

Planet of the Durkheimians: Where Community, Authority, and Sacredness Are Foundations of Morality

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Abstract

Most academic efforts to understand morality and ideology come from theorists who limit the domain of morality to issues related to harm and fairness. For such theorists, conservative beliefs are puzzles requiring non-moral explanations. In contrast, we present moral foundations theory, which broadens the moral domain to match the anthropological literature on morality. We extend the theory by integrating it with a review of the sociological constructs of community, authority, and sacredness, as formulated by Emile Durkheim and others. We present data supporting the theory, which also shows that liberals misunderstand the explicit moral concerns of conservatives more than conservatives misunderstand liberals. We suggest that what liberals see as a non-moral motivation for system justification may be better described as a moral motivation to protect society, groups, and the structures and constraints that are often (although not always) beneficial for individuals. Finally, we outline the possible benefits of a moral foundations perspective for system justification theory (SJT), including better understandings of (a) why the system justifying motive is palliative despite some harmful effects, (b) possible evolutionary origins of the motive, and (c) the values and worldviews of conservatives in general.

It has not yet been revealed to the public, but we have it on good authority that intelligent life was recently discovered on a planet several light years away. The planet has been given an unpronounceable technical name, but scientists refer to the planet informally as "Planet Durkheim." Judging by the television signals received, Durkheimians look rather like human beings, although their behavior is quite different. Durkheimians crave, above all else, being tightly integrated into strong groups that cooperatively pursue common goals. They have little desire for self-expression or individual development, and when the requirements of certain jobs force individuals to spend much time alone, or when the needs of daily life force individuals to make their own decisions or express their own preferences, Durkheimians feel drained and unhappy. In extreme cases of enforced individualism, they

sometimes commit suicide. Durkheimians have a biological need to belong to tight groups with clear and widely shared norms for behavior.

Given this need, it is not surprising that Durkheimian ethics revolves around groups. For any action, they ask: Does it undermine or strengthen the group? Anyone whose actions weaken social cohesion is evil and ostracized. For first offenders, the ostracism is brief, but for the most serious offenses the offender is tattooed with the word "Individualist" and is expelled from the group. Durkheimian societies are hierarchically organized by hereditary occupational castes, and most of the ostracism cases involve individuals who fail to perform their caste duties. These individuals seem to prefer their own comfort or own projects to the needs of their highly interdependent groups.

Within a few weeks of the discovery of Planet Durkheim, Google found a way to translate and index all Durkheimian academic journals. We used Google Durkheim to examine the state of social psychology research, and we found a fascinating debate taking place over the puzzle of "The Dissenters." The Dissenters are a social movement that disagrees with the frequent use of permanent ostracism. The Dissenters point out that the penalty is applied overwhelmingly to members of the lower castes, for whom work is often dull or dangerous. They argue that these individuals are not traitors, they are innocent victims who should be given compassion, more societal resources, and better work. The Dissenters even suggest that society should be changed, so that each individual rotates through all the high and low caste positions. The Dissenters acknowledge that such rotations would be less efficient than the current system of lifelong specializations assigned at birth, but they say it would be somehow right or good to do it anyway.

The Dissenters are a puzzle because most of them come from the upper castes. Why would an upper-caste Durkheimian press for a change to society that would harm not just himself (through loss of privileges) but also society as a whole (through loss of efficiency)? There is no justification for such a position within Durkheimian morality, so Durkheimian social psychologists recently proposed a theory—called "victim justification theory"—to explain the unconscious motives that impel Dissenters to defend traitors and challenge the legitimacy of the social system.

Of course, Planet Durkheim does not really exist, but our reactions to it can be illustrative. It seems obvious to terrestrial readers that the Dissenters are trying to act in accordance with moral concepts such as fairness, rights, and justice, which the rest of their hive-like, group-oriented society does not include as part of the moral domain. In this paper, we suggest that an analogous situation holds here on Earth: many people who justify the political/economic system even when it seems to work to their detriment are trying to act in accordance with moral concepts such as loyalty, tradition, hierarchy,

order, respect for one's superiors, and sacredness. The politically homogeneous discipline of psychology, however, does not at present consider such traditional concepts to be a part of the moral domain. For example, the most widely used definition in moral psychology says that "the moral domain refers to prescriptive judgments of justice, rights, and welfare pertaining to how people ought to relate to each other" (Turiel, 1983, p. 3). Rules and practices related to sexual purity, patriotism, and respect for authority are often dismissed as social conventions.

To develop this analogy into an argument, we will first discuss three of the most important ideas from classical sociology—community, authority, and sacredness—as described by Emile Durkheim, Ferdinand Tönnies, and Max Weber. We believe these sociologists offer to psychology analytical tools that are essential for understanding the moral concerns of American social conservatives in *moral* terms, rather than (or in addition to) being expressions of non-moral processes. Next, we will present our own theory of how and why the moral domain varies across cultures, which we call *moral foundations theory* (MFT; Haidt & Graham, 2007; Haidt & Joseph, 2004, 2007). In the third section of this chapter, we will present evidence in support of MFT, evidence that shows an unexpected but explainable result: that political conservatives are more accurate than political liberals in characterizing the explicit moral beliefs of the other side. And finally, we will suggest a reinterpretation of system justification theory (SJT; Jost & Banaji, 1994) that integrates it with MFT to provide a more complete account of the motives and motivated reasoning of partisans on both sides of the political spectrum.

THREE GREAT IDEAS

According to the sociologist Robert Nisbet (1993), two great revolutions—the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution—were the largest steps in the long transformation of European society from medieval/feudal to modern/democratic. During this transition, the individual took on much greater importance as the unit of society and the unit of value; the centralized state became ever more powerful; and there was a hollowing-out of everything in between. The many low- and mid-level associations and institutions that had proliferated in medieval Europe (guilds, extended families, the church, local feudal authorities) were weakened or destroyed. These cataclysmic changes to the social order greatly increased the liberty of most individuals, but the loss of social structure and social integration imposed costs on individuals as well. Sociology has its roots in the study of these changes (e.g., Marx, 1977/1867; Tocqueville, 1988/1835). Political conservatism has its roots in the opposition to them (e.g., Burke, 2003/1790).

Nisbet (1993) presents five “unit-ideas” of sociology—fundamental concepts developed in the 19th century that are still essential for sociological work today. We will focus our discussion on three of these ideas¹—community, authority, and sacredness—for these three ideas match closely the three foundations of morality that (we believe) psychologists often fail to recognize as moral foundations (Haidt & Graham, 2007). In arguing that community, authority, and sacredness are foundations of morality, we are making a *descriptive* claim only, not a normative one. We claim that most people across cultures and throughout history have considered community, authority, and sacredness to be sources of moral value in their own right, not derived from their ability to promote other values such as the welfare of individuals or justice. If this descriptive claim is true, then a moral psychology that examines only the psychology of welfare and justice is incomplete as an empirical exercise.

Community

Many theorists have contrasted two basic modes of relationship, one warm and personal, exemplified most perfectly in the closeness and lasting interdependence of family, the other cooler and more calculating, based on the mutual usefulness of the partners at a given time. The philosopher Buber (1937/1996) called these two forms “I-You” and “I-it.” Psychologists Clark and Mills (1979) contrasted “communal” and “exchange” relationships. People in all cultures have the capacity and the opportunity to engage in both kinds of relationship, yet cultures differ greatly in their valuation and relative frequency of the two types. Imagine that you were raised in a society in which, on average, 90% of your daily interactions were of the “warmer” type and only 10% involved the “cooler” type. What would you think of a neighboring society in which the ratios were reversed? Now imagine that your historically communal culture was undergoing changes, forced upon you by outside economic and political forces, that were pushing inexorably toward a market-based, exchange-oriented society. Might you be alarmed? Might something valuable be lost in the transition, even if these changes brought greater economic efficiency, wealth, and liberty?

The analysis of such transitions was the life-work of Ferdinand Tönnies (2001/1887), who saw this process unfolding in 19th-century Europe. Tönnies

¹ The other two are alienation and status. Alienation is what happens to people when they are cut off from ties of community and shared moral purpose. This is clearly not a foundation of morality but an effect of its loss. Status refers to the position of an individual within a hierarchy. We consider the moral ramifications of status in our discussion of the authority/respect foundation.

referred to the traditional pattern of social relations as *Gemeinschaft*, which is usually translated as “community.” *Gemeinschaft* relationships rest on the three pillars (whether real or imagined) of shared blood, shared place, and shared mind or belief. The prototype of *Gemeinschaft* is the family, and the family (particularly the patriarchal family) is easily scaled up to create larger *Gemeinschaft* institutions such as the Catholic Church or the feudal system. Tönnies labeled the new, more impersonal kind of relationship *Gesellschaft*, which is usually translated as “society” or “civil society.” *Gesellschaft* is what happens when the social restraints of community are weakened, mid-level institutions are eliminated, and people are largely free to pursue their own goals as they see fit. *Gesellschaft* relationships are “characterized by a high degree of individualism, impersonality, [and] contractualism, and [they proceed] from volition or sheer interest rather than from the complex of affective states, habits, and traditions that underlies *Gemeinschaft*” (Nisbet, 1993, p. 74).

Modern social scientists, who are likely to feel repugnance toward concepts such as patriarchy and feudalism, may find themselves equating *Gemeinschaft* with oppression and *Gesellschaft* with equality, freedom, and progress. Yet even if you are a proud *Gesellschafter*, devoted to the scientific study of how to structure society, the legal system, and the family to improve the lives of individuals, you might soon discover that there is a dark side to *Gesellschaft*. That is what happened to Emile Durkheim. Durkheim was politically liberal (Coser, 1977), but he spent his career investigating the importance of some rather conservative and system justifying ideas.

In his famous study of suicide, for example, Durkheim found that the suicide rate in European countries “varies inversely with the degree of integration of the social groups of which the individual forms a part” (Durkheim, 1951/1897, p. 208). Factors that increased social integration (having a large family, being Catholic or Jewish rather than Protestant, being in a nation at war) decreased suicide rates; factors that increased the degree to which people relied upon themselves (e.g., wealth and education) were associated with higher rates of suicide. Durkheim rejected the atomism of social theory in his day, which focused on individuals and the processes by which those individuals create larger groups. Durkheim, in contrast, gave analytical priority to the group. Many groups exist for centuries or longer; they have lives of their own, and their behavior follows laws that are not reducible to laws of psychology (hence the need for sociology). Individuals are born into these groups and made into human beings by them. Events or policies that weaken groups increase *anomie*—the unhealthy state in which norms are unclear or unshared—and therefore raise suicide rates. (For evidence that national suicide rates in Western nations are still related to Durkheimian variables, see Eckersley & Dear, 2002.)

In other words, if Durkheim is right, then we are all, to some extent, residents of Planet Durkheim. Strong, cohesive groups help us flourish.² And if this is true, then moral systems that aim to strengthen groups and that value group loyalty might, under some circumstances, be better for individuals overall than a moral system that aims to maximize individual rights and liberties.³

Authority

Which bumper sticker are you more likely to find in a faculty parking lot: "Question Authority" or "God said it, I believe it, that settles it!" We believe that academics have generally negative associations to the word "authority," associating it easily with authoritarianism and oppressive power. Nisbet, however, argues that in the history of sociology, authority is conceptually *opposed* to power. Authority refers to "the structure or the inner order of an association, whether this be political, religious, or cultural, and is given legitimacy by its roots in social function, tradition, or allegiance" (Nisbet, 1993, p. 6). Power, on the other hand, "is commonly identified with military or political force or with administrative bureaucracy and which, unlike the authority that arises directly from social function and association, raises the problem of legitimacy" (Nisbet, 1993, p. 6). It makes sense that academics in so many university departments are suspicious of power, which is often used to brutalize the powerless and enrich the powerful. (As Lord Acton said, "all power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.") But authority might deserve a second look.

A foundational question in cosmology is: Why is there something rather than nothing? The same can be said for sociology: Why is there such a profusion of intricate societies in which people restrain themselves and cooperate with others, rather than a planet full of self-interested individuals living in social anarchy? Tönnies, Durkheim, and Weber all investigated the willing submission of people to the rules and restraints that make social life possible. Tönnies found the answer in the natural sociability of the family, extended outward to create *Gemeinschaften* in which the authority of tribal, religious, or other leaders is experienced using the same psychological systems that make people feel respect for their fathers. Traditional authority is embedded

² Up to a point. Durkheim also noted that when groups bind too tightly, a different kind of suicide—altruistic suicide, often motivated by intense shame—rises in frequency.

³ Group-based moralities might be beneficial for happiness, civic engagement, and mental health for those who fit into groups, but we note that they may be oppressive to those who do not fit in, and they often increase the likelihood of intergroup conflict.

in personal relationships: people feel respect for the *people* in positions of authority; they owe loyalty and obedience to them, and in return can expect protection and guidance from them.⁴

One of Tönnies' concerns about the transition from *Gemeinschaft* to *Ge-sellschaft* was that this natural, interpersonal kind of authority is lost. When personal relationships are replaced by administrative and bureaucratic entities backed by the force of law and threat of punishment, then traditional authority is replaced by something cold, impersonal, and weak. Max Weber (1947) called this new kind of authority "rational" authority, in contrast to "traditional" authority.⁵ These labels may suggest to modern readers that rational authority is reasonable authority, whereas traditional authority is patriarchal oppression, but Weber focused his analyses on the dark side of the unstoppable force of rationalization. Weber acknowledged that rational authority, in concert with the bureaucratization of government and the rise of an impersonal legal system, were necessary for the efficient administration of large modern states. But he pointed out that this very rise in efficiency necessitated a loss of humanity. For example, conflict resolutions provided by traditional authorities are tailored for the particularities of each case (think of King Solomon), but modern legal proceedings, said Weber, are cold, mechanical, and often unsatisfying to all sides. In political relations, in the workplace, and even in religious and private life, Weber consistently warned about the unexpected and alienating consequences of requiring all arrangements and all actions to be justifiable with reference to efficiency, utility, and means–ends rationality.

Durkheim also stressed the loss to humanity that accompanied the loss of traditional authority and strong community. When mid-level associations and institutions are weakened, when the only remaining authority is the state, when social distinctions are erased and individuals engage mostly in temporary relationships of their own choosing, the result is not egalitarian liberty but anomic anarchy:

Man cannot become attached to higher aims and submit to a rule if he sees nothing above him to which he belongs. To free himself from all social pressure is to abandon himself and demoralize him . . . While the state becomes

⁴ Authority relationships, at their best, are mutually beneficial (see Fiske, 1991). However, when authority becomes distant and freed from checks and balances, it often devolves into power and oppression. See Abu-Lughod (1986) for an example of how women in a patriarchal Bedouin society impose some limits on the authority of males in their families.

⁵ Weber's third kind of authority—charismatic—is not as important, for it exists only briefly, during the reign of a charismatic individual. Authority always reverts, Weber said, to a rational or traditional form.

inflated and hypertrophied in order to obtain a firm enough grip upon individuals, but without succeeding, the latter, without mutual relationships, tumble over one another like so many liquid molecules, encountering no central energy to retain, fix, and organize them. (Durkheim, 1951/1897, p. 389)

Durkheim tells the story of modernity as a centrifugal force flinging people out from tight communities maintained by respect for traditional authority, into to a more open, freer, individualistic world in which people often have difficulty finding connection, order, and meaning. (See Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985, for a portrait of Americans still engaged in these struggles.)

Sacredness

Historically and cross-culturally, the strongest opposition to that centrifugal force has been religion. But religion and its central concept of sacredness are, like authority, often misunderstood by psychologists. Many scientists today think of religion primarily as a set of *beliefs* about god, the world, and the origins of humankind. Because many of these beliefs are demonstrably false, religion is then dismissed as a foolish and virulent delusion (Dawkins, 2006; Harris, 2006). But many of the great sociologists, most of whom were atheists or agnostics, thought that religious beliefs were the surface manifestation of something deeper.

Durkheim, from his analyses of traditional religions, concluded that one of the most fundamental distinctions in human thought is that between the sacred and the profane. As Nisbet (1993, p. 6) summarizes the sociological use of the word: "*The sacred* includes the mores, the non-rational, the religious and ritualistic ways of behavior that are valued beyond whatever utility they may possess." Sacredness hints at the existence of another world. The opposite of the sacred is the profane, an orientation to objects, places, and actions that is purely utilitarian and practical. Durkheim thought that the origin of sacredness was humanity's experience of moral authority. People *feel* that moral truths are far more than personal preferences; they exist outside the self and demand respect:

[Because authority] speaks to us in an imperative tone we certainly feel that it must come from some being superior to us; but we cannot see clearly who or what it is. This is why, in order to explain this mysterious voice that does not speak with a human accent, people imagine it to be connected with transcendent personalities above and beyond man, which then become the object of a cult. (Durkheim, 1973/1925, p. 89)

The source of this superhuman voice is society, and so, as Durkheim famously argued, God is really society, symbolized in many ways by the world's religions. The social function of religion is not to give us a set of

religious beliefs per se; it is to *create a cult*, to forge a community out of individuals who, if left unbound and uncommitted, would think and act in profane (practical, efficient, self-serving) ways. On this view, the shared rites, shared movements, shared calendar, and shared mental maps of sacred versus profane space are more important in creating this community than are the shared factual beliefs about the nature of God and the origin of the world. (For more on the power of synchronized motor movements to create transcendent experiences that bond people together, see McNeill, 1995; Haidt, Seder, & Kesebir, in press.)

As the West continued its long (although uneven) progression from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, its process of rationalization, and its dismantling of traditional sources of moral authority, is it any wonder that some critics—even nonreligious sociologists—lamented the loss of something important? The historian of religion Mircea Eliade (1959/1957) argued that the perception of sacredness is a human universal. (See also Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000, on people as “intuitive theologians.”) Most people passionately want to live in a “sacralized cosmos,” a world that is more than just matter swirling around, with no value beyond its usefulness in providing pleasure to individuals. (See Kass, 1994, on how the act of eating can be dignified and elevated above its utilitarian functions.) Eliade suggested that the cosmopolitan centers of the modern West are the first fully profane, fully desacralized societies ever created. Modern social scientists are, for the most part, secular cosmopolitans; we find pleasure and freedom in our desacralized lives and our pursuits of self-expression. We must understand, however, that many of our fellow citizens find the ethos of tolerance, individualism, and anything-goes-as-long-as-it-doesn't-hurt-anyone to be ugly, antisocial, and profoundly immoral. How can there be such a fundamental disagreement about morality within a modern Western nation?

MORAL FOUNDATIONS THEORY

Modern moral psychology is decidedly un-Durkheimian. In fact, Jean Piaget (1965/1932) specifically disagreed with Durkheim on the value of adult constraint and “heteronomous” relationships of hierarchy and obedience. Piaget thought that children constructed much of their morality for themselves, rather than learning it from their parents or from society. If adults would just step back and grant them more autonomy, children would reach moral maturity more quickly, including especially an understanding of justice. Lawrence Kohlberg (1969; 1971) developed Piaget’s ideas further and proposed that moral development is, essentially, the individual’s development of ever more adequate reasoning about justice.

However, Kohlberg's attempt to ground all of morality on a single foundation met with resistance: Carol Gilligan (1982) argued that women have an additional "ethic of care" derived from their experience of close relationships. The debate between Kohlberg and Gilligan dominated the field of moral psychology in the 1980s, but in the end most participants came to a consensus: Gilligan was correct that care was a separate foundation of morality, not derived from justice concerns, although she may not have been correct that the two ethics are gendered (see Gibbs, 2003; Walker, 1984). The field converged on a definition of the moral domain that accommodated both Kohlberg and Gilligan: "prescriptive judgments of justice, rights, and welfare pertaining to how people ought to relate to each other" (Turiel, 1983, p. 3).

The idea that there were two separate foundations, systems, or sets of skills with independent developmental trajectories fit with the then-emerging sociobiological idea that morality is the product of two evolutionary processes: kin altruism and reciprocal altruism (see Dawkins, 1976; Wilson, 1975). The idea that we evolved to be sensitive to the needs and welfare of our children and close kin bears an obvious affinity to Gilligan's ethic of care, while Trivers' (1971) explanation of reciprocal altruism and the origins of the human obsession with fairness bears an obvious affinity to Kohlberg's emphasis on justice and rights.

But once the rationalist dream of a single principle—a unified moral theory—is lost, then why stop at two? In the 1980s and 1990s, several anthropologists objected that Western moral psychology was essentially the psychology of modern cosmopolitan Westerners, and that it could not accommodate many of the moral concerns found in other cultures. Richard Shweder (1991; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997) proposed that there are three "ethics" in which moral discourse occurs around the world: the ethic of *autonomy*, in which the autonomous individual is the unit of value (this is Turiel's moral domain); the ethic of *community*, in which the group and its stability and cohesion are of fundamental importance; and the ethic of *divinity*, in which God is thought to be present in each person, rendering it morally necessary that individuals live in a pure, holy, and dignified way, rather than following their carnal desires wherever they please. In terms of Nisbet's (1993) unit-ideas from sociology, the ethic of community obviously includes both community and authority, whereas the ethic of divinity maps neatly onto sacredness.

Haidt and Joseph (2004, 2007), and Haidt and Graham (2007) have developed Shweder's (1991) theory further, connecting it to recent evolutionary thinking and making it more specific about the developmental processes and cognitive mechanisms involved. The result is MFT, which has three parts: (a) a nativist claim that natural selection prepared the human mind to learn

easily to detect and respond to (at least) five sets of patterns in the social world, (b) a developmental account of how children reach moral maturity by mastering culturally variable virtues that are related to the five foundations, and (c) a cultural/historical account of why groups and societies vary in the degree to which they construct virtues, laws, and institutions upon each of the five foundations.

In its briefest form, the nativist claim is that human beings have long faced a set of adaptive challenges in their social lives and that natural selection favored individuals who were better able to meet those challenges by noticing certain patterns and responding to them in particular ways. The five foundations, along with the adaptive challenges that might have shaped them, are as follows:

1. *Harm/care*: The challenge of protecting and caring for vulnerable offspring and kin made it adaptive for individuals to notice suffering and harm-doing, and to be motivated to relieve suffering.⁶ (This is essentially the theory of kin altruism [Hamilton, 1964], augmented by research on empathy/compassion [Hoffman, 1982].)
2. *Fairness/reciprocity*: The challenge of reaping the benefits of cooperation with individuals who are not close kin made it adaptive for individuals to be cooperative while being vigilant about and punitive toward cheaters. (See Trivers' [1971] theory of reciprocal altruism, which suggests that a set of moral emotions is the psychological mechanism by which reciprocity is implemented. See also Brosnan, 2006.)
3. *Ingroup/loyalty*: The challenge of reaping the benefits of cooperation in groups larger than dyads, particularly in the presence of intergroup competition for resources, made it adaptive for people to value belonging to groups while being vigilant about and hostile toward cheaters, slackers, free-riders, and traitors. (See the emerging literature on the evolution of "coalitional psychology," e.g., Kurzban, Tooby, & Cosmides, 2001. See also Wright [2000] on the ever-expanding "non-zero-sumness" of social life.)
4. *Authority/respect*: The challenge of negotiating rank in the social hierarchies that existed throughout most of human and earlier primate evolution made it adaptive for individuals to recognize signs of status and show proper respect and deference upward, while offering some

⁶ Of course, humans now extend this care beyond their kin, but it is striking how quickly caring declines as one moves from family to fellow citizen to foreigner, and how sharply concern intensifies when the sufferer is neotenous (e.g., children and baby seals).

protection and showing some restraint toward subordinates. (Note that human hierarchies depend much more strongly on “freely conferred deference” [Henrich and Gil-White, 2001] than on the threat of force, which plays such a large role in chimpanzee hierarchies. See Boehm, 1999⁷, and Fiske, 1991, on how human authority ranking is a two-way street with mutual obligations and limitations on power.)

5. *Purity/sanctity*: The challenge of avoiding deadly microbes and parasites, which are easily spread among people living together in close proximity and sharing food, made it adaptive to attend to the contact history of the people and potential foods in one’s immediate environment, sometimes shunning or avoiding them. This foundation is different from the others in that its origins are in our physical nature—as omnivores—rather than in our social nature (see Rozin, Haidt, & McCauley, 2000). However, once human beings developed the emotion of disgust and its cognitive component of contagion sensitivity, they began to apply the emotion to other people and groups for social and symbolic reasons that sometimes had a close connection to health concerns (e.g., lepers, or people who had just touched a human corpse), but very often did not (e.g., people of low status, hypocrites, racists). When moral systems are built upon this foundation, they often go far beyond avoiding “unclean” people and animals; they promote a positive goal of living in a pure, sanctified way, which often involves rising above petty and carnal desires in order to prepare one’s mind and body for contact with God (see Haidt, 2006, Ch. 9).

The developmental component of moral foundations theory posits that the foundations make it easy for children to learn some virtues and hard to learn others. When we say that the foundations are innate, we do not mean that they are visible in infancy or unchanged by experience. *Innate* means, as Marcus (2004, p. 40) puts it, “organized in advance of experience.” The genes create the first drafts of our brains, but experience in our families and cultures then edits those drafts to produce unique individuals and divergent cultures. Haidt and Joseph (2007) considered five ways that moral knowledge might be organized in advance of experience and concluded that, whereas all five

⁷ Boehm, 1999, suggests that human beings are naturally hierarchical creatures who have developed mechanisms (through cultural and biological co-evolution) that enable them to band together to suppress bullying and live in egalitarian societies. If this is true, then egalitarianism/anti-oppression would be a good candidate for a sixth moral foundation. So far, however, we have assumed that egalitarianism is based primarily on the fairness foundation.

approaches were probably correct about some aspects of moral knowledge, the most promising approach was to think of the five foundations as innate “learning modules” (Marler, 1991; Sperber, 2005), which generate a host of specific acquired modules during the course of development. A small set of moral learning modules could explain the high degree of preparedness (Seligman, 1971) that moral reactions show: some moral rules are so easily learned that it is not clear that anyone needs to teach them (e.g., the tit-for-tat rule: “don’t hit first, but if someone hits you, hit back”). Other moral rules are so hard to learn that it is not clear that they can be inculcated by any means yet discovered (e.g., “if someone hits you, turn the other cheek with love in your heart”). Parents and religions may propose such a rule, but children will learn it only explicitly, and it will not become part of their automatic intuitive morality.

Moral development on this view is not about children figuring out natural law (e.g., justice and rights) for themselves, as Kohlberg thought. Rather, moral development is a part of normal enculturation in which the child gradually learns to recognize specific cultural patterns (most of which are variants of evolutionarily prepared patterns), have the right intuitive reactions to those patterns, and then engage in culturally appropriate behaviors. (For more detail see Haidt & Bjorklund, 2008.)

The cultural/historical component of moral foundations theory is largely the story developed by Tönnies, Durkheim, and Weber in their analyses of the transformation of European society from the Middle Ages to modernity. In brief: the historical and cross-cultural prevalence of *Gemeinschaft* suggests that this form of association is in some sense the human default—it is the form of social structure in which human evolution took place, and the context in which intuitive ethics became a part of the human mind. The great sociologists put forth many ideas about what drives the shift toward *Gesellschaft*, and a common theme is the weakening of social constraints upon individuals and the empowering of individuals to make their own choices. Wealth, mobility, technology, education, and cultural diversity—all of these factors weaken the historical interdependence of people within a longstanding community and free individuals to construct lives for themselves guided by their own preferences. As that happens, the relative importance of the five foundations shifts.⁸

⁸ Of course, history does not move in a straight line. The second World War, for example, seems to have greatly increased the interdependence and civic engagement of those Americans who lived through it (Putnam, 2000).

Moral foundations theory says that people in all cultures are born with the *capacity* to cultivate virtues based on all five foundations. Furthermore, people in all cultures *do* cultivate virtues based on the first two foundations: harm/care and fairness/reciprocity (see Brown, 1991, and Hauser, 2006, on moral universals). But as a society becomes more modern and more individualistic, the first two foundations become ever more important in daily life and in moral and political philosophy, while the last three become less important. (And after the horrors of 20th-century fascism, the concepts of ingroup, authority, and purity became particularly and deservedly suspect.) Because modernity increases the value of the first two foundations while decreasing or even reversing the value of the last three foundations, we refer to harm and fairness as the two “modern” or “individualizing” foundations, and we refer to ingroup, authority, and purity as the three “traditional” or “binding” foundations. (For a similar distinction, see Hunter, 1991, on the culture war between those who follow the “progressive” impulse and those who follow the “orthodox” impulse with regard to moral truth.)

We stress, however, that the conflict between modern and traditional moralities is really between a morality based mostly (although not entirely) on two foundations and a morality based firmly on all five foundations. The same division, we find, holds true for the conflict between socially liberal and socially conservative moralities, although we note that political identities are often complex and multifaceted. For example, many groups on the political left believe strongly in the moral importance of community (e.g., communitarians, socialists, and the anti-free-trade left) and may even have a moral identity as a righteous ingroup battling an evil outgroup. Many greens and environmentalists seem to ground part of their morality on notions of purity applied to the Earth and its ecosystems. And most libertarians and free-trade conservatives would reject purity concerns outright. So, no division, including our two versus five division, can neatly separate all people who self-identify as liberals from those who self-identify as conservatives. But we believe (and have found) that the two versus five formulation works well as a first pass.

ASYMMETRIC EXAGGERATIONS

The words “liberal” and “conservative” each refer to families of political and moral ideologies. Varieties of liberalism generally share the view that liberty and equality are fundamental political goods, and so liberals typically support individual rights and the use of government programs or changes in social institutions to extend such rights as widely (and as equally) as possible. The fundamental goods of conservatism, in contrast, are harder to define because

conservatism is generally said to arise as a reaction to the changes promoted by liberals, and those changes vary widely depending on the society being changed (Muller, 1997). Nonetheless, conservatives are typically united in their desire to conserve the status quo (i.e., in their opposition to change) and by the belief that long-existing institutions, norms, and traditions embody the wisdom of many generations and should not be tampered with lightly. Combined with a view of human nature that is usually darker than that of liberals and a belief in the limits of human knowledge, conservatives tend to believe (as Durkheim did) that strong institutions and social constraints are necessary for children's socialization, valuable for human welfare, and hard to replace once called into question or delegitimated (Burke, 2003/1790; Muller, 1997).

There are many kinds of conservatives and liberals in the United States today, but Jost (2006) argues that as a first cut, a simple one-dimensional spectrum of left-right or liberal-conservative does a surprisingly good job of arranging political attitudes and orientations. People in the United States freely talk about how liberal or conservative they are, usually without adding qualifications (e.g., distinguishing social from fiscal domains). What do they mean when they make such ratings? What moral values and virtues are associated with these terms, or with the "culture war" that is sometimes said to be raging between the two sides?

To find out, we created the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ), which asks participants to rate how relevant each of 20 concerns (four for each of our five foundations) are to their moral judgments and decisions. Item examples include whether or not another person: cared for someone weak or vulnerable (harm), ended up profiting more than others (fairness), put the interests of the group above his/her own (ingroup), showed a lack of respect for legitimate authority (authority), and was able to control his or her desires (purity). Data from six samples totaling more than 5000 respondents have supported our basic political hypothesis with these relevance ratings: participants who had earlier identified themselves as liberal (below 4 on a 1-7 scale) rated items related to the two modern foundations as being more relevant to their moral judgments than items related to the three traditional foundations, whereas participants who had identified themselves as conservative (above 4) rated all five foundations as being equally relevant to their moral judgments (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2008; Haidt & Graham, 2007).

After our first two studies, we added a second section to the MFQ asking participants to agree or disagree with specific moral statements. Four different types of moral statements were used: normative ideals (e.g., "It can never be right to kill a human being" for harm), hypothetical scenarios (e.g., "If I were a soldier and disagreed with my commanding officer's orders,

I would obey anyway because that is my duty” for authority), positive virtues (e.g., “Chastity is an important and valuable virtue” for purity), and, because government policies are often the focus of moral debates, statements about laws or policies (e.g., “When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly” for fairness). Data from four samples totaling more than 3000 respondents has shown the same pattern as did the relevance ratings. Figure 15.1 shows this basic pattern, for all 5392 online participants who took either version of the MFQ. In all samples we have looked at, we have found that scores on the harm and fairness subscales slope downward as participants get more conservative, whereas scores on the ingroup, authority, and purity subscales slope upward.

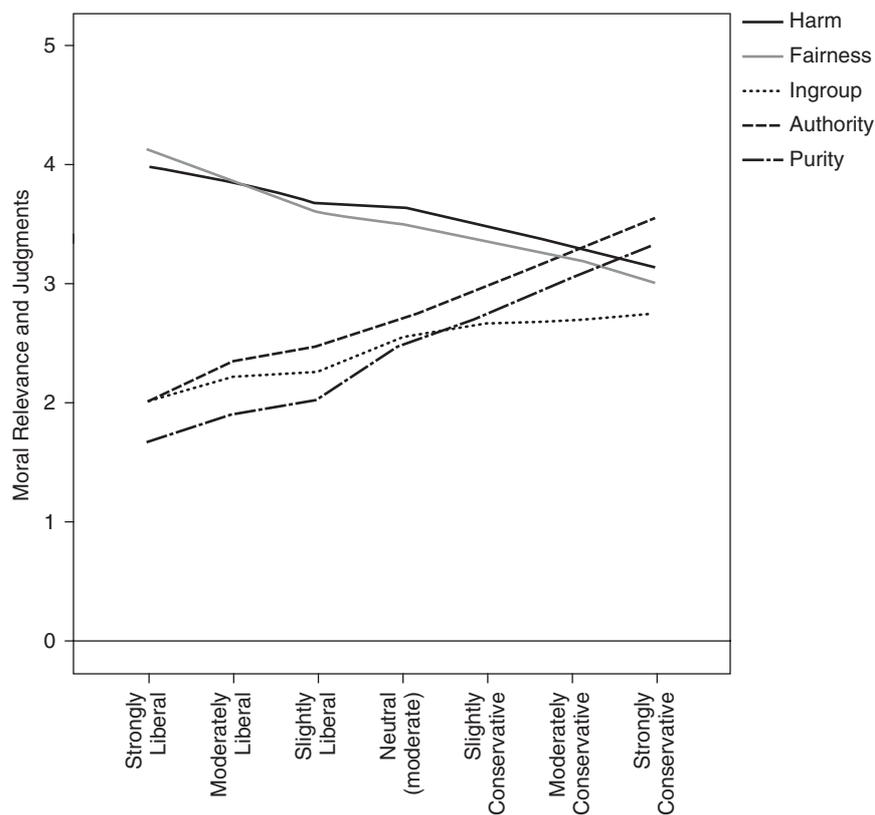


Figure 15-1 Moral foundations (relevance and statements averaged together) across the political spectrum. $N = 5392$. The two modern foundations are indicated in solid lines, which are higher for liberals, and the three traditional foundations are indicated with dashed lines, which are higher for conservatives.

We are currently extending this research by examining the moral stereotypes that liberals and conservatives have of each other, to see whether political partisans misunderstand the moral concerns of the other side. In a web-based study, we asked participants to fill out the MFQ for themselves, as the “typical liberal” would fill it out, and as the “typical conservative” would fill it out.⁹ Participants were 2212 U.S. residents and/or citizens. When we looked at the questionnaires for which people answered as themselves, we found the usual pattern (shown in Figure 15.1, which includes these participants).

Our main goal, however, was to see whether liberals, moderates, or conservatives were most accurate in filling out the questionnaire as the “typical liberal” or “typical conservative” would. Our design allowed us to test three competing predictions about accuracy. First, studies on ideological polarization (e.g., Chambers, Baron, & Inman, 2006; Cohen, 2003), the ideological extremity hypothesis (e.g., Rokeach, 1956; Greenberg & Jonas, 2003), and naïve realism (Robinson, Keltner, Ward, & Ross, 1995) suggest a *symmetrical* inaccuracy when liberals and conservatives try to look at the world through the eyes of the other. Both should distort equally because both sides think the other side does not truly care about morality. On this view, political moderates should be the most accurate. A second prediction comes from social psychological work on conservatism (see Jost et al., 2003a, for review and synthesis), which describes conservatives as being more intolerant, closed-minded, and mentally rigid. These findings suggest that conservatives might be less able to see the world from an alternate moral standpoint and therefore could be more motivated to demonize the other side. Just as Jost and colleagues (2003b) found more evidence for a “rigidity of the right” hypothesis than an ideological extremity one, this view predicts that accuracy would be *asymmetrical*, with *conservatives* the least accurate. A third possibility is suggested by MFT: *liberals* may be the least accurate because they do not understand or recognize three of the five foundations of conservative morality. When trying to fathom how conservatives see the world, liberals may conclude that conservatives simply do not care about harm and fairness, because conservatives favor policies that seem (to liberals) to hurt people and increase injustice for no morally valid reason. But, asymmetrically, if conservatives understand all five foundations, they may report (accurately) that liberals primarily value two of them.

⁹ The design was a bit more complicated: in a planned missingness design, each participant was randomly assigned to complete four of the six possible questionnaires (relevance or moral statements sections, answered for oneself, as a “typical liberal,” or as a “typical conservative”).

To quantify accuracy, we took the difference between each participant's ratings made as a typical liberal and those made as a typical conservative (their moral stereotype difference) and compared this to the actual mean differences between liberals and conservatives who were answering as themselves in this study. This difference score gave us a "moral stereotype inaccuracy" score for each participant. Figure 15.2 graphs these scores by ideology and shows how much participants exaggerated liberal-conservative moral differences. The results suggest three conclusions:

1. Participants at all points on the spectrum hold moral stereotypes that are accurate in direction. On average, participants correctly guessed

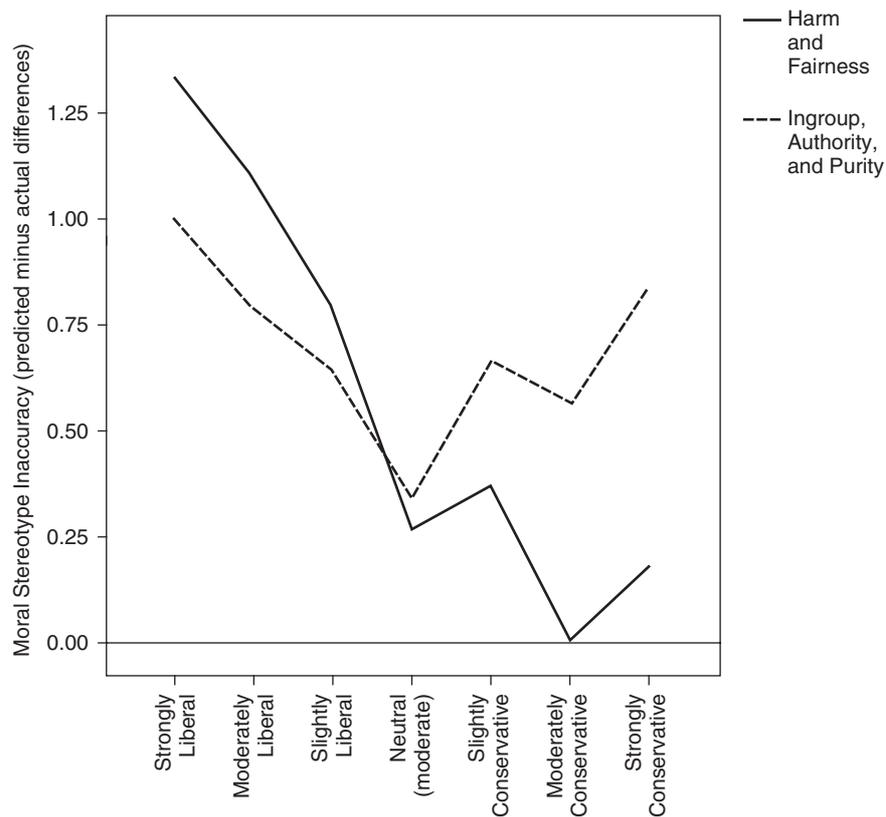


Figure 15-2 Moral stereotype inaccuracy across the political spectrum. Higher values indicate greater exaggeration of liberal-conservative differences, measured by comparing predicted/stereotyped differences against actual differences in self-reports. The units on the Y axis are the same 0–5 scale shown in Figure 15.1.

that liberals would give the highest ratings to harm and fairness items, whereas conservatives would give higher ratings than liberals on in-group, authority, and purity items.

2. There was some support for the ideological polarization hypothesis, but only on the three traditional foundations (see Figure 15.2): those on the extreme left and right exaggerated ingroup, authority and purity differences more than did moderates. This exaggeration was largely symmetrical across the political spectrum.
3. There was also support for the moral foundations prediction that liberals would be least accurate. As Figure 15.2 shows, liberals exaggerated the most overall, and they were particularly inaccurate about items related to the harm and fairness foundations. This asymmetrical exaggeration consisted almost exclusively of liberals guessing that conservatives would be less concerned about matters of harm and fairness than they actually were.

Do these data suggest a “rigidity of the left” hypothesis? No, but they do suggest the possibility of a “moral color-blindness” of the left, particularly the extreme left. When thinking about why conservatives generally oppose gay marriage, immigration, and stem cell research, for example, liberals simply cannot see any moral reasons. They are therefore free to assume the worst—that conservatives are really motivated by homophobia, racism, xenophobia, and ignorant fear of new technologies. If conservatives are motivated by such immoral forces, it must therefore be the case that conservatives don’t care very much about moral concerns such as harm to innocent victims, the rights of oppressed people, or justice more generally. If one believes this, and one is asked to complete the MFQ as a “typical conservative” would, then one would give inaccurately low ratings to items related to the two modern foundations.

But, before we suggest a color-blindness hypothesis, we note two limitations of our study. First, because our Internet-based sample was skewed to the liberal side, it is possible that those who said “strongly liberal” included more extremists and activists than was the case for our participants who rated themselves as “strongly conservative.” The most dogmatic and ideologically rigid conservatives might turn out to be just as morally color-blind, if we could find them and test them. Second, our study asked only about explicitly held beliefs, and it presented moral concerns cleanly separated as single items. In real life, moral concerns conflict and compete, and people make trade-offs (Tetlock, 1986). People then justify their choices and actions using convenient lofty principles, but those principles are often disconnected from the motives that really drove their decisions (Haidt, 2001, 2007). Therefore,

although liberals were fairly inaccurate about conservatives' explicit values, it is not yet known whether liberals are also inaccurate about conservative behavior.

Nevertheless, these findings suggest that liberals don't appreciate the extent to which issues such as gay marriage are morally conflicting for conservatives; it's not that conservatives don't care about fairness and equal rights, it's that they *also* care about ingroup loyalty, traditional family structures, and spiritual purity. Recognizing that conservatives have a variety of moral concerns that liberals do not share and often do not recognize as legitimate moral concerns can help liberals better understand conservatives and respond to their arguments. It can also help us to improve SJT.

SYSTEM JUSTIFICATION IS PART OF (A FIVE-FOUNDATION) MORALITY

System justification theory examines the widespread motivation to rationalize the status quo and justify the existing social system, even among those who seem to be disadvantaged by the system (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Although directly normative claims are seldom made in the literature, the implicit message is that system justification is a lamentable and ethically troubling motivation. In a two-foundation (harm and fairness) morality, system justification is problematic because it perpetuates existing inequalities and implicates people of low status as complicit in their own victimization. System justification research has largely concentrated on empirical demonstrations of the detrimental effects this motivation can have for low-status group members (e.g., lowered self-esteem, internalized inferiority; see Jost, Banaji & Nosek, 2004, for a review). It has been proposed that despite these negative effects, system justification occurs in part because it makes people feel better by reducing their anxiety, uncertainty, and (for high-status people) guilt (Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

We agree with the central claims of SJT that a system justifying motive is widespread and that it cannot be explained as a by-product of ego justification or group justification. We also agree with its more specific claim that this motivational tendency is most often manifest nonconsciously and may be best observed using implicit measures (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). In stressing the importance of automatic and intuitive processes, SJT fits neatly with the social-intuitionist model of moral judgment (Haidt, 2001; Haidt & Bjorklund, 2008). However, although we agree with most of SJT, we see the justification of existing systems in a different light: it is a normal part of human morality, no more in need of psychological explanation than are concerns about harm and fairness.

In any culture that builds on the authority foundation, traditions and longstanding institutions are vested with moral importance and seen as embodying the collective wisdom of many generations. Changes should not be made readily or radically (see Burke, 2003/1790, on the excesses of the French Revolution; and see Sunstein, 2006, on the wisdom of Burkean Minimalism for modern law). In any culture that builds on the ingroup foundation, loyalty to the group is the supreme virtue, and criticizing it can, particularly in times of external conflict, be seen as a kind of betrayal. In any culture that builds on the purity foundation (along with authority or ingroup), the group, its leaders, its traditions, and its land may become sacred. Revisionists and reformers who want to implement changes based on the latest scientific findings or political trends treat everything as profane and open to tinkering. Their goal is usually morally worthy from a two-foundation perspective (e.g., decreasing suffering and increasing fairness), but it is often seen as sacrilegious and harmful (to individuals and to the nation) from a five-foundation perspective.

We think that a five-foundations perspective on system justification can benefit SJT in three ways: (a) it can help explain how rationalizing the status quo can reduce anxiety, even for those oppressed by it; (b) it can provide insights into potential evolutionary origins of system justification; and (c) it can provide a more complete explanation of why conservatives (and liberals) favor the policy positions that they do.

Benefit 1: Morality as a Mechanism of Meaning

To explain why people justify the systems in which they participate, Jost, Fitzsimons, and Kay (2004) point to a long list of cognitive, social, motivational, and structural factors including uncertainty reduction, fear of equality, belief in a just world, needs for control and cognitive consistency, dissonance, reduction, political socialization, and mass media influences. Many of these factors have in common that they make people feel better about the status quo in the face of external threats and internal inconsistencies. Similarly, Jost and Hunyady (2002) point out the palliative (pain-reducing) functions of system justification as a coping strategy. But why exactly is it that justifying existing arrangements has so many psychological benefits, and why exactly are these benefits able to outweigh the many negative opposing effects that system justification has for members of low-status groups (e.g., dissonance, low self-esteem, depression, neuroticism, etc.)?

A moral foundations perspective suggests that the benefits of justifying the system are not just palliative, they are meaning-providing and can often be important for human flourishing. Happiness, health, and longevity are all correlated with income in Western nations, but this first-order correlation

cannot be taken as evidence for the harmful effects of system justification on the poor. It is possible that the correlation would be even steeper for those who do not believe they are part of a stable and legitimate moral order. Modernization involves a decline in the importance of community, authority, and sacredness, and a corresponding rise in individualism and contractualism. This pattern of changes brings many benefits, but it has also been linked to an increase in depression and suicide. Eckersley and Dear (2002, p. 1892), in analyzing these increases, suggest that “modern Western culture may be failing to do well what cultures do: provide a web or matrix of stories, beliefs, and values that holds a society together, allows individuals to make sense of their lives and sustains them through the trouble and strife of mortal existence.” On this Durkheimian view, the motive to justify socially shared systems begins to seem as fundamental as the motive to tell and retell culturally shared stories or to search collectively for meaning in misfortune. People often want to understand their lives in a social context, and that context is normatively saturated—it has clear dimensions of good and bad, right and wrong. A reflexive or unconscious tendency to find virtue in one’s nation or group may indeed make individuals feel better, but it misses the collective aspects of morality to say that people seek out such virtue *in order to* reduce their own discomforts.

Benefit 2: The Origins of the System Justifying Motive

Jost and Hunyady (2002) suggest that “there is a *socially acquired* motive to justify and rationalize the existing social system” (p. 148, emphasis added). This claim is echoed by Jost, Banaji, and Nosek (2004), who oppose the idea that “hierarchy and inequality are genetically mandated at the individual or species level” (p. 912), but do allow for the speculative “possibility that human beings have developed generally adaptive capacities to accommodate, internalize, and even *rationalize* key features of their socially constructed environments” (p. 912). In our analysis, however, a five-foundation morality should be seen as the human default (Rozin, 2007). Community, authority, and sacredness are key ideas in sociology because they are so prevalent cross-culturally and historically. Cultures and subcultures depart from defaults in hundreds of ways, and these departures must be explained by social scientists: Why exactly did Western nations develop novel and less binding moralities in just a few hundred years?

It is notoriously difficult to determine whether human needs and abilities are entirely learned or are partially innate (“organized in advance of experience”). But it can be done. We suggest that the situation is much like the old question about why children cling to their mothers. Harry Harlow’s famous wire-mother/cloth-mother experiments (Harlow & Zimmerman,

1959) demonstrated that the need for contact comfort was innate and was part of a larger and more complex attachment system that could only be understood as an evolutionary adaptation. It was not a by-product of other processes, as Freudians and Behaviorists had argued. We think the same is true here. We suggest that human beings are by default Durkheimians who want to live in a thick social world full of shared meanings, symbols, traditions, and communal goals. These are basic human needs, not products of social learning or unconscious conflict resolution. These needs emerge from the “first draft” of human nature, although the draft is modifiable, as when a child grows up in an anti-authoritarian subculture in which inequality and oppression are frequently discussed and condemned. To test this claim, we might examine the development of children’s play groups and social structures to see whether hierarchy and displays of deference emerge at similar ages across cultures (especially in modern versus more traditional cultures), and with similar ethologies (e.g., subordinates averting gaze, making themselves smaller, and showing other signs of appeasement upward; Fessler, 1999; Keltner & Buswell, 1997).

The system justification motive may have been shaped by the same adaptive considerations as group justification—namely, both served to bind small communities together in the face of cross-group competition, promoting group cohesion while providing anxiety-reducing shared meanings. For high-status groups, group justification and system justification are generally identical in their consequences and effects, but the two motivations are sometimes opposed for low-status groups (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). It seems possible that group justification and system justification came into conflict only with the advent of very large multigroup systems, a development quite recent in our evolutionary history.

Benefit 3: Making Sense of Conservatives

In their reply to Greenberg and Jonas (2003), Jost and colleagues (2003b) raised a puzzle about the variety and apparent contradiction of policies that American conservatives support:

We now take it for granted in the United States that political conservatives tend to be for law and order but not gun control, against welfare but generous to corporations, protective of cultural traditions but antagonistic toward contemporary art and music, and wary of government but eager to weaken the separation of church and state. They are committed to freedom and individualism but perennially opposed to extending rights and liberties to disadvantaged minorities, especially gay men and lesbians and others who blur traditional boundaries. There is no obvious political thread that runs through these diverse positions (or through their liberal counterparts) and no logical principle that renders them all consistent. (p. 391)

Jost and colleagues suggest that, instead of a political thread or logical principle, two psychological principles unify conservative positions: resistance to change and acceptance of inequality. We are persuaded by Jost and colleagues' (2003a) meta-analysis that these two principles are the most concise way to capture the main axis of political ideology using the language of psychological traits. However, this kind of description roots conservatism in traits that are unattractive (e.g., rigid, dogmatic, authoritarian, afraid of change and ambiguity) and immoral from a two-foundation perspective (e.g., preferring inequality to equality). When conservatism is seen as the product of amoral and immoral needs, then system justification is seen as one of the amoral and immoral processes by which these needs are satisfied (see Jost et al., 2003a, Figure 1). This is one description of conservatism, but is it the most fair and accurate?

If anthropologists were studying American social conservatives as a culture, they would try to offer a "thicker" description, one that first tried to empathize rather than reduce, one that offered an account of "what the devil they think they are up to" (Geertz, 1973). MFT grew out of anthropological work on cultural variation in morality (e.g., Shweder et al., 1997), and it can be used to derive a very different solution to the puzzle raised by Jost and colleagues (2003b). We agree that conservative positions seem contradictory to those with a modern or individualizing morality, but we believe they become coherent and consistent once grounded in the three traditional foundations of ingroup, authority, and purity. In Table 15.1 we have laid out the apparent paradoxes of American conservatism raised by Jost and colleagues (2003b). For anyone with a modern (two foundation) morality, the positions in the left-hand column are obviously better—they are closely connected to virtues and concerns related to harm and fairness. The positions taken by conservatives therefore seem immoral, and so they cry out for a psychological explanation. What motives could lead a person to support these positions? How about protecting oneself from psychological threats and uncertainty?

But if you grant that many people—or, at least, most American social conservatives—have a five-foundation morality, then the puzzle is solved in a different way. Social conservatives make appeals to fairness and harm too, but most of the positions they take on culture war issues are coherent because, as shown in Table 15.1, they are attempts to reinvigorate community (versus *Gesellschaft* and big government), authority (versus anarchy and anomie), and sacredness (versus profanity). The moral foundations of ingroup, authority, and purity are therefore central to social conservatism, just as they are to system justification.

The system justifying impulse is therefore a part of normal or default human morality. It reflects a widespread human tendency to believe that the

Table 15.1 Conservative and liberal disagreements may reflect differential reliance upon the Ingroup, Authority, and Purity foundations.

Liberal position	Conservative position
For gun control Harm: opposition to violence	For law and order Harm: protection from criminals Authority: favoring police powers to keep order and punish deviants Fairness: punishment should fit the crime
Against corporations Harm: concerned about exploitation of workers and the environment Fairness as equality: suspicious of massive wealth accruing to top management Fairness as fair play: concerned about corporate manipulation of government	Against welfare Authority: favoring hierarchy based on hard work and earned wealth Fairness: against giving something for nothing Ingroup: dislike of freeloaders within the group*
For contemporary art and music Fairness as anti-authoritarianism: dislike of traditions, preference for new and "subversive" art Fairness as anti-bias, anti-ingroup: preference for works by members of oppressed groups within the United States, and from non-Western cultures	For protecting cultural traditions Ingroup: valuation of "our" traditions Purity: dislike of overtly sexual or "degrading" art Authority: fear that "subversive" art and music encourages rebellion in youth
For big government programs Harm and Fairness: most big programs are intended to help victims or increase equality. This is the essence of the <i>Gesellschaft</i> approach to social problems.	Against big government Ingroup and Authority: Belief that people should take care of their own; preference for local control and <i>Gemeinschaft</i> solutions (e.g., church-based solutions to social problems).
Against mixing church and state Fairness as individual rights and autonomy in religious matters.	For mixing church and state Ingroup: America is a Christian nation Authority: Laws are most effective when they match the laws of God Purity: desire to live in a sacralized nation
For rights for gays and minorities Harm: concern for an oppressed minority Fairness: wanting all groups to have equal rights and if possible outcomes	Against rights for gays and minorities Ingroup: gays seen as outsiders Authority: gays seen as nonconformists and threats to traditional family structure Purity: gays seen as lustful sexual deviants

Note. The policy positions are from Jost et al. (2003b). Links to moral foundations are speculative. On most culture-war issues, liberal positions appear to draw on harm and fairness concerns exclusively, while conservatives draw on all five foundations.

*We note that some of the ingroup-based opposition to welfare may be based on or magnified by anti-Black racism. Not all motives relevant to policy positions are moral motives.

existing social order is morally good, regardless of how that order treats us. Recognizing the system justifying motive's basis in the traditional foundations of morality can help us better understand the tenacity of the motive, and perhaps help us prevent some of its detrimental effects for low-status group members.

CONCLUSION

In James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the novel's hero Stephen Dedalus gives voice to Western modernity's veneration of individual freedom: "When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets" (Joyce, 1916/1991, p. 206). In this worldview, language (ingroup), nationality (authority and ingroup), and religion (purity, authority, and ingroup) are not sacred at all; they are profane "nets" the individual soul must fly past to be free. This is a powerful expression of modern morality and what it holds sacred: the individual, freed from the oppressive bonds of community, authority, and religious sanctity.

In this essay, however, we have offered an account of traditional and conservative moralities in which ingroup, authority, and purity are not necessarily nets to trap and kill the human spirit; rather, they are foundations upon which some cultures build the structures that give lives order, value, and meaning. Our goal in offering this *descriptive* account is not to claim that conservative morality is superior to liberal morality, *normatively* speaking. Our normative position is a kind of consequentialism—we think moral systems should be judged by the quality of the worlds they lead to. We believe the benefits of modernity have been enormous, and that it is neither possible nor desirable to reduce ethnic diversity, eliminate existing technologies, or otherwise return to the *Gemeinschaft* social systems that prevailed centuries ago.

But our consequentialism leads us to ask whether there might be some hidden utility in the three traditional foundations. Even from a liberal perspective, in which all that matters is the welfare of individuals (particularly those who are least well off), might there be some paradoxical benefits to individuals of social policies that do not put the welfare of individuals first? The social policies favored by conservatives, shown in the right-hand column of Table 15.1, are, broadly speaking, Durkheimian policies. They increase the cohesion and stability of communities. They therefore also increase the social capital (Coleman, 1988) of communities, which includes the dense networks of obligation and trust, social information channels, and effective norms and sanctions for deviance. By extension, we might say they increase the symbolic capital, too—the culturally evolved network of shared symbols and

meanings from which people construct their identities and make sense of their worlds. (See Appiah, 2005, on the challenges of identity construction for liberalism.) Given the many arguments from psychology and sociology about the costs of anomie and hyperindividualism (Bellah et al., 1985; Leary, 2004; Schwartz, 1986), and the benefits of close, enduring social bonds and shared meanings (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), we believe that a modern society that makes *some* use of the three traditional foundations might—at least in theory—be a more humane, healthy, and satisfying place overall than a society that builds its values and policies *exclusively* on the first two foundations. We are not confident that the traditional foundations offer such benefits in practice, but we believe that traditional and conservative ideas are frequently mischaracterized, prematurely dismissed, or simply ignored by many psychologists, philosophers, and other academics.

In conclusion, we do indeed live on Planet Durkheim, where community, authority, and sacredness are foundations of morality. Or, at least, many Earthlings live on such a planet, so those of us who study morality, ideology, and system justification can benefit from conducting open-minded cross-planetary fieldwork.

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