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Each of the doctrines which we have now examined rejected the assumption that the basic attributes of human nature were constant, but each invoked a different type of principle to account for the fact that changes in these attributes occurred. Geneticism was concerned with the role of individual experience in the formation of character; organicism, on the other hand, turned its attention to the effects on the individual of the patterns of culture which were characteristic of the times. In short, while both assumed that man’s nature was almost indefinitely malleable, the psychological bias of the one contrasted sharply with the historical and cultural bias of the other. This helps to explain how geneticism could flourish within the context of eighteenth-century thought, whereas organicism was linked with the growth of historicism.

The third doctrine which we have been considering, that man is by nature a progressive being, had points of contact with each of the other two views. It resembled organicism, rather than geneticism, in tending to stress the historical development of mankind; on the other hand, it rejected the assumption that societies could change in an autonomous fashion, and therefore, like geneticism, sought a primarily psychological basis for the changing nature of man. However, all forms of the progressivist view rejected the emphasis which both geneticism and organicism had placed on the plasticity of human nature, rather than on the individual’s active powers. It was this difference which separated John Stuart Mill from the geneticism of prior associationism, and which separated Fichte and Green from organicism. As we have seen, Mill, Arnold, and Huxley, no less than Fichte and Green, held that within man’s changing nature there was a power of self-transformation: men had the ability to bestow new capacities upon themselves, actually transforming themselves rather than being transformed. Furthermore, among progressivist theories which used the analogy of biological evolution to explain changes in human nature, emphasis also was placed on the active side of man: only when individuals varied and societies were innovative could the selective process operate and mankind advance. Thus, on all progressivist views,
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it was not primarily because men could be shaped by experience, but because they tended to bring new forces to bear upon future experience, that human nature itself changed.

These differences among the various theories with which we have been concerned should not be allowed to conceal the point which they had in common: their rejection of the previously dominant nativistic views of the human mind. Instead of regarding variations in human behavior as merely reflecting the ways in which a common set of characteristics expressed themselves under varying circumstances, they held that the characteristics of man's nature had basically changed during the history of mankind, and would presumably continue to change.

In order to analyze this contention in a manner which will be directly relevant to issues that have been important to the social sciences from the nineteenth century to our own day, it will be useful to begin with one of the more recent forms of the malleability thesis, the doctrine which may be designated as "social conditioning." This doctrine provides a useful point of departure since it combines the psychological approach of geneticism with the cultural approach of organicism; furthermore, it has surely been one of the most pervasive concepts in social psychology in the twentieth century, on both quasi-popular and scientific levels of discussion.

1. The Concept of Social Conditioning

One need not trace the history of the concept of "social conditioning" in detail in order to be aware of its origins and of the sources of its appeal. When the doctrine of conditioning which had been developed by Pavlov in the early years of the century came to be known in the United States, it became an important force in American experimental psychology, and helped promote the acceptance of behaviorism, through which it had in large measure been introduced. While Pavlov was no less opposed than were the behaviorists to any use of the concept of consciousness in explaining behavior, his primary importance in the development of their views was through the concept of conditioning: his results had suggested that conditioning could provide a well-grounded alternative to instinctivist theories of behavior. Until then, instinctivism had been an important element in early twentieth-century psychological thought, since it was connected with those forms of comparative psychology which had been stimulated by Darwin's evolutionary theory. Furthermore, through the influence of McDougall's *Introduction to Social Psychology* the instinctivist interpretation of human characteristics had come to have widespread popularity in the United States, as well as in England. It was this popularity which the theory of conditioning began to undermine in the 1920s and 1930s.

If we are to understand the development of the concept of "social conditioning," we must not only take into account the factor of conditioning, which was stressed by the behaviorists, but must also note that within American psychology
there were those who placed great emphasis on the role of social interaction in the formation of character. For example, the sociologist E. A. Ross wrote a pioneering work entitled Social Psychology (which was published in 1908, contemporaneously with McDougall’s book), and his account of human behavior assigned a primary role to imitation and custom, not to instinct. Similarly, in the works of C. H. Cooley and in John Dewey’s influential Human Nature and Conduct, which was published in 1922, one can see clear exemplifications of the trend toward interpreting individuals as interacting with one another to form a social environment which enters deeply into each individual’s nature. This type of socio-psychological theory may be said to represent one form of a theory of social conditioning, but unlike later forms it did not place primary emphasis upon environmental influences in explaining the characteristics of individuals. Instead, as one sees most clearly in George Herbert Mead, it emphasized the factor of an ongoing interchange between the individual and his social environment, through which each formed the other.

The widespread acceptance of this view undoubtedly paved the way for what might be designated as social conditioning in its strictest, narrowest sense: a view which had earlier been exemplified in such works as Sumner’s Folkways and Westermarck’s Origin and Development of Moral Ideas, both of which were published during exactly the same period as the social psychologies of Ross and McDougall. The works of Sumner and of Westermarck placed primary emphasis on the diversity of cultural norms, and explained the ideals of individuals in terms of the social group. This theory of moral codes exerted a considerable influence on popular thought, and more than a negligible influence on sociology during the subsequent decades. Nevertheless, the dominance of the theory of social conditioning in the 1930s and subsequently is most properly identified with the impact of a number of anthropological investigations such as Margaret Mead’s Coming of Age in Samoa (1928), Growing Up in New Guinea (1930), and Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies (1935), to mention merely one fairly typical series of related studies. In such studies one can see a strong resemblance between the doctrine of social conditioning and organicist views of man’s malleability. It must be remembered, however, that anthropologists of this period had rebelled against social evolutionism (and also against cultural diffusionism); as a consequence, they had rejected the possibility of giving historical interpretations of changing schemes of value, as nineteenth-century organicists had done. Furthermore, unlike most earlier organicists, these anthropologists had a strong positive interest in using psychological concepts in explaining the impact of culture on the individual; and for this purpose they made use of the concept of “conditioning,” although they first applied it in a loose and very extended sense. Later, under the influence of a special concern with child development, and with the popularity of the theory that differences in culture might be explained in terms of differences in child-rearing practices, the mechanisms of the relevant forms of conditioning were spelled out in somewhat greater detail. However, it is not with these differences among the proponents of various forms of social conditioning theory that we need here be concerned: what I first wish to establish is
that no form of such a theory can legitimately hold to an indefinite malleability in human nature. What I have to say in this connection will shortly be seen to be relevant to most of the doctrines which were characteristic of geneticism and of nineteenth-century organicism as well.

To establish this point, let us consider the conditioning experiments which Pavlov himself originally performed. In conditioning a dog to salivate at a specific sound, it was necessary that this sound should have been repeatedly connected with the presence of food; obviously, if food were not itself capable of inducing salivation, it could not serve as a vehicle for the conditioning process. To be sure, what constitutes an unconditioned response in any particular set of trials may itself have been due to prior conditioning. For example, it is a conditioned response that an animal salivates at the mere sight of food; and this conditioned response can serve as a basis for further conditioning. However, the regress cannot be indefinitely extended: there must eventually be some unconditioned response (in this case, salivation when food is present in the dog's mouth) upon which the conditioned response is based. Furthermore, as Pavlov quickly discovered, conditioned responses do not persist through an indefinite number of repetitions without being restored through re-conditioning. Thus, it is clear that conditioning presupposes the existence of native tendencies to react in specific ways: not every response can be a conditioned response.

Pavlov not only admitted this fact, but insisted upon it. His system depended upon there being a relatively large number of unconditioned reflexes, and among those which he discussed we find not only reflexes of grasping, and of salivating when food is placed in the mouth, but also unconditioned reflexes which he designated as reflexes of purpose, of freedom, and of slavery (as when puppies fall on their backs in the presence of larger dogs). On the other hand, J. B. Watson attempted to cut down in drastic fashion on the number of unconditioned responses which psychologists would have to postulate in order to explain behavior. This attempt served to forward the belief that human beings were almost indefinitely malleable, and Watson himself drew this conclusion from his theory. Nevertheless, neither Pavlov's experimental work, nor Watson's assumptions regarding the existence of complicated chains of conditioned responses, provided concrete help in explaining the actual differences in social behavior with which anthropologists were concerned. Still, the views of Pavlov and Watson had already had sufficient impact to make it appear that "conditioning" was a synonym, or almost a synonym, for "learning." Under these circumstances, it was assumed that the differences in attitudes, beliefs, and behavior which anthropologists described were to be explained in terms of "social conditioning."

In contrast to the classical form of conditioning theory characteristic of both Pavlov and Watson, one must take cognizance of what is termed "instrumental conditioning," the conditioning process primarily associated with the name of B. F. Skinner. This form of conditioning theory is undoubtedly closer to what most persons have meant when they have spoken of "social conditioning." According to it, a conditioned response develops and becomes stable, or it is extinguished, because it has led to what can be designated as reward or punishment.
For example, in the experiments of Thorndike, or in those of Skinner, a cat comes to be conditioned to pull a string, or a rat to press a lever, because in past trials these actions have led to obtaining food. In short, the conditioning process is instrumental to the attainment of a state which the organism naturally seeks, or one which it would naturally avoid. On such a theory the initial success, or initial failure, might be construed as having resulted from trial and error, or from chance; in that case, the only unconditioned factors which would be needed to explain the process of conditioning would appear to have been the animal’s tendency to pursue or avoid that which served as reward or punishment. Yet, even in such cases, what is involved is somewhat more complex than initially appears, for in instrumental conditioning the tendency to pursue or avoid that which serves as reward or punishment actually has two facets. On the one hand, the animal’s behavior would not be what it was in the absence of some specific drive or propensity (the term to be used is not particularly important): for example, it is obvious that a condition of deprivation with respect to hunger or thirst is presupposed in many animal experiments. On the other hand, conditioning also demands that the satisfaction of such a drive or propensity will result in reinforcement: the animal must be assumed to have a tendency to repeat whatever acts led to the satisfaction of its drive. As an example of this second type of factor, we may refer to Thorndike’s “Law of Effect,” which was phrased in terms of states of affairs which were satisfying or discomforting; and others have referred to this type of factor as the “tension-reduction” of reinforcers, or as “drive-reduction.” While the theories connected with the use of these terms are not identical, each of the terms is meant to refer to some generic factor in conditioning. However, any such generic factor is to be distinguished from specific drives or propensities, such as hunger, thirst, or a tendency to activity. These two types of factors may be said to serve quite different explanatory functions. As Skinner has argued, if one is attempting to discover general laws of conditioning, one need not catalogue and classify the different forms of behavior presumably connected with different propensities—a task which he characterized as “the botanizing of reflexes.” On the other hand, this should not lead one to neglect the fact that in every instrumental conditioning experiment some drive or propensity is presupposed: it is not sufficient merely to appeal to the general concept of reinforcement (or to one of its equivalents) when analyzing the factors which must be present if conditioning is to occur. Thus, instrumental conditioning presupposes elements in behavior which are themselves unconditioned, just as classical Pavlovian theory had done.

It is at precisely this point that one can see a major cause of failure in vaguely formulated theories of “social conditioning.” Those who have been identified with this doctrine have not been sufficiently concerned with the fact that conditioning presupposes aspects of behavior which are essential to the occurrence of conditioning, and are not themselves products of it. It is, of course, possible that these unconditioned factors might differ widely from individual to individual, with very little similarity among them; however, I know of no one who would regard this as a plausible suggestion. Nor would most psychologists, sociologists,
or anthropologists be inclined to expect a high degree of variability in native endowment when the populations of different societies are compared. In fact, those who have laid greatest stress on the concept of social conditioning have been especially inclined to insist on the unity of mankind with respect to inherent capacities, and have generally rejected explanations of cultural differences which postulate differences in biological inheritance. Thus it would not be consistent for them to suppose that the process of conditioning involves widely different propensities in people belonging to even the most widely differing cultures. They generally fail to make this explicit. Instead, they emphasize the fact that what serves as an effective reward or punishment in one society may not do so in another. This is a fact which no one is likely to deny. However, from it we cannot legitimately infer that the propensities of people in different cultures are themselves different, for exactly the same propensity may be satisfied by different objects. It is the differences among these objects which theories of social conditioning have stressed; unfortunately, they have not also been concerned with the particular propensities which must be present if conditioning is to take place at all. We shall later be in a better position to estimate the significance of the variability of specific rewards and punishments; at this point it is only important that such variability should not be permitted to obscure the fact that whenever something serves as a reward or a punishment, there is presupposed some definite type of propensity, in the absence of which it could not function either as a reward or a punishment.

This conclusion should be sufficient to throw fundamental doubt on any thesis which affirms the indefinite malleability of human nature. Nevertheless, it does not fully uncover the flaws in the general theory of social conditioning. To do so, one further preliminary step must now be taken: it must be shown that the theory of conditioning does not commit us to holding that there is only a restricted range of basic propensities in human nature. Once this is acknowledged, it will quickly become evident why social conditioning only remains plausible as long as it remains vaguely stated.

From a number of points of view it might be considered theoretically satisfactory if one could successfully hold that the only unconditioned responses in human beings could be reduced to some very small number, and it might seem to be maximally satisfactory if there were only one type of unconditioned response. Perhaps the most persistently prevalent theory which has attempted to explain all human action in terms of a single causal factor has been psychological hedonism. Originally, hedonistic theories of motivation were phrased in a manner that emphasized the universality of a desire for pleasurable experiences: for continuing in a state of hedonic satisfaction, or for achieving as much future pleasure as one could. The differences among the variant forms of this general type of hedonistic theory should not be minimized; however, each was a theory which treated the desire for pleasure (or for the avoidance of pain) as a specific propensity regulating all behavior. It was assumed either to do so directly, or because new desires and aversions could be built into us through the pleasures and pains which we had experienced in the past. Nevertheless, as we noticed in discussing
Fichte and Green, pleasure is frequently only a by-product of the satisfaction of desire, rather than being that which itself elicits the desire. It is therefore not plausible to hold that our only propensity is that which directs us to seek pleasure.

There is another form of hedonism which supposedly avoids this difficulty. It was held by Locke and, as we have noted, it was the view which John Stuart Mill adopted in opposition to Bentham's psychology. According to it, the decisive factor in motivation is the pleasantness or unpleasantness accompanying present ideas, not a desire for future pleasures; it has therefore often been referred to as "psychological hedonism of the present moment." Unlike the more traditional form of psychological hedonism, this theory does not hold that there is only one fundamental propensity in human nature; in fact, it does not refer to specific propensities at all. Rather, it suggests that affective tone provides the common denominator which is present whenever action follows one course rather than another; it is thus roughly comparable to more recent explanatory concepts, such as "the law of effect." Unlike them, this form of hedonism does not lend itself to the explanation of animal behavior, nor does it serve to explain those forms of human behavior which do not include deliberate choice: it is surely not on every occasion that, before acting, we envision some future state of affairs, and are led to act as we do because our idea is either agreeable or not. Therefore, it would be self-defeating for those who may wish to explain all human behavior in terms of some single common denominator if they were to accept this form of hedonism. Furthermore, it is important to note that, even in those cases in which the theory might be applied, it does not serve to explain the existence of our drives or propensities: if we were not attracted or repelled by an envisioned state of affairs, the idea of that state of affairs would not be pleasant or unpleasant to us. Therefore, like the law of effect, the theory would not offer a sufficient explanation of the springs of action: appetency remains irreducible to the concepts of pleasure and pain.

If this point may now be taken for granted, we can turn to the question of whether the drives, propensities, or appetites which are not themselves engendered by conditioning, but which must be presupposed in order to explain it, are to be assumed to be highly restricted in number, or whether it is plausible to assume that there are many such tendencies. In order to answer this question, no extensive "botanizing of reflexes" is demanded. When we consider the general nature of the experimental method (which is most effective when only one factor is varied at a time), we can understand why, in conditioning experiments, every effort is made to elicit responses which presuppose only one very specific native propensity, in order that all variations among the responses will be attributable to the process of conditioning itself. Thus, only hunger will be presupposed in one particular set of experiments; in another, only thirst. For the same reason, environmental conditions must be carefully controlled in a stimulus-response experiment, so that the responses elicited are—in so far as possible—limited to those directly involved in the conditioning. Bearing these methodological demands in mind, one can readily understand why the units of behavior in conditioning experiments tend to be restricted to relatively simple elements. However, the same propensities
which are essential to the conditioning process under artificially controlled conditions are, of course, known to enter into far more complex forms of behavior in both animals and humans. Hunger, for example, gives rise to food-seeking behavior which can be much more complicated than pressing a treadle or running a maze. What is said of hunger can also be said of thirst; or it can be said of any other propensity used in animal conditioning. It is to be noted, however, that these are themselves different propensities: hunger is not to be identified with thirst, nor is either to be identified with the avoidance of electric shock. Furthermore, hunger and thirst and shock-avoidance by no means exhaust the list of propensities which have been used in conditioning experiments. As H. F. Harlow and his associates, as well as others, have shown, the satisfaction of curiosity can be as effective a reward as is food when monkeys are being conditioned; manipulation as well as exploratory behavior have also functioned in this way in animal experiments. Given even this degree of variety of drives, propensities, or appetites, all of which are sufficiently specific to provide a basis for animal conditioning under experimental conditions, the range of unconditioned propensities which might reasonably be assumed to be present among animals would be rather wide; among men, there is reason to believe, it would be very wide indeed.

The assumption that the repertory of human propensities may be wider than that of animals demands some defense. Against that assumption, some might be inclined to invoke C. Lloyd Morgan’s well-known canon. In his pioneering work in comparative psychology in 1894, Morgan stated his canon as follows:

In no case may we interpret an action as the outcome of the exercise of a higher psychical faculty, if it can be interpreted as the outcome of one which stands lower in the psychological scale.

This methodological principle has led to the supposition that all complex forms of behavior can be analyzed in terms of compounding factors which are simpler in character; and it must be admitted that, in many cases, the results of such analyses have been wholly adequate. However, it is worth noting that Morgan tended to look upon his principle as a necessary consequence of evolutionary theory, as one can note in his use of the terms “higher” and “lower.” Interpreting it in this fashion, one can presumably drastically reduce the number of different factors which must be invoked to explain the behavior of the higher animals; thus, Morgan’s canon would seem to conform to the principle of Ockham’s razor, avoiding the multiplication of different “entities.” In general, animal psychologists have tended to interpret the canon this way, and have not been tempted to challenge it. On the other hand, one should notice that this canon makes the explanation of the behavior of the so-called higher animals far more complex than it might otherwise be presumed to be: in explaining what are designated as higher processes in terms of compounding those which are lower, one does save entities, but in doing so, one multiplies the steps through which such an explanation must proceed. Therefore, if Ockham’s razor is interpreted as commending the simplest explanation, it would not necessarily constitute an endorsement of Morgan’s canon. Now, I do not believe it possible to hold that
one should always seek simplicity in explanation at the cost of multiplying entities, nor that one should always proceed in the opposite direction; on the contrary, I am inclined to believe that the relative adequacy of either procedure must be decided from case to case. Nevertheless, in the context of this discussion of Morgan's canon, and of the presuppositions of the processes of conditioning, I wish to argue that it is not necessary, in principle, for us to assume that the number of independent unconditioned propensities in human nature must be restricted to very few.

Evolutionary theory does not demand that such should be the case. In fact, when Darwin analyzed animal instinct in the *Origin of Species*, he assumed that these inherited changes in behavior could be explained by the same factors as changes in bodily organs; in both cases, natural selection acted upon individual variations and, over the course of time, gave rise to new forms. Thus, it is wholly consonant with Darwinian theory to hold that new and more complex forms of behavior are due to changes in the constitution of organisms, rather than being complex resultants of simpler patterns of reaction. In fact, considering the evolutionary changes in the nervous systems of the higher animals, it might even be considered surprising were there no characteristics of human behavior which were without counterparts among many of the lower animals. Evolutionary theory does not force us to suppose that the only distinctive characteristics of new species will be anatomical features which are readily apparent, and that no changes in the propensities and behavioral capacities of these species will accompany the other changes which they have undergone.

To be sure, if one were to say that the propensities of men were absolutely different from those of any other animals, one would be making a claim that would be regarded as implausible by evolutionists. This would also be true if the lines of kinship which one claimed to trace between the psychological characteristics of men and other animals did not in general conform to the lines of biological descent that evolutionary theory has established. Neither claim is here being made. The only point at issue is whether evolutionary theory does not permit us to suppose that along with those psychological traits in which men and other animals resemble one another there may not be a number of inherited capacities which are crucial for the analysis of human behavior, but which are not possessed by most other species; and whether, among these, there may not also be some not possessed even by those animals most closely resembling man. It seems to me not in the least implausible to hold that such is the case.

However, there is a rather widespread tendency to assume that the basis for every unconditioned drive or reflex, and for every inherited capacity, must be connected with some specific organ or structure, as hunger is often assumed to be connected with the stomach, sex with the genital organs, reflexes with specific neural connections, etc. Once this assumption is made, any attempt to enlarge the number of man's propensities beyond the limit of those ascribed to other animals is likely to encounter difficulties, since the supposedly relevant anatomical features of men will have close analogues among other species. However, the assumption is one which should not be made. Totally apart from the doubt which
attaches to the analysis of either hunger or sex in these terms, it will be recalled that Pavlov believed it necessary to assume unconditioned reflexes of freedom, of power, and of slavery, which are not related to specific organs. While he firmly believed that every response, whether conditioned or unconditioned, did depend upon neural mechanisms, he did not insist that it was necessary to discover them in order to decide that a particular form of behavior was conditioned, or that it was an unconditioned response. The same point has, of course, been a basic methodological principle in B. F. Skinner's work, which involves a self-conscious attempt to avoid any physiological assumptions whatsoever, let alone assumptions which relate to specific anatomical organs. One can in fact be as reductionistic as one likes with reference to the physiological foundations of behavior without assuming that every basic drive must be connected with a specific organ or with a specific neural connection. Therefore, the similarity of man to other animals with respect to anatomical structure is largely irrelevant to the question of what are the basic propensities of human nature.

Bearing this in mind, and in order to make the following discussion more concrete, I should now like to propose that among men's basic propensities there is one which was most commonly designated as "pride" by eighteenth-century moral psychologists, but which might better be termed self-esteem. I place no special emphasis on singling out this particular propensity for attention, and it would not be fundamentally damaging to the points which I wish to make if one could show that it happens to be a response acquired through experience, by means of conditioning. What I wish to illustrate is the fact that while self-esteem is surely not a derivative of the specific propensities which are used in the experimental conditioning of animal behavior, and while we are not likely to attribute it to animals, nor likely to be able to find any specific anatomical or neural basis for it, it is itself an important factor in influencing human behavior; furthermore, it is especially important in what is referred to as "social conditioning."

Consider, for example, the manner in which praise and blame can be used in guiding the actions of children. Casting these facts into the terminology used in conditioning theory, we may say that the rewards and punishments which serve as reinforcements with respect to some social actions often consist in having other persons praise us or blame us. Nevertheless, if we are to derive satisfaction from another's praise, or to be troubled by his blame, we must first have an inclination to be thought well of by others. This is in principle no different from the fact that food can only serve as a positive reinforcer for a rat because that rat, without being conditioned, is the sort of organism which (under the conditions of the experiment) has strong food-seeking propensities. Similarly, we are the sorts of organisms whose social conditioning would not proceed as it often does, if we were not affected by self-esteem, and if we were not also tied to others by bonds which make their feelings toward us relevant to our own self-feelings. Thus, the efficacy of self-esteem in social conditioning is closely tied to the existence of what has often been loosely designated as sympathy. Yet self-esteem and sympathy are not the same, for either can function independently of the other. In the particular case with which we are here concerned, that of conditioning by means of praise or
blame, both propensities must be assumed to be present: there must be an urge
to think well of oneself, and, in addition, there must also be bonds of affectivity
which relate us with others, in order that it should happen that what they may
think of us will influence what we think of ourselves.

Of course, there are cases in which self-esteem and sympathy may not enter into
what is often designated as “social conditioning.” In some cases, we have learned
to pay attention to the good or bad opinions of others through having learned
that it will be of some special advantage for us to do so: in such cases, we are
primarily interested in assuring ourselves of future rewards, or seeking to avoid
overt punishment. However, we are not always thus motivated. There are
phenomena such as being offended by others, and “being offended” is different
from being physically hurt; yet both types of being “hurt” are effective condi­tioners. In fact, each type seems to be effective in all societies of which we have
careful reports; it might therefore be safe to assume that each is equally to be
regarded as rooted in man’s nature, rather than itself having been “socially con­ditioned.”

To be sure, those who have stressed social conditioning have placed great
emphasis on the fact that individuals in different societies manifest sympathy or
self-esteem, or other similar states, under very different sets of circumstances; they
have also stressed the fact that the forms through which such attitudes express
themselves differ widely. That there is such diversity is a fact which, as I have
admitted, no one would be inclined to deny. The question, however, is whether
sympathy or self-esteem could be conditioned into an organism if either were
originally absent; and, if so, upon what unconditioned responses such a process of
conditioning would rely. To make a plausible case for holding that either is in
fact a product of prior conditioning, one must be in a position to suggest how
the conditioning proceeded: as we have seen, neither Pavlovian nor instrumen­tal
conditioning can take place unless unconditioned propensities are present and
serve as a foundation for the conditioned responses. However, it is worth noting
that even if traits such as sympathy or self-esteem are probably not explicable in
terms of conditioning, such traits can be removed, or rendered generally inopera­tive, through conditioning. For example, in describing experimentation on a
particular dog, Pavlov showed that what he designated as an unconditioned reflex
of freedom could be removed through a process of conditioning. In this case, as
in many others, there is an asymmetry between the possibility of conditioning “in”
and conditioning “out”: the fact that a person can be trained not to be sym­pathetic under certain circumstances does not prove that he was first rendered
capable of feeling sympathy by any analogous process of conditioning.

Taking this into account, we are in a better position to understand some aspects
of the variability which characterizes different societies. Given similar propen­sities, we may expect that the occasions on which these propensities will be ex­hibited may (in some cases at least) be affected by the manner in which rewards
and punishments were distributed under roughly similar circumstances in the
past. Some of these rewards and punishments might have been deliberately as­signed within the society; others might have arisen independently of conscious
design. In either case, certain standardized forms of behavior could result; but these forms of behavior might be expected to vary from one society to another. That such variability could occur, and could nonetheless be consistent with the presence of the same propensities in all societies, should be obvious from the fact that even propensities such as hunger and thirst can be satisfied by different objects, and from the fact that sexual drives can be satisfied in variant ways. In the case of a propensity such as self-esteem, the occasions which would provide for its gratification, or occasion its frustration, would be myriad: it is difficult to imagine any object which might not, on some occasion, be experienced as having a direct connection with a person's self-esteem. Granted these facts, it would be astounding if there were not radically different ways in which different societies (each of which had developed through a different history in a different environment) rewarded or punished the various ways in which specific human propensities were satisfied.

Or, to put the matter differently, in terms more closely related to the theory of conditioned responses: different forms of behavior will be reinforced in different societies, just as different animal responses are reinforced in different experiments. Nevertheless, we must in every case assume the existence of particular propensities which are satisfied in the course of these experiments, or reinforcement would not occur. Similarly, when one says that particular social responses are either rewarded or punished, there must be preexisting propensities with reference to which something serves as a reward or a punishment. It is these preexisting, underlying drives or tendencies which are neglected in the usual, vaguely formulated, statements which hold that men are indefinitely malleable, being formed by social conditioning. As soon as attention shifts to the propensities which must be postulated in order to account for conditioning itself, the plausibility of the thesis of complete malleability quickly disappears. One will then become aware of some needs which human beings must have been able to satisfy in order that they could survive, either individually or as a species. Any such needs could not, of course, be assumed to have been engendered by social conditioning, since their existence, and the means of satisfying them, would be presupposed if social life were to be possible at all. Furthermore, if one assumes that psychological characteristics tend to be the same in all individuals belonging to the same biological species, varying around some fairly constant biologically based norms, the postulate of indefinite malleability suffers further loss in plausibility. What then becomes important, of course, is to explain the degree of variability which one finds in human behavior from society to society. Our consideration of conditioning theory suggests a way in which this variability can be explained. Differences in the conditions accompanying the exercise of any propensity will lead to differences in the ways in which that propensity will be expressed; at the same time, however, it will not be possible even to begin to explain the behavior if one does not first acknowledge the existence of the propensity itself. Since, as we have seen, even in the most restricted forms of animal experimentation various different propensities account for the conditioning which takes place, one would expect that under non-experimental conditions (in which neither the propensities nor the environments are rigidly controlled) an interplay of factors would be present.
and a greater degree of variability in individual responses would therefore occur. Thus, even were one to assume that the processes of conditioning are the sole factors involved in learning, the thesis of indefinite human malleability would be erroneous in the form in which it was espoused both by those subscribing to geneticism and by those who accepted organicism.

First, let us consider the difficulties in geneticism, in so far as it is a theory of malleability. It will be recalled that geneticism viewed the development of individuals as shaped by the specific nature of their experiences, each person being the product of the series of influences brought to bear upon him in the circumstances in which he was placed. The model on which this theory of character was originally based was the doctrine of the association of ideas, according to which all knowledge could be traced back to a series of ideas inscribed on the mind by experience. To be sure, neither Hobbes nor Locke had accepted associationism in this form, and there were various differences among other associationists. However, the standard manner of treating the association of ideas as an explanatory principle was to hold that the mind was fundamentally passive in acquiring knowledge, the primary connections among our ideas being dependent upon the order and frequency of their presentation. Now, it is to be noted that the principle of the association of ideas would not, of itself, account for the formation of a person's character, for while it might be assumed to account for his thoughts, it would only account for his behavior in so far as his thoughts were responsible for his behavior, either directly or indirectly. Therefore, in accounting for the sum total of an individual's behavior, some principle in addition to the association of ideas was called for. As we have noted, this principle was generally taken to be one or another form of egoistic impulse, the most common interpretation of such an impulse being hedonistic: that every person, on all occasions, is motivated by a propensity to favor that which brings pleasure or avoids pain. Given the assumption that men are so motivated, and that associative connections have been formed between particular states of affairs and past pleasures or pains, every individual's tendency to behave in one way rather than another can be explained in terms of the effects of his past experiences: the order and frequency of occurrence of the elements in his past experience will account for the associations among his ideas and for the fact that he seeks or avoids certain objects. Thus it is his past which will make him into whatever he becomes.

Our preceding analysis of "social conditioning" should have been sufficient to show that this classic associationist form of geneticism is basically misleading. Even if it were true that a propensity to favor pleasure over pain were regarded as the decisive factor in every instance in which any individual behaves in one way rather than another, it would still remain the case that in many such instances this hedonic propensity can come into play only because the individual has other propensities as well. As we have seen, these propensities must themselves be unconditioned, just as it is assumed that the tendency to favor pleasure over pain is a native, unconditioned propensity. Thus the attempt to explain the total character of a person through the effects of past experience upon him is a program which simply cannot be carried through.

To be sure, we have admitted that the effects of experience will have a great
deal to do with how an individual's propensities will be channeled, and in this sense every individual may be said to be malleable in some degree. This follows from the fact that different objects are capable of satisfying the same propensity. Of course, the types of object capable of doing so are sometimes relatively restricted; not everything, for example, can serve as a foodstuff and allay the hunger of human beings. In other cases, however, the range of potential satisfiers seems to be almost indefinitely extensible, as we noted with respect to self-esteem. Yet, even in the latter type of case, the propensity itself is not an effect of learning, nor can its first manifestations be held to be: the effects of experience can only come into play after there has been some actual experience in which that particular propensity was or was not satisfied, and whether it was then satisfied would have been dependent on forces operating then, not in the past. This point is so obvious that it probably appears not worth saying; yet it is highly important, for it applies in every case, and not merely in the case of what is taken to be the first instance in which some propensity comes into play. This fact is easily overlooked because the effects of experience are often so obvious in influencing the choices which we make. However, in all cases in which anything that we choose proves to be either satisfying or dissatisfying, it has that character here and now, not in the past. It is, then, because of a direct relationship between a present state of affairs and a present propensity that we find something satisfying or not. While past experience may strengthen a propensity which we already had, and while it may also have established the fact that a particular type of action can satisfy a particular propensity, this by no means proves that present satisfactions are derivative from past satisfactions. In short, satisfaction is not itself a product of learning, even in those cases in which learning may help to explain how we came to seek satisfaction in one quarter rather than another. It is a confusion with respect to this point that accounts for the fact that variations in the forms of expression of a propensity have led so many people to hold that where a person finds satisfaction is merely a matter of how he has been trained. This, as we have seen, was unfortunately the lesson which was drawn by the later associationists and, more recently, by those who have sought to explain human behavior in terms of "social conditioning." Both schools have inferred, from the variety of the changes in behavior which can be traced to learning, that the only stable psychological factors in human nature are very general, contentless principles according to which the individual's nature is affected by his experience. That such a view should have been held prior to the rise of evolutionary biology is more readily understandable than that it is still widely held.

2. The Limits of Organicism

Up to this point we have directed our attention to that form of the malleability thesis which rests on psychological grounds, that is, we have been concerned with geneticism. It is now necessary to consider the views of those who have argued for the same conclusion on the basis of the history of human development. This, as
we have seen, was a position which Comte and Hegel and Marx held in common. Each held that human nature is not constant, but changes as the forms of human social life change. On their view an understanding of the nature of a person is not to be gained through tracing the specific series of experiences which make up his personal history, as geneticism held; rather, we must approach the individual through first understanding the dominant cultural forces in the community to which he belongs. Since this approach to the fundamental forms of human behavior did not rest on the concept of conditioning, nor on any direct analogue of it, the foregoing argument cannot be assumed to provide a cogent reason for rejecting the organicist version of the malleability thesis. Furthermore, if we are to show in what precise respects the malleability thesis is mistaken, we must disengage it from other issues with which it may sometimes be associated. For example, organicism is not necessarily connected with the belief that there is an evolutionary pattern to which all social institutions must themselves conform. While these two doctrines were not adequately separated in the thought of Comte, Hegel, or Marx, Durkheim's sociological theory provides a case in which it is easy to see that the arguments in favor of organicism can be wholly independent of considerations which presuppose an evolutionary point of view. In what follows, I shall therefore treat the question of organicism as a problem in sociological theory, separating it from those developmental questions with which it was frequently entangled in nineteenth-century thought.

There is one presupposition basic to all forms of organicism. It consists in holding that, even though the existence of human societies presupposes the existence of individuals, no society is simply an interacting aggregate of individuals: societal facts are irreducible to facts concerning the beliefs, desires, habits, actions, etc., of the individuals on whose activities the existence of the society depends.

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that fundamental principle of Reason which lies behind and beyond Nature and which is indeed the well-spring from which the individual's own free, creative activity comes.

The similarities between the thought of T. H. Green and Fichte are striking, in spite of the differences between the points of departure which characterized their theories of knowledge. Whereas Fichte had attempted to overcome dichotomies within the Kantian system, and thus correct it, Green was not primarily concerned with its outcome; instead, he used Kant's general view of the mind's judgmental activity as a means of attacking the empiricist tradition in British philosophy. As we shall see, he too reached an idealist metaphysics in which nature itself was taken to be an expression of mind; this led him—as it had led Fichte—to reject the view that the mind's activities were subject to natural law, and therefore unfree. Furthermore, like Fichte, he couched his theory of man's basic nature in terms of a striving toward self-realization and, in defending this standard, he too was emphatic in his rejection of hedonism.

All of this constituted a self-conscious attack on the current form of British empiricism. However, it should be noted that Green's was by no means the first such attack within the century: others, both in England and Scotland, had already been influenced by Kant and German idealism, and had attempted to introduce
power over him, “they impose themselves upon him, independent of his individual will.”

This externality and objectivity was the basis on which Durkheim argued against any attempt to reduce societal facts to the thoughts and actions of individuals: what is true of any given individual is true of every individual—each is constrained by societal facts, and indeed, within any given society, each is constrained by the same set of facts, by a system of punishment, by a system of kinship, etc. Therefore, one must resist the temptation to suppose that societal facts can be reduced, seriatim, to an aggregate of interactions among individuals: it is the pattern which is all-important, and it is the pattern which constrains every individual within the society. In short, when we are dealing with institutions, it is grossly misleading to say that we are dealing with nothing more than a set of interactions among individuals, for these individuals are not simply reacting to each other; it is to the institutional pattern of action, which each has learned, that each is reacting.

In seeking to describe the difference between the sphere of individual thought and action and the nature of institutions, Durkheim appealed to the concept of “collective representations.” While it is not difficult to understand why he did so, the term immediately gave rise to misunderstandings and needless debate. For our purposes, we shall avoid his terminology and speak of institutions, using that term to refer to all aspects of a society which, in consonance with Durkheim’s main line of argument, are not reducible to the behavior of individuals. That there are such aspects is a point on which I am in agreement with Durkheim, and also, of course, with Comte, Hegel, and Marx.

One standard objection to all forms of this thesis is that the elements on which every aspect of social life depends are to be found in the activities of individual human beings; that a society is simply a group of people living and working together. Or, differently put, it is claimed that a society is, simply, its members. Durkheim denied this proposition, constructing a defense in terms of the doctrine of emergence, as that doctrine had been applied in chemistry and in biology. However, in order to defend Durkheim’s general position, it is not necessary to follow him along this brambly path. Instead, one can show that the objection itself rests on a fundamental mistake: that it assumes that when one says of a group of individuals that they are “members of a society” we mean to affirm that a society is composed of individuals who are its constitutive elements or parts. However, if we are to make sense of the fact that a particular society cannot be said to have undergone a change, as a society, because a king dies or a presidential term expires, we cannot say that it is individual persons who are the constitutive elements of societies; rather, it is the roles which individuals play that compose a society’s “parts.” Roles, however, are defined by institutions; and while roles may be inherited, ascribed, or won by individuals, they are not identical with the individuals who function in them, nor are individuals identical with their roles. If this is not already obvious, the reader need merely take account of the fact that, when we describe the differences between two societies, we do not describe specific individuals who live in those societies; we describe each society as a system of
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There are, of course, other standard objections to the type of thesis which Durkheim maintained, in defense of which the preceding argument was constructed. Some are based on epistemological grounds (e.g., "How can we know institutions except by observing individual behavior?"); others are based on quasi-metaphysical grounds (e.g., "How can institutions be said to be real, except in so far as they exist in the behavior of individuals?"). I shall not attempt to deal with such objections here. In my opinion, the preceding argument is decisive as an answer to the view that institutions must be reducible to the behavior of individuals, and this view is one on which, to some extent, most formulations of both the epistemological and the metaphysical objections rest. As I shall now show, the argument which I have given is also decisive as an argument against organicism.

There is no paradox in holding that the same argument can function in defending the irreducibility of societal facts and also function as a counter-argument against organicism: as I have already remarked, the thesis that institutions cannot be reduced to the behavior of individuals is a necessary presupposition of organicism, but this irreducibility does not provide a sufficient condition for organicism's truth.34 We shall now quickly see that this is the case.

In arguing that it is not individuals who are the constitutive elements in a society, we saw that it was necessary to distinguish between individuals and their roles. While we saw that this distinction ensures the irreducibility of societal facts, it also establishes the point that the individual cannot be identified with whatever social roles he may play. In fact, we have already noted in passing that any one individual plays a number of different roles; and, of course, different individuals in the same society often play exactly the same roles. This does not serve to make the two individuals one, nor does it suggest that they will closely resemble one another in temperament or ideas, nor in all aspects of their behavior, merely because they have the same social roles to play. This point is obvious if one simply considers how the individual personality of a president or a king may affect the functioning of a society, even though the description of that society, as a society, does not change merely because one president or king has succeeded the other: unless the effects of their personal differences change the institutional relationships within the society, the fact of a royal or a presidential succession does not force us to describe the society in different terms.

Should the foregoing point seem in any way doubtful, we may return to the fact from which we started in explaining Durkheim's views. Every individual, as he insisted, is born into an ongoing society, and the duties which he is to perform are something external to himself; they are defined by law and by custom, and must be learned.35 However, it is a human individual who learns what these laws and customs are, and the capacities necessary for social learning—for coming into one's social inheritance—must be innate. For example, one such capacity is the ability to use languages: whatever characteristics underlie this ability must be
inherited before any particular language to which the child is exposed can be learned. What is true in this case is true also in others: members of the human species must possess certain psychological characteristics not possessed by other species, for only our species has developed a form of existence which is entirely dependent on the transmission of learned modes of behavior. Thus, underlying all cultural differences between societies, there are similarities in inherited capacities which are not themselves explicable in social terms.

A similar point can be made through a comparison of individual persons, rather than through the contrast between humans and other species. We find significant variations in the capacities of different persons. Even if it were never the case that the variations which we note are solely attributable to the individual's biological inheritance, there can be no doubt that there are some inherited differences in the capacities for learning which different individuals possess. Such differences would not themselves be attributable to the social roles which people assume in the course of their lives. Therefore, in so far as Durkheim's type of position depends upon the fact that individuals are molded by their social inheritance acquired through an educative process, it does not establish a complete malleability of human nature: the capacities for learning which human beings possess are not themselves functions of the societies in which they live. Rather, we are forced to say that, in order to understand the nature of human beings in any society whatsoever, we need a science of psychology which is independent of sociology. This, as we saw, was a point which Comte, Hegel, and Marx all denied.

Durkheim differed from them in believing in a science of psychology which would investigate the connections among "individual representations," as distinct from "collective representations." Nonetheless, he drastically restricted the scope of those phenomena with which psychological explanations are usually assumed to be concerned: wherever the subject-matter of thought involved what he termed "collective representations," he assigned the question of why individuals thought in that way to the province of sociological explanation, not to psychology. This procedure is most apparent in the introductory and concluding chapters of The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.

It is not easy to state Durkheim's position with respect to how society influences human thought without using his concept of "collective representations;" nonetheless, I shall once again avoid using that term because of the confusions which it tends to invite. Putting the matter quite generally, what Durkheim attempted to establish was that the forms of life characteristic of a particular society constitute the sources for whatever is common in the ways in which its individual members think. He held this conviction not only with respect to moral and religious beliefs, but with respect to the categories of time, space, causality, and the like. In fact, he held that whatever appears to us as a priori, rather than as being based upon our individual experience, is a product of the form of life of our social group. As he said in speaking of the categories, "Not only is it society which has founded them, but their contents are the different aspects of the social being." He illustrated this general dictum by saying:
It is the rhythm of social life which is at the basis of the category of time; the territory occupied by the society furnished the material for the category of space; it is the collective force which was the prototype of the concept of efficient force, an essential element in the category of causality.\(^{38}\)

In speaking in this way, Durkheim did not intend to suggest that the rudimentary forms of temporal and spatial experience were socially acquired; in an immediately subsequent paragraph he admitted that such forms of experiencing were undoubtedly found in animals as well as in human beings. What he wished to establish was the fact that our general conceptual frameworks of space and time—that is, the ways in which we organize the experienced world—are a function of the forms of life characteristic of our society. Time, he held, is organized and measured by the recurrence of rites and public ceremonials; space is given its coordinates of right and left, up and down, north and south, in terms of values attributed to specific regions by the society, and in some societies the totality of space is conceived according to the same plan which characterizes the manner in which the tribal community is divided.\(^{39}\) Furthermore, Durkheim attributed the concept of totality itself, which he regarded as performing a crucial role in building up the conceptual frameworks of space and of time, to a sense of the social group as a totality.\(^{40}\)

The concrete evidence which Durkheim offered in favor of this radical thesis was really very slight, even if one were not to challenge any of his interpretations of that evidence. The basis on which he rested his case was less a matter of empirical evidence than of one particular argument: that concepts could not originate in the experience of individuals, for they would not then be universally shared by the members of a society. In advancing this argument, Durkheim contended that each individual’s experience was fluid rather than fixed, and was different from the experience of others; consequently, any concepts originating in that experience would not be applicable beyond the scope of the individual’s own experience.\(^{41}\) Yet, as Durkheim pointed out, the concepts which individuals use, and the language in which these concepts are embodied, impose themselves upon individuals, and are socially shared. Thus, he argued, their source must be sought in the group itself. If this argument holds of concepts generally, then it holds most especially of those concepts which are to be regarded as categories, by means of which we organize all of our experience. These categories, Durkheim remarked, have so great a stability and impersonality “that they have often passed as being absolutely universal and immutable.” To this he added:

Also, as they express the fundamental conditions for an agreement between minds, it seems evident that they have been elaborated by society.\(^{42}\)

If one wishes to understand why this seemed evident to Durkheim, one may turn to his essay “The Dualism of Human Nature and its Social Conditions,” which was acknowledgedly written to help clarify *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. In that essay Durkheim’s psychology is explicitly stated, and is summarized in the following way:
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Our intelligence, like our activity, presents two very different forms: on the one hand are sensations and sensory tendencies; on the other conceptual thought and moral activity. Each of these two parts of ourselves represents a separate pole of our being, and these two poles are not only distinct from one another but are opposed to one another. Our sensory appetites are necessarily egoistic: they have our individuality and it alone as their object. ... [Conceptual thought] and moral activity are, on the contrary, distinguished by the fact that the rules of conduct to which they conform can be universalized. Therefore, by definition, they pursue universal ends. ... A sensation of color or sound is closely dependent on my individual organism, and I cannot detach the sensation from my organism. In addition, it is impossible for me to make my awareness pass over into someone else. I can, of course, invite another person to face the same object and expose himself to the same effect, but the perception that he will have of it will be his own work and will be proper to him, as mine is proper to me. Concepts, on the contrary, are always common to a plurality of men.43

Any such sharp separation of sensations and concepts is, of course, open to challenge, as is the supposition that “sensory tendencies” are always egoistic, and that the privacy of sensations entails a variability from individual to individual which the individual’s grasp of a concept does not. It was these epistemology-ridden assumptions of Durkheim’s psychology which made him assume that the universality which we attribute to our basic concepts establishes the fact that they have a social origin, and are not to be understood except in social terms.

Even if the foregoing objection were to be rejected by those who follow Durkheim, it can be shown that there are other respects in which the views which he put forward in The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life presuppose constant and universal psychological factors in human nature, in spite of all that he said to the contrary. Consider, for example, the distinction which Durkheim drew between the sacred and the profane. It was this distinction which, he held, was at the root of all forms of the religious life. It was his contention that

All known religious beliefs, whether simple or complex, present one common characteristic: they presuppose a classification of all the things, real and ideal, of which men think, into two classes or opposed groups, generally designated by two distinct terms which are translated well enough by the words profane and sacred (profane, sacré). This division of the world into two domains, the one containing all that is sacred, the other all that is profane, is the distinctive trait of religious thought.44

This, however, presupposes a constant feature in human experience, based upon a trait common to all men: it is not a feature of some societies, and not of others, nor is it a characteristic which has no basis in human nature, as such. This can be noticed in the manner in which Durkheim assumed a psychological interpretation of religious commitment:

If we give the name delirious to every state in which the mind adds to the immediate data given by the senses and projects its own feelings into things, then nearly every collective representation is in a sense delirious; religious beliefs are only one particular case of a very general law. Our whole social environment seems to us to be filled with forces which really exist only in our own minds.45
This is obviously a generalization concerning a psychological fact, and it is a fact essential to the distinction which is drawn in all societies between the sacred and the profane—if one accepts Durkheim's views. A similar psychological generalization is evident in the statement which Durkheim made in accounting for the origins of totemic symbolism, when he said:

That an emblem is useful as a rallying-centre for any sort of group it is superfluous to point out.

And he explained this dictum in the following terms:

If left to themselves, individual consciousnesses are closed to each other. . . . It is by uttering the same cry, pronouncing the same word, or performing the same gesture in regard to some object that they become and feel themselves to be in unison.46

Such generalizations underlie the whole of Durkheim's explanations of the effects of societies on individuals. Yet such generalizations are psychological in character, not sociological: they are not facts concerning social organization, facts external to individuals, that is, they are not what Durkheim denominated as things. Instead, they are processes by means of which he sought to explain why societal facts appear as external, and are capable of influencing human behavior. Such processes are psychological, and if Durkheim's theory of religion is actually correct, they are universal. Thus, they themselves would not be explicable through reference to the particular forms of social organization which are present in some places, and not in others.

Exactly the same point can be made with respect to Durkheim's classic study, Suicide. The correlations which, for example, he found between European suicide rates and religious affiliations established his point that suicide bears a significant relationship to institutional factors. However, according to his own etiology of suicide, this connection was mediated by psychological factors, the suicide rate varying inversely with the degree of integration of the religious society to which individuals belong.47 Or, quite generally put, in all societies individuals tend to commit suicide when subjected to particular strains which derive from a lack of integration in the social groups through which their lives are organized. The needs which induce such strains are psychological needs, and are universal. What is not attributable to these psychological needs are the particular forms of organization according to which such needs are satisfied, or because of which they fail to be satisfied. These forms of organization cannot be directly attributed to the needs, precisely because they are not universal, but vary from society to society. Thus, for example, in Suicide Durkheim presupposed that individuals have a need for integration into a group, and for support from the group; of course, he recognized that there are various types of groups capable of lending such support, and that their efficacy varies in different countries. Similarly, in The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life he argued, as we saw, that a distinction between the sacred and the profane is universal, but the specific
forms of the religious life vary enormously. Now, if one is to understand the behavior of individuals in any given society one will have to take into account both the psychological needs of these individuals and the specific forms of social organization which channel the ways in which those needs are satisfied, or because of which they remain unsatisfied. It will therefore be necessary to take into account both psychological and sociological factors, and neither will prove to be reducible to the other.

It is important to acknowledge that the views of Durkheim, as well as those of Comte, Hegel, and Marx, provided a historically important corrective to earlier attempts at purely psychological explanations of societal facts. However, it is one thing to show that the facts of history and of social organization are not to be explained in terms of universal psychological principles, and another thing to establish that there are no such principles. I have used the example of Durkheim to illustrate the difference between these two theses, for in his case the hiatus is particularly apparent. I shall now illustrate the same general point through reference to the sociological theories of Marx.48

Let us first concede, for the sake of the argument, that the systems of belief, the approved forms of attitude, the categories of interpretation and explanation, and, in general, all aspects of the intellectual and moral life of a society reflect the modes of production and the class structure characteristic of that society. Even acknowledging this to be true, it would be a mistake to suppose that there is no room for an independent science of psychology. This is the first point which I wish to establish.

In speaking of systems of beliefs, approved forms of attitudes, categories of interpretation—or, in short, "ideologies"—one is speaking of what it is that a particular group of individuals accepts as true, what they regard as good, etc.: that is, one is speaking of the content of their beliefs. An analysis of this content may be the task of the historian, anthropologist, or descriptive sociologist; it is not the task of the psychologist. Nor is it a primary task of psychologists to correlate differences in the content of socially accepted beliefs with specific forms of social structure. Rather, the central problems of psychology have involved attempts to find and to apply general explanatory or interpretative principles to the experience and the behavior of individuals. Different branches of psychology have specialized in different phases of their subject, but all have had as their first task that of establishing general principles. In short, they have not been primarily concerned with differences in the specific nature of the experience and behavior of different individuals. This can be seen even when, for example, a psychologist attempts to explain why the thoughts of a particular individual continually revert to certain materials, or why an individual repeatedly behaves in some particular way; it is not with the content as such that psychologists are in such cases primarily concerned, but with the principles which account for its repetition.49 To choose another example, the psychologist who is concerned with learning, with memory, or with perception will not be involved in describing what is learned, remembered, or perceived. To be sure, the nature of that material may in some cases affect the processes themselves, as one finds in comparing the learn-
ing of nonsense syllables with the learning of other materials. Nevertheless, it is still not the case that the psychologist is interested in the content as such; rather, he is interested in the ability, attempting to establish the principles which best describe its modes of operation.

Translating this into terms which are relevant to Marxian thought, one can say that, even if it is assumed that everything that Marx said about the relation of ideologies to the economic substructure were true, there would still be adequate room for the science of psychology. This would not merely be a psychology concerned with problems of learning, or perceiving, or of any other field which might be supposed to have restricted import for problems of social organization. Psychologists have investigated the ways in which social pressure can influence conformity in the expression of opinion, and some have claimed that it influences conformity in perception itself; they have also investigated the effects of various forms of deprivation on thinking, and some of the ways in which alienation or frustration affect the personality of individuals. No one, I take it, would hold that generalizations concerning such matters would necessarily conflict with Marxian analyses of the relationships between ideologies and social organization. Furthermore, in Marx’s own writings (even apart from the early Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts), one finds at least implicit psychological generalizations, and these generalizations were not meant to apply to some forms of society but not to others. For example, it would be a mistake to interpret Marx as having held that men’s reactions to alienation or to oppression count for nothing in the historical process; and he did not treat such reactions as if they were simply causal consequences of a particular set of historically conditioned institutions. Or, to use a related example, it would not be plausible to interpret Marx as believing that individuals seek equality only because their societies have antecedently instilled ideals of equality in them. At this basic level of human experience, his theories actually presupposed the existence of attributes of human nature which were not derived from specific forms of social organization.

Unfortunately, Marx failed to recognize this fact. Whether because of the influence of Hegel upon him, or for some other reason, he too readily assumed that if one can show that great changes have been brought about in men’s beliefs and attitudes by institutional changes, then one can abandon the supposition that there is anything constant in human nature. Yet it should be apparent from ordinary experience that changes in our beliefs and attitudes do not necessarily reflect changes in our abilities: for example, it is frequently the case that, when our convictions change, it is not because the form of our thinking has changed, but because we have acquired new knowledge, or because we have been exposed to new modes of experience. Therefore, if changing social institutions provide new modes of experience (as they undoubtedly do), one would expect such changes to be reflected in differences in the content of generally accepted beliefs. Thus, Marx was undoubtedly correct in holding that beliefs and attitudes are deeply influenced by the social institutions under which men live, and he was undoubtedly correct in criticizing Feuerbach’s interpretation of religion for overlooking this fact; but this does not in itself prove that men change in all fundamental
respects as their institutions change. Thus, the new insights of Marx and of Engels, in the German Ideology and elsewhere, which established connections between economic and ideological factors, should not have led to an advocacy of the view that an interpretation of man's nature has to be couched in exclusively sociological terms. This was the first point which I wished to make clear.

Turning now to Marx's sociological analysis itself, there are a number of problems which arise with respect to the relationship between the superstructure of a society and its economic substructure, and one among these problems is directly relevant to questions concerning constancy and change in human nature. That problem is, whether the modes of production and the relations of production in a given society determine the existence of some particular element in the superstructure, or whether their influence upon such an element is limited to altering it in one direction or another. The very important difference between these two interpretations of the substructure-superstructure relationship—a difference which Marx himself appears to have overlooked—may be illustrated by the following cases.

First, take the question of the organization of familial life. One can readily admit that in every society the structure of the family will be deeply affected by the modes of production of that society, and that changes in these modes of production will be reflected in changes in the conditions of familial life. However, the fact that all societies possess some form of family-structure is not itself to be explained merely in terms of the needs people have to produce the means of their subsistence: sexual controls, and the protracted period of dependency of the human offspring, must also be taken into account. Thus, it would not be plausible to seek to explain the existence of the institutionalized structures of familial organization solely in terms of the economic substructure, no matter how deeply changes in the substructure may penetrate particular forms of family organization. To explain the universality of this institution, an appeal must be made to some constant factors in human nature. On the other hand, there may also be cases in which a particular type of institution has been present in all societies, but in which its existence is not to be explained in terms of some particular set of biological or psychological factors. According to some interpretations of religious institutions (including that usually attributed to Marx himself), religion does not spring from any basic human need; on the contrary, it is held that these institutions reflect the interests of a particular social class, and are designed for the sake of consolidating power and social control. Although such an interpretation of religion is surely suspect, it does illustrate the fact that one should not too readily assume that any type of institution which is to be found in all societies is one which exists to fulfil some specific type of biological or psychological need. And, quite obviously, if there are institutions which exist in some societies and not others, their existence will have to be explained in historical or sociological terms, and not in terms of factors which can confidently be taken as representing universal human needs.

On the other hand, when we turn to the question of how one is to explain alterations in particular institutions, rather than the existence of the institutions
themselves, the situation is quite different. We have already noted that the type of sociological analysis which Marx's doctrine of substructure-superstructure offers may do much to explain changes in family organization, even if it cannot serve to account for the existence of the institution itself. On the other hand, when we consider any institution which is not universal, and whose existence must therefore be explained in historical or in sociological terms (or in both), it must not be assumed that every alteration in such an institution is to be explained only in these terms. However important may be the specifically economic factors which Marxist doctrine uses in explaining historical change, it is nonetheless true that psychological factors may also have to be taken into account. For example, we have already remarked on the fact that Marx himself implicitly assumed that at the most basic level of experience men will react in similar ways, rebelling against deprivation and oppression; and we may note that the existence of this tendency in human nature was an essential assumption in his analysis of the growth of class-consciousness and of revolutionary activity. This is not to say that this particular factor would, of itself, allow one to explain the forms which that revolutionary activity would take; nor would it be decisive with respect to the success of any revolution: Marx's contentions concerning the importance of specifically sociological factors in revolutionary situations would not be affected by what I have just been saying. All that it is necessary to note is that, in such a case, psychological forces as well as sociological forces are responsible for historical change.

That alterations in institutions may be brought about by a combination of psychological and sociological forces makes it plausible to suggest that there may also be many cases in which the manner of functioning of an existing institution is to be explained in the same way, rather than in terms of either factor alone. We have already noted that such is the case with respect to family organization, since the very existence of the institution depends upon universal factors in human nature, but the forms of the institution depend upon historical and sociological factors. The same interplay of these disparate factors can be noted in other cases as well. Consider some particular institution which is characteristic of our own society, but not of all others; for example, consider the system of elective representative government, either as it exists in the United States or in its more general form—as a system which has come to be characteristic of modern Western-style democracies. The particular way in which such a system functions cannot be understood apart from historical and sociological factors; among these factors one may wish to include precisely those which Marx was concerned to analyze in his doctrine of substructure and superstructure. However, even on a Marxian basis, psychological factors would have to be taken into account in order to explain the functioning of this institution; and this would be true even if Marx were wholly correct in thinking that there are no universal psychological characteristics to be found among men. For we are not in this case attempting to explain the existence of this institution, and we are not attempting to explain an institution which is universal. We are also not trying to explain how this institution has changed. What we are trying to explain is how such an institution func-
tions here and now. To do so, even in Marxist terms, we need to take into account the historically and sociologically conditioned forms of thought characteristic of the bourgeois class. Even though these particular modes of thought are the products of forces residing in the substructure, it is through them that contemporary political activities are carried on. What is said in this respect of political institutions can be said with equal force regarding any other institution which Marx would care to designate as part of the superstructure of a society.

It might be tempting to hold that the foregoing point can be generalized without limitation, and to say that in explaining every fact concerning any society one must take into account psychological as well as historical and sociological factors. This might seem tempting since it is undoubtedly true that it is only through the activities of individual human beings that any of the ongoing processes of a society are carried on. Nevertheless, for reasons which I shall not here attempt to adduce, I believe that this sweeping generalization should be resisted; and nothing that I have said would entail that, whenever some relationship between two institutions—say, between the growth of scientific technology and changes in industrial organization—is to be explained, one must necessarily introduce psychological factors into such an account. What I have argued has been more restricted in scope. I have argued (1) that there are some cases in which the existence of a particular type of institution in all societies presupposes common factors in human nature, but (2) that the universality of a particular type of institution does not necessarily rest upon such factors. (3) I have also argued that, in explaining changes in institutions, it is sometimes necessary to invoke both psychological and sociological factors, and (4) I have suggested that in many cases the ways in which a specific institution functions may also have to be explained in terms of both sets of factors. It should be apparent that, if these theses are accepted, they will severely limit the claims of Marx, or of Durkheim, or of others who uphold organicism, and they will involve us in often appealing to psychological, as distinct from sociological, generalizations. Yet these claims do not in any way serve to undercut the important contributions made by those who rebelled against the individualistic and psychological approach of geneticism, and who established once and for all the importance of historical studies and the irreducibility of societal facts.

3. Self-Realization and the Illusions of Progress

In the foregoing sections, we have seen reason to doubt two types of argument which have stressed the indefinite malleability of human nature. One had attempted to show that tendencies to think, to feel, and to act in one way rather than another are to be explained in terms of the individual's personal history; the other held that such tendencies were primarily attributable to the nature of the society in which the individual lives. According to both views, whatever tendencies might be assumed to be the possession of individuals from birth were of the most restricted and rudimentary kind; either pain-avoidance or biologically-
based needs would be examples of them. On the other hand, our various skills, our beliefs, and our attitudes, and all of the complex sentiments that characterize our emotional lives, were looked upon as having no basis in our natures until they became ingrained in us through external influences.

As we have noted, there was another view which was characteristic of nineteenth-century thought: that man is by nature a progressive being. While this view was held in various forms, in general they shared the belief that mankind had undergone a self-transformation through forces rooted in the individual's nature; furthermore, they all tended to hold that the talents and powers of individuals were capable of continuing to transform virtually all aspects of men's social existence. Changes which had been achieved, and were still to be achieved, were regarded as constituting mankind's progress. They were progressive not merely in the sense that men were gradually learning better ways of mastering their environments and achieving their goals, but in the sense that these goals were themselves becoming higher in value. Thus, human nature was viewed as changing, with new and nobler ends coming to dominate the lives of individuals.

As we saw in discussing the thought of Fichte and Green, one form of this doctrine stressed the concept of self-development, or self-realization, taking it to be the most important key to understanding man's intrinsic nature. While this concept was intimately connected with an idealist metaphysics in both Fichte and Green, it could also be held on other grounds; for example, in Nietzsche as well as in others, it was connected with a biologically-oriented form of voluntarism. Regardless of these differences, self-realizationism always involved an outright rejection of a hedonistic psychology; it also involved a rejection of nativism. In the present context, it is the latter aspect of the doctrine which is of primary importance. In accounting for the ways in which human beings think and act, the self-realizationist thesis did not appeal to isolated principles of explanation, as nativism inclines to do; rather, it sought a single underlying tendency toward growth and self-development which manifested itself in all human activities, expressing itself in multifarious and ever-changing ways. Before examining the general thesis that progressive change is a fundamental characteristic of the human race, we shall first consider the difficulties in self-realizationism as a psychological concept.

When stripped of its metaphysical associations and treated as a basic psychological concept, the notion of self-realization or self-development is unfortunately empty. If one considers how the concept would be used in interpreting individual development in the case of an infant, this emptiness becomes immediately apparent; and the same lack of significance attaches to it as a psychological principle if one attempts to apply it to any other stage of a person's life. Let us first illustrate the point with respect to the infant.

The biological processes in an infant do, of course, tend to sustain its life and promote its growth, and they lead to the successive development of new forms of activity. However, these processes are not under the control of a general tendency toward self-development. The specific propensities which the infant exhibits—sucking, swallowing, yawning, sleeping, grasping, kicking, stretching—may lead to
self-development, but they are not to be explained as being engendered by a tendency toward that end. To think that they are, would be to fall once again into what I have termed “the retrospective fallacy.”

Nor is the situation different if we look to the psychological forces in a person at any stage in his later development, rather than focusing on the basically organic needs of the infant. Every person, whether young or old, has concrete particular ends which he seeks, which are associated with his present wants and desires, and it is in terms of these particular ends that we must understand his choices. If it is the case—as it often is—that a person has an ideal of the self toward which he wishes to develop, that too is a particular end which is presently desired. To say, however, that he desires “self-development,” or “self-realization,” without indicating what he regards as being an instance of self-development for him, is to speak in terms which lack meaning. To be sure, a person may sometimes actually say that he wants to realize himself, but when he speaks in this way, he generally has in mind some set of conditions which he wants to have removed, because they presently inhibit him from getting what he wants; or he may have in mind certain capacities which he hopes to be able to develop, in order that he may in the future attain some presently envisioned ends which he is not yet in a position to achieve. In such cases, the concept of self-realization has meaning, but it has this meaning because it actually refers to concrete particular ends which are to be attained: it is not to be interpreted as if it were being sought as an independent end in itself.

This fact was not always noted. In Nietzsche’s voluntarism, for example, self-surpassing was interpreted as an end-in-itself; in Bradley’s Ethical Studies we are told that men never aim at particular ends, but that they always actually aim at that whole which is their true self. These two positions—though they have been influential—were by no means typical of self-realizationist doctrines. If one examines such standard texts of the period as those of Paulsen, of Muirhead, of James Seth, or of Mackenzie, one sees that they did not deny the psychological fact that desire is related to concrete, particular ends which are heterogenous in nature; what they were concerned to establish was a specifically ethical thesis which they put forward in opposition to hedonism and in opposition to Kant. Their thesis was that the good is to be conceived in terms of the fulfilment of desire, not in terms of pleasure nor in terms of the Kantian conception of duty. It was also essential to their view that men’s desires can only be adequately fulfilled when they are harmoniously integrated within the individual, and when, through a growing sense of community, the good of each individual is also brought into harmony with the good of others. I shall not attempt to estimate this specifically ethical thesis, for it is only with psychological questions concerning man’s nature that we are here concerned. In this connection, I need merely point out that all ethical self-realizationists admit that it is unfortunately possible for particular persons to fall short of the ideal, obsessively pursuing very restricted ends, permitting selfishness to override communal good, and the like. Thus, it would not be correct to say that all individuals, as a matter of fact, are to be regarded as dominated by a tendency toward progressive growth; this is rather
claimed for them only when they are "at their best," when they exhibit health in
the life of the will. Such, at least, is the way in which one must interpret the
doctrine of self-realizationism which tended to dominate Anglo-American philo-
sophical theories of conduct at the turn of the century.

In point of fact, running through this form of self-realizationism, there was a
premise concerning man's nature that often entered the argument, but was seldom
singled out for attention, perhaps because it was thought too obvious to be
designated as a fundamental principle of human action. It was the principle that
there must be some consistency in the manner in which we behave, that in acting
today we feel constrained not to negate what we strove for yesterday, unless we
now find ourselves to have been mistaken: in short, that in behavior no less than
in thought, we avoid disjointed sequences, the absence of continuity, and whatever
is completely random or disordered. This characteristic tendency, which, as I
say, was implicitly present in the theory of human nature held by self-realizationists, is not, of course, a concrete particular desire; instead, it provides a
principle of connection among these desires. As such, it helps to explain the de-
velopment of a stable self which tends to grow in one way rather than another;
and it does so without making the assumption that every concrete desire is to be
interpreted as merely one manifestation of the single, all-inclusive desire for self-
development.54

If the foregoing suggestion commends itself to the reader, it will be obvious
that there is no necessary connection between stressing the so-called hormic
aspects of human nature and interpreting human nature as being essentially
"progressive" in character. Consequently, the view that men's natures become
radically transformed over time, with primitive impulses subjugated or extirpated,
and a new race (psychologically speaking) being born, is a view of human history
for which historical evidence must be supplied. Unfortunately, the evidence for
the progressivist thesis, though it was widely accepted, was extremely weak.

That evidence consisted in assuming that all societies could be arranged in a
single evolutionary order in which contemporary non-literate societies represent
the comparatively early stages, with development moving in a linear fashion
toward the highly literate, scientifically and technologically advanced societies of
the contemporary world. This evolutionary hypothesis was not severely challenged
until Franz Boas's essay "The Limitations of the Comparative Method of An-
thropology" in 1896, and the influence of his essay was apparently not felt for
some time. However, there can now be little doubt that the comparative method,
as it had been used by anthropologists, was not based on historical evidence, but
was forced to rely upon preconceived theories as to what stages there may have
been in the history of mankind. In this respect, it differed markedly from the
manner in which the comparative method had contributed to the theory of
organic evolution. In biology, evolutionists had well-grounded geological and
dateontological evidence on the basis of which they could trace the sequence of
species, but there was no historical evidence of comparable weight upon which
social evolutionists could rely in structuring their views of the past. Consequently,
when they assigned particular places in an evolutionary sequence to various
contemporary non-literate societies in North America, Africa, or Oceania, class­ing them as "survivals" of earlier forms, they were unable to show from what particular earlier societies their descent was to be traced. In fact, so long as one did not depart from the evidence, no general movement of social evolution could be discovered. To be sure, one could say that, in certain areas of the world (for example, in Western Europe and in those regions to which European influence had spread), it was possible to trace a sequence of changes in specific respects: there had been growth in literacy, in science and in technology, there had been specific changes in certain forms of social institutions, such as the forms of family organization, or ownership of land, and the like. Now, regardless of what judgments of value one might make with respect to these changes, it remained an open question as to whether other societies would be assumed to possess a tendency to develop in the same ways. In fact, the evidence on this question would appear to have been negative. Contemporary non-literate societies were acknowledged not to have done so, nor had the vast societies dominated by religions other than Christianity which existed in the East; yet all of these were assumed to be older, not younger societies. Therefore, the progressive nature of man could not be established on the basis of historical evidence any more than it could be established through an appeal to the psychological concept of self-realization. Yet this progressive view was nonetheless widely held, and we must seek to understand why this was so.

While one can find a variety of more specific influences at work, one funda­mental reason why nineteenth-century thought, from Comte and Hegel through Spencer, was dominated by the theory of a progressive course of social evolution is to be found in the growth of interest in what might be called a rudimentary form of comparative history. When it was recognized that societies were not artifacts designed by individuals in order that they could secure their own ends, but were the products of cumulative historical change, attention was shifted from the desires and interests of individuals to the growth of social institutions. Social theorists sought to compare institutions, and to locate their place in the history of the human race. Just as it was of historical interest to know what sorts of implements prehistoric man possessed, and to trace how these implements changed over time, so it would be of interest to trace similar changes in religion, in family organization, and in all other aspects of social life. Thus, the point of view which was adopted did not seek to explain any specific society in all of its concreteness, as later anthropologists attempted to do; instead, a vantage point was chosen from which it was thought that one could trace the development of different institutional forms, and could thereby place different societies along a single developmental scale. This assumed the unity of the human race, that the human race does indeed have a single history. This assumption had of course been characteristic of eighteenth-century views of Progress, no less than it was a presupposition of most historically oriented thought in the nineteenth century. We shall now show that, far from being obviously true, it is a theory which should be regarded as highly suspect.

I do not wish to be taken as suggesting that it is necessary to assume that the
human species arose in different places, and at different times, from different non-human or semi-human progenitors. This issue, which has often been heatedly debated, is irrelevant to the point which I wish to make. Let us therefore accept the contrary assumption: let us suppose that the whole human race has a single biological ancestry which (in theory) can be traced back to a single place of origin, with all of the progenitors of what we now know as human beings having been of common stock. Still, human beings have spread throughout the world, and wherever they now exist, they live in organized societies. The question is whether we should say that all of these societies have a common history, and it is clear that we should not. Even though my present assumption commits us to saying that there was some point of remote time when the ancestors of all presently existing men existed together, and even were we to suppose that these men then had some one common form of social life, what has happened since that time is that various groups have split off, have taken up residence elsewhere, and each has had a history which (over some stretch of time) is different from the history of the others. Thus, it would be grossly misleading to say that the whole human race has had the same history. In fact, we must say that the contrary is the case, and that all societies have to some extent had their own quite different histories.

Once this is granted, the supposition that mankind is inherently progressive will lose its plausibility. Whatever standard of progress we accept, it will assuredly not be true that we shall find all societies exhibiting progress. Even with respect to the actual history of any one society, it is not likely that we shall find that there has been only one directional tendency throughout the entire course of its history. What we may more reasonably expect is that, whatever standard we choose to apply, there have been times at which that society has progressed, and other times during which it has regressed; and there may be stretches of time during which there were no significant changes with respect to the particular criteria by means of which we estimate progress. What is in this respect true of each society would assuredly be true were we to examine them all.

At first glance, this conclusion might seem to be wholly sceptical with reference to questions of value; however, such is not the case. To be sure, if one were to maintain that our judgments of value rest on the movements of history, then the lack of a single directional tendency within all history would entail that we would be left without a way of knowing what is good or bad, right or wrong. However, as I have obliquely suggested, a belief in progress is not established through history, but it is brought to history. This should have been abundantly clear in the progressivist views and the social criticism of Mill, Arnold, and Huxley. It was also clear in the self-realizationism of Fichte and Green. It was even true, as we have seen, of the organicism of Comte, of Hegel, and of Marx, whose standards of what constitutes social well-being were not actually deduced from history, but were critically applied to it. But what, one might then ask, could be the source of such standards?

If our earlier arguments against theories of social conditioning were correct, the answer should be obvious: these standards have a basis in the specific propensities, interests, and needs which are basic in human nature. To be sure, we have not
attempted to designate a list of inherent tendencies upon which all judgments of value may be supposed to be based, but we have mentioned some tendencies which surely have relevance to the moral standards which one finds in any community. We have noted pain-avoidance and the existence of biological needs; we have noted the existence of sympathy and of self-esteem; and in discussing self-realizationism we have also noted a tendency to be uncomfortable with inconsistencies in our actions. Any such admittedly heterogeneous list of presumably unconditioned propensities might be greatly expanded, and while those which I have just mentioned may not unreasonably be supposed to have some fairly direct connections with the fact that we make moral judgments, and with the actual nature of the moral judgments which we make, there will be others which it would not be plausible to suppose to be directly connected with the moral life. For example, as we noted, curiosity appears to be an unconditioned propensity in some animal species, and may perhaps be so among men; yet its relevance to the fact that we make moral judgments at all, or that we make the moral judgments that we do, would appear to be so slight as to be negligible. Thus, the relationship between morality and the existence of native propensities is likely to prove complex, not simple.

Furthermore, in saying that the source of the fact that we make moral judgments lies in our psychological dispositions, and in suggesting that these dispositions may also be reflected in the actual nature of the moral judgments we make, I am not denying that the social matrix is also an important influence on the specific moral codes which individuals and groups accept. As I noted in the case of self-esteem, the concrete forms of behavior through which self-esteem can be satisfied, or even be expressed, will vary according to the society in which the individual lives; it is well-known that, under certain circumstances, even extreme self-abnegation can greatly enhance self-esteem. As I have sought to point out, the channeling of our propensities, and the precise nature of the things that we seek or that we avoid, cannot be understood without taking into account the societies in which we live. Nor would it be sufficient merely to cite the general conditions dominant in our society: account must also be taken of the roles which we play and of our own individual experiences as well as of any particular dispositional traits of temperament which we may have inherited. Yet, all of these elements of variability among men should not be taken as suggesting that there are no basic psychological traits which they have in common, regardless of differences among their societies, and regardless of differences in their life-histories. If our earlier arguments have been correct, these basic forms of unconditioned responses, these common propensities and basic human needs, are also of importance in determining the course of human development.

It should now be clear that there is no necessary antagonism between some features of geneticism, some features of organicism, and some of the types of propositions concerning human nature and moral psychology which nativists have always sought to uphold. For example, in comparing geneticism and the form of nativism which has here been defended, the primary difference lies in the fact that geneticism, in both its classic hedonistic-associationistic form and in recent
behaviorism, has attempted to restrict the native dispositional traits of men to an absolutely minimal number. As we have seen, there are reasons which make it doubtful that any such radically restrictive attempts will be successful; and we have seen no methodological reasons which would justify that they should be made. To be sure, one can find reasons of a specifically historical sort which account for the attacks of the associationists upon prior forms of nativism; there were other historical reasons why behaviorists held the positions they did. Going back to the situation in which the associationists found themselves, one can indeed sympathize with the attacks which they directed against the supposedly apriori character of all basic intellectual and moral propositions. However, scepticism regarding the claims of apriorists need not lead to the conclusion that the only basis on which human experience is to be explained is through pleasures and pains, and through the effects of associations among our ideas. The range of our experience and our capacities of thought need not be assumed to have so narrow a compass.

If we now compare organicism with the form of nativism which is here being defended, there need be no incompatibility in what they affirm, but only in what they deny. The irreducibility of societal facts to facts concerning individual behavior can be accepted; the relativity of different forms of institution to different periods of history can also be accepted; all that has been denied is the assumption that these facts entail that we reject the possibility of any stability in human nature, and therefore reject the possibility that there can be a generalizing science of psychology. These rejections had their sources in historicism, and in the belief that the history of mankind is a single and unitary process; they were not made necessary by what was in fact one of the great intellectual achievements of the late eighteenth and of the nineteenth century. This was, first, the discovery that the character of social institutions is to be historically understood, rather than interpreted in terms of that which was constant in human nature; and, second, that these institutions do have an influence upon the characters of individuals, helping to determine all that they can become.