certain additional assumptions.

Process of Attribution

According to the duality theory we form, within a group, collective consciences which we attribute to some impersonal entity or entities. Under favorable conditions (such as the absence of the vicious circle of individualism), we can derive considerable benefits from the group via our collective conscience. Not only are all the achievements that result from collective elaboration over generations (such as language, instruments, rights, knowledge etc.) anchored in collective consciences, we also gain vitality and stability from the interactive strengthening of our collective sentiments (see vitality theory and Durkheim, 1915, p. 242).

It follows from the duality theory that we cannot attribute these benefits to ourselves, nor to any other person qua person. It also follows that we have to attribute them to some source. If it is not clear to us that the benefits derive from the group, we will thus attribute them 'mythically' to some other power or powers (Durkheim, 1915, p. 242f).¹⁵ It is not necessary that these powers be gods or spirits; they can also be concrete objects (such as a rock, a tree, a spring) or abstractions (such as the four noble truths of Buddhism) (Durkheim, 1915, p. 52). No matter what they are, they are invested with both dignity and authority, they are both 'good' and 'imperative', because they mythically represent both the benefits and the authority of the group seated in each collective conscience (Durkheim, 1915, pp. 239ff). In short, they are *sacred*, and so are any objects that symbolize them. But just as our collective conscience is separated from our individual conscience, the sacred appears as a sort of reality distinct from the 'utilitarian and individual avocations' of every day life, the world of the *profane* (Durkheim, 1915, p. 390).

The Process of Maintenance

Since the sacred is a hypostatized collective conscience, the sentiments surrounding it are collectively reinforced and thus a source of vitality. The vitality theory states that contrary sentiments (or representations thereof) reduce vitality; it also states that we attempt to maintain a high level of vitality. Thus we will attempt to keep contrary sentiments or their representations away from the sacred. As just claimed above, sentiments and representations surrounding the sacred are contrary to those of the profane, so that we will attempt to keep the sacred clearly separate from the profane (Durkheim, 1915, pp. 356f). This explains the attempt to create and the willingness to submit to and maintain a 'negative' cult. This cult has various components. First, there is a physical and temporal separation of the sacred from the profane (through temples and sanctuaries on the one hand, and feast days and initiations on the other; Durkheim, 1915, pp. 347f). Second, there are interdictions against touching, seeing, speaking, eating sacred things, as well as prescriptions for cleansing oneself from and renouncing profane things (Durkheim, 1915, pp. 341ff). Third, the behavior vis-a-vis the sacred is as different from everyday (profane) behavior as possible, viz. ritualistic (as opposed to everyday 'work', Durkheim, 1915, pp. 345f).

Given the sacred, the vitality theory can, of course, only predict *that* there will be a negative cult, not *what* particular negative cult it will be. Yet, the theory would also predict that the higher the degree of vitality derived from sentiments surrounding the sacred, the more important the negative cult, because in that case these sentiments are stronger and the profane is a greater threat to them (see Avoidance Hypothesis). But how is a high degree of vitality derived from sentiments surrounding the sacred?

The vitality derived from collective sentiments can only be increased through exposure to sentiments (see vitality theory). Thus, the sacred can only heighten vitality if people come physically into contact with each other (assemble) and express their sentiments vis-a-vis the sacred. The negative cult has already provided place, time and a ritualistic demeanor for such an assembly. But why assemble at all? Everyday life with its 'utilitarian and individual avocations' is contrary to sentiments surrounding the sacred; and thus every-day life will slowly reduce the vitality coming from these sentiments. (Durkheim, 1915, p. 390), providing the impetus periodic assembly. What is still needed is a code for expressing sentiments at the assembly, since the negative cult prevents simple (profane) expression of sentiments surrounding the sacred. This

code Durkheim calls 'positive' cult. It is exemplified by such ritual actions as alimentary communion, ritual sacrifice, dances, hymns etc (Durkheim, 1915, pp. 366ff).¹⁶ Given a negative cult, the vitality theory thus explains the attempt to create and the willingness to submit to and maintain a positive cult.

This is not to say that the negative cult must develop first and the positive cult second. Since both reinforce the sacred, they reinforce each other and may thus develop together. Conversely, if their power to reinforce the sacred decreases, they will decline together.

The Process of Secularization

The sacred depends, as we have seen, on a mythical attribution of benefits that arise from the collective conscience. If these benefits actually or apparently diminish and/or the attribution of benefits becomes less mythical, the sacred — and with it 'religion' — also declines.

According to Durkheim, it is one process that reduces both apparent benefits and mythical attribution. This process begins, just like the vicious circle of individualism, with a continuing reduction in environmental restriction (through communication among formerly isolated groups, horizontal mobility etc). This means that the people who mutually form and maintain collective consciences are less and less exposed to the same environment. According to the deliberation theory, this effects a reduction in the number of similar sentiments, an increase in deliberation, and a heightened importance afforded to individual consciences. The collective consciences are thus reduced in volume and importance, so that their apparent benefits also diminish.

Increasing deliberation brings about a number of other changes. First, since deliberation involves consideration and weighing of alternatives in problem situations, it favors the development of a critical attitude (Durkheim, 1933, pp. 272f, 290) and disfavors mythical attribution of efficacy. Second, it thereby gradually extends the world of the profane to all areas where efficacy is involved.¹⁷

Curiously enough, this development of secularization first results in a consolidation of religion. Through the continuing reduction in environmental restriction, local religions become 'internationalized' by merging with or being absorbed by other religions (Durkheim, 1915, pp. 325f, 473). And although the benefits attributed to sacred powers diminish and the world of the profane extends at the same time that religions become inter-

nationalized, this does not mean that these religions instantly weaken and decline. Being progressively cut loose from 'this-worldly' efficacy, religious thought becomes more autonomous and freely speculative within its own realm, establishing itself as a power able to systematize and elaborate ideas (Durkheim, 1915, pp. 332f, 471ff).

Religion thus contributes to the process of secularization. It develops systematic thinking at the same time that deliberation and critical attitudes become more prominent. Religion thereby plays into the hands of a rival power 'which, being born of it, ever after submits it to its criticism and control. And everything makes us foresee that this control will constantly become more extended and efficient, while no limit can be assigned to its future influence' (Durkheim, 1915, p. 479). This rival power is science.

Under the assumption of continuing reduction in environmental restriction, the deliberation theory explains an overall process of secularization, including a phase of religious consolidation. Yet, Durkheim is quick to point out that there is a limit to secularization, since religion is born from collective life. As long as collective life continues, there will be collective consciences; these will continue to be an important source of vitality and will thus be protected and maintained as 'sacred' by negative and positive cults of some sort. Of course, this sacred element may be stripped to its bare bones of a faith in deliberation, as in the case of individualism (see above) and the principle of free examination (Durkheim, 1915, p. 244).

Needless to say, there is more to Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* than the process of attribution (sacred and profane), the process of maintenance (negative and positive cults), and the process of secularization. But the essential points of the book are covered and we saw that, given certain assumptions, the duality theory explains the first process, the vitality theory explains the second, and the deliberation theory explains the third.

CONCLUSION

In sum, it is fair to conclude that major parts of Durkheim's work on mechanical solidarity, suicide, and religion are applications of psychological theories worked out in his first major book (*Division of Labor*). It is quite likely that close examination will add other parts of Durkheim's work to the list. This has implications for sociologists. For many, Durkheim was an exemplary sociologist. I hope he will remain exemplary, but with more light upon how he actually did sociology, namely by applying

psychological theories to the explanation of important social phenomena. This is the 'role model' implication of this paper.

Another implication regards the way his theories are reconstructed and tested. If the above analysis is only moderately correct, it would imply that his psychological theories and his structural assumptions have to be scrutinized separately and, if necessary, improved or abandoned separately. The first needs an interdisciplinary effort, the second detailed structural analyses. Whatever the result of this twin effort may be, it can be expected to be more promising than to test and retest his famous but low-level generalizations (such as: suicide varies inversely with the integration of society). And maybe we can even improve on the master.

Notes

1. Valuable comments on an earlier draft by various members of the Interuniversitair Werkverband Sociologische Theorie are gratefully acknowledged.
2. The term 'theory' is here used to denote a set of hypotheses considered to be substantively related. The term 'derived' will also be used quite informally, in the sense that explication of a particular derivation may show that some additional, unstated assumptions were made.
3. The naming of the following hypotheses solely serves the purpose of easy identification.
4. This hypothesis shows that Durkheim's vitality theory is not identical with a simple consensus theory (see also note 5) or even with balance theory (compare Davis, 1966) to which it bears some similarity. Contrary to balance theory, Durkheim assumes that others' sentiments can be highly rewarding (through their effect on vitality) even if they are *not similar* to our own sentiments. This may throw some light on the *revolutionary* role of charisma discussed by Weber.
5. Durkheim assumes that if sentiments are not only communicated by words but also by acts, they are particularly difficult to ignore. (1933, p. 99).
6. This auxiliary hypothesis actually presupposes the Gain Hypothesis above and even follows from it under the assumption that there are no other sources of vitality than the sentiments of others.

It should be noted that Durkheim does not claim that we find others' similar sentiments always attractive, but that this attraction depends on the degree of our prior reduction in vitality. It is thus more sophisticated than the simple claim that consensus is rewarding.

It should also be noted that the two auxiliary hypotheses are the basis for Durkheim's famous view on *crime*. Crime (the display of strong sentiments contrary to strong sentiments of others) triggers both exposure-reduction (e.g. excommunication, prison, exile, death) and exposure-increase reactions (e.g. increased communication) and thus has the consequence of strengthening the 'collective consciences' (see Duality Theory below).

7. Durkheim (1953, p. 15) answers the question whether this similarity is only perceived similarity or not, unequivocally: 'Two representations can be similar, as the things which they express, without our knowing it'. How this similarity should be ascertained, however, is not clear.

It should also be added that neither perceived nor unconscious similarity is transitive, so that drastic changes through successive fusions are not ruled out by the very idea of 'fusion'.

8. In *The Division of Labor*, Durkheim does not spell out in sufficient detail what this separation entails. But it seems that Durkheim assigns greatest importance to this separation. In his *Rules of Sociological Method*, he says: 'one can ask whether individual and social (collective) representations do not . . . resemble each other in that both are equally 'representations' . . . It is not conceivable that contiguity and resemblance, logical contrasts and antagonisms, act in the same way, whatever may be the things they represent?' (p. 1 and 1i). He answers this question thus: 'It appears quite improbable that the stuff of which representations are made should have no influence on their manner of combining' (p. 1i-1ii). And he maintains that 'the corresponding laws of social thought will be as distinctive as this thought itself . . . This peculiarity will explain the apparently strange combinations and segregations of religious ideas (which certainly are of collective origin) and their transformations which produce compounds of contradictory elements widely different from ordinary products of individual thought' (p. 1ii). Similar passages can be found in Durkheim's 'Individual and collective representations' (in Durkheim, 1953). There he also urges that a 'special branch of sociology which does not yet exist, should be devoted to research into the laws of collective ideation . . .' (p. 32) and he insists that 'collective psychology is sociology' (p. 34).

In short, Durkheim believes that the separation of collective and individual sentiments (or representations) also entails separate 'laws' for each kind of sentiment. This is one reason why he rejected the 'individual' psychology of his time as a basis for sociology. He certainly did not reject every kind of psychology as a basis for sociology.

While the insistence on separate laws seems exaggerated today (and even Durkheim himself did not really work with two sets of laws), there seems to be an important and generally neglected point in Durkheim's view: that cognitive processes are not independent of the content of cognition. This point was supported by Lindenberg (1971) who could show that structures of collective entities (such as organizations) exert a stronger pressure towards balance than structures of individual entities (such as a perceived friendship structure between Jim, Sam and Jo).

9. It could be asked whether fusion is the only source for collective sentiments. What about education? Can people learn a sentiment as a collective sentiment? This point is not quite clear. In *The Division of Labor*, Durkheim says: 'What gives force to collective states is not only that they are common to the present generation, but especially that they are, for the most part, a legacy of previous generations' (1933, p. 291). In the *Rules* he says: 'all education is a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling, and acting which he could not have arrived at spontaneously'. (1938, p. 6). These statements sound as if collective sentiments are indeed mainly 'transferred' on the new gene-

ration rather than being continuously the result of fusions. Yet, in *Moral Education* (1961, pp. 230ff), Durkheim stresses that moral education in family, friendship circles and schools necessitates a group process, and only to the degree that there is 'fusion' will moral education succeed.

The two views of socialization (transmission and fusion) can be reconciled within Durkheim's own theoretical framework. The Gain Hypothesis explains the transmission of sentiments, and the Fusion and Separation Hypotheses jointly explain the development of a collective conscience based on transmitted sentiments. Yet transmission alone would not form a collective conscience; rather, it would produce something similar to what Piaget (1951, pp. 410f) calls 'moral realism' and what Durkheim calls 'moral despotism' (see text on fatalistic suicide below). There is, of course, no reason to assume that an alternation of transmission and fusion is restricted to childhood.

10. The term 'collective conscience' should not suggest that Durkheim conceives of it only in the singular. He says: 'To simplify the exposition, we hold that the individual appears only in one society. In fact, we take part in several groups and there are in us several collective consciences' (1933, p. 105n). Yet, Durkheim caught himself in this simplification by often using 'collective conscience' to describe an attribute of groups rather than individuals. For the same reason, we never learn how different collective consciences are related in one individual.
11. Means and ends would thus only differentiate as categories of thought to the degree that the collective consciences become abstract (see also 'the vicious circle of individualism' below). Structural changes that reduce environmental restrictions (such as positional differentiation, increasing mobility etc) would thus also cause increasing means-end thinking (rationalization) because they would make collective consciences more abstract (see Durkheim, 1933, p. 289). It may be worthwhile to investigate how this explanation of rationalization compares with Max Weber's views on the matter. Such an investigation, however, would be completely beyond the scope of this paper.
12. At times, Durkheim treats a penal code as a negative cult (see p. 15 below) tempted by the common link both have to taboos. Since a high degree of mechanical solidarity goes with negative cults, Durkheim at times also erroneously assumed that it goes with an elaborate penal code. One of the most serious sources of this misinterpretation of penal codes comes from Durkheim's simplistic view of government as the expression of the collective conscience in his *Division of Labor*. A much more sophisticated view of penal codes was developed by Durkheim together with a more sophisticated view of government (see his *Two Laws of the Evolution of Penal Law*) later in his life.
13. Except, of course, if the lack of collective regulation is due to a temporary mismatch between the existing regulations and the circumstances to which they apply, such as during a sudden crisis.
14. Piaget describes this as a stage for children in which adults are the source of rules but the child is unable to generate the rules and thus unable to disassociate these rules from the particular adults and make them a part of him- or herself. Interestingly, Piaget also states that moral realism is overcome only through a form of collective elaboration or what he calls 'cooperation'.
15. Because beliefs underlying the attribution of benefits are mythical, they are

- also a cosmology making these powers the source of efficacy (Durkheim, 1915, pp. 21, 406).
16. To the degree that religion is also a cosmology, positive cult will also be linked to problems of efficacy, such as fecundity rites etc. The link to efficacy is a constant threat to the separation of sacred and profane, and religious speculation could only develop freely after this link to efficacy had declined (see the following section on secularization).
 17. This may be a basis on which an answer to Jarvie and Agassi's 'urgent sociological problem posed by magic' may be found. Their problem is this: 'can people with inefficient magical beliefs come to be critical of them, under what conditions and to what extent?' See Jarvie and Agassi, 1967; see also Willer, 1971.

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