**Sociology, Embodiment and Morality: A Durkheimian Perspective**

Philip A. Mellor and Chris Shilling

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**Abstract**

Durkheim is often associated with the ‘old’ sociology of morality but a fresh engagement with the embodied dimensions of his work can bring theoretical clarity to the contemporary field. In undertaking this task, our argument proceeds through three stages. Firstly, we demonstrate how Durkheim’s explanatory *homo duplex* model insiststhatbiological and social factors *combine* to constitute morality. Secondly, we analyse how this model provides the basis for a broader explanatory account that *resists* reductionist ‘substantive’ assessments of diverse moral systems to focus on them as cultural systems. Finally, we explore how his approach facilitates the analysis of competing moral solidarities *within* as well as *acros*s contemporary societies. Having reappraised Durkheim’s account, we suggest that the sociology of morality should be *inclusive* of insights from other disciplines but also *synthetic*, resisting various forms of reductionism in favour of a distinctively sociological model reflective of the fact that human beings are, simultaneously, natural and cultural creatures.

**Introduction**

It is commonly noted that while morality was a key concern in the classical writings of Durkheim and Weber, maintaining its status in the mid-twentieth century normative sociology of Parsons, this prominence gradually dissipated until the recent emergence of the ‘new’ sociology of morality (Hitlin and Vaisey, 2010, 2013; Abend, 2010). This term ‘new’ does not signal merely the ‘rediscovery’ of morality (Bykov, 2019), however, but also an epistemological break with the past. Bargheer and Wilson (2018: 1-2), for example, suggest it entails a departure from the ‘old’ sociology of morality associated with Parsons’s argument that the discipline had converged around a concern with values (see also Hitlin and Vaisey, 2013: 53).

The suggestion that we should leave behind classical accounts, however, overlooks the partiality of those visions of the discipline that have been shaped by the legacy of normative sociology (Levine, 1995; Bargheer and Wilson, 2018: 2). In what follows, we propose that a fresh engagement with Durkheim’s work, free of Parsonian assumptions, can usefully inform debates about the future direction of the sociology of morality. This engagement aims to address Bykov’s (2019: 192-3) recent call for further theoretical clarity in the sociology of morality; a call reflective of his view that it remains unclear whether the renewed prominence of the subject signals a common topic of interest, or an emergent, comprehensive sociological perspective akin to that of the behavioural science of morality. Our starting point in this regard is Hitlin and Vaisey’s (2010: 9-11) suggestion that the key issue facing the sociology of morality is to make sense of the relations between ‘innate’ moral capacities and the social and cultural complexities of morality. These relations remain undertheorised, but a creative reinterpretation of Durkheim offers a basis for developing our understanding.

Our account of Durkheim’s utility for this project is rooted in two fundamental observations. First, for him, morality is not simply a central and explicit concern but is also an *elementary* feature of social life. As such, any study of the social is necessarily aligned to an interrogation of the ‘moral’ frameworks, feelings and conditions that nurture a sense of responsibility towards others, or shape action in the light of effervescently grounded ideals or values (Shilling and Mellor, 2001: 1-2, 203; see Levine, 1995: 100; Nisbet, 1993 [1966]: 3-20). Second, despite frequent suggestions that Durkheim evidences a sociological hostility to biology, his *homo duplex* model of humans offers a productive basis upon which to theorise the relations between inherent bodily capacities *and* a range of social and cultural dynamics (Durkheim 1973 [1914]: 151; 1995 [1912]: 223, 438).

This interpretation is at odds with the dominant reading of Durkheim as an analyst of ‘social facts’ that exist in *opposition* to natural, biological processes. Bykov (2019: 174, 195) exemplifies this conventional view in the contemporary sociology of morality by suggesting that Durkheim’s understanding of the moral stands in opposition to the natural, despite acknowledging that his work holds significant ‘potential for thorough reconsideration’. In this reading of Durkheim, morality is a social achievement with no basis in biology. It emerges from the submission of the individual to society, mitigates what is a Hobbesian view of human nature as ‘animalistic, anti-social and immoral’, and ‘rules out the capacity of emotions to be morally generative’ (Hookway, 2015: 7, 12; Junge, 2001: 106-7). If Durkheim really proposed such a view it would, amongst other things, be antithetical to much evolutionary psychology and anthropology (e.g. Tomasello, 2014), though a fresh reading of his work suggests potential convergence rather than opposition. Indeed, alongside certain longstanding attempts to develop creative syntheses of evolutionary science and Durkheimian sociology (see Turner, 1996; Turner and Machalek, 2018), the sociology of the body offers a particularly valuable correction to conventional assumptions of Durkheim’s antipathy to biology.

The sociology of the body shares certain features with the sociology of morality. They were interrelated concerns of classical writings that were downplayed in significance and became increasingly ‘ghostly’ absent-presences in much subsequent disciplinary writing (Horowitz, 1993: 227; Shilling, 2012 [1993]). Parsons can be seen as a key figure in this transition, especially in the selective interpretation of Durkheim evident in his own normative functionalist model of social action and morality (Shilling and Mellor, 2001: 94). While acknowledging Durkheim’s discussions of the social significance of emotions and somatic experience, he subordinated these considerations to ‘information high’ cognitive values in his own system (Parsons, 1978: 54-9, 171, 221-5, 241, 320; Shilling, 2012: 212).

Subsequent generations of sociologists have often read Durkheim through the influence of Parsons’s writing, obscuring the importance of embodiment to his work (see Shilling, 2005), yet this is not true of anthropologists. As Hausner (2017: 3) expresses it, Durkheim remains central to contemporary anthropology because of the rigour with which he explored the relationship between embodiment, the collective bond and the genesis of solidarity. Humanity’s bodily, biological being is inextricably entwined with culture, as well as constituting a foundation for it.

In what follows, we develop this embodied perspective further and highlight its contemporary utility. Our focus is on how Durkheim’s account intersects with current concerns in the sociology of morality, and our argument develops as follows. First, we examine Durkheim’s account of humans as *homo duplex*, which signals how the *combination* of biological and social factors constitutes morality. Exploring this both in relation to Bauman’s attempt to explain moral phenomena with reference to ‘pre-social’ impulses, and to biologically reductionist accounts of morality, we emphasise its merits as a distinctively *sociological* way of conceptualising human moral capacities. Second, we use this account as a basis for arguing against attempts to offer ‘substantive’ assessments of moral orders and in favour of them as cultural systems predicated upon the embodied foundations of society. In the light of this we reflect on the nature and merits of the moral ‘relativism’ Durkheim’s model implies. Third, we emphasise that this approach has utility not only across single societies, but also with reference to competing moral solidarities *within* societies, exploring its relevance in relation to contemporary phenomena such as neo-tribalism, fanaticism and insider/outsider dynamics.

**Innate moral capacities and the *homo duplex***

Hookway’s (2015: 2) belief that Durkheim’s *homo duplex* offers a negative depiction of biology reflects a broader view in the secondary literature (see Mayes, 1980: 82; Smart, 2001: 513). Junge (2001: 107), for example, associates *homo duplex* with the social and moral constraint of a bodily impulse that would otherwise lead, in Durkheim’s (1995 [1912]: 215) words, to ‘bloody barbarism’. Clearly, if true, that would be the unhelpful for sociologists of morality interested in building interdisciplinary bridges to biology (Hitlin and Vaisey, 2010: 7). Junge, however, is unfair to Durkheim: the ‘bloody barbarism’ referred to relates to the French Revolution and arises from an *excess* of social and moral force, not its *absence*. This ‘excess’ certainly has an embodied dimension, but this has nothing whatsoever to do with ‘unleashing’ bodily impulses from social constraints. Rather than proposing a theory of morality *against* biology, in fact, Durkheim *integrates* it into his account.

For Durkheim, it is not that biology is absent from the constitution of morality, but that morality is *irreducible* to biology: what is distinctive about human life is that humans alone are affected by organic *and* social causes (Lefebvre and White, 2010: 468). On their own, biological explanations account for one dimension of what it is to be human, rendering a reduction of morality to biology not only partial, but also fundamentally false, since they fail to account for the dualism of human nature wherein moral feeling and thought is born (Lefebvre and White, 2010: 468). It is this *socio-natural* conception of *homo duplex* in Durkheim’s theorisation of being human that offers a basis for exploring the relations between innate bodily capacities and the social and cultural forces that interact with them to generate the ‘moral’.

Specifically, there are three elements to these bodily capacities: first, individual bodies do indeed contain the asocial, egoistic impulses that preclude moral life; second, however, they also possess an inherent bodily capacity for 'reaching beyond' these to the realm of moral activity held in common by a collectivity; third, the activation of this capacity is a bodily phenomenon provoked by the social stimulation of collective emotions (Durkheim, 1973 [1914]: 151; 1995 [1912]: 223, 438). Thus, while Durkheim followed Kant (1964 [1785]) in recognising the need for individuals to reach beyond their natural selves if they were to become moral, morality nonetheless has its basis in a social engagement with the 'natural properties' of humans rejected by Kant: moral rules are *emotionally grounded* products of society that build on some, and override other, innate human capacities through processes of ‘collective effervescence’ (Shilling and Mellor, 1998: 195; see Turner and Machalek, 2018).

For Durkheim, there is an effervescent 'propulsion' towards moral action (Collins, 1988). It is the collective effervescence stimulated by social groups that harnesses people's passions to the symbolic order of society, enabling individuals to interact on the basis of concepts shared and 'shielded' from the 'perpetual flux' of individual sensory impressions (Durkheim, 1995 [1912]: 434). Collective effervescence substitutes the world immediately available to our perceptions for another world; a world that is moral because it is social but is no less grounded in the body (Durkheim 1984 [1893]: 319). In this way, Durkheim's account captures the idea of social 'force' at its birth, when embodied humans feel themselves and are transformed through an emotional structuring of their sensory and sensual being (Gane, 1988: 5). This force is experienced mentally and physically, and binds people to the ideals valued by their social group; a process examined in most detail in Durkheim's (1995 [1912]) study of religion, but also central to his writings more broadly (e.g. Durkheim 1961 [1925]; 1982 [1895]: 50-2).

In Hitlin and Vaisey’s (2010: 4-7) terms, then, innate human capacities constitute a basis for morality, though an ambiguous one, since they also include asocial, egoistic impulses hostile to moral feeling. It is social life that facilitates their transformation into something ‘moral’. For some, however, this attribution of such a key role to the social effectively devalues innate potentialities as a source of the moral. Hookway (2015, 2017), indeed, rejects it on the basis that social forces can *corrupt* rather than *facilitate* natural moral impulses, and instead looks to Bauman (1989: 172) as the antidote to Durkheim for the contemporary sociology of morality. Bauman’s account of innate moral impulses provides a useful comparison to Durkheim’s, even though it ultimately places severe restrictions on what sociology can say about the subject.

Bauman (1993) has his own *homo duplex* model of humanity, but identifies the individual pole with a pre-social, embodied moral impulse, and the collective pole with opportunities for and threats to it (though he concentrates very heavily on the latter). Either way, whether a society expresses or represses the moral impulses of individuals it does not create and transform them, since moral life is not sociological in its origins (Shilling and Mellor, 1993: 211; see also Junge, 2001). Indeed, Bauman’s (1993: 51) assertion that ‘ethics’ (in the sense of society’s moral rules and codes) is *irrelevant* to ‘morality’ reflects Lévinas’s (1991) quasi-theological belief in an unconditional, pre-social *being for the other* rather than anything sociological. But what do ‘pre-social’ capacities mean here, and how can they be ‘corrupted’? For Durkheim, the natural or innate human capacities within the *homo duplex* are not ‘pre-social’ but, potentially, anti- or pro-social, depending on context: the concept of ‘pre-social’ human beings is here a contradiction in terms, as well as being impossible to study empirically. Bauman (1990: 5) appears to take a different view, but nonetheless concedes that the notion of a ‘pre-social’ impulse is a fiction, or *hermeneutical device*, for thinking about morality rather than anything real (see Dawson, 2017). The key question here is why should sociology align itself with worries about ‘corrupting’ something that exists only as a hermeneutical device, not least when it renders the discipline epiphenomenal to the explanation of morality, even though morality outside social life is neither conceivable nor verifiable?

This problem is repeated in part within many accounts of morality offered by evolutionary biology and biologically oriented forms of psychology. As Bykov (2019: 196) outlines, such approaches, along with recent developments in the neuroscience of morality, offer accounts of morality reduced to universal foundations in the body, and thereby little scope for the *sociology* of morality (see Alexander, 1985; Kurzban et al., 2015; Sinnott-Armstrong, 2008). In such cases, these ‘universal foundations’ are clearly *conceivable* and, to some extent, *verifiable* (e.g. through MRI scans), but, like sociological notions of ‘pre-social’ capacities, they render society and culture epiphenomenal to the analysis of morality. In Durkheim’s terms, therefore, they are partial, reductionist and misleading.

Firat and Hitlin’s (2012: 168, 171) assessment of the potential for sociology and neuroscience to explore morality in a genuinely interdisciplinary manner is instructive in this regard, as it attempts to move beyond such reductionism. Emphasising that humans are biological *and* social beings, they suggest that developments in neuroscience, particularly around the illumination of certain emotional and somatic stimuli and responses, not only challenge the rationalism of much cognitive psychology but also offer considerable potential to align creatively with a sociological interest in the role of emotions in moral judgements. Certainly, such conclusions sit comfortably with the Durkheimian model we have outlined, in that neuroscientific methods hold the potential for observing and measuring the bodily effects of the sort of 'propulsion' towards moral action Durkheim theorises, e.g. with regard to ‘somatic markers’ emergent from specific social interactions (Firat and Hitlin, 2012: 172; see Damasio, 1994). As they also note, however, neuroscience tends to be limited to ‘individual-level moral judgements isolated from the social environment’, and has no handle on ‘thick’ moral issues such as righteousness, fanaticism, in-group loyalty and authority (Firat and Hitlin, 2012: 173).

Abend (2012: 158) has explored these issues in detail, noting that while

‘converging lines of evidence from evolutionary biology, neuroscience and experimental psychology have shown that morality is grounded in the brain’, this work has not focused on morality per se, but ‘a particular kind of individual moral judgment… about the rightness, appropriateness, or permissibility of an action made in response to a stimulus at a particular point in time’. As he suggests, not only is there far more to morality than ‘individual moral judgments’, but also the place or prominence of such ‘thin’ moral judgments in day-to-day life is hard to specify, while such research cannot account for those ‘thick’ moral judgments that are absolutely central to contemporary life. These include issues such as dignity, tolerance, barbarism or fanaticism; thick issues that are, furthermore, potentially untranslatable between different cultures (Abend, 2012: 180-1).

In terms of how we manage such problems in the sociology of morality, however, Abend (2012: 187) equivocates. On the one hand, he asserts there is ‘no single best method to study morality’ or make claims about it, and endorses the ‘plurality’ of approaches that has led to him being accused of promoting an ‘unstructured eclecticism in regards to social scientific method’ (Lizardo, 2016: 129). On the other hand, he acknowledges that

‘some of the phenomena and processes of interest to a science of morality can’t be broken into separate parts—for example, the social and the neural—because these parts mutually influence or even constitute one another. Hence, studying them separately may lead to misleading results’.

Abend’s latter point suggests the potential value of Durkheim’s model, albeit in a way that is inclusive of biological/psychological data. The latter in and of themselves are, as we have emphasised, inevitably limited. MRI data are, for example, of only partial use in making sense of morality as a ‘web of interlocked organic and dynamic systems encompassing (sometimes competing) thoughts, feelings and actions’ (Firat and Hitlin, 2012: 169). Neither can such data explain *how* certain thoughts and feelings come to be provoked in the first place, and can only infer rather than observe, analyse and predict how they might shape social actions and structures. If what is distinctive about human life is that humans are affected by organic *and* social causes, and social life is 'moral life' only when the individual and collective, emotional and cognitive, dimensions of the *homo duplex* achieve a kind of communion (Durkheim, 1995 [1912]: 227, 434), then sociological explanation cannot be an adjunct to biology but is foundational to the understanding of the role innate human capacities play in moral life.

In this regard, while it is entirely possible that sociological terms can be ‘translated’ into the languages of other sciences in order to facilitate, rather than restrict, ‘uniquely sociological’ contributions to the cross-disciplinary analysis of morality (Vaisey and Valentino, 2018), the key issue is not the terminology used but the theoretical framework within which it is situated. Bykov (2019), in fact, offers what can be taken as a warning about the dangers of adopting elements of Durkheim’s approach without his broader vision of the need for a distinctively sociological analysis of morality. He draws attention to the value of various psychological approaches to morality that counter purely biological interpretations by advocating a comparative neo-Durkheimian focus on the collective shaping of morality, such as Haidt’s (2012) ‘Moral Foundations Theory’. Hitlin and Vaisey (2013: 60) also note that Haidt’s (2012) most recent book refers to Durkheim 24 times, signalling the potential value of the latter’s work for building bridges with psychology. Bykov (2019: 199, 201-2) notes, however, there are limitations in merely contributing greater sophistication in the elucidation and analysis of cultural variations while the core theories and methods underpinning such work remain grounded in evolutionary biology or cognitive psychology. Moscovici’s (2001) social psychology is of note in this regard, in that he explicitly develops his account of ‘social representations’ via Durkheim, but strips out the emotional and somatic elements of his work in favour of a cognitive focus on discursive communication.

In contrast to one-sided elaborations of Durkheim, it is therefore necessary to maintain his systematic account of the *relations between* innate bodily capacities and the social and cultural forces that constitute moral phenomena (see Shilling and Mellor, 2001). This is particularly important for developing an account of morality that avoids the limitations of substantive evaluations of contrasting moral viewpoints, and is also able to provide adequate recognition and analysis of them as embodied cultural systems. It is to these issues that we now turn.

**Moral orders as embodied cultural systems**

It is common to challenge accounts that embed morality in the universal biological properties of humans by noting that they cannot account for the widespread cultural variations in moral viewpoints (e.g. Bykov, 2019; Hitlin and Vaisey, 2013). Approaching these variations sociologically, however, raises the question of whether we define morality *substantively* or *relationally*. Hookway (2015: 10-11), for example, critiques Durkheim’s analysis on the grounds that it rules out the possibility of evaluating the substantive content of particular moral systems, allowing us to see dangerous, fascistic social orders as ‘moral’ just as much as more benign social phenomena.

Substantive approaches enable scholars to avoid the potential discomfort of attaching the label ‘moral’ to phenomena they find unappealing or repugnant, but, drawing on Durkheim, Alexander (2014: 307) makes it clear that, since morality is a cultural system as well as a normative order, it is *always* the case that ‘moral principles are defined relationally’. It is on a similar basis that Bykov (2019: 195) emphasises the merits of Durkheim’s relativistic view that each collectivity has its own ‘moral reality’ for dealing with cultural variation. Others, however, while also advocating a relationally defined account of morality, have questioned whether Durkheim’s views are internally consistent.

Abend (2008: 100-101), for example, identifies a tension or countertrend in Durkheim’s writings in their espousal of both ‘normative’ relativism *and* what he sees as a ‘metaethical’ commitment to truth. The former is evident in Durkheim’s claim that one form of morality cannot be ‘truer’ than another since each reflects the societies from which they emerge. The latter is said to emerge in Durkheim’s commitment to ‘improving’ society and morality expressive of a belief that science can determine the truth of moral judgements and seek to shape society in the light of them.

Abend ultimately rejects Durkheim’s approach, in favour of a Weberian conception of morality, but his analysis can be seen as underestimating the significance of *homo duplex* in Durkheim’s work. In defence of Abend, Durkheim does express worries about modernity which might appear to support the suggestion of a countertrend in his analysis. Durkheim’s evaluation of the division of labour suggests a weakening of collective sentiments leading to a proliferation of anomie and suicide, alongside the spread of the contractual relationships that he saw as having only a contingent connection with morality (Durkheim 1984 [1893]: 294, 302). Yet Durkheim’s warning that if the beliefs, traditions and aspirations of the group were no longer felt and shared by the individuals, then ‘society would die' and people would no longer be forced to pay morally binding attention to others (Durkheim, 1973 [1914]: 149; 1995 [1912]; 1984 [1893]: 331), does not arise from a metaethical commitment to moral truth, but from the *embodied basis* of his moral theory.

Durkheim’s concern is with the potential 'devitalisation' of society arising from a neglect of its effervescent basis (Nisbet, 1993 [1966]: 300), and subsequent worries about what happens to innate human capacities without the effervescent 'propulsion' towards moral action. This is to do with the waxing and waning of moral force in everyday life, processes implicated in whether people experience a certain 'rush of energy' evident in acts 'that express the understanding, esteem and affection' characteristic of positive human relations (Durkheim, 1995 [1912]: 215). The incidence, intensity and scope of this moral force varies according to the relationships and activities characteristic of social groups (Collins, 1988), while its effects are, since they are rooted in emotion, characterised by ephemerality and must be ‘recharged’ if they are to have enduring social significance (Shilling and Mellor, 2011) . This can imply ‘decline’, of course, but it also highlights the potential for ‘renewal’ in terms of the particular balance of *homo duplex* energies upon which a cultural system is predicated at any point in time.

From this perspective, the presumed association of Durkheim’s sociology with *evaluative* narratives of modern ‘moral decline’ makes little sense. Hookway (2015), for example, identifies as ‘Durkheimian’ two traditions expressive of such narratives. The first, a ‘cultural pessimist’ tradition, points to a hollowing out of cultural and moral life that can be redressed via ‘a Durkheimian repressive inhibition’ (Hookway, 2015: 4-6). The second, a ‘communitarian’ tradition, advocates that a modern culture prioritising the personal authenticity of individuals, rather than community-based moral orders, ‘will inevitably mean diminished care, respect and responsibility for others’ (Hookway, 2015: 6-8). The delineation of these traditions may be internally coherent, but do *not* cohere with the logic of Durkheim’s embodied cultural sociology. Moral decline and revitalisation are instead based upon the *homo duplex*, the embodied basis of a society’s cultural system, and bear no relation to substantive judgments of the standards of conduct within a social system.

In concluding the argument of this section, it is worth noting that the Durkheimian rejection of substantive approaches to morality has been maintained even in the face of what can be considered it biggest test, the rise of German Nazism. Mauss (1992 [1936]: 214) was clearly highly uncomfortable, and knew Durkheim would have been so too, in recognising the explanatory power of the Durkheimian model of moral order for analysing the nature and evolution of Nazi Germany, but he nonetheless did so. Here, Mauss followed Durkheim in emphasising that sociology’s purpose is to elucidate and analyse ‘social facts’, in all their cultural *and* biological complexity, a task to be undertaken regardless of how pleasant or unpleasant those facts might appear to the researcher. In a context where we cannot fail to be aware of the vast diversity of moral views across the globe today, this is a strength. We should surely be able to explore the underlying processes which have given rise to this diversity rather than filtering it through our own culturally-specific ‘substantive’ assumptions about what can and cannot count as moral. In this regard, it is important to note that such processes can occur, often simultaneously, ‘within’ as well as ‘across’ societies.

**Competing moral orders within societies**

Durkheim has often been interpreted as conceptualising morality as a property of entire societies that bind its members together into a singular collective force. It is on the basis of this reading that Hitlin and Vaisey (2013: 53) argue that while Durkheim provides the paradigm for ‘the old sociology of morality’, ‘new’ perspectives are better served taking their bearings from Weber’s view that morality ‘belongs more to cross-cutting groups and less to society as a whole’. Yet this binary distinction does a disservice to Durkheim. Contrary to a simple functionalist reading of his work, the embodied generation of social and moral force he focuses on has diverse, and ambiguous,consequences for individuals and groups within particular social orders (see Shilling and Mellor, 2001; Mellor and Shilling, 2014).

Despite suggestions to the contrary (Coser, 1977: 223, Hookway, 2015: 9), Durkheim is keenly attentive to the potentially violent, destructive consequences of moral force for some groups rather than others. Such force can be mundane or dramatic, harmonious or revolutionary (Durkheim 1982 [1895]: 53). In periods of extreme effervescence, people can be 'stirred by passions so intense that they can be satisfied only by violent and extreme acts: by acts of superhuman heroism or bloody barbarism' (Durkheim 1995 [1912]: 215). The impact of such outcomes can be similarly diverse, with Durkheim citing the French Revolution as an example of collective emotions and moral force resulting in vastly different consequences for opposing groups (Durkheim 1995 [1912]: 215).

This concern with competing moral orders within societies has been developed by a number of writers working within the Durkheimian tradition. Caillois (1950: 171, 227), for example, offers a theory of morality based on a distinction between the forces of cohesion and dissolution that can arise from these processes. He highlights how they can stimulate an emotional and cognitive renewal of existing moral orders, but also an upsurge of potentially violent social movements that slice brutally through everyday life. While Caillois develops his arguments with reference to non-modern groups, however, others have offered engagements with these aspects of Durkheim’s thought that are highly relevant to assessments of the moral diversity in contemporary societies.

Maffesoli (1996) and Meštrović (1993, 1994) are two of the more prominent writers to have developed Durkheimian perspectives on competing moral orders within modernity.

Maffesoli (1996: 42) focuses on the return of an emotionally grounded category of the moral in contemporary life, identifying various modern ‘tribes’ as 'specific groupings for the exchange of passion and feelings' that threaten rational orders. Maffesoli spends little time on the *dangers* of neo-tribal groups, however, despite the conflicts around religion, xenophobia and racism in France at the time he was writing (Shields, 1991: 183). In contrast, Meštrović (1993, 1994) has focused on the opportunities modernity has provided for the spread of effervescent manifestations of fear and hatred amongst particular groups. Like Maffesoli, his analysis is rooted in an explicitly Durkheimian framework, but he argues that the sensual and cognitive experience of effervescence in modern societies is bound up with ethnic and racial conflict, analysing race riots in the US, for example, as evidence of a broader ‘Balkanisation’ of modern life (Meštrović, 1994: 2).

These analyses highlight how a Durkheimian model of the moral can help account for contemporary neo-tribal social movements, but both also depart from Durkheim’s writings in certain respects. Meštrović’s pessimism and Maffesoli’s enthusiasm about neo-tribalism contain more than a suggestion of a ‘metaethical’ tendency to reject value-freedom (Abend, 2008). They also neglect Durkheim’s (1995 [1912]: 227, 434) assertion that social life is 'moral life' only when the individual and collective, emotional and cognitive, dimensions of the *homo duplex* achieve a kind of communion in the vitalism of collective effervescence. Regardless of whether they are excited or horrified by it, Meštrović and Maffesoli see only a wild effervescent emotionalism that, for Durkheim, was *involved* in the constitution of moral life but cannot be *equated* with it. Creative though these analyses are, a brief engagement with certain recent social movements suggests that Durkheim’s model is possessed of even greater value.

Discussions of the emergence and development of the radical Islamist movement ISIS suggests a combination of virulent emotional contagion on the one hand, and collective representations of community and self that draw on a range of scriptural, symbolic and historical sources on the other; together, these embody the sort of potent moral order that Durkheim envisaged (Shilling and Mellor, 2018: 135). Similarly, Strenski’s (2003) analysis of Palestianian suicide bombing as a Durkheimian sacrificial ritual also foregrounds the moral order that frames these activities; an analysis consistent with Atran et al’s (2007) argument that the sacred values underpinning such extreme sacrificial acts render them immune to the utilitarian, rational assumptions that tend to characterise processes of conflict resolution. Of course, the violence and insider/outsider dynamic displayed by such phenomena can reinforce concerns about the moral relativism of Durkheim’s model and its neglect of ‘substantive’ moral issues, but this is to underestimate the ambiguity of *all* emergent moral phenomena. Alexander (2014: 308-9), for example, in a discussion of the inherent ambiguities of morality as a cultural system, notes that the temporary upsurge of solidarity and civility evident early on in the Arab Spring was nonetheless accompanied by a notable upsurge in anti-Israeli and anti-American feeling, well before the subsequent descent into militarism, repression and religious fanaticism.

These analyses have their roots in Durkheim’s (1984 [1893]) insistence that ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ are always marked by symbolic distinctions; an insight that resonates with Firat and Hitlin’s (2012: 174) discussion of the importance of boundary research to cultural sociology. The suggestion that symbolic boundaries simultaneously signal patterns of inclusion *and* exclusion has, indeed, been used to explore the problem of moral solidarity in the diverse, culturally fragmented context of the contemporary US, where groups increasingly define themselves against each other. It is also prominent within Alexander’s (1992) exploration of how models of ‘citizenship’ symbolically exclude those deemed unworthy of solidarity (Edgell, Gerteis and Hartmann, 2006: 232).

In this regard, Durkheim’s theory of morality is not only useful for examining how, for example, Islamist religious fanaticism offers a particular challenge for highly differentiated modern societies because of the commitment to a ‘total’ socio-religious society that excludes or subjugates those beyond the solidarity of the *umma* (Mellor and Shilling, 2014: 27),but can also help account for more subtle yet pervasive patterns of inclusion and exclusion. It has been noted, for example, that neo-tribal patterns of social solidarity can be associated with increasing manifestations of *resentment* across societies, manifest not only in widespread inter-racial tension and prejudice but also in the zealous policing of views and persons deemed to infringe ‘progressive’ values of inclusivity, empathy and tolerance; an on-going exercise In moral boundary making highly relevant to contemporary university life, amongst other things (Shilling and Mellor, 2021: 10). Yet in each of these cases, the establishment of general or particular, consistent or opposed, moralities occurs only when there are balances formed between the individual and collective, emotional and cognitive, dimensions of the *homo duplex*.

**Conclusion**

Our argument has developed in three stages. First, building on an examination of Durkheim’s account of *homo duplex*, we have suggested that he offers a sociological model of moral phenomena that does not counter the biological effacement of culture with the cultural effacement of the body, but stresses that both are inextricably implicated in the constitution and evolution of the moral. Second, in using this as a basis for reflecting on moral diversity across societies, we have examined the nature of the moral ‘relativism’ Durkheim’s model implies, and argued for its value in analysing diversity in a non-reductionist manner. Third, we have argued for its particular value in accounting for competing moral solidarities *within* societies, such as in relation to contemporary phenomena such as neo-tribalism, fanaticism and insider/outsider social dynamics.

In short, if the key challenge facing the sociology of morality today is to develop a compelling theoretical account of the relations between innate moral capacities and the social and cultural complexities of morality (Hitlin and Vaisey, 2010: 9-11), then Durkheim offers the basis for one. What we have also emphasised, however, is that this challenge should be met via a sociology of morality that is also a sociology of the body (Mellor and Shilling, 1997; Shilling, 2012 [1993]). The historical trajectories of the two subjects have followed a similar path, from classical significance to decline to more recent renewal, but a reengagement with Durkheim’s relevance for moral issues today can reunite them at the centre of sociological analysis. If, as he indicates, human beings are, simultaneously, natural and cultural creatures, and morality emerges and operates at the nexus of these two poles of the *homo duplex*, then parcelling out the study of morality to various disciplines in a theoretical and empirical ‘division of labour’ will not do (Abend, 2012: 187). Rather, in the light of Durkheim’s model, the sociology of morality should be *inclusive* of insights from other disciplines but also *synthetic*, resisting various forms of reductionism in favour of a distinctively sociological model reflective of the duality of human nature.

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**Authors**:

Philip A. Mellor is Professor of Religion and Social Theory in the School of Philosophy, Religion and History of Science, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT.

[P.A.Mellor@Leeds.ac.uk](mailto:P.A.Mellor@Leeds.ac.uk)

ORCID - 0000-0001-6954-442

Chris Shilling is Professor of Sociology in the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent. CT2 7NF.

[C.Shilling@Kent.ac.uk](mailto:C.Shilling@Kent.ac.uk)

ORCID – 0000-003-2930-9223

**Corresponding Author:**

Philip A. Mellor [P.A.Mellor@Leeds.ac.uk](mailto:P.A.Mellor@Leeds.ac.uk)