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Does the Social Exist?

PhD Thesis

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Imagine there’s no countries
It isn’t hard to do

Imagine – John Lennon

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I question whether social phenomena exist. Since social groups are perhaps the most widely recognised category of social phenomena, I focus my discussion on social groups. First I elucidate our common-sense intuitions about social groups. Thereafter, I distinguish between two problems: specifying the relation among the members of a social group (the individual-individual problem), and specifying the relation between social groups and their members (the social-individual problem). I argue that the individual-individual and social-individual problems comprise the core concerns of social ontology, at least insofar as social ontology is applied to social groups.

I then examine a number of possible solutions to the individual-individual problem, and argue that none of these positions convincingly captures our common-sense intuitions about social groups. I divide these solutions into Objectivist and Subjectivist accounts. Objectivist accounts of social groups exclude reference to the reflexive mental states of the individuals underlying the group, and focus instead on the patterns of interactions among group members, observable from a non-member's perspective. I argue that Objectivist accounts, including Elster's transactional account, the organic account, and the teleological account of social groups, are unable to capture adequately the distinction between a mere aggregate and a social group because they exclude reference to reflexive mental states, rendering the accounts vulnerable to a number of counterexamples. By contrast, Subjectivist positions, including Sartre's account, Gilbert's plural subject theory, and Searle's constructionism, hold that reflexive mental states provide the principle that unifies a collection of individuals into a social group. Subjectivists, however, are unable to account for the importance of the history of social phenomena.

Thereafter I consider affirmative solutions to the social-individual problem, or positions that hold that social groups exist. These positions are divided into non-reductive and reductive accounts. Non-reductive accounts, including Social Dualism and Non-Reductive Individualism, hold that social groups are logically or conceptually distinct from the individuals that comprise them. Social Dualists posit that social groups and their members are distinct entities, while Non-Reductive Individualists hold that social properties are distinct from individualistic properties. I argue that Social Dualism problematically reifies the social, while Non-Reductive Individualism is unable to maintain the dependence of the social on the individual without collapsing into a reductive account. Reductionists hold that social groups are identical with their members, or with the intra-relations among their members. Logical

Individualists hold that this identity is conceptual: the concept of a social group is the concept of a collection of individuals. Type Individualists claims that types of social groups are identical with types of members (or types of member intra-relations). And Social Functionalists hold that social groups are just phenomena with a certain function, and those functional phenomena are in turn instantiated by individuals. I argue that none of the reductive accounts are successful, however: Logical Individualism cannot account for the holism of the social, Type Individualism faces the problem of multiple realisation, and Social Functionalists cannot adequately individuate groups diachronically.

Finally, I tentatively support an alternative, negative solution to the individual-individual and social-individual problems: Eliminative Individualism. Eliminative Individualism is the position that social phenomena do not exist, that Folk Sociology is a radically false and misleading theory, and that social terms have no referent. I discuss a number of strategies for eliminating social phenomena, ultimately providing a psychological and neurological explanation that I argue might be used to explain away the appearance of social groups. That is, I make a case for the possibility that we can explain away beliefs in social groups the way we explain away paranormal, or errant religious beliefs. Finally, I argue that "thick" social phenomena, such as the wisdom of the crowds and the unintended consequences of intended action, may be explained using reason-based, statistical and possibly network-based explanations.

I conclude that Eliminative Individualism, although it faces certain challenges, is worthy of serious attention as a contender to affirmative social ontologies in the literature.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Section A. Introduction (p. 1-40)

Core questions asked in the thesis:

Q1	The individual-individual problem: what relationships obtain among the members of a social group that do not obtain among the individuals in a mere aggregate?
Q2	The social-individual problem: what is the relation between a social group and its members?

Version of Methodological Individualism:

M1	All social phenomena can be explained purely in terms of the individualistic phenomena that comprise them.
M2	Social phenomena can be understood only in terms of the individualistic phenomena that comprise them.
M3	The proper subject matter of Sociology concerns "the resultants and modes of organisation" of individualistic phenomena.
M4	There are no entities other than individualist entities
M5	Social phenomena are nothing but individualistic phenomena.
M6	The concept of a social phenomenon is identical to the concept of a collection of individualistic phenomena.
M7	It is not the case that the members of social groups act as component parts of an organism.

Origins of the individual-individual and social-individual problems:

Configuration problem	Which configurations of individualistic phenomena underlie the various sorts of social phenomena?
Macro-micro link problem	What is the link, or relation, between social phenomena and the individualistic phenomena that underlie them?

Relating the individual-individual and social-individual problems:

Assimilation	The individual-individual and social-individual problems are equivalent or interchangeable, and so, are in fact one problem.
Upward Reduction	Answering the individual-individual problem answers the social-individual problem.
Downward Reduction	Answering the social-individual problem answers the individual-individual problem.

Subsumption	The social-individual and individual-individual problems can be subsumed within a distinct, overarching question.
Pluralism	There are two distinct core concerns of social ontology: the social-individual problem and the individual-individual problem.
Identity	There are necessary and sufficient individualistic configurations for social phenomena, and the social can be reduced to the individual.
Supervenience	There are sufficient but not necessary individualistic configurations for social phenomena, and Non-Reductive Individualism is true.
Dualism	There are necessary but not sufficient individualistic configurations for social phenomena, and Social Dualism is true.
Negative	There are necessary but not sufficient individualistic configurations for social phenomena, and Pessimism is correct.
Functionalism	An Objectivist solution to the individual-individual problem and Social Functionalism are correct.

Section B. The Individual-individual problem (Q1) (pp. 40-115)

Criteria for success:

Let *a* be a solution to the Configuration Problem, let M*gx* mean that *x* is a member of *g*:

Groupness	$a \rightarrow ((x)(g)((\mathrm{M}gx) \rightarrow (a \rightarrow \mathrm{M}gx)))$
Individuation	$a \rightarrow ((x)(g)((\sim\mathrm{M}gx) \rightarrow \sim(a \rightarrow \mathrm{M}gx)))$

Let A*c* mean that *c* is a mere aggregate, and let G*c* denote that *c* is a social group:

Aggregation	$a \rightarrow ((c)((\mathrm{A}c) \rightarrow \sim(a \rightarrow \mathrm{G}c)))$

Categorisation of solutions to Q1:

S-1	A solution to Q1 that provides sufficient conditions for the existence of a social group of any type.
S-2	A solution to Q1 that provides sufficient conditions for the existence of a social group that is prototypical for any given type.
S-3	A solution to Q1 that provides sufficient conditions for the existence of social groups of a select few types (but not all types).

S-4	A solution to Q1 that provides sufficient conditions for the existence of social groups that are prototypical of a select few types (but not all types).
S-5	A solution to Q1 that provides sufficient conditions for the existence of a social group that is one of a limited number of instances.

Narrow teleological account

i	There are members [M] of a certain social group g.
ii	[M] are unaware of the goals of g.
iii	The best explanation for why [M] are members of g is that [M] work towards the goals of g.

Objection to Objectivism

Distinguishability	For any given social group G, there is some feature F of G that no mere aggregate of individuals possesses, and F is distinguishable from an external perspective (i.e. by someone other than a member of G).

Gilbert's plural subject theory:

PS-1	M1…Mn together comprise a plural subject.
PS-2	Each of M1…Mn believes that PS-1.
PS-3	M1…Mn each expresses readiness to ϕ.
PS-4	PS-3 is common-knowledge among (if n>2) or between (if n=2) M1…Mn.
PS-5	The expressions in PS-3 have collective content.
Correct Thought	Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group iff each of M1…Mn "correctly thinks of himself and the others, taken together, as 'us*' or 'we*'" (1989, p. 147).
Joint Commitment	Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group iff they are "jointly committed" to ϕ "as a body" (2003, 2006b) – where ϕ is a joint action, belief, state, attitude, or goal.
D-1	x believes: PSx
D-2	x believes: $(y)((x \neq y \ \& \ Gy) \rightarrow Gy)$
D-3	PSx
D-4	Fx
D-5	x believes: $(y)(((x \neq y) \ \& \ Fy) \rightarrow PSy)$

D-4`	*x* is American
D-5`	*x* believes: (*y*)(((*x* ≠ *y*) & *y* is American) → PS*y*)

Searle

Searle-1	Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a token social group *g* if there is collective recognition that they count as *g* with a status function F in context C.
Searle-2	Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a token social group *g* if the relations among M1…Mn satisfy *p*, and there is collective recognition of the Declaration that for any *x* that satisfies a certain set of conditions *p*, *x* is a social group with status function F in C.

Subjectivism and the Dark City

P1	If Subjectivism is correct, when Murdoch falls asleep, Murdoch is a member of this family, and he is married to Emma.
P2	Murdoch, Emma and the children fail to comprise a family; and Murdoch is not married to Emma.

Hybrid solutions to Q1

C	Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group.
T	M1…Mn work towards a common broad *telos*.
W	W be the claim that each of M1…Mn correctly thinks of himself and the others, taken together, as "us*" or "we*", as on Correct Thought.
Conjunctive Account	(T & W) → C
Disjunctive Account	(T v W) → C
First Complete Account	(T → C) & (C → W)
Second Complete Account	(W → C) & (C → T)

Section C. The Social-individual problem (Q2) (pp. 116-188)

Criteria for evaluation:

Aggregation	It is not the case that a implies that some mere aggregates are social groups.
Diachronic	*a* individuates groups diachronically.

Synchronic	*a* does not undermine the synchronic individuation of groups.

Non-reduction

R1	The social exists.
R2	The social and the individual are logically or conceptually independent; and
R3	Social terms can refer successfully to entities in the world.

Sheehy's account:

O-1	Material objects have a unity of form.
O-2	Material objects have a causal capacity.
O-3	Material objects can be individuated both from other material objects, and through time.
O-4	Material objects can be located spatio-temporally.
O-5	Material objects have a collection of parts related in a way that determines O-1 through O-4.

Non-Reductive Individualism:

NRI-1	Ontological Individualism is true: i.e. there are no entities other than individualist entities.
NRI-2	Social phenomena supervene upon individual phenomena (groups supervene upon their members).
NRI-3	Any given token social phenomenon is identical with a token set of individual phenomena (any given social group is identical with its members).
NRI-4	A given type of social phenomenon can be realised by wildly disjunctive types of individualist phenomena (a given type of social group can be instantiated by wildly disjunctive types of members).
NRI-5	Social properties (e.g. being a group) and individualistic properties (being a member of a group) are ontologically distinct.

Supervenience:

H	A higher-order property, such as a social property.
L	A lower-order property, such as an individualistic property.
Ob-1	An objection which claims that a supervenience account contradicts common-sense intuitions about social groups.

Ob-2	An objection which claims that a supervenience account does not adequately capture the dependence of higher-order properties on lower-order properties.

Variations of NRI-3:

NRI-3$_{\text{member}}$	Any given social group is identical with its members.
NRI-3$_{\text{member relational}}$	Any given social group is identical with the relations among its members.
NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ re}$	Any given social group is identical with specific members M1…Mn.
NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ dicto}$	Any given social group is identical with its members, whoever they are.
NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ re \text{ relational } de\ re}$	Any given social group is identical with the specific relations that exist among specific members M1…Mn.
NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ re \text{ relational } de\ dicto}$	Any given social group is identical with whatever relations exist among specific members M1…Mn.
NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ dicto \text{ relational } de\ re}$	Any given social group is identical with the specific relations that exist among its members, whoever those members are.
NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ re \text{ relational } de\ dicto}$	Any given social group is identical with whatever relations exist among specific members M1…Mn.
NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ dicto \text{ relational } de\ re}$	Any given social group is identical with the specific relations that exist among its members, whoever those members are.
NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ dicto \text{ relational } de\ dicto}$	Any given social group is identical with whatever relations exist among its members, whoever those members are.
NRI-3$_{\text{Copp}}$	Any given token social group is identical with a token set of mereological sums of person-stages linked by the appropriate unity relation.
NRI-3$_{\text{constitution}}$	Any given social group is constituted by its members.
NRI-3$_{\text{intra-relational constitution}}$	Any given social group is constituted by the intra-relations among its members.
NRI-3`$_{\text{member } de\ dicto \text{ relational } de\ dicto}$	Any given social group is identical, *at some point in time*, with whatever relations exist among its members, whoever those members are.
NRI-3`$_{\text{intra-relational constitution}}$	Any given social group is constituted by the interrelations among its members *at some point in time*.

Data considered when evaluating NRI-3:

Datum$_1$	*Coextensional groups* – some groups are coextensional; i.e. there may be two numerically distinct groups that have the same members.

$Datum_2$	*Changing membership*: most groups undergo changes in membership over time.
$Datum_3$	*Changing intra-relations*: groups are forever in flux, not just in their membership, but also in how a group's members relate with each other.
$Datum_4$	*Absent members*: some groups endure periods without members.

Baker's Schema:

Baker's Schema	Let F and G be the "primary kinds" of *x* and *y* respectively, where F and G are distinct; let "G-favourable" circumstances be those circumstances required for something to be G; and let D be G-favourable circumstances. Then, *x* constitutes *y* at time t just in case all of C1 through C5 are satisfied:
C1	*x* and *y* occupy the same space at t.
C2	*x* is in D at t.
C3	It is necessary that for any z, if *z* is F and *z* is in D at t, then some *u* exists such that *u* is G at t and *u* occupies the same space as *z*.
C4	It is possible that: *x* exists at t, while nothing occupying the same space as *x* at t is G.
C5	If *y* is immaterial, then *x* is also immaterial.

Applications of C3:

C3`	It is necessary that for any collection of human beings, if the collective is in the current political climate in South Africa, then there is a radical political youth party that occupies the same space as the collective.
C3``	It is necessary that for any collection of individuals who relate in an R-manner, if the collective is in the current political climate in South Africa, then there is a radical political youth party that occupies the same space as the collective.
C3```	It is necessary that for any social chess club, if it has multiple members, then there is a legal entity that occupies the same space as the social chess club.

Interpretations of the Knights of War case:

Int-1	The interpretation of the Knights of War case which states that the Knights of War exists at t1, at t2, and at t3.
Int-2	The interpretation of the Knights of War case which states that the Knights of War exists at t1, ceases to exist at t2, and then returns to existence at t3.
Int-3	The interpretation of the Knights of War case which states that the Knights of War exists at t1, ceases to exist at t2, and a numerically distinct chess club (i.e. not the Knights of War) comes into existence at t3.

Type Individualism:

CSM	Central State Materialism
MR-1s	If Type Individualism is true, then every social kind is identical with an individualistic kind.
MR-2s	Some social kinds can be realised by individualistic entities belonging to distinct individualistic kinds.
MR-1m	If CSM is true, then every mental kind is identical with a bodily kind.
MR-2m	Some mental kinds can be realised by bodily structures belonging to distinct bodily kinds.

Social Functionalism:

$SF_{de\ re}$	Any given social group is identical with a specific function F.
$SF_{de\ dicto}$	Any given social group is identical with a function, whatever that function is.
$SF_{diachronic}$	Social group G1 with function F1 at time t1 is identical with G2 which has F2 at t2 iff G1 and G2 are functionally continuous.

Questions concerning functional continuity:

Q3	What does it mean for two groups to be functionally continuous?
Q4	Does functional continuity (whatever functional continuity is) provide the correct principle for the diachronic individuation of social groups?

Where F1 and F2 are the respective functions of G1 at t1 and G2 at t2:

FC-1	G1 and G2 are functionally continuous iff F1 resembles F2 more than F1 resembles the function of any other social group existing at t2.
FC-2	G1 and G2 are functionally continuous iff F2 causally depends upon G1 to a greater degree than F2 depends upon any other social group existing at t1.
FC-3	G1 and G2 are functionally continuous iff there is an overlapping "goal-progression chain" between F1 and F2.

In Nozick's Closest Continuer Schema, G1 is identical with G2 iff CC-1 through CC-4 obtain:

CC-1	G2 is the closest continuer of G1.
CC-2	G1 is the closest predecessor of G2.
CC-3	G2 is close enough to G1.
CC-4	The degree to which G2 is close to G1 is significantly greater than the degree to which any other group G3 is close to G1

Section D. Eliminative Individualism (pp. 188-248)

Claims considered or dismissed in the formulation of Eliminative Individualism:

EI-1	Social phenomena do not exist.
EI-2	Folk sociology is useful.
EI-3	Folk Sociology is a radically false and misleading theory.
EI-3a	Folk Sociology is a theory.
EI-3b	Folk Sociology is radically false.
EI3-c	Folk Sociology is radically misleading.
EI-4	Social terms have no referent.

In a Kemeny-Oppenheim reduction, for any two theories (or sets of theories) T1 and T2, T2 can be replaced by, and hence eliminated in favour of, T1 if all of the following conditions are met:

KO-1	T2 cannot be Nagel-reduced to T1.
KO-2	All observations that can be explained by T2 can be fully explained by T1.
KO-3	T2 is at least as simple as T1 after T2 has explained all observations made by T1.

Types of explanatory claims:

S-1	Every instance of paranormal activity (e.g. stigmata, poltergeists, ESP, alien abduction, etc.) can be explained scientifically.
S-2	The hardness of diamonds can be explained by chemistry.
S-3	The death of Mrs Smith can be explained by the burglar firing his gun.

Ways of construing Token Explanatory Methodological Individualism:

$TEMI_{eliminative}$	Any given token social phenomenon can be explained away as a misperception by citing a token set of individualistic phenomena.
$TEMI_{constitutive}$	The underlying nature of any given token social phenomenon can be explained fully by citing the token set of individualistic phenomena that comprise it.
$TEMI_{causal}$	The cause of any given token social phenomenon can be fully specified by citing a token set of individualistic phenomena.

Discussion of evolutionary-perception-inference:

EPI	Evolutionary-perception-inference: because a given perceptual apparatus PA provided humanity with a crucial survival advantage, PA represents reality accurately most of the time.
$EPI_{concrete\text{-}concrete}$	Because using Gestalt principles to organise experiences of concrete objects provided humanity with a crucial survival advantage, the Gestalt principles represent concrete reality accurately most of the time.
$EPI_{social\text{-}concrete}$	Because using Gestalt principles to organise experiences of aggregates into social groups provided humanity with a crucial survival advantage, the Gestalt principles represent concrete reality accurately most of the time.
$EPI_{concrete\text{-}social}$	Because using Gestalt principles to organise experiences of concrete objects provided humanity with a crucial survival advantage, the Gestalt principles represent social reality accurately most of the time.
$EPI_{social\text{-}social}$	Because using Gestalt principles to organise experiences of aggregates into social groups provided humanity with a crucial survival advantage, the Gestalt principles represent social reality accurately most of the time.
P-1	Using Gestalt principles to organise experiences of aggregates into social groups provided humanity with a crucial survival advantage.

Ichikawa and explaining away:

I	Intuition to be explained away.
E	Explanans offered to explain away the intuition I.
p	The probability with which E predicts I.
i	E is true.
ii	(ii) E predicts I.
iii	(iii) It is not the case that: if I is incorrect, then E is false (or highly improbable).
iv	*p* is the same whether I is correct or incorrect.

Hempel's characteristic features of theories:

F-1	Theories are introduced to explain a set of apparent regularities.
F-2	Theories use laws or generalisations in their explanations.
F-3	Theories posit underlying theoretical entities in their explanations

F-4	Theories predict new regularities using the laws (or generalisation) and theoretical entities introduced in F-2 and F-3.

Discussion of EI-3:

RF-1	The theoretical entities posited by a theory do not exist.
RF-2	The apparent regularities for which a theory is introduced to explain do not in fact occur.
RF-3	A significant number of the generalisations utilised by a theory are false.
RF-4	The generalisations utilised by a theory do not explain adequately the apparent regularities for which the theory is introduced to explain.

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1. THE PROBLEM

Suppose there were an ancient alien being whose entire existence has been spent in solitude. The alien lives out its days exploring the universe, and, until now, has never come across another living being (of its own species or any other). But today its perambulating spaceship comes across earth, and it lands in Wits Central Block concourse, a bustling square at the heart of the South African university.[1]

Fortunately, the alien is both rational, and a skilled learner. It realises not only that we are alive, but that we are attempting to communicate with it. After some months of discussion, the alien learns enough about our language to converse, and begins to ask about the constituent elements of our world. During our explanation about how our society works, we explain to the alien that our lives and identities are hugely influenced by social groups. We grow up in a *family*, attend a *school*, participate in the rites and rituals of a *culture*, find a place in our *society*, work for a greedy *corporation*, support *Bafana Bafana*, vote for our favoured *political party*, and love our *country*. Unaccustomed to a plurality of beings, the alien appears perplexed, and asks to see one of these "social groups".

So, we point to the concourse. We explain that on an ordinary weekday, the square contains a number of individuals. Some might be eating lunch, while others are walking through to get to their lectures. These individuals, we explain, do not together comprise a social group – they are a *mere aggregate*[2] of individuals. However, later that day, the individuals on the concourse begin to chant in unison about the fee increases this year, all holding ANC youth-league (ANCYL) flags and banners.[3] Seizing the opportunity, we tell the alien that now the chanting individuals in the concourse together comprise a social group. But the alien still does not understand. "What," it asks, "is it that distinguishes the first case [the lunch-eaters and class-

[1] I constructed this thought experiment from a combination of Mandelbaum's (1955 [1973]) Martian and Rorty's (1979) Antipodeans.
[2] Note that here, and throughout the thesis, I use the phrase "mere aggregate" to refer to a collection of individuals that does not amount to a social group. Thus, I do not use the phrase "mere aggregate" in any technical sense, for example, as Sheehy (2006a, ch. 1) uses the term to refer to a mereological sum.
[3] The ANC youth-league (ANCYL) is the youth branch of the African National Congress (ANC). The ANC is presently the ruling party in South Africa.

goers], from the second [the ANCYL members] that allows us to call the latter a social group[4], but not the former? That is, what distinguishes a mere aggregate of individuals from a social group?"

After some thought a member of the sociology department answers that the most significant common-sense intuition we have about social groups is that they can **(i) act**: the ANCYL can protest, chant and demand. Moreover, groups are capable of acting morally or immorally, and are **(ii) responsible for their actions**. Should the group of ANC youth-leaguers break university property during their protest, or harm other students, they can be held liable. Related to the responsibility of groups, they also have **(iii) value**. Members of the league are proud of their allegiance to a group they believe performs meritorious actions. Or, using a different example, there seems to be something worthwhile in preserving the lost artefacts of an ancient civilisation. But, unlike the ANC youth-leaguers, the aggregate of lunch-eaters and class-goers does not possess group agency, responsibility or value. Finally, groups seem to **(iv) persist through time** in a way that mere aggregates of individuals do not. When the lunch-eaters and class-goers leave the concourse, this aggregate ceases to exist. However, the ANCYL continues to exist even after its members disperse from the concourse and go home.

Still dissatisfied, the alien says that although it sees how an *individual* can possess capacities (i) through (iv), it does not understand how a *group* of individuals has the capacity for these four features. Fortunately, the philosophy department is present in these talks, and answers that the agency, responsibility, value and persistence of social groups are grounded in the agency, responsibility, value and persistence of their individual members.

Pondering the importance of individuals for the groups they together comprise, the alien presses us further, asking two questions:

Q1. What relationships obtain among the members of a social group that do not obtain among the individuals in a mere aggregate? (e.g. how do the ANC youth-leaguers relate differently with each other compared with the lunch-eaters and class-goers?)

[4] Strictly speaking, the chanting individuals do not together comprise the ANCYL – merely a sub-section of the ANCYL. Nevertheless, we think that, at the very least, the chanting individuals together act as members of a social group in a way that the individuals walking along the concourse previously in the day did not.

Q2. What is the relation between a social group and its members? (e.g. are the ANC youth-leaguers the same as or distinct from the ANC youth-league?)

A.2. THE LITERATURE

Q1 and Q2 are located within the debates that surround the notion of individualism, but more specifically, within a branch of philosophy called "social ontology". In what follows I outline the various types of individualism that have been discussed in the literature, with the goal of highlighting the relevance of these debates for Q1 and Q2. Thereafter, I locate Q1 and Q2 within social ontology specifically. I argue that Q1 and Q2 are instances of two widely discussed questions within social ontology, namely, the configuration problem and the macro-micro link problem. However, these two problems are damagingly ambiguous, and as a result, it is unclear what the core concerns of social ontology are. To resolve this problem I will argue that Q1 and Q2 are instances of what might be called the "individual-individual problem" and the "social-individual problem" respectively. These two problems should be understood as the correct disambiguations of the configuration and macro-micro link problem respectively, and that together they comprise the core concerns of social ontology.

A.2.a. Types of individualism

In this dissertation I favour a controversial version of individualism that I later label "Eliminative Individualism", which claims that social groups do not exist. Eliminative Individualism provides negative answers to both Q1 and Q2: there is no relation among individuals sufficient to distinguish group membership from membership in a mere aggregate, and there is no relation specifiable between a social group and its members. To place Q1, Q2 and Eliminative Individualism within the existing literature, a good place to start is to discuss the different debates around individualism.

The term "individualism" has been used in distinct debates within numerous fields of inquiry, including **(i) psychology, (ii) sociology, (iii) philosophy of mind, (iv) epistemology, (v) ethics, (vi) political philosophy, (vii) economics, (viii) philosophy of social science,** and **(ix) social ontology**. Debates in fields (i) through (vi) are largely excluded from (although not unrelated to) the discussion I will have around individualism in this dissertation – I will outline these debates now, only to put them aside as tangential to my purposes. (vii) is more important, as it will be raised at the end of the dissertation, when I consider the implications of Eliminative

Individualism. However, (viii) and (ix) are central to my purpose, and so, I will discuss them at length.

Briefly, within **(i) psychology**, individualism takes the form of arguing over whether individuals construct their sense of self with or without reference to other people – i.e. whether we have a social or individualistic self – and whether this differs between societies (Chen & Lie, 2005; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). This psychological debate will become relevant later, when I argue in favour of Eliminative Individualism by providing a case for explaining away the experience of social phenomena. I argue that one reason we might believe there are social groups is that (we believe that) groups satisfy important psychological needs we have.

The structure-agency debate among **(ii) sociologists** concerns whether the behaviour of individuals is primarily determined by social structures (the "structure" position) or by the individual's psychological makeup and free choices (the "agency" position). In this context, proponents of the agency position, also called "abstract individualism" (Lukes, 1973), would often be coined as individualists (Giddens, 1987; Scott & Marshall, 2009). Eliminative Individualism would decide in favour of the agency position in this debate (since non-existent social structures have no causal power), and so, the structure position could be viewed as one of a number of positions targeted by Eliminative Individualism. I will later label this conjunction of social positions, "Folk Sociology".

Individualists, or internalists, within **(iii) philosophy of mind** argue that the content of any given intentional[5] mental state (e.g. a desire or belief) depends entirely on intrinsic properties of the individual who possesses that mental state. By contrast, externalists argue that the content of our beliefs and desires is at least partly determined by factors external to us (Lau, 2010). In **section D.4.a. Burge's account of content (p. 230)**, I discuss Burge's (1979) brand of externalism which, if true, would imply that Eliminative Individualism is false.

(iv) Social epistemologists argue that the classical, "individualist" approach to knowledge, which stresses the individual as an interchangeable, anonymous subject of knowledge, is fundamentally flawed. Instead we should adopt a social concept of knowledge, which views the subject of knowledge either as a "situated knower" (a specific, concrete individual in relation

[5] An intentional mental state is any mental state that is about, or directed at, an object.

to other individuals) or as a community (see Goldman, 2006). Eliminative Individualists would obviously deny the social account of knowledge, and adopt an individualistic account.

Within **(v) ethics**, "individualism" has been used to refer to at least three controversial positions. First, "individualism" has been understood as the view that the individual human being has ultimate intrinsic value (e.g. Matthew, p. 25:40). Kant (1785 [1998]) used this claim to ground his Formula of Humanity, or the doctrine that an action is right just in case it treats every person involved with dignity, or as an end in herself. Second, "individualism" has been used to refer to psychological egoism, or the position that individuals act purely in their own self-interest (e.g. Hobbes, 1651 [2001]). Third, "individualism" might be understood as moral egoism: the claim that an action A performed by an agent S is right if and only if A maximises or promotes the happiness or well-being of S (e.g. Kalin, 1970 [2001]). The truth of Eliminative Individualism, or any of the answers to Q1 and Q2, is independent of the truth of Kant's Formula of Humanity, psychological egoism, and moral egoism, and so, the ethical debate is irrelevant to my purposes here.

(vi) Political philosophy contains a long-standing debate about the legitimacy of authority and the obligations of subjects to obey the state's commands. In this context, "individualism" has been used to refer to a variety of positions (see Blackburn, 2008a), specifically, positions that (a) encourage civil disobedience (see Crowder, 1998), (b) are "soft" on the obligations of subjects (e.g. Wolff, 1998), (c) require the consent of subjects for legitimate authority (e.g. Locke, 1690 [1966]), and (d) stress the rights and liberty of individuals as more important than the authority of the state (e.g. Mill, 1869). It is an interesting question whether Eliminative Individualism implies any of these positions, but unfortunately it is beyond the scope of the thesis to consider this.

Finally, within **(vii) economics**, "economic individualism" refers to doctrines that justify and espouse "economic liberty", or the view that the economy should be formed as a spontaneous, competitive market, in which the means of production are privately owned (e.g. Hayek, 1946). However, what is more important for my purposes than the doctrine of economic liberty, is its most influential justification, namely, Smith's "invisible hand" argument. Smith (1759) argues that economic liberty provides a self-regulating system, in which, as if by an invisible hand, the self-interested actions of its individuals create an economy which best satisfies the interests of society as a whole. Smith's argument provides an example of what Flew (1985) describes as "the unintended consequences of intended action", involving an apparent pattern in the way

groups interact, and patterns that seem to emerge as a result of this, despite these patterns being unintended by the individuals involved. Folk Sociologists argue that without a social explanation, such patterns would be inexplicable, and therefore, these unintended patterns highlight a crucial explanatory gap in Eliminative Individualism. Towards the end of the thesis, I respond to this important objection to Eliminative Individualism.

A.2.a.i. Philosophy of social science

While debates (i) through (vii) have limited relevance to my purposes here, the debates within **(viii) philosophy of social science** and **(ix) social ontology** are far more important. Within **philosophy of social science**, the concept of individualism takes the form of "Methodological Individualism", often discussed in opposition to "Methodological Holism", or simply "Holism". Just what Methodological Individualism is, though, is itself hotly contested. The confusion starts when one notices that generally accepted practice involves labelling philosophers who never used the phrase "Methodological Individualism" as core proponents or progenitors of the position. For example, Udehn, whose work on the history of Methodological Individualism is authoritative, writes:

> The founder of Austrian economics, Carl Menger, was also the main pioneer of methodological individualism. He did not use the term himself, but there is little doubt that his "atomistic method" is the main source of the doctrine later called "methodological individualism." (2002, p. 484)[6]

Similarly, Lukes (1973, p. 119) labels Hobbes and Mill as influential Methodological Individualists, even though the phrase was first used by Schumpeter decades later (see Heath, 2007). Now, this practice (of labelling un-self-proclaimed philosophers as Methodological Individualists) would not be problematic, except for the fact that there is very little agreement on the definition of "Methodological Individualism" among those who *do* use the phrase. "Methodological Individualism" has been used to describe various (often conflicting)

[6] One might defend Udehn by arguing that he merely ascribes to Menger the role of providing that thesis (atomism) from which Methodological Individualism originates, rather than labelling Menger a Methodological Individualist. However, Udehn is clear that in his view, Menger's atomism is a form of Methodological Individualism: "he [Menger]… formulated the first ambitious program of methodological individualism, or "atomism", in the history of the social sciences" (2002, p. 484).

ontological[7], metaphysical[8], epistemological[9], explanatory[10], and topic-delimiting[11] claims within the philosophy of the social sciences. Thus, "Methodological Individualism" is generally used as a catch-all phrase for any position that places greater importance on individuals than on social phenomena in the philosophy of the social sciences. In what follows, I attempt to delineate the various accounts of Methodological Individualism provided by its (commonly proclaimed) core proponent, Weber, with the goal of showing how a variety of solutions to Q1 and Q2 arise from these accounts.[12]

Weber provides what is generally considered to be the seminal account of Methodological Individualism, stating that:

> …it may on the other hand be convenient or even indispensable to treat social collectivities, such as states, associations, business corporations, foundations, as if they were individual persons…. But for the subjective interpretation of action in sociological work these collectivities must be treated as solely the resultants and modes of organization of the particular acts of individual persons, since these alone can be treated as agents in a course of subjectively understandable action. (1922 [1978], p. 13)

This passage might be (and has been) understood as asserting any or all of the following claims:

MI-1) All social phenomena can be explained purely in terms of the individualistic phenomena that comprise them.

MI-2) Social phenomena can be understood only in terms of the individualistic phenomena that comprise them.

MI-3) The proper subject matter of Sociology concerns "the resultants and modes of organisation" of individualistic phenomena.

MI-4) There are no entities other than individualist entities.

MI-5) Social phenomena are nothing but individualistic phenomena.

It is no wonder, then, why there is such confusion over the central thesis of Methodological Individualism. MI-1 makes a claim about social *explanation*; MI-2 is an *epistemological* thesis

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[7] An ontological claim is a claim about what does or does not exist.
[8] A metaphysical claim about *x* concerns the nature of *x*.
[9] An epistemological claim concerns the nature of knowledge.
[10] An explanatory claim, in this context, is a claim about the nature of social explanation.
[11] A topic-delimiting claim concerning an area of inquiry A is a claim about which topics A should take as its subject of inquiry.
[12] Note that I will follow the trend of ascribing Methodological Individualism to commonly considered, yet un-self-proclaimed, Methodological Individualists. The reason for this is that I am less concerned here with what Methodological Individualism *is*, and more concerned with how some of the versions of Methodological Individualism provided in the literature could be understood as answers to Q1 and Q2.

about how social phenomena can be understood, or known; MI-3 is a *topic-delimiting* claim about the proper subject matter of sociological inquiry; MI-4 is an *ontological* doctrine; and finally, MI-5 is a *metaphysical* claim about the nature of social phenomena.

To make matters worse, in the following two pages, Weber writes:

> When reference is made in a Sociological context to a state, a nation, a corporation, a family, or an army corps, or to similar collectivities, what is meant is… a certain kind of development of actual or possible social actions of individual persons. Though extremely pedantic and cumbersome, it would be possible, if purposes of sociological terminology alone were involved, to eliminate such [social] terms entirely, and substitute newly-coined words. (1922 [1978], p. 14)

> Thirdly, it is the method of the so-called "organic" school of sociology… to attempt to understand social interaction by using as a point of departure the "whole" within which the individual acts. His action and behavior are then interpreted somewhat in the way that a physiologist would treat the role of an organ of the body in the "economy" of the organism, that is from the point of view of the survival of the latter…. For purposes of sociological analysis… if its [i.e. the organic view's] cognitive value is overestimated and its concepts illegitimately "reified," it can be highly dangerous. (Weber, 1922 [1978], p. 15)

These two passages, respectively, suggest the following claims:

MI-6) The concept of a social phenomenon is identical to the concept of a collection of individualistic phenomena.

MI-7) It is not the case that the members of social groups act as component parts of an organism.

MI-6 is a claim about the *meaning* of social terms, while MI-7 concerns the *relations among the members* of a social group.

Philosophers have argued vociferously over which of these seven claims "truly" defines Methodological Individualism [as an example, see the Watkins (1952, 1952 [1973], 1958, 1959a, 1959b) vs Goldstein (1956, 1958, 1959) debate; also, see Udehn (2002) for an excellent summary]. For my purposes in this dissertation, I am primarily interested in individualism understood as an ontological and metaphysical claim, since Q1 and Q2 are metaphysical questions, while Eliminative Individualism is an ontological claim with metaphysical implications for Q1 and Q2. Thus, my discussion will involve MI-4 and MI-5 as important components. Specifically, MI-4 (later labelled "Ontological Individualism") and MI-5 form the ontological basis for Non-Reductive Individualism **(p. 124)**, Logical Individualism **(p. 154)**, Type Individualism **(p. 159)**, and Eliminative Individualism **(p. 188)**, all of which are solutions to Q2. This is not to say, though, that the other versions of Methodological Individualism are

irrelevant to my purposes. Indeed, MI-1 is used as an argument for Type Individualism, MI-6 is the central claim of Logical Individualism, and MI-7 is the denial of the organic account of social groups presented as a possible solution to Q1 **(p. 40)**.

Thus, **(viii) philosophy of social science**, in offering Methodological Individualism in its various versions, provides the ground for many of the solutions I later present to Q1 and Q2. However, Q1 and Q2, as questions, belong within **(ix) social ontology**.

A.2.b. Social ontology

Gittler was the first to define the phrase "social ontology":

> It is the contention of this paper that sociologists tend to overlook one of the prime criteria for defining concepts; that this criterion involves the consideration of the nature of social reality (social ontology)…. We are employing the term social ontology to refer to the ultimate social "stuff," the basic generic social reality that has to be taken into account in defining social objects or the concepts that refer to them. (Gittler, 1950, p. 8; emphasis added)

On a rough paraphrase of Gittler's usage, which I will assume for the remainder of this dissertation, social ontology is the study or investigation of the nature and existence of social phenomena. Social "ontology", then, is both the ontological and metaphysical investigation of social reality. Gittler is silent, however, on precisely how social ontologists should go about "taking into account" social reality: what questions would a successful social ontology, or account of social phenomena, need to answer?[13] A consideration of the more influential social ontologies (Elster, 1989; Gilbert, 1989; Lewis, 1969; Sawyer, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004; Searle, 1995, 1998, 2010; R. Tuomela, 1983, 1989b, 1990, 2003) yields two plausible candidate questions, namely, the configuration problem and the macro-micro-link problem:[14]

Configuration problem: which configurations of individualistic phenomena underlie the various sorts of social phenomena?

Macro-micro link problem: what is the link, or relation, between social phenomena and the individualistic phenomena that underlie them?

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[13] I use the phrases "an account of social phenomena", "an account of social reality" and "a social ontology" interchangeably.

[14] One might read Searle as providing a distinct problem from the configuration and macro-micro-link problems. I consider this view in **section A.2.b.iv. Pluralism and gaps in the literature (p. 29)**.

Interestingly, these two questions are, respectively, similar to Q1 and Q2: the questions asked by our alien interlocutor at the start of this dissertation. Recall that Q1 asks us to specify the relation among (i.e. the *configuration* of) the members of a social group that does not occur among the individuals in a mere aggregate, while Q2 concerns the relation (i.e. the *link)* between a social group and its members.

However, I will argue that, as they stand, the configuration and macro-micro link problems are damagingly ambiguous, for two reasons: because they permit versions of the problems (and hence some solutions) that do not belong within social ontology; and because the ambiguity obfuscates the points of agreement and departure among the various accounts on offer. Moreover, little attention has been given as to how these two problems are related. As a result, it is unclear exactly what common underlying question(s) these social ontologies seek, or should seek, to answer. Put differently, there seems little agreement over answering the question: what do social ontologists do?

In what follows I attempt to resolve these problems, by arguing that the individual-individual and social-individual problems, of which Q1 and Q2 are respective instances, should be considered the correct disambiguations of the configuration and macro-micro-link problems. That is, I will argue that the individual-individual and social-individual problems together comprise the core concerns of social ontology. Thereafter, I discuss the relationship between these two problems, first by providing a taxonomy of solutions to each, and then by relating these two taxonomies.

A.2.b.i. The configuration problem and the individual-individual problem

Which configurations of individualistic phenomena underlie the various sorts of social phenomena? Social ontologists discussing this question have focused their efforts on understanding collective preferences (see, e.g., Condorcet, 1785; Downs, 1957), cooperation (Axelrod, 1984; Kreps, Milgrom, Roberts, & Wilson, 1982; Schelling, 1960), convention (Lewis, 1969), collective feelings (Gilbert, 1997, 2005, 2006a; Konzelmann Ziv, 2007), collective agency (Bratman, 1987, 2009; Elster, 1989; Gilbert, 2002; Holmstroem-Hintikka & Tuomela, 1997; S. Miller, 1992, 2001, 2010; Pettit, 2007; Searle, 1990; R. Tuomela, 1989a, 1994), and social groups and institutions (Elster, 1989; Gilbert, 1989; Searle, 1995, 2010; Simmel, 1910-1911 [1971]; R. Tuomela, 2003). However, these accounts engage with the configuration problem in distinct ways, which I will argue suggests an underlying ambiguity in

the problem. I focus here on three Rational Choice accounts in the literature (Condorcet's Paradox, Schelling's account of cooperation, and Lewis's account of convention), and argue that these three accounts together suggest a four-way ambiguity in the configuration problem. Yet only one of these four disambiguations, I will argue, is a suitable candidate for being a core concern of social ontology.

Rational Choice Theorists understand the configuration problem to be the challenge of specifying how social phenomena arise from configurations of rational, self-interested preferences of individuals. Consider first Condorect's Paradox (1785), which provides us with a *necessary* condition for the configuration of individualistic preferences underlying a collective preference. The paradox is often discussed in terms of the issues raised for democratic voting (e.g. Cudd, 2002). Consider the following scenario. Let a group G consist of individuals A, B and C. Suppose their voting preferences in the South African 2009 general elections are:

- A prefers ANC to DA, and DA to COPE.
- B prefers DA to COPE, and COPE to ANC.
- C prefers COPE to ANC, and ANC to DA.

If we attempt to aggregate these three preferences into a single preference for G, we arrive at: G prefers ANC to DA (since both A and C hold this preference), DA to COPE (held by A and B), and COPE to ANC (held by B and C). This is clearly problematic, since these three preferences together are intransitive, and so, create a contradiction: there is no determinate (rational) group preference in this scenario. Hence, the conclusion of Condorcet's paradox could be stated as: the individualistic preferences underlying a (rational) collective preference must be non-cyclical, or there must be fewer than three individuals voting, or there must be fewer than three options from which the individuals choose. (The challenge raised for democracy is that, arguably, it is almost never the case that any of these three disjuncts is satisfied in a democratic election).

By contrast, consider Schelling and Lewis's accounts of cooperation. Both accounts stem from a discussion of how rational players should act in various *coordination games*. First, consider the following example, which I call Game 1. I lived on a farm with a narrow access road, and so drivers tended to drive in the middle of the road. Suppose that while driving this road, I noticed another car, also driving in the middle of the road, but driving *towards* me. Suppose that it was impossible to stop in time to avoid the collision (the road was wet), so either I should

have veered to my left while he veered to his left, or I should have veered to my right while he veered to his right. Now, let "Strategy1" and "Strategy2" be, respectively, the choice to veer to the left and to the right, and let he and I be, respectively, players A and B. Then the payoff matrix for this scenario is described by **Figure 1** (assume that each of us prefers an outcome described by a lower number – i.e. "1" is preferable to "2", and that an outcome of the form *x*,*y* indicates an outcome of *x* and *y* for A and B respectively):

		B	
		Strategy1	Strategy2
A	Strategy1	1,1	2,2
	Strategy2	2,2	1,1

Figure 1: Game 1

In Game 1, cooperation or coordination occurs if both players choose the same strategy, whether this be Strategy1 or Strategy2 (top-left or bottom-right cells). Thus, the challenge faced by each player is that he must somehow predict which strategy his opponent will choose, and act similarly. Since this challenge concerns a lack of information, Lewis and Schelling attempt to solve this problem by finding ways to provide the players with relevant information about their opponent. I consider Schelling's solution first.

Schelling argues that even if there is no communication possible between the players, the players can with fairly reasonable accuracy assume certain helpful information about the other player, based upon the assumption that the other player is like them. These assumptions can be made because of certain common "focal points" shared by the players. For example (see Hardin, 1998), player A might by default choose Strategy1 because A is an English-speaker, who is accustomed to reading from top left to bottom right. Similarly, A could with greater than a 50% chance of being correct assume that because player B is an English-speaker, he will do the same. In this case, the top-left cell operates as a focal point, and therefore allows for coordination, and hence, for cooperation.

Unlike Condorcet's paradox, Schelling's solution does not provide us with a *necessary* condition for social phenomena: focal points are not necessary for cooperation – the two players might purely by chance (in Game 1, a 50% chance) happen upon a common strategy. Rather, Schelling provides a *causal* condition for cooperation: focal points enable, or cause, each player

to predict with greater certainty the other player's strategy, and so, cooperate. Lewis, however, provides something stronger than either a necessary or causal condition for cooperation.

Lewis's solution is to point out that, as they apply to real-world social scenarios, games like Game 1 are iterative, or repeated over time. Every time the game is repeated, the players gain further information about their opponent's strategy, since these iterations are – or as Lewis (1969, p. 36) describes it, "the force of precedent" is – likely to produce repeated choices, or patterns of choices, of strategies (especially if these strategies result in cooperation). This information then allows each player to act accordingly, and so resolve the coordination problem successfully. This repeated successful solution to a game problem is, roughly, what Lewis calls a "convention".[15, 16]

For example, I have driven this road and many others in South Africa, and in almost all cases where there is an approaching car, we each keep to our respective left. Thus, in this instance of Game 1, I had justified grounds for believing that you would veer to your left, and so, I chose to veer to my left as well, thereby avoiding the collision. By repeatedly avoiding collisions in this way, South Africans form a convention to drive on the left-hand side of the road.

By definition, then, acting on, or in accordance with, convention is *sufficient* for cooperation. However, Lewis's account offers us something more important than just a sufficient condition for cooperation: Lewis intends to provide what Gilbert (1989) calls a *principle of unity*. Roughly, a principle of unity transforms a mere aggregate of individualistic phenomena into a social phenomenon. The principle of unity for a given social phenomenon S is the glue [or "cement", as Elster (1989) would call it] that combines the individualistic phenomena underlying S – without that principle of unity, S would be a mere aggregate of individualistic phenomena, and not a *social* phenomenon.

On Lewis's account, every time a player acts in accordance with convention, he is more likely to act that way in future. That is, the convention is self-sustaining. Evolutionary game theorists explain this by drawing an analogy between the Darwinian notion of the survival and evolution of the fittest animals over successive generations, and the establishment of conventions (or

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[15] A solution to a game is successful just in case it results in cooperation between the players, and the outcome for each player is the best possible outcome obtainable given that they cooperate.

[16] This simplified version of Lewis's account of convention suits my purposes here. See Lewis (1969, pp. 78-79) for a fuller statement of the account.

sustained successful strategies) over successive rounds in a tournament of reiterated games (see Guala, 2007). To use a simplified example, suppose there were a multitude of sets of players playing Game 2 (described in **Figure 2**) in a tournament:

		B	
		Strategy1	Strategy2
A	Strategy1	2,2	2,2
	Strategy2	2,2	1,1

Figure 2: Game 2

In this scenario, any player who chooses Strategy1 will receive a worse outcome than a player who chooses Strategy2, and so, only players who choose Strategy2 will be permitted to proceed to the next round of the tournament. That is, Strategy2 will "survive", or "evolve" as a convention, and cooperation will therefore result. On this understanding, convention is more than just an aid to cooperation – it is *intrinsic* to cooperation. During the course of many iterations of game play, cooperation *becomes* convention. (This fits with our common linguistic usage: "it is conventional to cooperate").

This is even more evident when one compares the scenario of a tournament of reiterated games with a once-off game. Suppose Game 2 is played only once, between two players. The focal point of choosing the top-left cell used to resolve Game 1 will not help here. If cooperation does occur, it will be merely coincidental or lucky – i.e. cooperation (or perhaps mere convergence?) here is unintentional. By contrast, in an iterative game scenario, players will learn that Strategy2 is the only way to achieve a reward, and so, will intentionally cooperate by choosing Strategy2. Thus, the convention of choosing Strategy2 transforms merely coincidental convergence into intentional cooperation. Therefore, for Lewis, convention provides the principle of unity that underlies social cooperation.

We are now in a position to elucidate the ambiguity in the configuration problem. The three accounts considered (Condorcet's paradox, Schelling's focal points, and Lewis's conventions) might each be understood as answering one or more of the following distinct disambiguations of the configuration problem: what are the individualistic phenomena

1. **that cause social phenomena?** (Schelling)
2. **necessary for social phenomena?** (Condorcet)
3. **sufficient for social phenomena?** (Lewis)

4. **that provide a principle of unity for social phenomena?** (Lewis)

This four-way ambiguity is problematic because not all of these disambiguations belong within social ontology. Recall that social ontology investigates the *nature* of social phenomena. Social ontology is therefore not in the business of providing causal conditions for (i.e. explaining) social phenomena – that is the realm of the social sciences. Put otherwise, the cause of a phenomenon is not a part of its nature, and so, version 1 of the configuration problem lies outside of social ontology.

Moreover, versions 2 and 3 are also non-central concerns for social ontologists: the necessary and sufficient individualistic conditions for a given social phenomenon do not necessarily form part of its *principle of unity*. That is, conditions that are necessary or sufficient for a social phenomenon need not be *constitutive* of that phenomenon. For example, a *necessary* condition for collective action is that the individuals involved must be alive, yet being alive is not intuitively part of what transforms individual actions into a collective action – it does not form part of the principle of unity for collective action. Consider a second example. Elster (1989) has pointed out that if a collection of individuals interacts frequently enough, those individuals comprise a social group. Intuitively, however, the mere frequency of interaction among individuals does not seem to be the principle of unity for social groups (the *quality* of interaction seems to play a role here too).[17] Thus, although, at best, Elster may provide a *sufficient* condition for social group membership (I doubt he has though), it does not seem to form part of the principle of unity for social groups.

Now if the necessary and sufficient conditions for a social phenomenon do not form part of its principle of unity, they will not provide us with information about the *nature* of that phenomenon. Ultimately, then, versions 2 and 3 of the configuration problem enter into social ontology only insofar as they inform our investigation of version 4: *version 4 is the proper subject matter of social ontology*. Version 4 asks us to specify the constitutive conditions for social phenomena.[18] To emphasise its importance, and to distinguish version 4 from versions 1 through 3, I call version 4 the **individual-individual problem**.

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[17] This is a simplified version of Elster's account – for a more lengthy elucidation of the account, see **section B.2.a. Elster's transaction account (p. 43)**.

[18] Specifying the constitutive conditions for social phenomena may involve specifying necessary and/or sufficient conditions for those phenomena. But those constitutive necessary and/or sufficient conditions will not be accidental to those phenomena, while they may be accidental in versions 2 and 3 of the configuration problem.

A.2.b.ii. The macro-micro-link problem and the social-individual problem

Even if we accept that the individual-individual problem is a core concern of social ontology, this does not imply that it *exhausts* the concerns of social ontology. The **macro-micro-link problem** is another important candidate: **what is the link, or relation, between social phenomena and the individualistic phenomena that underlie them?**

Unfortunately, like the configuration problem, the macro-micro-link problem is problematically ambiguous, since it has been understood in three ways, not all of which properly belong within social ontology. First, and traditionally, the problem of specifying the macro-micro link is often understood as a problem of *explanation*: **can social phenomena be fully explained in purely individualistic terms?** This is the debate between methodological individualists and methodological holists discussed above **(p. 6)**. However, again, the explanation for a social phenomenon does not form part of its nature, and so, questions about the nature of social explanation belong within philosophy of social science, rather than within social ontology.[19]

Second, the macro-micro-link problem has been understood as a question about the *causal role* of social phenomena: **do individual actions *affect* (or *impact*) social phenomena, and do social phenomena impact individual actions?** In the social sciences, this puzzle is discussed in terms of the structure-agency debate **(p. 3)**. Proponents of the agency position deny the existence of "downward" causation of social phenomena upon individual agents, while the structure proponents affirm this downward causation. It is plausible that this causal version of the macro-micro-link problem belongs within social ontology: investigating whether or not social phenomena are capable of downward causation seems relevant for understanding the nature of social phenomena (Sawyer, 2003). Nevertheless, this does not appear to be a *core* concern for social ontologists: there is more to the study of the nature of social phenomena than studying their causal capacity. Rather, this causal-role version of the problem should be understood as a question which stems from, and hence will be answered in the course of investigating, the third version of the problem – discussed now.

The third version of the macro-micro-link problem is a question of identity: **are social phenomena identical with or distinct from the individualistic phenomena underlying them?** If they are identical, should we understand this identity in terms of token-token identity,

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[19] This is not to say that Methodological Individualism is *irrelevant* to Social Ontologists, since Methodological Individualism is used to support Type Individualism [see **section C.3.b. Type Individualism (p. 159)**].

type-type identity, or some other relation? And if social and individualistic phenomena are distinct, is this a distinction of properties, or of entities? Traditionally, this version of the macro-micro link problem, which I call the **social-individual problem**, has been put aside as unimportant. For example, Ryan (1970, p. 181) dismisses the problem as that problem which "worries students more than it ought to". There seem to be a number of reasons for adopting Ryan's view, namely, that the social-individual problem is: (a) interchangeable with the individual-individual problem; (b) reducible to the individual-individual problem, and hence, resolved once the individual-individual problem is resolved; (c) an instance of the whole-part problem; (d) analogous to the mind-body problem; (e) outside the boundaries of social ontology; or (f) easy to resolve. I argue, however, that claims (a) through (f) are false, and therefore, that the social-individual problem remains a plausible candidate for being a core concern of social ontology.

I object to (a) and (b) in **section A.2.b.iii. Relating the individual-individual and social-individual problems (p. 19)**, under my consideration of **Assimilation** and **Upward Reduction** respectively. Consider now (c), or the claim that the social-individual problem is an instance of a far more widely discussed problem, namely, how to relate a whole to its parts. Proponents for this position, such as Mellor (1982, pp. 63-65) and Quinton (1975-76, p. 5), suggest that the social-individual problem has already received long-standing attention, albeit in a different form (e.g. discussions about Theseus's ship), and so, the social-individual problem does not merit separate attention.

The difficulty with this position, however, is that even if the social-individual problem is an instance of the whole-part problem, there is still much to investigate, since it is unclear precisely what the parts of social phenomena are. For example, are the parts of which social groups are composed their members, or the intra-relations among their members? To add to the complexity here, Mandelbaum (1955 [1973], p. 115) correctly points out that individualistic phenomena are not the only parts of social phenomena. Rather, the social is *holistic*, in that social phenomena have as some of their parts *other* social phenomena: part of being a bank is having a relationship with the government, reserve bank, clients, etc.; and part of being the ANCYL is being the youth branch of the ANC, and being in opposition to other political parties. This holism of the social is not paralleled by a "holism" of material objects – tables do not have as their parts other tables. Thus, even if the social-individual problem is an instance of the whole-part problem, the social-individual problem is more complex than the whole-part problem as

applied to material objects. Hence, the social-individual problem is a legitimate problem, distinct from the whole-part problem as traditionally construed.[20]

The fourth reason one might adopt Ryan's position on the unimportance of the social-individual problem is that (d) the social-individual problem is analogous to the far more carefully considered mind-body problem (see, e.g., Horgan, 1993; Sawyer, 2001, 2002, 2003), or the question: is the mind distinct from or identical with the body? One might then infer that answering the mind-body problem will provide a corresponding answer to the social-individual problem; and therefore, we should concentrate our efforts on the mind-body problem, rather than on the social-individual problem.

Now, it is correct that the two problems are analogous in certain important respects: specifically, I argue in **section A.2.b.iii. Relating the individual-individual and social-individual problems (p. 19)** that the two problems should receive analogous *taxonomies* for their various solutions. However, solutions to the social-individual problem face challenges that their corresponding solutions to the mind-body problem do not. For instance, a supervenience account of the social suffers from problems that a supervenience account of the mental does not [see **section C.2.b.ii. Regional supervenience (p. 133)**]. Moreover, in **section C.3.b. Type Individualism (p. 159)** I argue that Type Individualism lacks resources, which Central State Materialism has at its disposal, to respond to the objection from multiple realisation. Further, I argue that Social Functionalism, a position that parallels Mental Functionalism, faces issues that the corresponding mental account does not [see **section C.3.c.ii. The analogy between cognitive states and social groups (p. 174)**].[21]

Finally, consider (e) and (f), or the claims that the social-individual problem is external to the concerns of social ontologists, and that it is easy to resolve. It should be clear, given the analogies between the social-individual problem and the whole-part and mind-body problems, that since the latter two problems are crucial metaphysical problems, so is the former. That is, the identity or distinction between any given object or property *x* and its underlying parts seems to be a part of the nature of *x*, whether *x* is a ship, a mental state, or a social phenomenon. Moreover, given the obvious complexity and difficulty of the whole-part and mind-body

[20] For a more extensive discussion of the holism of the social, see **section C.3.a. Logical Individualism (p. 154).**
[21] I define supervenience, Type Individualism, Central State Materialism, Social Functionalism and Mental Functionalism in the next section.

problems and their similarity to the social-individual problem, it would be unwise to presume that the social-individual problem is easily resolved.

I take it, therefore, that the social-individual problem is the correct disambiguation of the macro-micro link problem. Moreover, we should understand Q2 as an instance of the social-individual problem. Thus, Q2 is the question: **are social phenomena identical with or distinct from their members?** If they are identical, should we understand this identity in terms of token-token identity, type-type identity or some other relation? And if social groups and their members are distinct, are they distinct substances, or, rather, are group's properties distinct from their members' properties?

A.2.b.iii. Relating the individual-individual and social-individual problems

So far I have argued that the social ontology literature is confusing because two important questions underlying the literature (the configuration and macro-micro-link problems) are problematically ambiguous. However, even once these two questions have been disambiguated appropriately, as the individual-individual and social-individual problems respectively, confusion remains, since the relationship between the two questions has never been explored explicitly or fully. In the remainder of the introduction, I will investigate the relationship between the two problems by providing a taxonomy of the possible answers to the individual-individual problem, a taxonomy of solutions to the social-individual problem, and then highlight the implications of the one taxonomy for the other.

The literature on the individual-individual problem is perhaps best divided along two dimensions. First, the proposed solutions to the individual-individual problem might be divided into Subjectivist and Objectivist accounts. Subjectivist accounts of a given type of social phenomenon S cite the mental states of the persons underlying S as providing a principle for the unity of S. By contrast, Objectivist accounts exclude reference to the mental states of the individuals underlying S, and focus instead on the *patterns of interactions* which these individuals have with one another. The distinction might be framed as a difference in perspective, or stance. Subjectivist accounts take an "internal" stance with regard to social phenomena, where the perspective of the individuals involved is crucial, whereas Objectivist accounts view social phenomena from the perspective of an all-seeing, external observer.

For example, Gilbert (1989), following Simmel (1910-1911 [1971]), provides a Subjectivist account of social groups, in which groups are understood as a collective in which every member

thinks of himself, as well as the other members of the group, as a "we" or "us". Thus, Gilbert holds that mental states (i.e. beliefs) of individuals underlying social phenomena are essential to the nature of those social phenomena. By contrast, Rational Choice accounts of social phenomena, such as Lewis's (1969) account of convention and cooperation, are Objectivist accounts. For Lewis, it is the *patterns of strategy choices* made by individual agents in reiterated coordination games that produce convention and cooperation. Lewis's account has spawned Objectivist, teleological accounts of collective action and group membership, which understand these concepts in terms of the *teloi* of the individuals involved. On these accounts, collective actions are actions performed by individuals in pursuit of a common *telos*, and social groups are collections of individuals capable of collective action (e.g. S. Miller, 2001, 2010; R. Tuomela, 1989a). These teleological accounts are Objectivist because they espouse that even if we do not know the beliefs of the individuals involved, we can, "from the outside" as it were, see that these individuals act towards a common goal, and this is why we should view these individuals as comprising a social group performing collective actions.

Notice, though, that the Subjectivist-Objectivist distinction as it stands is problematic. Objectivist teleological accounts include the notion of working towards a common *telos*, which presupposes that the individuals involved have mental states – beliefs and desires. Thus, it seems both Subjectivists and Objectivists require that group members have mental states, and so, there is no distinction here. However, we might refine our distinction between Subjectivism and Objectivism as follows. Subjectivist accounts cite *reflexive* mental states in their account of social groups, whereas Objectivist accounts do not. A group member with "reflexive" mental states has mental states regarding his and the other members' membership in the group. On Gilbert's account, for example, group members believe that they together with the others *are members of the group*, or members of a plural subject. But Objectivist accounts do not require or posit that group members have this reflexivity – although they do require that group members have some mental states, such as preferences (on rational choice theory) or goals (on the teleological account).

The second dimension along which solutions to the individual-individual problem might be classified is according to their strength: the principle of unity provided to account for a given social phenomenon S might be (i) sufficient but not necessary for the unity of S, (ii) necessary but not sufficient for the unity of S, or (iii) both necessary and sufficient for the unity of S. Returning to Gilbert's (1989) account, for example, we might understand Gilbert as espousing

any one of the following three positions: that the beliefs of group members are necessary, sufficient, or both necessary and sufficient, for membership within the group.

Thus, we now have a taxonomy for the individual-individual problem. Moreover, it is fruitful to taxonomise solutions to the social-individual analogously with the taxonomy already provided by accounts of the mind-body relation. These accounts of mind are perhaps best broken up into two broad types of accounts: affirmative and negative accounts. Affirmative accounts claim that mental states exist, while negative accounts deny this claim. We can further divide affirmative accounts into reductive and non-reductive accounts.[22]

Non-reductive accounts hold that the mind and the body are distinct. However, different non-reductive accounts understand this position in different ways – that is, they understand the *emergence*[23] of mental states differently. Cartesian Dualists hold that the mind and the body are distinct substances: the mind and the body are made of different kinds of stuff, or, put otherwise, the mind and the body are two distinct types of entity (Descartes, 1641 [2009]). The only relation that obtains between the mental and the physical, on Descartes' account, is causal: the mind has a causal impact on the body, and vice-versa. Cartesian Dualists posit a *strong* form of emergence of the mental. By contrast, Non-Reductive Materialists posit a *weak* form of emergence of the mental, denying that the mind and body are distinct substances, and holding instead that mental properties are distinct from physical properties (Davidson, 1970 [1980]). On this view, the mental supervenes upon the physical. That is, the mental is dependent on the physical, in the sense that a change in the physical requires a change in the mental; or, if the physical remains constant, so does the mental (Kim, 1984). This has been taken to be consistent with the claim that a single, or token, mental state is identical with a token physical state (Davidson, 1970 [1980]), and with the claim that the mental is *constituted* by the physical (L. R. Baker, 2000).[24]

Reductive accounts deny the claim that the mind and the body are distinct, and hold instead that the mental can be *reduced* to the physical: that is, the mind and the body are identical.[25]

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[22] The term "realism" has been used to refer to both affirmative accounts, and to (non-eliminativist) non-reductive accounts. Because of this ambiguity, I won't use this term in the thesis.

[23] I discuss emergence further (specifically, the emergence of social phenomena) in **section C.2. Non-reduction (p. 118)**.

[24] For a discussion of constitution, see **section C.2.b.iii. Constitution (p. 144)**.

[25] The term "reduction" might also refer to a relation between two theories. Roughly, to say that theory T1 can be reduced to theory T2 is to say that T1 can be replaced by T2. In this context, reductionists claim that psychology can be replaced by neurology. There is much debate here around exactly what "replacement" involves [see

Importantly, reductionists (in the sense intended here) should not be taken to deny the *reality* of the mind – i.e. reductionists affirm the existence of the mind, and so intend to conserve the mind in its reduction to the physical. Now although reductionists are unanimous that by identity they mean more than supervenience, token identity, or Baker's constitution, they disagree on whether this identity is a *conceptual* relation between the mental and the physical, as in Philosophical Behaviourism (Ryle, 1949)[26] and Common-sense Functionalism (Lewis, 1972)[27], or an *empirical* connection between the mental and the physical, as espoused by Psycho-functionalists (Putnam, 1981)[28] and Central State Materialists (Place, 1956)[29]. Conceptual accounts hold that the reduction of the mental to the physical is *a priori* and necessary, while empirical accounts espouse an *a posteriori*, contingent reduction.

Finally, returning to our initial distinction among accounts of mind, while both reductive and non-reductive accounts assume that mental states exist (since they are affirmative accounts), negative accounts deny this claim. There are two ways a proponent of a negative account might do this. Instrumentalists, like Dennett (1987), claim that while mental states are useful for explaining or predicting human behaviour, mental states do not exist – that is, mental states are useful fictions. Eliminative Materialists, however, such as Churchland (1981 [1991]) and P. M. Churchland (1986), take a more radical view: the sum of talk about mental states constitutes a radically misleading and false theory, called "Folk Psychology". As such, Folk Psychology should be discarded, and replaced by the evolving neuro-scientific account.

Similarly, we might attempt to construct a parallel taxonomy of accounts that seek to answer the social-individual problem. Accounts might be divided into affirmative and negative, with affirmative accounts affirming the existence of social phenomena, and negative accounts denying the existence of the social. Within affirmative accounts we could distinguish between reductive and non-reductive accounts. Non-reductive accounts would comprise Social Dualism

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Batterman (2007) and **section D.2.b. Models of elimination (p. 191)** for a discussion of various types of inter-theoretic replacement]. I am less interested here, however, in the status of psychology and its relation to neurology, and more interested in the relation between the mind and the body themselves – i.e. my focus is on metaphysics and ontology, rather than philosophy of science.

[26] Philosophical Behaviourists claim that the concept of a mental state is identical with the concept of a behavioural state.

[27] Common-sense Functionalism is the doctrine that the concept of a mental state is identical with the concept of a functional state. Functional states might be understood in terms of their typical causes and effects.

[28] Psycho-functionalists posit that psychologists will discover perfect bi-conditional correlations between types of mental states and types of functional states.

[29] Central State Materialists, such as Place, hold that types of mental states are identical with types of physical states, where this identity will be discovered empirically.

(Durkheim, 1895 [1982]; Sheehy, 2006a) and Non-Reductive Individualism (Sawyer, 2002, 2003), which, respectively, claim a distinction at the level of substance and property between the social and the individual. On Social Dualism, social phenomena are strongly emergent, with merely a causal relation between the social and the individual; while on Non-Reductive Individualism, the social is weakly emergent, and supervenes upon the individual.[30]

Moreover, reductive accounts might be divided into conceptual accounts (Logical Individualism and Common-sense Social Functionalism) and empirical accounts (Type Individualism and Empirical Social Functionalism). Logical Individualism holds that social concepts are identical with individualistic concepts (Neurath, 1944; Quinton, 1975-76), while Common-sense Social Functionalism is the doctrine that social phenomena can be reduced conceptually to their function. On the other hand, Type Individualists and Empirical Social Functionalists posit that we will discover (empirically) that types of social phenomena are perfectly correlated with, respectively, types of individualistic phenomena and types of functions.

And finally, "Social Instrumentalism" (R. Tuomela, 1983) and "Eliminative Individualism" (Schmitt, 2003; R. Tuomela, 1990) parallel the negative accounts of mind. These two doctrines claim, respectively, that social phenomena are useful fictions, and that "Folk Sociology" is a radically misleading and false theory, to be replaced by purely individualistic sciences.

Thus, we arrive at **Figure 3**:[31]

[30] Like the Non-Reductive Materialist account of mind, the Non-Reductive Individualist account of the social is consistent with the claim that token social phenomena are identical with token collections of individualistic phenomena, and that social phenomena are constituted by individualistic phenomena in Baker's (2000) sense of constitution.

[31] Note that **Figure 3** does not distinguish between the conceptual and empirical versions of mental and Social Functionalism, since this distinction does not impact (what is my ultimate interest in this section) the relation between the taxonomies for the individual-individual and social-individual problems.

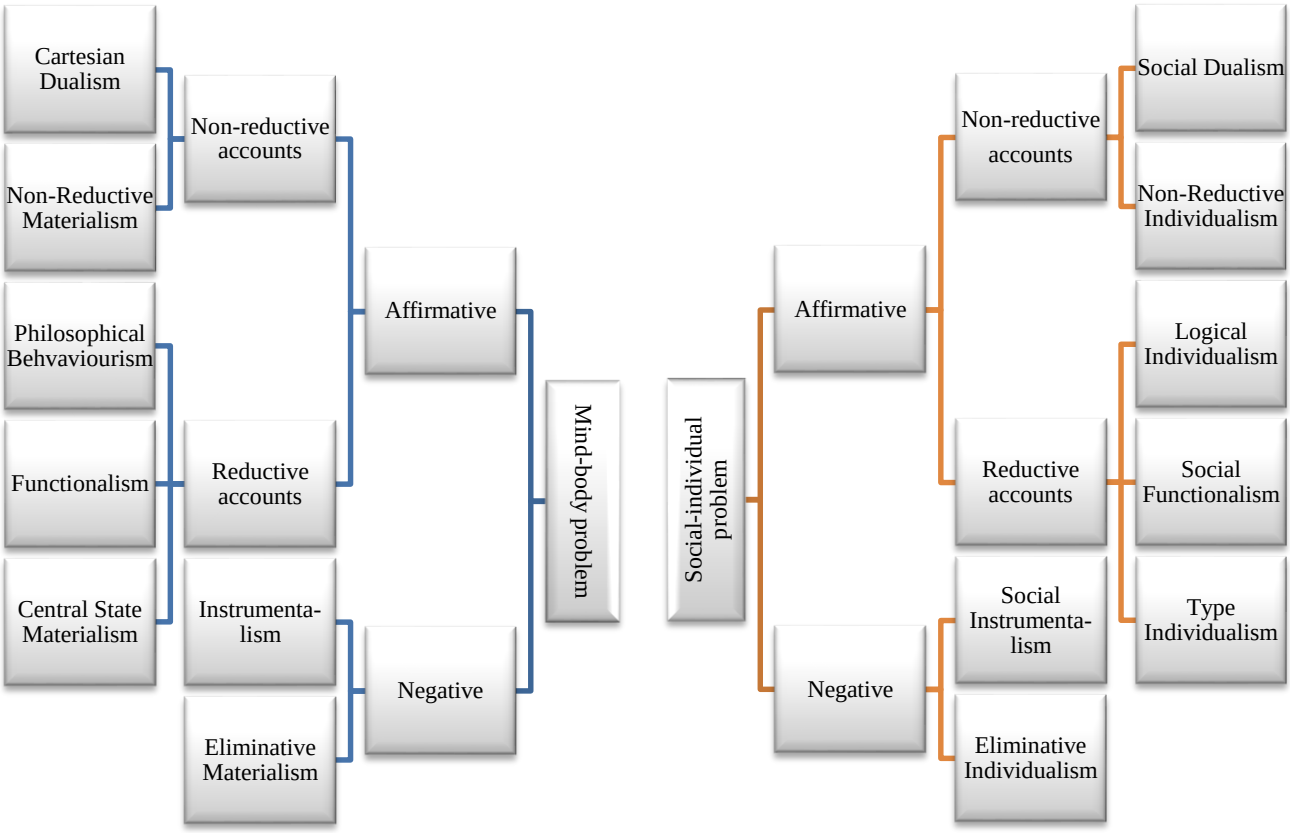


Figure 3: The mind-body and social-individual problems

What is interesting, partly because it has not been explored before (at least as the two problems are defined here), is how the taxonomies of solutions to the individual-individual and social-individual problems impact each other. I suggest that there are at least four interactions between the two taxonomies.

First, let TS be a given type of social phenomenon, and let TI be a type of individualistic phenomenon. Then if the social can be **reduced** to the individual, for every TS there is a TI that is identical with, and hence both **necessary and sufficient** for, TS.[32]

Second, **Non-Reductive Individualism** involves the claim that the social supervenes upon, and hence is determined by, the individual. Thus, Non-Reductive Individualists are committed to the claim that where a given TS is instantiated by a given TI, TI is **sufficient** for TS. Moreover,

[32] The claim that TI is identical with TS is stronger than the claim that TI is necessary and sufficient for TS. Thus, interestingly, it is not the case that if for every TS there is a necessary and sufficient TI, then every TS can be reduced to a TI. Nevertheless, the claim that TI is necessary and sufficient for TS does *support* the claim that TS can be reduced to TI. Specifically, Type Individualists utilise such bi-directional correlations, also called "bridge laws", to support their reduction of TS to TI (Nagel, 1961).

Sawyer designed Non-Reductive Individualism so that it is consistent with the multiple realisation of the social: any given type of social phenomenon might be instantiated by distinct types of individualistic phenomena. Thus, Non-Reductive Individualists are committed to the claim that no TI is **necessary** for a given TS. Therefore, Non-Reductive Individualism implies that there are **sufficient but not necessary** individualistic phenomena specifiable for any given type of social phenomenon.

Third, suppose that we find that we can provide **only necessary but not sufficient individualistic conditions** for social phenomena – i.e. for any given TS, we can specify TI such that TI is necessary but not sufficient for TS. Now, we might adopt either Social Dualism or a negative account, depending upon whether or not the necessary conditions specified are fulfilled – i.e. whether or not TI obtains. If TI does not obtain, then neither does TS (since TI is necessary for TS), and therefore, a negative account is correct. On the other hand, if we hold that social phenomena do exist, and if TI does obtain, we would most likely support a sort of Social Dualism. For if individualistic phenomena are necessary but not sufficient for social phenomena, then the social does not supervene upon the individual. So, it is possible for the very same set of individualistic phenomena to instantiate distinct social phenomena. This implies that social phenomena are in an important sense undetermined by individualistic phenomena, and so, possess a strong independence from individualistic phenomena. This amounts to, or comes very close to amounting to, Social Dualism.

And finally, if Social Functionalism is correct, then we can reduce any type of social phenomenon to a type of function. Book clubs, on this view, are just those social groups the goal of which is to meet to discuss books. This function, it seems, is something we can identify from an "external perspective", without reference to the reflexive mental states of the individuals involved. Thus, Social Functionalism implies an Objectivist solution to the individual-individual problem, most likely a teleological account.[33]

[33] It is an interesting question, however, whether Objectivist solutions to the individual-individual problem imply Social Functionalism. There are two popular Objectivist accounts: the organic account and the teleological account. Both of these accounts are "functionalist", in that they posit that the members of a group relate in such a way that they promote some function associated with the group. For the organicist, that function is the reproduction, growth, and self-regulation of the group. On the teleological account, that function is a shared *telos* towards which the members of the group work. It would be understandable (and elegant), therefore, for a proponent of an Objectivist solution to the individual-individual problem to hold Social Functionalism as a solution to the social-individualism problem. Nevertheless, it is not the case that Objectivism *implies* Social Functionalism, for it

We now have a roadmap **(Figure 4)** for social ontologists. For any two accounts A1 and A2, let a solid line with an arrow pointing from A1 to A2 denote that A1 implies A2, and let a dotted line with an arrow pointing from A1 to A2 denote that A1 supports but does not imply A2:

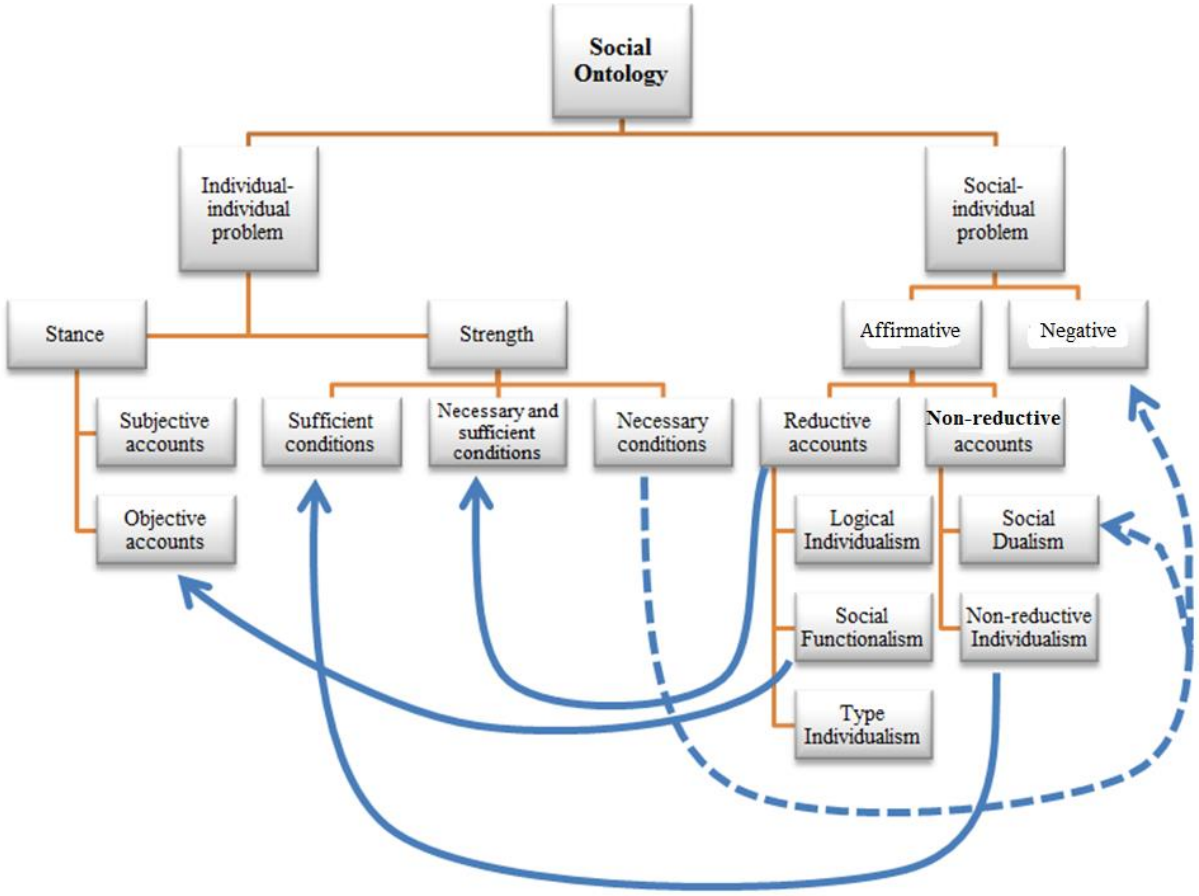


Figure 4: The individual-individual and social-individual problems

Now that we have some idea of the relations among the respective *solutions* to the individual-individual and social-individual problems, we are in a position to draw conclusions about the relation between the two *problems* themselves, and their positions as core concerns of social ontology. On the one hand, we might adopt any one of the following views which holds that social ontology has exactly *one* core concern:

i. **Assimilation**: the individual-individual and social-individual problems are equivalent or interchangeable, and so, are in fact one problem (Sheehy, 2006a)[34];

seems possible to hold the position (without contradiction) that group members relate to promote the function of a group, but that the group is distinct from its function.

[34] In Sheehy's (2006a) survey of the various accounts of social groups, he regularly switches between discussing the individual-individual and social-individual problems without distinguishing them. For example, Sheehy

ii. **Upward Reduction**: answering the individual-individual problem answers the social-individual problem (Gilbert, 1989)[35];
iii. **Downward Reduction**: answering the social-individual problem answers the individual-individual problem; or
iv. **Subsumption**: the social-individual and individual-individual problems can be subsumed within a distinct, overarching question (Searle, 1995, 1998, 2010).

Alternatively, one could adopt a plural position, specifically:

v. **Pluralism**: there are *two* distinct core concerns of social ontology: the social-individual problem and the individual-individual problem.

Assimilation is implausible, for the two problems are *prima facie* distinct: while the individual-individual problem asks us to specify the *horizontal* relation among individuals underlying social phenomena, the social-individual problem asks us to provide the *vertical* relation between social phenomena and their underlying individualistic parts. Moreover, **Assimilation** implies both **Upward Reduction** and **Downward Reduction**, and yet both of these are implausible positions, for reasons considered now.

As a counterexample to **Upward Reduction**, assume that the correct solution to the individual-individual problem provides both necessary and sufficient individualistic configurations for social phenomena. This account is consistent with more than one type of reductive account – Logical Individualism, Social Functionalism or Type Individualism. Thus, the solution to the individual-individual problem does not provide us with a complete answer to the social-individual problem. Moreover, **Downward Reduction** is similarly problematic. For example, suppose we know that Non-Reductive Individualism is the correct solution to the social-

considers Gilbert's (1989) Subjectivist solution to the *individual-individual problem* in terms of the reduction – non-reduction debate. Moreover, he provides a Social Dualism meant to rival Gilbert's solution to the individual-individual problem, and yet, Social Dualism is an answer to the *social-individual problem*: how they compete is unclear.

[35] Gilbert (1989, p. 1) is interested in answering the question: "what precisely is a social group?". This question seems to call for a complete account of social groups – i.e. solutions to both the individual-individual and social-individual problems, at least as they apply to social groups. Gilbert acknowledges the importance of the social-individual problem, since the first paragraph in her book discusses the Social Dualism of Durkheim, and the macro-micro link. Yet, Gilbert attempts to answer her question by providing a Subjectivist solution to the individual-individual problem, and no solution to the social individual-problem. This suggests that Gilbert is operating under the assumption that a solution to the individual-individual problem is all we require for a complete social ontology; and therefore, the social-individual problem, insofar as it is important to social ontology, is encompassed within, or can be reduced to, the individual-individual problem.

individual problem, and hence, that social phenomena supervene upon individualistic phenomena. We do not know, however, exactly *what sort* of individualistic phenomena these are: to know this we would need to answer the individual-individual problem. For example, Non-Reductive Individualism is consistent with both the claim that political parties supervene upon their *members' beliefs* that they together constitute a "we" or "us", and the claim that political parties supervene upon *their members' pursuit of a common* telos. Thus, Non-Reductive Individualism is consistent with both a Subjectivist and an Objectivist solution to the individual-individual problem.

Finally, Searle (1995, 1998, 2010) might be taken to support a **Subsumptive** social ontology. Searle, who makes the dubious claim (1998, p. 143) that he is the progenitor of social ontology (dubious because Rational Choice Theorists have been practising social ontology long before Searle's work on the subject), provides both a puzzle, and a Subjectivist, affirmative account of social reality to resolve that puzzle. Searle's puzzle arises from the following sort of observation. Consider a tree, a rock or a building: they exist in objective reality. Likewise, social phenomena like governments, families and money, exist in objective reality. However, unlike trees, rocks and buildings, governments, families and money would not exist if nobody believed in their existence. Thus, social phenomena raise a question, or puzzle, that individualistic phenomena do not: **how is it possible for it to be an objective fact that social phenomena exist, and yet these social phenomena depend for their existence upon subjective states?**

Searle's solution is to argue that social phenomena should be understood as constructed through common agreement over what he calls "constitutive rules". Briefly, constitutive rules take the form "X counts as Y in C", where X is an individualistic phenomenon (or collection of individualistic phenomena), Y is a social phenomenon, and C is the context in which this rule is effective (Searle, 1995, pp. 27-29). Thus, a *piece of paper* (X) that Searle hands to a store clerk is *money* (Y), a phenomenon existing in the objective world, because there is common agreement that pieces of paper such as this one count as money *in the United States of America* (C).

Now, we might understand Searle's puzzle either as an overarching question that **subsumes** both the individual-individual and social-individual problems, or as an alternative core concern of social ontology, which replaces both the social-individual and individual-individual

problems.[36] Yet Searle's puzzle, it seems, is a poor candidate for being a core concern of social ontology (on either understanding), since it presupposes a subjectivist solution to the social-individual problem, and an affirmative solution to the social-individual problem. Yet how can social ontologists entirely ignore both the Objectivist, Rational Choice theoretical solutions to the individual-individual problem, as well as negative solutions to the social-individual problem? Of course Searle might hold that the Objectivist and negative accounts are unsuccessful. But this is irrelevant: the point is that these accounts (Objectivism and negative accounts) fit within social ontology as a branch of philosophy (since they concern the nature and existence of social phenomena), but do not satisfy the presuppositions of Searle's puzzle.

A.2.b.iv. Pluralism and gaps in the literature

The conclusion of this discussion is that **Pluralism** is correct, a position which has never been explicated explicitly or defended in the literature. To conclude this section, therefore, I wish to perform a brief explication of **Pluralism**. Initially, we should distinguish between two pluralist positions. **Independent Pluralism** asserts that the individual-individual and social-individual problems are independent, while **Dependent Pluralism** is the denial of **Independent Pluralism**. I have argued in the previous section that solutions to the two problems impact each other, and so, I take it that **Independent Pluralism** is false.

Within **Dependent Pluralism** we might outline five broad social ontologies:

- **Identity:** there are necessary and sufficient individualistic configurations for social phenomena, and the social can be reduced to the individual;
- **Supervenience**: there are sufficient but not necessary individualistic configurations for social phenomena, and Non-Reductive Individualism is true;

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[36] To be fair to Searle, it is unclear whether Searle's puzzle arises as a challenge for his constructionist understanding of social phenomena, or rather, whether he intends his constructionist account of social phenomena as an answer to his puzzle. I have assumed the second reading here. This assumption is not without support, however: Searle does after all consider himself the progenitor of social ontology, and the only question or concern he raises to guide this "new" field is his puzzle.
On the first reading, Searle's puzzle effectively asks the question: how is it possible for a given constitutive rule (R) to be successful merely because there is common agreement that R is correct? Here, Searle provides us with a challenge faced specifically by his constructionist account of social reality, rather than a challenge faced by all accounts of social reality – i.e. rather than a central concern of social ontology. This does not present a **Subsumptive** view of social ontology: merely a Subjectivist solution to the individual-individual problem, as well as an affirmative solution to the social-individual problem (since the account holds that social phenomena exist in the objective world).

- **Dualism**: there are necessary but not sufficient individualistic configurations for social phenomena, and Social Dualism is true;
- **Negative**: there are necessary but not sufficient individualistic configurations for social phenomena, and a negative account is correct; and
- **Functionalism**: an Objectivist solution to the individual-individual problem and Social Functionalism are correct.

This taxonomy highlights at least two glaring deficiencies in the literature. First, **Negative** has been largely dismissed and ignored as a viable social ontology.[37] Flew describes the reality of the social as "inexpugnable" (1985, p. 102), and Lukes declares the denial of the existence of social reality "absurd" (1968 [1973], p. 124). Sheehy (2006a, p. 16) writes that "it is difficult to identify any compelling reasons to endorse" Eliminative Individualism, while Roth (2010, sec. 1) points out that in the literature "it is hardly controversial" that the social exists. Yet a careful consideration of **Negative** should be conducted, especially given that its parallel position within the philosophy of mind (Eliminative Materialism[38]) is taken seriously.

And secondly, Social Functionalism as a solution to the social-individual problem has received little direct treatment in the literature. Rather than engaging with Social Functionalism as a metaphysical or ontological claim, philosophers have focused upon the legitimacy of functional *explanation* in the social sciences (see, e.g., Dore, 1961 [1973]; Elster, 1994 [1995]; Hempel, 1959 [1995], 1966; Hollis, 1994; Homans, 1964 [1973]; Kincaid, 1990 [1995]; Mayntz, 2004; Ryan, 1970; Steel, 2005).[39]

In this thesis, I tentatively favour **Negative,** partly because the alternatives are problematic [see **section A.3. Central argument (p. 31)** for a summary of the central argument in this thesis]. Thus, I intend to address the first gap outlined above. Moreover, in arguing for **Negative**, I intend to provide a survey of the various solutions to Q1 and Q2, as outlined by the taxonomies

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[37] Tuomela (1983) does present an Instrumentalist account of the social, and Tuomela (1990) and Schmitt (2003) do briefly discuss Eliminative Individualism as an option. However, much more exploration is required: Tuomela's Instrumentalism could be refined so that it better parallels Dennett's Instrumentalist account of the mental, and Tuomela and Schmitt's discussions of Eliminative Individualism are cursory at best.

[38] I discuss the similarities and relation between Eliminative Individualism and Eliminate Materialism in footnote 144.

[39] Notable exceptions include Schmaus (1999) and Schwartz (1993). Nevertheless, given the extensive treatment of Functionalism as an account of mind, much more work is required for an adequate treatment of Social Functionalism.

discussed. As part of this survey, I discuss Social Functionalism, and so I also hope to go some way towards filling this second gap in the literature.

A.2.c. Conclusion

I hope to have shown thus far that Q1 and Q2 should be read as instances of the individual-individual and social-individual problems respectively, and that these two related, but distinct problems together comprise the core concerns of social ontology. Hence, this thesis should be understood both as an investigation into the nature of social groups, as well as providing a blueprint for social ontology in general.

However, before I begin surveying the potential solutions to Q1 and Q2, I wish to summarise and delimit the central argument in the thesis, clarify my methodology, and provide a working definition for the distinction between "social" and "individualistic" phenomena.

A.3. CENTRAL ARGUMENT

The core claim which I wish to support in this thesis is that **it is not the case that Eliminative Individualism is clearly less plausible than the accounts with which it competes**. If this claim is correct, then Eliminative Individualism is worthy of serious consideration, which it has not received in the past.

In the thesis I argue for three premises that together support my core claim:

(1) None of the solutions to the individual-individual problem (i.e. Q1) provide a clearly adequate principle of unity sufficient for social groups [see **section B. The Individual-individual problem (Q1) (p. 40)**].[40]

[40] Premise (1) supports the second conjunct of the claim that there are **necessary but not sufficient** individualistic configurations for social groups. By itself, A-1 does not imply Eliminative Individualism. To infer deductively Eliminative Individualism from A-1 I would also need to support two additional claims, namely, that there are also *necessary* individualistic configurations for social groups, and second, that these necessary configurations are not instantiated. I will not pursue these two additional claims in this thesis. Nevertheless, although A-1 does not *imply* Eliminative Individualism, A-1 is nevertheless a necessary claim for an Eliminative Individualist to hold. For if there are sufficient conditions for social groups, and if these sufficient conditions are instantiated (presumably successful accounts of social groups will provide conditions which are instantiated), then social groups exist, and so, Eliminative Individualism is false.

(2) None of the solutions to the social-individual problem (i.e. Q2) provide a clearly adequate account of the relation between social groups and their underlying individualistic parts [see **section C. The Social-individual problem (Q2) (p. 116)**].

(3) The best objections to Eliminative Individualism are unconvincing [see **section D. Eliminative Individualism (p. 188)**].

There are, however, two important points to make concerning the scope of this argument. First, notice that (1) and (2) concern the individual-individual and social-individual problems as they apply to *social groups*, rather than to social phenomena in general. Thus, at best they imply the claim that Eliminative Individualism *as it applies to social groups* is plausible.[41] Nevertheless, I take it that social groups are prototypical social phenomena. As such, if Eliminative Individualism as it applies to social groups is plausible, there is some inductive support for the claim that Eliminative Individualism broadly construed is plausible. Moreover, social groups play a central role in explanations provided in the social sciences, and so, if Eliminative Individualism about social groups is correct, this would deal a significant blow to Folk Sociology as a whole. In **section D.2.a. Scope (p. 190)** I discuss the inference from claims about social groups to claims about social phenomena more broadly.

Second, (1) and (2) do not specify which types of social groups are under discussion, and as such, seem to presume that a clearly adequate solution to Q1 and Q2 provide a *unified* account of social groups – that is, an account which incorporates *every* type of social group. Beck (2011) suggests that this criterion for success is overly demanding, for it may be the case that there are different types of social groups, each of which might receive a distinct, successful account.[42] For example, we may find that small social groups can receive one account, while large social groups receive another. Call this view, the "multiple-account" view.

There are two legitimate responses to the proponent of the multiple-account view. First, I could narrow my thesis to the discussion of a select type of social group, most probably groups like the ANCYL (let us call such groups, "organised-large-groups"). The disadvantage of this

[41] Eliminative Individualism as it applies to social groups is the claim that social groups do not exist, and that the folk sociological claims concerning social groups comprise a radically misleading and false theory, and should be replaced by a purely individualistic study of collectives. Eliminative Individualism broadly construed is the claim that social *phenomena* do not exist, and that Folk Sociology is false and misleading, and should be replaced by purely individualistic sciences.

[42] See Brewer (2003), Giddens (1987, p. 134), Gilbert (2006b, ch. 6), Thalos (2008), and R. Tuomela (1989a, pp. 476-477) for a delineation of distinct types of social groups.

approach is, of course, that it narrows my conclusion to the claim that Eliminative Individualism *about organised-large-groups* is plausible. This is an interesting conclusion, but is not as interesting as the conclusion that Eliminative Individualism about *all* social groups, or all social phenomena, is plausible.

Thankfully, however, I am not forced to resort to this narrow conclusion, since I have available a second response, namely, to argue that my demand for a unified account of social groups is not too strong (e.g. Gilbert, 2006b, p. 94 accepts this demand), or at least, is not too strong in the context of the thesis. Recall that ultimately I am attempting to support the conclusion that Eliminative Individualism is not clearly implausible. To support this conclusion, I do not need to show that Eliminative Individualism's rival accounts are *false*. Rather, I am required to show that there are legitimate doubts about the plausibility of these rival accounts. And there are two reasons why we might doubt the plausibility of the multiple-account view. First, the multiple-account is an *inelegant* theory of the social. Now of course a theory may be both true and inelegant, but by Occam's razor, we do not accept an inelegant theory without first considering the plausibility of competing theories. Thus, we should not accept the multiple-account without first considering whether Eliminative Individualism offers a more plausible view, since Eliminative Individualism is, at least *prima facie*, more elegant in that it posits not *two* accounts of social phenomena, but only one (that social phenomena do not exist). This consideration, together with premise (3), as well as my support for premise (3), should be enough to support the plausibility and attractiveness of Eliminative Individualism as an alternative to the multiple-account view.

The second reason one might find the multiple-account view implausible, or at least no more plausible than Eliminative Individualism, is that if different types of social groups require different accounts, this lends credence to the position that our Folk Sociological conception of small and large social groups *as a single type of social phenomenon* is false. But if Folk Sociology is false in at least one significant respect, it may be false in other respects too – at the very least, it is not the case that Folk Sociology is *obviously* true. And if it is not the case that Folk Sociology is obviously true, it is not the case that Eliminative Individualism is obviously false. But the claim that Eliminative Individualism is obviously false is the chief

objection to Eliminative Individualism. Thus, if we are willing to take seriously the multiple-account view, we have already provided support for premise (3).[43]

A.4. METHODOLOGY

A.4.a. Analytic Philosophy

In this thesis I employ the analytic philosophical method. Analytic philosophy is that method of inquiry which attempts to understand philosophical concepts and answer philosophical problems using *analysis*. Expanding on Beaney's (2009) discussion of analysis, we might distinguish among four types of analysis: *regressive*, *decompositional*, *interpretive* and *transformative*.[44]

Regressive analysis attempts to understand a problem or claim by demonstrating how it follows from first principles, thereby illuminating the problem or claim in question. Ancient Greek geometry exemplifies this approach. Consider, for example, the proof of Pythagoras's theorem from Euclidian principles.[45]

Decompositional analysis involves breaking down a concept into its component parts, often followed by subsequently synthesising those parts so as to understand better the original concept as well as the relationships among its parts. Kant's project in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781 [1897]) to decompose experience into its component parts is prototypical of this sort of analysis. Importantly, decompositional analysis often, although not always, involves the specification of necessary and sufficient conditions for the concept under investigation.

Interpretive analysis of a set of philosophical claims C involves the use of a set of intuitions or a conceptual framework to test the truth of C (or to guide a further decompositional or transformational analysis of C). Current approaches to ethics and value theory typify this

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[43] See **section B.1. Criteria for success (p. 40)** for a further discussion on types of groups and accounts that only characterise some types but not others.

[44] Beaney's classification of the distinct types of analysis does not distinguish between transformative and interpretive analysis, whereas I do.

[45] Pythagoras's theorem is the claim that the square of the length of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of its other two sides.

method, since they use cases in which we have strong intuitions to falsify theories of right action, well-being, and the meaning of life (see, e.g. Metz, 2013; Williams & Smart, 1973).

And last, transformative analysis translates the concept or statement under investigation into an alternative form so as to illuminate the concept or statement more clearly. Frege and Russell are considered the fathers of this approach, since they advocate understanding claims by translating them into their logical form (see Frege, 1893/1903 [1964]; Hager, 1994).

In this dissertation I utilise all four types of analysis. The central problem in this dissertation is whether or not the social exists. My initial approach to understanding this problem is to understand how it is informed by, *or can be regressed to*, two prior questions, namely, the individual-individual and social-individual problems.[46]

Thereafter, I use *decompositional* analysis to taxonomise the various solutions to the individual-individual and social-individual problems. Moreover, in the tradition of decompositional analysis, my evaluation of these solutions, especially my evaluation of the solutions to the individual-individual problem, involves the consideration of whether these accounts provide adequate sufficient conditions for social groups.[47]

Moreover, to establish whether or not the conditions provided by any given solution to the individual-individual problem are indeed sufficient for social groups, I assess whether they accommodate Folk Sociological intuitions. *Interpretive* analysis is therefore critical to my discussion.

Finally, to aid in the clarification and assessment of the various solutions to the individual-individual social-individual problems, I will *translate* the account, some of its claims, or some of its implications, into their logical form [see, e.g., **section C.2.b.iii. Constitution (p. 144)**].

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[46] The social-individual and individual-individual problems are prior to the question of whether or not the social exists, since solutions to the individual-individual and social-individual problems will provide us with a full answer as to whether or not the social exists, but merely knowing whether or not the social exists will not provide us with full answers to the individual-individual and social-individual problems.

[47] However, parting with the traditional decompositional analytical tradition, I do not demand that adequate solutions to the individual-individual problem provide necessary conditions for social groups.

A.4.b. Intuition

Recently, however, there has been growing controversy over the use of interpretive analysis, and specifically the use of intuitions, in philosophy. "Experimental philosophers", such as Stich, point out that a good proportion of philosophy relies on interpretive analysis and intuition. However, so the argument goes, intuitions are culturally biased, and therefore, intuitions are an illegitimate methodological tool for philosophers. Hence, a good proportion of philosophy "belongs in the rubbish bin":

> For 2500 years, philosophers have been relying on appeals to intuition. *But the plausibility of this entire tradition rests on an unsubstantiated, and until recently unacknowledged, empirical hypothesis* – the hypothesis that the philosophical intuitions of people in different cultural groups do not disagree…. [A] great deal of what goes on in contemporary philosophy, and a great deal of what has gone on in the past, belongs in the rubbish bin (Stich in Ichikawa, 2009, p. 110).

This general eschewing of the use of intuition in philosophical inquiry is echoed by Guala within the field of social ontology:

> Indeed, one could even argue that a good fit with current linguistic practice is of secondary importance. In the end it may be more important to come up with a coherent new concept of convention, norm, etc., than trying to mirror a hopelessly muddled discourse [i.e. Folk Sociology]. (Guala, 2007, p. 14)

Yet, my methodology for assessing accounts of Q1 and Q2 relies heavily on the use of Folk Sociological intuition: insofar as these accounts cannot accommodate common-sense intuitions about social groups, my thesis declares them inadequate as a clearly superior alternative to Eliminative Individualism. And therefore, an experimental philosopher would be unimpressed by my methodology.

I have available three responses to the experimental philosopher's objection. First, it is important to note that the objection to the use of intuition in philosophy is hardly shared by all philosophers. Indeed, many philosophers have vehemently disagreed with the experimental philosopher's position (see, e.g., Grundmann, 2010; Hoffman, 2010; Ichikawa, 2009; Liao, 2008; Ludwig, 2010; Spurett, 2010). Thus, at worst, my thesis sides with the large number of "armchair philosophers" who continue to maintain that the use of intuition is acceptable.

Second, the more recent and more popular solutions to the individual-individual problem, such as Gilbert's plural subject theory [see **B.3.b. Plural subject theory (p. 70)**] and Searle's Constructionist Account [see **section B.3.c. Searle's constructionist account (p. 90)**], are Subjectivist – that is, they claim that the reflexive beliefs of the individuals underlying social

phenomena are constitutive of those phenomena. But the reflexive beliefs (i.e. beliefs about group-hood) of the individuals underlying social phenomena *are* Folk Sociological, and so, an account of social phenomena (insofar as it conforms with the now popular Subjectivist approach) should accommodate those Folk Sociological intuitions.

To put this point differently, it seems that types of social phenomena are not natural kinds. Consider H_2O. H_2O exists, and has the properties that it has, independently of what humans believe about H_2O. That is, H_2O does not depend upon, nor is it constituted by, our theories about H_2O: H_2O is a *natural* kind. By contrast, a social kind (i.e. a type of social phenomenon) *does* depend upon humans and their beliefs for its existence: our beliefs about a given social kind are constitutive of that kind (at least if Subjectivism is correct). For this reason, accounting for our intuitions (or Folk Sociology) is essential to an adequate social ontology.

And finally, the ultimate conclusion of my dissertation is that Eliminative Individualism is worthy of serious consideration – not that Eliminative Individualism is true. One of the most important objections to this conclusion is the claim that Eliminative Individualism is highly counterintuitive, absurd. But if I can show that all the alternatives to Eliminative Individualism (i.e. the array of possible solutions to Q1 and Q2) are also counterintuitive, and yet it is generally accepted that these accounts are worthy of serious consideration, then Eliminative Individualism should not be dismissed merely because it is counterintuitive. Thus, if Eliminative Individualism is to be dismissed as unworthy of serious consideration, we will need additional objections to Eliminative Individualism that are clearly successful.

Thus, when claiming that a solution to Q1 or Q2 is counterintuitive, I am claiming neither that the theory is *false*, nor that the theory should be dismissed. Rather, I am claiming that the theory is no better (or not a whole lot better) in this respect than Eliminative Individualism. That is, a counterintuitive solution to Q1 or Q2 is *inadequate for the purpose of providing a solution clearly better than Eliminative Individualism*. This weaker claim should be more palatable to the experimental philosopher.

Of course the experimental philosopher could insist that "real" philosophy should not even consider whether a theory is counterintuitive – intuitions have no place at all in good philosophical inquiry. Thus, my objections to the solutions to Q1 and Q2 are irrelevant, since they often rely on whether the solutions accommodate intuitions about the social. However, in response, the claim that intuitions are irrelevant strikes both ways: Eliminative Individualism

is a whole lot easier to defend if its counter-intuitive nature is irrelevant to an evaluation of the account, since the primary objection to Eliminative Individualism (that it is counterintuitive) has then been resolved. Thus, extreme experimental philosophy supports my conclusion, even though it undermines my methodology for supporting that conclusion. This is a trade-off I am willing to accept, since the conclusion is ultimately what is important to me.

A.5. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN "SOCIAL" AND "INDIVIDUALISTIC" PHENOMENA

In this dissertation I take "social phenomena" to include:

- social groups and institutions, such as countries (e.g. Kenya), religious groups (Muslims), political parties (the ANC), cultures and societies (Eskimos), and corporations and organisations (Standard Bank and Wits University);
- social systems, such as economic systems (capitalism and money), systems of government (democracy), and administrative systems (bureaucracy);
- collective mental states and behaviour (e.g. group intentions, group beliefs, and group actions);
- roles (e.g. public servant), mores (circumcision), status (power) and social positions (the president); and
- social relations among individuals (e.g. harmony and friendship) or between groups of individuals (war and peace).

Moreover, by "individualistic phenomena" I mean:

- individual persons, their mental states, dispositions and actions;
- relations between individual persons;[48] and
- material objects and their parts.[49]

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[48] Of course, some of the relations between individuals are *social*, rather than individualistic, relations – e.g. power relations. However, I take it that any relation that can be specified individualistically (i.e. in terms of particular persons, their environment, and their psychological states) without loss of meaning may be considered an individualistic relation between persons. A good example of an individualistic relation would be that I am standing "to the right" of you.

[49] Sheehy (2006a) holds that social groups are material objects [see **section C.2.a.ii. Social groups as material entities (p. 121)**]. I am referring here, however, to material objects in the conventional sense, rather than in Sheehy's idiosyncratic sense.

Note that I intend this distinction between "social phenomena" and "individualistic phenomena" to be completely exhaustive: there are no phenomena that are neither "social" nor "individualistic". Thus, the definition I have provided for individualistic phenomena is meant to be as inclusive as possible, and indeed, I include some entities as individualistic that other theorists do not. For example, Epstein (2009, p. 213) holds that certain material objects, such as "parts of the physical environment that are not in anyone's local vicinity, and that no one has even encountered, are not plausibly individualistic". Instead, according to Epstein, these sorts of phenomena should be labelled "physicalist", and excluded from both social and individualistic phenomena. Moreover, Guala (2007, p. 974) claims that instances of "physical technology", such as a "hand-held micro-computer", should not be classified as individualistic phenomena.

However, for my purposes here, nothing is gained by distinguishing between individualistic and "physicalist" or "technological" phenomena. I am ultimately interested in whether or not social phenomena exist *at all*. Thus, if the sociologist can demonstrate that certain configurations of non-social phenomena (be they individualistic, physicalist or technological), are sufficient for social phenomena, or if he can demonstrate that social phenomena are constituted by, supervene upon or can be reduced to, any sort of non-social phenomena, then he has demonstrated that the social exists, and hence, that Eliminative Individualism is false. Thus, for ease of argument, in surveying the various solutions to Q1 and Q2, I will call any non-social phenomenon "individualistic", but the reader can substitute another term if he wishes.

B. THE INDIVIDUAL-INDIVIDUAL PROBLEM (Q1)

B.1. CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

We are ready now to begin our discussion of Q1, or the individual-individual problem as it applies to social-groups: what relationships among the members of a social group provide the principle of unity for that social group? I begin by specifying the criteria for a successful solution to this problem.

Ultimately, I am interested in whether social groups exist. Thus, if the sociologist can show that there are *sufficient* unifying conditions for a collection of individuals to comprise a social group (or for an individual to be a member of a group), then so long as such a collection can be found, he has satisfied my curiosity. That is, if an account can provide adequate sufficient conditions for social group membership, then an affirmative answer to the individual-individual problem is correct, and so I concede that Eliminative Individualism is false. By contrast, if I can show, or go some way towards showing, that no account clearly provides adequate sufficient conditions for group membership, then we have reason to at least begin our discussion of Eliminative Individualism as an alternative to an affirmative solution to Q1.

But what does it mean for an account to provide *adequate* sufficient conditions for group membership? I take it that such an account should satisfy three criteria. First, the account should capture a group's "group-ness" (and so, a member's "membership-ness"). Crudely put, *Groupness* asserts that all group members should be included as group members by the account. That is, **for any social group *g*, for any individual *x*, if *x* is a member of *g*, then the account will imply that *x* is a member of *g***. Put formally, let *a* be a solution to Q1, and let M*gx* mean that *x* is a member of *g*. Then *Groupness* asserts:

Groupness: $a \rightarrow ((x)(g)((\mathrm{M}gx) \rightarrow (a \rightarrow \mathrm{M}gx)))$

A second, *Individuation* criterion, states that the account should fail to include non-group members as group members.[50] Thus, **for any social group *g*, for any individual *x*, if *x* is not a member of *g*, the account will fail to imply that *x* is a member of *g***:

Individuation: $a \rightarrow ((x)(g)((\sim Mgx) \rightarrow \sim(a \rightarrow Mgx)))$

Perhaps the most severe failure to satisfy *Individuation* occurs when the collection of non-members incorrectly ascribed to a social group by an account are themselves a distinct social group. In such cases, the account illegitimately agglomerates two distinct social groups. That is, the account fails to distinguish between distinct social groups G1 and G2, since the account incorrectly implies that all the members of G1 are members of G2, and that all the members of G2 are members of G1 [see, e.g. **section B.2.c.iv. Broad *telos* (p. 59)**].

And third, what I call the *Aggregation* criterion requires of the account that **for any collection of individuals *c*, if *c* is a mere aggregate, it is not the case that the account implies that *c* is a social group**. Let A*c* mean that *c* is a mere aggregate, and let G*c* denote that *c* is a social group. Then *Aggregation* is the claim:

Aggregation: $a \rightarrow ((c)((Ac) \rightarrow \sim(a \rightarrow Gc)))$

Fulfilling *Aggregation* is necessary (but not sufficient) for fulfilling *Groupness*, since an account that provides conditions which imply that a mere aggregate of individuals is a social group cannot utilise those same conditions to adequately capture the group-ness or membership-ness of legitimate social groups and their members. That is, an account that fails to satisfy *Aggregation* fails to provide a principle of unity for social groups, and so, cannot capture the group-ness of a group. Moreover, although they appear similar, *Individuation* and *Aggregation* are logically distinct. *Individuation* requires that an account does not ascribe non-members to an existing social group, whereas *Aggregation* requires that mere aggregates are not classified as social groups. Thus *Individuation* applies only in cases where there is a social group, while *Aggregation* applies only in cases where there is *not* a social group.

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[50] *Individuation* is weaker than the requirement that the account should imply that non-members are not group members (i.e. the requirement that the account provides a necessary condition for group membership). That is, *Individuation* does *not* require the following: $a \rightarrow ((x)(g)((\sim Mgx) \rightarrow (a \rightarrow \sim Mgx)))$

There is, however, an important caveat to this discussion. In my formulation of *Groupness*, *Individuation* and *Aggregation*, I allow *g* to be "any" social group. Thus, *Groupness* and *Individuation* demand that the conditions specified by a successful solution to Q1 be sufficient for the membership of *any type* of social group. However, we might imagine that although an account may not characterise *every* type of social group, it may nevertheless characterise *some* social groups and still be valuable. Specifically, the second best case would be an account that provides a sufficient condition for comprising a *prototypical group* of any kind. Such an account, for example, would be adequate to characterise prototypes of both small and large groups, but would fail to characterise certain unusual examples. Our third choice of account is an account that provides sufficient conditions for a collection of individuals to comprise both prototypical and a-prototypical tokens of only a *select few types* of social groups (such as small groups), but not all types. The fourth-strongest account would furnish us with sufficient conditions for *prototypes* of only a select few types of social group – e.g. prototypical large groups. And the weakest type of account would merely provide sufficient conditions for individuals to comprise limited, rare or unusual instances of social groups. So, to summarise, from strongest to weakest, accounts can be rated as providing sufficient conditions that satisfy *Groupness*, *Individuation* and *Aggregation*, where *g* is a social group:

S-1) of any type;
S-2) that is prototypical for any given type;
S-3) of a select few types (but not all types);
S-4) that is prototypical of a select few types (but not all types); or
S-5) that is one of a limited number of instances.

Given my remarks in **section A.3. Central argument (p. 31)** above, I will assume that S-3, S-4 and S-5 accounts are inadequate for the purposes of ruling out the possibility of Eliminative Individualism as a viable alternative to an affirmative solution to the individual-individual problem. Should a solution to Q1 be correctly classified as S-1 or S-2, however, this does pose a threat to the view that Eliminative Individualism deserves serious consideration. I will argue that a survey of solutions to Q1 yields the conclusion that no solution to Q1 provides a clearly S-1 or S-2 type solution to the problem. I begin by examining Objectivist accounts.

B.2. OBJECTIVE ACCOUNTS

B.2.a. Elster's transaction account

I begin my discussion of objective accounts with what is perhaps the least plausible Objectivist account discussed in the literature. For Elster (1989, p. 248), social groups are "clusters of individuals who interact more strongly with each other than with people in other clusters." Elster defines the strength of the interaction[51] among individuals in terms of the number of transactions among them, and therefore, we can state his account as follows:

> **Elster's transaction account: For any set of individuals M1…Mn, Let T_{inner} be any transaction between at least two individuals in M1…Mn; and let T_{outer} be any transaction between at least one of M1…Mn and an individual outside of M1…Mn. Then, M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group if the total number of T_{inner} instances is greater than the total number of T_{outer} instances.**

There are, however, two reasons we should think that Elster's account fails to satisfy *Groupness*. First, even if the account does specify a sufficiency condition for what counts as intra-group interrelations, it seems that this is not the kind of condition that provides a *principle of unity* for group members – i.e. the account doesn't tell us what the "group-ness" of groups is. For on Elster's account, whether a set of relations within a set of individuals is sufficient to allow those individuals to comprise a group depends (partly) upon how those individuals interact with individuals *outside* of the group. So, on Elster's account, what happens outside a group partly determines whether the group is, in fact, a group. Now it is true that what happens outside a group does impact on the specific goals or function of the group. For example, the ANCYL is a mainstream youth party in post-apartheid South Africa, but was a revolutionary organisation before the ANC came to power, and this change is due to factors external to the party. Yet, it seems that what happens outside of a group does not determine whether the group is a group *at all*. We cannot, for example, imagine a scenario in which the ANCYL members interact as they do, and yet they comprise a mere aggregate – i.e. not a social group. No matter *how much* interaction ANCYL members have with individuals outside of the group, they are

[51] Unfortunately, Elster never explains what he means by an "interaction", but I take it that an interaction is an exchange of, or an agreement to exchange, something (such as money, information, services, etc.).

still a group. So, at best Elster's account provides a condition coextensive with intra-group relations, but it is not *constitutive* of intra-group relations.

Moreover, there is a second reason we might think that Elster's account fails to satisfy *Groupness*. Certain types of groups have members who hardly interact. Take, for example, committees. Committees meet infrequently – every few months, or annually in some cases. Committee members may therefore interact far more frequently with individuals with whom they do not share a group, than they do with other members of the committee. Consider that between two committee meetings, the committee members will have countless transactions with shop tellers, more than they will with other members of the committee. So, on Elster's account, because committee members transact more frequently with shop tellers outside the committee than they do with the other members of the group, committees are not groups. But of course committees are groups (not mere aggregates), and so, Elster's account does not account for all types of social groups – i.e. it is at best an S-3 account.

In addition, it is not just committees that do not interact frequently. *Any* group of any type could, it seems, become dormant for a time, or at least interact very infrequently. So we should lower our assessment of Elster's account further, since it will at best account for prototypes of certain types of groups – so it is an S-4 account. With this in mind, together with the initial objection (that the account does not provide an intuitively appealing *constitutive* principle of unity), I take it that Elster's account is inadequate to rule out Eliminative Individualism as a plausible alternative.

B.2.b. Organic account

One way we might diagnose the problem with Elster's account is to notice that although it takes into account the *frequency* of interactions among individuals, it ignores the *quality*, or character, of these interactions. As Elster (1989, p. 248) admits, "There is no presumption that a society in this sense [i.e. on Elster's transaction account] is well ordered." By contrast, functionalists attempt to capture the quality of the interactions among the members of a group by positing that group members function together to promote a certain state of affairs for the group as a whole. Thus, the functionalist's social group *is* ordered. However, functionalists disagree on just which "states of affairs" group members promote, thereby spawning two distinct functionalist accounts: the organic account and the teleological account. I consider the organic account first.

B.2.b.i. The account

Consider a termite colony.[52] The colony comprises three types of termites: workers, soldiers and a queen. Now, if the colony is to survive, it must have the correct proportion of workers to soldiers (say, for example, one worker for every one soldier); but, unfortunately, external factors (such as hungry ant-eaters and other insects) may kill some of the termites such that the ratio of workers to soldiers is altered. After such a calamity, the queen, who rests deep in the bowels of the termite hive away from danger, changes her egg-laying habits to correct the disproportion. Thus, while the hive's ratio of workers to soldiers is optimal, the queen will lay one worker egg for every one soldier egg; but, if, for example, a number of the soldier termites are eaten, such that there is now a 2:1 ratio between workers and soldiers, the queen will lay (for instance) two soldier eggs for every one worker egg until the disproportion is rectified.

There is an established tradition among philosophers and social scientists, such as Hegel, Burke, and Durkheim, that involves viewing social groups as analogous to the termite colony, that is, as organic systems (see Ryan & Bohman, 1998 for a discussion of the organic tradition). More recently, Theiner and O'Connor (2010) have expressed sympathy for this view. These proponents point out that, like the termite colony that requires soldiers and workers to survive, social groups often have roles whose fulfilment is necessary for the survival of the group. For example, a company has a CEO, CFO, board of directors, etc., without which the company cannot continue. And, like the queen who fills her hive with the requisite termites, the company fills its posts when they become vacant – e.g. when the CFO resigns, the company hires a new employee (or promotes an existing employee) to fulfil this role.

Such an organic account of social groups would read:

> **Organic account: Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group if M1…Mn together operate as parts of an organic system.**

In the biological sciences, it is generally agreed that *x* is an organic system if and only if *x* is capable of **reproduction**, **growth**, and **self-regulation** (Martin & Hine: 2008). The problem with the organic account of social groups is that: (i) it is difficult to understand exactly what these three capacities *mean* when applied to social groups, and (ii) it is difficult to provide an

[52] This example appears in Hollis (1994, p. 95).

understanding that satisfies the *Aggregation* criterion – i.e. that aids in distinguishing between mere aggregates and social groups. I consider each of the three capacities in turn.

B.2.b.ii. The capacities of organisms and social groups

♦ *Reproduction*

In what sense does a social group *reproduce*? In the biological sphere, an organism reproduces by creating a new organism that has all or some of its genetic structure. So, to stretch the organic analogy, perhaps the "genetic structure" of a social group is its ethos, whatever that involves, be it the group's goals, beliefs, or typical actions. Then the reproduction of a group would involve the creation of another group with a similar ethos. Indeed, this is what seems to happen with branches, or subsections, of some social groups: e.g. the increasing branches of a bank, church or political party. But the problem with this literal, numerical understanding of "reproduction" is that, first, many social groups do *not* reproduce in this sense. A book club, for example, may never, and need never, spawn another book club. Similarly, a cricket team, a marriage or a small-town school may never produce more of its type of social group.[53]

Instead, the organicist might argue that we should understand the reproduction of a social group as the endurance of the group through time. Therefore, a group has the capacity to reproduce just in case it has the capacity to survive. However, this interpretation is also problematic, for two reasons. First, it is difficult to specify the necessary and sufficient conditions for a given group's survival through time, for the group can undergo significant changes whilst remaining the same group. The group can change its membership [see **section C.2.b.iii. Token-token identity (p. 138)**], or its goals [see **section C.3.c.iii. Diachronic identity (p. 175)**], making it difficult to provide diachronic identity criteria for the group.

Second, telling us that groups have the capacity to survive is not telling us anything that we did not know already. Part of the common-sense concept of groups is that they can persist through time [see **section A.1. The problem (p. 1)**]. Given this common-sense concept of social groups

[53] Perhaps the notion of a numerically reproductive collective is more applicable to social *institutions*, rather than to social *groups*. If we consider the groups under discussion (clubs, cricket teams, marriages, schools) as instances of widely occurring social phenomena (rather than as individual social groups), then reproduction becomes a more intelligible feature. The number of clubs grows regularly, cricket is an expanding sport, and schools become more numerous as the number of children increase. But I am interested here in what unifies *this* particular group, and not what unifies the social institution of which this group may be an instance.

– thus, knowing already that groups have the capacity to persist through time – the individual-individual problem arises. So, defining groups in terms of persistence helps us none at all in resolving the individual-individual problem.

♦ *Growth*

The organicist might define reproduction in terms of the second capacity of organic systems listed above: *growth*. Thus, a group reproduces just in case it grows. However, there are two problems with this definition. First, some types of groups do not possess the capacity for growth, since, by definition, they are fixed in size. Take for example a cricket team: a cricket team simply cannot grow to greater than the size of eleven, for then it would no longer be a cricket team. Thus, growth could at best contribute to an S-3 account of social groups. And second, mere aggregates can also grow: e.g. the number of class-goers and lunch-eaters on the central block concourse may increase in size. Thus, growth cannot aid us in distinguishing between social groups and mere aggregates.

♦ *Self-regulation*

Like reproduction, the capacity for *self-regulation* is also difficult to define in relation to social groups. In the biological sphere, self-regulation is the tendency in a system towards homeostasis; and in the case of biological organisms, homeostasis is relatively easy to define, as the tendency to return to a *healthy* or *normal* state. For example, there is an optimal temperature at which cold-blooded animals tend to maintain their body temperature, since it is only at this temperature that they can function optimally. Hence, this temperature is (partly constitutive of) the normal or healthy state of the animal.

However, there are two problems with understanding self-regulation homeostatically when discussing groups. First, a homeostatic understanding of social groups as applied to governments and political groups is limited to characterising authoritarian, politically conservative groups (see S. Miller, 2011; Ryan & Bohman, 1998), since a government or political party that promotes change through radical policies (e.g. the ANCYL) does *not* aim to maintain a stable state. Thus, a homeostatic account would at best be characterised as an S-3 account.

The second problem with homeostatic accounts is that it is difficult to define what is meant by the “healthy” or “normal” state of a social group (Hempel, 1959 [1995], pp. 366-367). There

are two *prima facie* plausible ways in which the organicist might define the "normal state" of a social group. First, the normal state might be that state in which all of the essential roles of a group are filled, or instantiated, by members of the group. So, the organisation is in a normal state when it has a CEO, CFO, board of directors, etc. This definition, though, seems to collapse into the survival interpretation of reproduction, for it is obvious that if the *essential* roles of a social group are not filled, then the group will cease to exist – i.e. will not survive. But I have already objected to the claim that the capacity for survival contributes to a sufficient condition for social groups.

Radcliffe-Brown provides a different interpretation of the homeostatic state of a social group, in terms of the "harmony" and "internal consistency" of its parts:

> …[group homeostasis is] a condition in which all parts of the social system work together with a sufficient degree of harmony or internal consistency, i.e., without producing conflicts which can neither be resolved or [sic] regulated. (Radcliffe Brown in Hempel, 1959 [1995], p. 366)

Yet, this definition of normality just sets the problem one step back: what do we mean when we say that the parts of a social group operate in "harmony" or with "internal consistency"? If Radcliffe-Brown's answer is that harmony is just that state which does not result in irreparable conflict, then we would need an account of which conflicts are irreparable, and which can be "regulated". For it seems that for *any* given conflict, it is logically possible that the conflict could be resolved. So Radcliffe-Brown must have a different concept of possibility in mind here, but which concept? Is it psychological possibility? But again, it seems that although people may be stubborn, it is almost always *possible* for them to overcome their prejudices to the extent necessary to settle differences such that the group may continue – indeed, mediators facilitate precisely this outcome. The point is that it is not at all clear that we can give an adequate definition of the homeostatic state of a social group.

The organicist might therefore abandon the homeostatic understanding of self-regulation, and instead understand self-regulation more robustly, as regulation through *convention*. The problem now, however, is understanding precisely what is meant by convention. There are three main accounts of convention discussed in the literature:

First, for **Lewis**, a social group has a convention just in case the following three conditions are met: (i) the group has a "coordination problem"; (ii) members of the group attempt to resolve this problem by coordinating their behaviour in an appropriate fashion; and (iii) members of the group expect one another to attempt to resolve the problem (see Gilbert, 1989 ch. 6; 1998;

Lewis, 1969). A coordination problem for a social group arises iff the problem can be resolved only if multiple members of the group coordinate their behaviour. To cite a common example, a coordination problem arises when a cellphone connection between two callers (a small social group) is lost, for if both callers attempt to re-establish the connection simultaneously, or both callers wait, they will be unsuccessful in re-connecting the call. Rather, one caller must wait, while the other calls.

Unfortunately, though, Lewis's account of convention does not work as an account of self-regulation in the context of the organic account. For if we were to adopt Lewis's account, the revised organic account would state that a social group has Lewisian conventions. However, many social groups do not have coordination problems (and hence, lack Lewisian conventions), or at least, need not have them. What is the coordination problem of a religious group, for example? Perhaps they have the coordination problem of organising regular meetings. But such coordination problems seem to be incidental to the unification of the group. Thus, the account at best characterises some types of social groups (e.g. organisations and sports teams, which have obvious coordination problems) but not others – i.e. the account is an S-3 account.

But more importantly, against a Lewisian understanding of self-regulation, it seems that individuals in mere aggregates may have coordination problems that satisfy features (i) through (iii). For example, the lunch-eaters and class-goers may communicate briefly with one another, and so, will face the coordination problem of who speaks and who listens. A further example is that the mere aggregate of lunch-eaters on the central-block concourse faces (i) the problem of coordinating who sits where, since without this coordination, the lunch eaters may sit one on top of the other. (ii) Each of the lunch-eaters solves this problem by observing the other lunch-eaters, and then sitting in an unoccupied location. Moreover, (iii) each of the lunch-eaters expects the other lunch-eaters will do the same. Thus, because mere aggregates can have Lewisian conventions, the Lewisian organic account fails to satisfy *Aggregation*.

Second, **Gilbert** defines a convention as a fiat that receives "joint agreement" among the members of the group (Gilbert, 1998). The members of a group jointly agree to a fiat just in case each agrees to the fiat, and each believes the other members of the group agree to the fiat. This understanding of convention suffers from the same problems as Gilbert's earlier (1989) version of plural subject theory discussed in **section B.3.b. Plural subject theory (p. 70)**.

And third, **Miller** argues that a social group possesses a convention just in case its members perform "joint actions" with a "collective end" (2011, p. 12). This would collapse the organic account into what I call the teleological account, which I consider in the following section.

B.2.b.iii. Conclusion

I have argued that none of the three capacities (reproduction, growth or self-regulation) posited by the organic account provide a convincing sufficient condition for distinguishing mere aggregate intra-relations from the intra-relations in social groups (assuming the account does not collapse into either Gilbert's plural subject theory or Miller's teleological account). The organic account, therefore, fails to satisfy *Aggregation*.

B.2.c. Teleological account

The strength of the organic account is that it recognises that the members of a social group operate *together*, or as a unit. This is cashed out in terms of reproduction, growth and self-regulation, all of which are problematic when applied to social groups. But perhaps we can retain the intuition that social groups operate as a unit, but cash out this intuition in a different way. The teleological account of social groups attempts to do just this, by cashing out the unity intuition in terms of a common *telos*, or goal.

B.2.c.i. The account

Tuomela (2003; 2007) and S. Miller (2001) are the chief proponents of the teleological account of social groups:

> **Teleological account: Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group just in case M1…Mn work towards a common *telos* (or goal).**

The difference between the teleological and organic accounts is that the teleologist, unlike the organicist, need not posit that the *telos* of every social group is its reproduction, growth or regulation. Rather, the *telos* of a social group will differ from group to group because the *telos* of a group will be comprised of the *telos* of its members, and the goals of the members of distinct social groups will be distinct. So, for example, the *telos* of the ANCYL will be distinct from the *telos* of a soccer team, because the ANCYL members have distinct goals from those of soccer players.

However, like the organic account, the teleological account is prima facie Objectivist, since it seems that an observant non-group member would be able to see whether or not M1…Mn work towards a common goal, much like an apiologist is able to observe a colony of bees working together to sustain and grow the hive. Nevertheless, some philosophers, such as Gilbert (1989, 2006b), provide a Subjectivist version of the account, namely, that M1…Mn comprise a group if each *believes* that he, together with the others, work towards a common goal. Moreover, other teleologists hybridise the teleological account by appending Subjectivist elements to the teleological account as I have defined it here. R. Tuomela (2007, p. 1), for example, includes "affective elements (e.g. "we-feeling")" in his account of social groups, and Miller appends the notion of mutual beliefs among group members to his list of conditions for social groups (see footnote 64). I am interested here, however, in purely *Objectivist* versions of the account. It may turn out that a purely Objectivist account is inadequate (and therefore, that a Subjectivist or hybrid account is required), but not enough work has been done in the literature to demonstrate this. I attempt to fill this gap by assessing the Objectivist teleological account against the *Groupness* and *Individuation* criteria. In **section B.5. Hybrid solutions to Q1 (p. 109)** I consider whether hybrid accounts might fill these gaps.

To begin this assessment, notice that, as it stands, the teleological account is unclear, or vague, in two ways. For one, there are three ways one might specify or characterise the *telos* of a given social group. First, one might specify the *telos* of a group **narrowly**. This involves characterising the *telos* of a group in detail, and often in relation to its contingent relations with other social groups or phenomena. For example, we might define the *telos* of the ANCYL as the combination of the following goals: nationalising the mining industry in South Africa, providing a mechanism for the majority of black South African youth to live a more politically and financially equitable existence, and for providing new and fresh ideas that will eventually become the policies of its parent organisation, the ANC.

Second, one could specify the *telos* of groups **broadly**. This would involve specifying certain overarching, core ideals or purposes that a group has – roughly, Tuomela (2003, p. 100) calls this the "ethos" of the group.[54] For example, while the ANCYL may change its views on nationalisation, it seems that the ANC would *never* be a group geared towards the furthering of

[54] Tuomela (2003, p. 100) includes, in addition to goals, "central… beliefs, standards, and norms" within the ethos of the group. Including these phenomena within the broad *telos* of a group does not alter the objection I provide to the broad teleological account in **sections B.2.c.iv. Broad *telos* (p. 59)** and **B.2.c.v. Standard-broad (p. 62)**.

the goals of white upper-class males. Thus, the broad *telos* of the ANCYL would be something like promoting the rights of black youth in South Africa.[55]

Finally, we might specify the *telos* of a group **analytically**. Both the narrow and broad accounts of a group's *telos* involve specifying the group's goals synthetically. That is, it is not part of the *concept* of the ANCYL that it supports nationalisation, nor that it supports the rights of black youth in South Africa. Specifying the *telos* of a group analytically, by contrast, involves a conceptual analysis of the terms used to refer to that group. So, for example, the analytic *telos* of the ANCYL is to provide a youth branch for the African National Congress.

The second manner in which the account is unclear is that it is not obvious what it means for a collection of individuals to "work" towards a goal. Following Tuomela (2003, p. 97), I use the term "work" in a neutral sense: it could refer to either *collective* action or *personal* action.[56] Thus, roughly, M1…Mn "work towards" a common goal if either (i) *each* individual in M1…Mn acts in some way that aids that goal, or (ii), M1…Mn together perform a *collective* action that brings about, or aims to bring about, that goal. In Tuomela's terminology, (i) and (ii) involve acting as a group member in a "weak" and "standard" sense, respectively (2007, p. 13). Tuomela labels groups that are unified by virtue of members acting weakly towards a common goal, "I-mode" groups, while groups that are unified in the standard sense, "we-mode" groups.

Consider, for example, two people moving a piano. If they carry the piano simultaneously, coordinating their moment-to-moment movements, they are performing a collective action, and would be considered a we-mode group (assuming they are a group). On the other hand, if the two individuals each, at different times, pushes the piano half the way to its destination (perhaps while the other person is not around), they are each performing personal actions with a common goal, but not a collective action. Thus, if these individuals comprise a group, they comprise an I-mode group.[57]

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[55] The bifurcation between the narrow and broad conceptions of the *telos* of a group should not be considered a categorical division: it is likely that there is a continuum between narrow and broad conceptions of the *telos* of a group. The narrower the conception of the *telos*, the more specific the details provided concerning the policies, ethos, and activities of the group. As more of these details are omitted, and more generic features inserted, the conception of the group's *telos* becomes broader.

[56] Miller (2001, p. 5) labels those actions I call *personal* actions towards a common goal, "interpersonal" actions.

[57] Different teleologists understand the notion of collective action differently. Miller (2001, p. 4) holds that collective action (what he calls "joint action") is always reducible to the individual actions that underlie it, while

The result of this discussion is that are at least six distinct teleological accounts, determined by whether one characterises the *telos* of a group narrowly, broadly or analytically, and by whether one understands "working" towards a common goal in the weak or standard sense: **Weak-narrow**, **Weak-broad**, **Weak-analytic**, **Standard-narrow**, **Standard-broad**, or **Standard-analytic**. My discussion of the six versions of the teleological account begins with a discussion of the analytic accounts, followed by the narrow and broad accounts.

B.2.c.ii. Analytic *telos*

Both of the analytic accounts (**Weak-analytic** and **Standard-analytic**) suffer from two obvious problems. First, the analytic *telos* of a given group will be a goal which has been achieved upon formation of the group, and so, is a poor candidate for sustaining on-going and new membership in the group. What does it mean, for example, to say that the members of the ANCYL work towards the goal of "providing a youth-branch for the ANC"? It seems strange to say that this is a goal at all, since this goal has already been achieved through the mere existence of the ANCYL. That is, if the youth-league exists then, *by definition*, the goal of having a youth-branch of the ANC has already been fulfilled.

So, the only goal that the ANCYL (or any group for that matter) actually has, on the analytic account, is the group's *continued* survival.[58] This account, however, violates the *Individuation* criterion, for it implies the dubious claim that every individual who has the goal of sustaining the existence of a particular group G is a member of G. But, of course, non-members of a group may work towards the continued survival of the group. The anthropologist may see value and beauty in a New Guinea tribe, and may help the members of the tribe in their continued battle to survive in a swiftly modernising world; yet the anthropologist is not a member of the tribe. The president of a country may value and respect the diversity of religious groups in his country,

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Tuomela (2007, pp. 5, 11), by contrast, holds that there are collective actions that are irreducible to individual actions. One way to understand Miller's position, or a position like Miller's, is to see it as espousing that the standard mode is reducible to the weak mode (see, e.g., S. Miller, 2001, p. 6; but see p. 56 for the denial of this view). If this is the case, then the teleological account can be no better than **Weak-broad**, as objected to in **section B.2.c.iv. Broad *telos* (p. 59)**. On behalf of the teleologist, therefore, I assume that the standard mode of collective action is irreducible to the weak mode, since this provides the teleologist with more options to escape the objections presented against **Weak-broad**.

[58] The analytic teleologist might claim that this is an uncharitable interpretation of the account. Perhaps the goal of the group members is not to maintain the survival of the group, but to perform the daily activities of the group. This account of social groups, however, collapses into either the narrow or broad account, depending on the detail provided concerning the daily activities of the group.

and so work towards giving those groups every opportunity to prosper; yet the president may be an atheist, and so fail to be a member of any of the religious groups he works to maintain.

Moreover, there is a second serious objection to the analytic account. Only a limited number of groups, specifically what might be called derivative groups, have an analytic *telos*, and so the account is at best an S-5 account. Take for example, the ANCYL. Here it is clear what the analytic *telos* of the group is: to provide a youth league for the ANC. We know the analytic *telos* of the ANCYL because its *telos* is derived from the fact that it is a child of its parent group. But what is the analytic *telos* of non-derivative (or parent) groups, such as the ANC? Here it is not so clear. The best answer we can furnish is that the function of the ANC is to provide an African National Congress. This, however, seems disappointingly vague. Just what sort of congress is meant here? Are all Africans involved, or just South Africans? What is the agenda of this congress? The point is that the meaning of the terms we use to refer to our social groups will not, in many cases, provide us with anything more than an inadequately vague understanding of the *telos* of a group. And a vague *telos* will fail to satisfy either *Groupness* or *Individuation*.

B.2.c.iii. Narrow *telos*

The narrow accounts (**Weak-narrow** and **Standard-narrow**) suffer from a different problem. On the teleological account, *every* member must work towards the group's *telos* (since working towards the common *telos* determines any given member's membership); yet, it is not the case that every member of the group works towards the group's *telos* specified *narrowly* (or so I will argue). And so, the narrow accounts fail to fulfil the *Groupness* criterion. Specifically, there are two sorts of problem cases: group members who do not know the narrow goals of the group, and group members who purposely act contrary to the group's narrow *telos* so as to alter the narrow goals of the group. I consider these two cases in turn.

Consider ignorant group members. It is unlikely that the majority, never mind *all*, of the ANCYL members know what all of the ANCYL's narrow goals are: many of the league's members may not know what nationalisation is, for example, nor whether they want it. But if they do not know what the youth-league's goals (narrowly construed) are, it seems dubious to claim that these youth-league members are working towards these goals. Thus, the narrow account fails to satisfy *Groupness* at least in the case of large groups, since members in many

large groups (such as the ANCYL) will lack knowledge of the group's goals, and so, will not be characterised by the narrow teleological account.

Perhaps the narrow teleologist would insist that it is possible for group members to work towards a common goal, even if many of those members lack knowledge of what that goal is. Tuomela seems to adopt this view:

> The descriptions under which the members take themselves and others to be members of the group might be vague, as long as the group is still able to function in the right way as a group. (2007, p. 18)

Now this may be true, in some extremely weak sense of "functioning as a group" or "working towards" a common goal. For example, ignorant ANCYL members (members who do not know what nationalisation is or have no opinion on the matter), may nevertheless join their fellow members in a march against private mining in South Africa (without knowing what the march is about). Or, we might say that the ignorant league members support the league's project of nationalisation because every member pays a membership fee (assume they do), and this membership fee is used to promote the nationalisation campaign in some way. Yet in these cases, intuition suggests that it is not the ignorant member's (very weak) working towards the common goal of nationalisation that unifies him as a member of the youth league, but rather, some other feature or activity of the individual. For how could it be that I am a member of a group *because* I unknowingly aid some goal that I know nothing about? Of course, as a group member I *may* aid a goal of which I am ignorant, but this, it seems, is not constitutive of my membership in the group: I would be a member of the group in virtue of some other feature or event.[59]

The narrow teleologist may respond by arguing that there are other, clearer cases where it seems intuitive that a group's unity and at least some of the members' membership, is constituted by those members working towards a goal of which they are ignorant. Consider the child soldier, who knows nothing of the goals of the army for which he fights. He has no wish to support the dictator that leads this army, nor to support the goals of this dictator – indeed, he may not know

[59] Tuomela (2007, p. 18) recognises this problem, and so, appends to the account a Subjectivist requirement, namely that the members "must believe (or be disposed to believe) that they are members of the group (under some description of membership) and also that the other group members (noncircularly characterized) belong to the group." Tuomela therefore suggests hybridising the account to resolve the objection, borrowing from Gilbert's (1989) Subjectivist account. I discuss hybrid accounts in **section B.5. Hybrid solutions to Q1 (p. 109).**

who the dictator is. And yet, he is a member of the army *because* he fights in a way that supports the goals of the dictator, and hence, the goals of the army.

The counterexample, however, suffers from the fallacy of ambiguity. Notice that the narrow teleologist seeks to provide cases in which the following three conditions obtain:

(i) there are members [M] of a certain social group *g*;
(ii) [M] are unaware of the goals of *g*; and
(iii) the best explanation for why [M] are members of *g* is that [M] work towards the goals of *g*.

Now, there seems little doubt that the child soldier is a member of *some* social group. For the child does not act alone – he fights alongside others. But, of just which group is he a member? I can see two options. First, we might think that the child is a member of the *Army*, ruled by the dictator. But, second, the child might be considered a member of a smaller group, perhaps a collection composed of him and other children he considers his friends, who together go around shooting at people. Call this small group *Friends*. Now, suppose we substitute *Friends* for *g*, then although (i) is plausible, (ii) is false, since the goal of the small group of friends is simple and open to all the children involved: run around shooting at people. On the other hand, we might substitute *Army* for *g*. Then, although (ii) is true, my intuition is that (i) is false. That is, the narrow teleologist's labelling the child a "soldier" is a misleading way to describe the case. In addition to the fact that the child does not know who the leadership of the army is, and does not know what the goals of the army are, he may not even know that there *is* an army.[60] And it seems odd to think that the child is a member of a group *he does not know exists*. Thus, the intuition that he is a member of a social group is better explained by holding that he is a member of *Friends* (the existence of which he is aware), than that he is a member of *Army*. To conclude, therefore, my contention is that the counterexample fails because it ambiguates in its substitutions of *g* in (i) through (iii): it implicitly substitutes *Friends* for *g* in (i), and *Army* for *g* in (ii) and (iii).

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[60] Of course the teleologist could refine the case so that the child *does* know about the existence of the army. Then, I would want to ask the child whether he believes he is a member of the army. If the child answers negatively, then, both for the reasons stated above, and because it seems odd to be a member of a group of which one believes one is not a member, I would doubt that the child is a member of *Army*. On the other hand, if the child responds affirmatively, then we should doubt that (iii) holds, for now it seems plausible that the child is a member of *Army because he believes he is a member*. This explanation of the child's membership is at least as plausible as the claim that he is a member of *Army* because he pursues goals he knows nothing about.

The narrow teleologist might accept that his account fails to characterise large social groups (like the ANCYL and *Army*), and limit his account to smaller groups, in which, he could argue, prototypical group members are well-informed about the goals of the group. This concession, however, renders the account an S-4 type account. Moreover, it is easy to conceive of apparently prototypical cases of small social groups whose members are ignorant with respect to the narrow *telos* of the group. Consider the family with young children. The family's children may be ignorant of their parents' (and hence their family's) narrowly defined goals of promoting the emotional, intellectual and financial well-being of its members. Thus, on the narrow teleological account, these children would not be members of the family – and yet, it seems clear that they *are* members of the family. So, if we accept that the narrow account fails to characterise large social groups because of members' ignorance, we should equally accept that the account fails to characterise small social groups for the same reason.[61] And therefore, the account seems to characterise only a limited number of cases – i.e. it is an S-5 type account.

The second problem case for the narrow account involves a dissident group member – that is, a group member who purposely disobeys, or acts contrary to, the *telos* of the group (narrowly construed). Specifically, the sort of case I am interested in here is a group member who attempts to alter or modify the group's narrow *telos*. For example, after leading the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) for a number of years, Malcolm X softened his views on black separatism. The other members recognised that by softening his stance, he undermined the narrow *telos* of the organisation to promote extreme black separatism – which, at least on one understanding, lead to his assassination.[62] On the narrow account, Malcolm X was not a member of the OAAU when he held his divergent view on black separatism, since he expressly *failed* to work towards black separatism. Nevertheless, contrary to the narrow teleological

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[61] Perhaps the narrow teleologist would point out that families are a-prototypical in an important respect: they are strictly hierarchical. Many other types of small groups (such as a walking group, a book club, or an audience), however, are not hierarchical, or not hierarchical to the same degree. Such non-hierarchical groups would fail to suffer from the objection from ignorance presented here, since, presumably, the members of these groups would be knowledgeable of the group's *telos* – the walkers all know where they are going, and the members of the book club know they are meeting to discuss the book. Thus, perhaps the account could account for small, non-hierarchical social groups. This, however, would significantly diminish the scope, and hence importance, of the account. Moreover, the second objection (dissident group members) considered immediately below applies equally well to small non-hierarchical groups as it does to large hierarchical groups.

[62] There are multiple interpretations of the motivations and causes of the assassination of Malcolm X. Assume, for the purposes of this dissertation, that Malcolm X was assassinated because of his dissidence. If the reader simply refuses this assumption, then replace the case under consideration with the case of Malcolm X* in a possible world w*, where Malcolm X* was assassinated for his dissidence.

account, Malcolm X was still a member of the group after he softened his stance; indeed, he was still its leader (which is why he was assassinated).

Tuomela responds to the objection by arguing that although dissident group members cannot be part of a we-mode group, they can nevertheless be members of an I-mode group. That is, Tuomela in effect argues that although **Standard-narrow** cannot account for dissident group members, **Weak-narrow** can. Specifically, Tuomela provides two ways in which dissident members like Malcolm X could be understood to be working towards the narrow *telos* of the group, understood in the weak, or I-mode sense of working towards the group's *telos*. A dissident group member works towards the group's narrow *telos* if he "obey[s] part of" the group's narrow *telos*, or if he acts "in reference to" to the *telos* "in order to modify it" (2007, p. 236). I consider each of these disjuncts, starting with the second.

On the second disjunct, an individual works towards the group's narrow *telos*, and therefore, is a member of the group, if he acts so as to alter that *telos*. Thus, on this account, any critic of a group G, whose goal is to alter G's goals through his criticism, is a member of G. But many of these critics are expressly and avowedly *not* members of the group, and therefore, by including them as members the account fails to satisfy *Individuation*. For example, members of the Democratic Alliance (DA), South Africa's principle opposition party, persistently engage with the ruling party (the ANC) with the goal of altering the ANC's goals. For instance, DA members fight to have the elimination of corruption become a priority for the ANC. On the second disjunct, these DA members are members of the ANC because they seek to alter the *telos* of the ruling party. But, obviously, DA members are not members of the ANC.

While the second disjunct fails to satisfy *Individuation*, the first disjunct is unclear. What does Tuomela mean when he claims that dissident group members obey "part" of the group's *telos*? Does obeying *any* part or element of the group's narrow *telos* suffice for working towards the group's goals? If so, the account will again fail to satisfy *Individuation*, for the group's narrow *telos* may be extremely detailed and complex, some (intuitively less relevant) elements of which may be commonly pursued by individuals outside of the group. For instance, the narrow *telos* of the ANC includes the goal of creating an "economy that creates more jobs" (2011, p. 1). But many non-members of the ANC, such as DA members, work towards this goal.

Thus, Tuomela would need to find some way to specify just which parts of the group's narrow *telos* would be sufficient objects of pursuit to unify an individual as a member of the group.

The most obvious way to do this would be to specify those parts of the group's narrow *telos* without which the group would no longer be the same group. That is, there are certain core, or *broad*, goals that we cannot imagine the group failing to have. For example, the OAAU would not be the OAAU if it did not have as a goal promoting the rights of black people – this is the broad *telos* of the OAAU. And even though Malcolm X fought to alter the details around how the OAAU went about achieving this goal, he nevertheless maintained this broad *telos*. For *this* reason, we could continue to consider him a member of the OAAU even while he was a dissident.

However, this understanding of Tuomela's first disjunct collapses the account into the broad teleological account, which I therefore move to consider next.

B.2.c.iv. Broad *telos*

The broad teleological accounts (**Standard-broad** and **Weak-broad**) avoid the problems faced by the analytic and narrow accounts. Unlike the analytic account, the broad *telos* of a given group need not be vague, for to know what the broad goals of a group are, all we need to do is examine the credos of that group, which could be precisely specified. For example, the broad *telos* of the ANC is something like the goal of providing a democratic South Africa, where every culture, ethnic group, race, religious group, etc. is respected equally. Moreover, although Malcolm X changed his goals construed narrowly, there was still some general, common underlying goal (e.g. promoting black rights) shared by him and the other members of the OAAU. The broad teleologist requires merely that group members possess common broad, rather than specific, goals; and so, the broad teleologist would not exclude Malcolm X from the OAAU, despite his shifting views, thereby avoiding the objection from dissident members to the narrow account.

But the broad account faces a different problem: distinct social groups may share the same broad *telos*. For example, although we take the OAAU and today's ANCYL to be distinct groups, operating on distinct continents in distinct eras, the members of both groups share the same broad goal of undermining discrimination against black people. Such cases pose a problem for the broad account, for the account implies that members of the first group are members of the second group, and that members of the second group are members of the first. This is what I called the problem of illegitimate agglomeration in **section B.1. Criteria for success (p. 40)**, a severe form of failing to satisfy *Individuation*.

One way the broad teleologist might respond to the agglomeration problem is to deny that the OAAU and the ANCYL are distinct social groups. He may point out that the ANCYL arose from a complex history of black activism, partly motivated by the philosophy of the OAAU. We might therefore view the two groups as part of a larger social group – a view which the broad teleological account correctly endorses. There are two difficulties with this response, however.

On this response, the case involves *three* groups rather than two: (i) the OAAU, (ii) the ANCYL, *and* (iii) a third (very large) group comprising (i), (ii) and presumably any other black rights organisations that share the broad *telos* of (i) and (ii). The first difficulty with this response, however, is that although the broad teleological account is able to satisfy the *Individuation* criterion with respect to (iii), it seems unable to satisfy the *Individuation* criterion with respect to (i) and (ii). For we might ask: what makes *x* a member of (ii) the ANCYL? The broad teleologist can only answer with something along the lines that *x* works towards the broad *telos* of fighting for black rights. But then, on this account, all members of (i) the OAAU are also members of (ii) the ANCYL; yet OAAU members are not members of the ANCYL. That is, the agglomeration problem persists.

The second difficulty is that although in this case the two groups (the OAAU and the ANCYL) are connected in important ways, and so, may plausibly form a larger social group, we can construct a case where the groups are *not* so connected, and therefore, cannot plausibly form a larger social group. For example, suppose that in the near future, an apocalyptic war wipes out civilisation as we know it, kills all members of the ANCYL and destroys all records that the league existed. A thousand years from now, civilisation grows again, and unfortunately experiences similar racial issues to those experienced by members of our current civilisation. In response, social groups arise a thousand years from now whose broad *telos* is fighting for the rights of black people. Now, on the broad teleological account, these social groups of a thousand years from now and the ANCYL of today are together members of the same social group, since they share a common broad *telos*. Yet, they are not – the members of the future groups have no interaction whatsoever with today's ANCYL members, and we think at least some sort of interaction is necessary among the members of any social group (see S. Miller, 2001, p. 161), for otherwise the group would be a mere aggregate and not a *social* group.

Alternatively, Miller's discussion of collective ends may provide a better response for the broad teleologist: a way to deny that the account implies that the OAAU and the ANCYL are a single

group (2001, pp. 58-59). Miller distinguishes between two senses of a "shared goal": a goal that is "necessarily" shared, and a goal that is "shared only as a contingent matter of fact". Miller holds that a goal is necessarily shared between individuals M1 and M2 only if each individual requires the other to perform an action to satisfy the goal. By contrast, M1 and M2 share a goal contingently if M1 or M2 can satisfy the goal alone, without requiring an action from the other. Now, reconsider the OAAU-ANCYL case again. These two groups share a broad *telos* contingently rather than necessarily, since neither group requires the other to fulfil its goal. Thus, if we qualify the broad account such that it states that a social group is a collection of individuals who *necessarily* share a common broad *telos* (and work towards that goal), then we avoid the agglomeration problem.

We may, however, be able to construct another illegitimate agglomeration case in which two groups share a goal in Miller's necessary sense, but they are not one group. Suppose for a moment that God exists. Suppose, moreover, that there are multiple planets other than our own with intelligent, sentient life, and that God governs over life on all of these planets – that is, God is able to, and does occasionally, change the lives of these people.[63] We can imagine that these planets do not know about one another, and have no contact whatsoever. Now, suppose that God is currently reconsidering His previous decision to allow there to be evil in the universe, and that God would only rescind this decision if the vast majority of the individuals under his dominion pray for the cessation of evil. Moreover, suppose that the inhabitants of the various planets all pray for the cessation of evil. Then, we arrive at the following illegitimate agglomeration counterexample to the account as qualified by Miller. It seems that we can characterise each planet's inhabitants as distinct social groups – Earthlings, Martians, Venutians, Gliesians, etc. These social groups are not part of a larger social group, since they do not interact with each other in any way. However, these groups do share a common broad *telos* – namely, the *telos* of God's changing his decision to allow there to be evil in the universe. Moreover, this *telos* is *necessarily* shared among the various planetary groups, since none of the planets can, by themselves, convince God to change his mind: by hypothesis, the inhabitants of all, or most, of the planets must work towards this goal for it to come about. Thus, Miller's account implies, incorrectly, that the planets together form a single social group.[64]

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[63] For devout atheists, replace all references to "God" with reference to super-powerful aliens.

[64] Miller (2001, p. 59) adds a second, Subjectivist, qualification to the account, namely, that a shared *telos* must be "open" to all members of the group. A *telos* is open to the members of a group just in case every member of the

B.2.c.v. Standard-broad

Fortunately for the broad teleologist, there is a way to avoid the agglomeration problem altogether: the broad teleologist may point out that the agglomeration problem applies to **Weak-broad**, but not to **Standard-broad**. Members of similar but distinct social groups (e.g. the ANCYL and OAAU), although possessing common broad goals, and although they may perform personal actions that aim to achieve those goals, do not together perform *collective* actions. The members of the ANCYL and OAAU did not work *together*, in unison, to achieve black rights (although they do work separately to achieve this goal). Similarly, the inhabitants of distinct planets, although praying for the same result, do not pray *together*. Thus a weak account of working towards a common goal will suffer from the agglomeration problem, while a strong (collective-action-based) account will not.

There are, however, problems for **Standard-broad**. First, the account is too strong to characterise some group members as members, and so, fails to satisfy *Groupness*. Consider the convertee, who proclaims his devotion to Islam thrice, after which he is a Muslim. We can assume that the convertee has never performed a joint action with other Muslims, and so, the **Standard-broad** teleologist would fail to classify him as a member of the social group of Muslims. Or, consider the woman who joins a club by paying the joining fee. She believes she is a member of the club, and we can suppose that the treasurer to which she pays the fee also recognises her as a member. We can imagine, however, that she has performed no joint actions with the other members of the club yet, but, it seems, she is nevertheless a member of the club. Similarly, **Standard-broad** would fail to characterise her as a member of the club.

The proponent of **Standard-broad** may respond to the Muslim and club-joiner cases in three ways. First, the proponent could argue that the convertee *does* perform a joint action with Muslims generally, even if he participates very indirectly in that action. For example, the convertee has played his role in increasing the size of the religious group, which is perhaps a goal of the group.[65] So, the convertee might be said to indirectly perform the joint action of

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group truly believes that every other member of the group has that *telos*. This refinement would, presumably, avoid the planetary counterexample, since the inhabitants of the respective planets do not know about each other, and so, will fail to believe that they together have this *telos*. I discuss this suggestion in **section B.5. Hybrid solutions to Q1 (p. 109)**.

[65] It is never clear what the goals of a religious group are. And I am not highlighting Islam specifically here – it might be argued that *any* religious group aims to swell its numbers. The only reason for using Islam in the counterexample is that Islam has clear rules about group membership, such as proclaiming one's allegiance thrice being sufficient for being Muslim.

expanding the number of Muslims. Moreover, by paying her joining fee, the club member supports, and hence to some extent participates in, the club's activities (which, presumably, involve joint actions).

The problem with this response is that by characterising such indirect support of a joint action as sufficient for performance of that joint action, the account fails to satisfy *Individuation*. For consider that it is commonplace for non-members to support the joint actions of social groups, such as the humanitarian who supports an NGO (non-governmental organisation) of which he is not a member with a generous grant, and the good neighbour who reports a gunman in his neighbour's house to the police. The humanitarian and the good neighbour support the activities and broad *telos* of the NGO and family next door respectively, and so, on this notion of joint action, are members of these groups. Yet, by hypothesis, the humanitarian is not a member of the NGO, and the neighbour is not a member of the neighbour's family.

The second response that the **Standard-broad** teleologist might offer is to deny that the convertee is a member of the Muslim group, and deny that the club-joiner is a member of the club. These individuals are not members *yet*: they must first perform a joint action with the other members of the group. The convertee becomes a member of the Muslim group when he prays with the others, and the club joiner is a member of the club when she attends the first club meeting. This response, however, is counterintuitive. The club joiner believes she has joined the club, and the club members believe she has joined the club. Perhaps they give her a welcome bouquet. It seems odd that she and the other club members are incorrect. And the convertee who proclaims his allegiance to Allah sleeps happily that night, believing that he is now a member of a great group, while the imam and other Muslims who witness his conversion affirm this belief. It seems strange to think that the belief is incorrect.[66]

A third and final response that the broad teleologist might offer is to argue that the convertee and club-joiner counterexample target only *codified* groups – that is, groups who have collectively recognised rules concerning the joining (and leaving) of the group. Perhaps, then,

[66] This is not to say that the members of a group believing *x* is a member of *g* is sufficient for *x* being a member of *g*, for this would presuppose a Subjectivist solution to the Configuration Problem. Nevertheless, I take it that mutual belief, even if it does not provide an adequate solution to the Configuration Problem, does provide in many pedestrian cases (such as this one) an intuitive gauge of our intuitions around group membership.

the **Standard-broad** proponent could limit his account to characterising uncodified social groups only. That is, the account is an S-3 type account.

The second objection to the enriched teleological account, however, seeks to show that the account fails to satisfy the *Individuation* criterion for both codified and uncodified groups. Notice that there are instances where a social group performs a collective action together with a non-group member, where the group members and the non-member share the same broad *telos*. Consider the family who hires an attorney to sue the state. The family and the attorney perform joint actions together (preparing for the hearing, going to court, attacking the state's case, etc.) with a common broad *telos* – furthering the family's interests (assume the attorney is generous in his motivations). Similarly, the company that hires a consultant to restructure its employee hierarchy, acts together with the consultant with the common goal of boosting productivity. Finally, the individual who joins a long-term travel group for the day travels together with the group, with the same goal of experiencing the locale. Intuitively, the attorney, consultant and fellow traveller are not members of the family, company and travel group respectively; yet, on **Standard-broad**, these outsiders are members of the respective groups.

In response, the broad teleologist could bite the bullet and argue that the "outsiders" *are* members of the respective groups. The attorney who fights alongside his clients forms a social group with them; the consultant works such long hours in the presence of company employees that they together form a social group; and the lone traveller increases the size of the travel group by one when he joins them for the day. But this response is open to a familiar objection: although the enriched account may satisfy *Individuation* with respect to the larger groups formed in each case, it fails to satisfy *Individuation* with respect to the sub-groups involved. For example, while it may be true that the consultant forms a distinct group with the company employees, the consultant is not part of the *company* – he is a consultant (rather than an employee) after all. Thus, even if we accept that there is (i) a social group that consists of the consultant plus the company employees, there is also (ii) a distinct group that consists *only* of the company employees. And the problem is that **Standard-broad**, even if it accounts for (ii), incorrectly implies that the consultant is a member of (i), since he acts jointly with the other members in this group towards a common broad *telos*.

B.2.d. Conclusion

I have argued that an Objectivist teleological account of social groups is an implausible solution to the Configuration Problem, by arguing that none of the six possible teleological accounts satisfy both *Groupness* and *Individuation*. **Weak-analytic** and **Standard-analytic** are vague, and fail to characterise non-derivative groups. **Standard-narrow** cannot account for ignorant or dissident group members, and although **Weak-narrow** can account for dissident members, it can do so only at the cost of collapsing into **Weak-broad**. **Weak-broad** and **Strong-broad** can account for ignorant and dissident members. But **Weak-broad** illegitimately agglomerates distinct social groups, while **Strong-broad** is too strong to accommodate group members who fail to act together with the rest of the group, as well as non-members who act together with members of a group.

Some of the counterexamples raised against the six Objectivist teleological accounts might be avoided by appending a Subjectivist condition for group membership to the teleological account. I will discuss such a hybrid account in **section B.5. Hybrid solutions to Q1 (p. 109)**. I hope here, however, to have shown that a purely Objectivist teleological account of social groups is dubious, and in so doing, which gaps such a Subjectivist appendage would need to fill for the teleological account to be successful.

B.2.e. Objecting to Objectivism from indistinguishability

Thus far I have considered three Objectivist solutions to the individual-individual problem as it applies to social groups (i.e. Q1): Elster's transactional account, the organic account, and the teleological account. I argued that each of these accounts faces distinct challenges, which render the accounts no better (and often worse) than S-3 accounts. There is a reason, however, for thinking that *in principle*, no brand of Objectivism can succeed as a solution to Q1. Consider Searle's case of park-goers seeking shelter in a storm:

> Imagine that a group of people are sitting on the grass in various places in a park. Imagine that it suddenly starts to rain and they all get up and run to a common, centrally located, shelter. Each person has the intention expressed by the sentence "I am running to the shelter." But for each person, we may suppose that his or her intention is entirely independent of the intentions and behavior of others. In this case, there is no collective behavior; there is just a sequence of individual acts that happen to converge on a common goal. Now imagine a case where a group of people in a park converge on a common point as a piece of collective behavior. Imagine that they are part of an outdoor ballet where the choreography calls for the entire *corps de ballet* to converge on a common point. We can even imagine that the external bodily movements are indistinguishable in the two cases; the people running for shelter make the same types of bodily movements as the ballet dancers. Externally observed the two cases are indistinguishable…. (Searle, 1990, pp. 4-5)

One way to understand Searle's case is as a counterexample to what might be called the "distinguishability" thesis:[67]

> **Distinguishability: For any given social group *g*, there is some feature F of *g* that no mere aggregate of individuals possesses, and F is *distinguishable* from an external perspective (i.e. by someone other than a member of *g*).**

Distinguishability is a presupposition of all the Objectivist accounts considered: Elster's account claims that F is the frequency of transactions that occurs among the individuals in a social group; the organic account posits that F is the capacity for a social group to act as an organism; and the teleological account holds that F is the capacity of social group members to work towards a common goal. Searle's case provides a counterexample to **Distinguishability**, for the mere aggregate of unrelated park-goers is indistinguishable from the coordinated ballet performers. That is, there is no property (F) that that ballet performers have that is both distinguishable by an external observer, and that the mere aggregate of park-goers does not have.

The Objectivist might respond by arguing that Searle's case is unusual, or a-typical, perhaps because the individuals in the ballet have as one of their goals that they coordinate in such a way that their behaviour is indistinguishable from a mere aggregate's behaviour in the same situation. Social groups, they might argue, rarely have this goal. Thus, at best, the objection merely shows that Objectivist solutions are no better than S-2 level accounts. This response, however, is problematic, for it seems that *for any* given social phenomenon, or at least, for any given social group, we can imagine a mere aggregate of individuals who behave and relate in a qualitatively identical fashion, and so, appear indistinguishable to an onlooker.

Consider, for example, our original case of the ANCYL members chanting on the Wits concourse, protesting the rise in study fees. We can imagine a collection of androids or neatly-dressed zombies who are each programmed (or each biologically designed, in the case of the zombies) to stand in front of the Wits concourse, and shout exactly the same chants that the ANCYL members shout, and move in exactly the same manner as the ANCYL members move: a skilled onlooker could not notice the difference. The problem is that an Objectivist solution to the individual-individual problem is committed to the implication that either *both the ANC-*

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[67] Searle intends his case as a counterexample to the distinguishability of *collective* (or joint) *action* from mere agglomeration of individualistic action. Here I apply the case to the distinguishability of *social groups* from mere aggregates.

youth league members and the collection of androids/zombies are mere collectives, or that *both are social groups*, for these two collections of individuals are indistinguishable from an outsider's perspective. Yet we think that the ANCYL members are a social group, while the androids/zombies are not.[68]

Perhaps the Objectivist would argue that the android/zombie case is unsuccessful, for solutions to the individual-individual problem need only apply to *human* social groups, and so, cannot be expected to account for androids and zombies. There are two good objections to this response, however. First, there seems no reason why, in principle, sophisticated, sentient non-human species cannot form social groups. Thus, we would want a solution to the individual-individual problem that is not anthropocentric. Second, we might replace androids and zombies with individuals who are unaware of, or do not consider, the behaviour of the individuals around them when they stand on the Wits concourse and shout. These unaware humans just happen to shout in unison, purely coincidentally. Replacing the androids or zombies with such blissfully unaware humans would not, it seems, hinder the counterexample.

Ultimately, the reason why the androids/zombies/unaware humans do not comprise a social group is that they lack the *reflexive mental states* required by members of a social group. In Roth's (2003, pp. 74-80) terminology, social group members have an "intersubjectivity" that cannot be adequately understood or captured from an outsiders' perspective, and so, cannot be possessed by the androids/zombies/unaware humans. The problem is that Objectivist solutions to the individual-individual problem cannot adequately capture these reflexive mental states, or intersubjectivity. At best, the Objectivist can tell us how group members with these mental states typically behave and relate, and then (incorrectly) identify these externally observable relations as the principle of unity for the social group. Objectivist accounts therefore provide an "intersubjectivity on the cheap" (Roth, 2003, p. 74), ignoring what is most important: *the reflexive mental states* underlying the behaviour and interactions of group members.

[68] The die-hard Objectivist may argue that androids are capable of forming social groups. Perhaps, in certain cases, this is possible. The technology used to create androids may reach a level of sophistication where we may grant "communities" of these androids a "social" status. Perhaps, for example, androids learn to interact with one another, and are able to coordinate their behaviour in previously un-programmed ways. I take it that, even in this case, there will be debate as to whether or not the androids do comprise a social group. Nevertheless, this is not the sort of case I imagine here: assume that the androids on the central concourse are programmed in such a way that they *do not* learn from one others' behaviour – i.e. they are "unaware" of the other androids around them, and shout in isolation, but at the same time.

Subjectivist accounts, however, take the reflexive mental sates of group members as *central* to their account. Therefore, I turn next to consider Subjectivist accounts.

B.3. SUBJECTIVIST ACCOUNTS

Subjectivist accounts might be divided into two types: cognitive and non-cognitive accounts. Cognitive accounts cite the beliefs of group members as crucial to understanding the relations among them, while non-cognitive accounts are framed in terms of non-cognitive states, such as "feelings". The most developed cognitive accounts in the literature are Gilbert's plural subject account and Searle's constructionist account. Non-cognitive accounts have received little attention, but perhaps the best known is Sartre's account. I will argue that neither of these types of accounts is convincing. Since it is the less plausible of the two, I start by briefly elucidating and evaluating Sartre's non-cognitive account.

B.3.a. Sartre's non-cognitive account

B.3.a.i. The account

Sartre provides a non-cognitive Subjectivist account – i.e. an account that cites non-cognitive mental states as central to understanding intra-group relations. Specifically, Sartre posits that the "look" is essential to group member relations. Sartre's concept of the "look" is integrated into his ontology, which investigates the relation between *being-for-itself* and *being-in-itself* (Barnes, 1992, p. 13). Being-for-itself is the mode in which consciousness exists, as intentional[69] and translucent[70]. By contrast, being-in-itself is the mode in which non-conscious material objects (such as chairs and pencils) exist, as non-intentional and opaque[71] (i.e. not translucent). A human being, Sartre argues, exists both as a for-itself and an in-itself, and when I "look" at another human being (the "Other"), I transform the Other into an in-itself, alienating him from his consciousness, and making him into an object for me. At the same time, the Other, who is transformed into an object, sees me as a for-itself performing this transformation.

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[69] That is, consciousness is always directed towards an object: "all consciousness is consciousness of something" (Sartre, 1943 [2005], p. 16).
[70] Consciousness is translucent because its contents are never hidden from itself – "consciousness is consciousness through and through" (Sartre, 1943 [2005], p. 11).
[71] Being-in-itself is opaque because it is not aware of itself.

Sartre argues that there are two ways in which the look may lead to the creation of a group. First, if I together with other persons look at the Other, then I and those other persons together transform the Other into an object for us (rather than an object for me). I and the other persons are now a plural *subject*, or "we" (Sartre, 1943 [2005], pp. 437-438). Second, I may feel the Other look at me and a number of others together as a unit, in which case the Other transforms me and the others into a combined "us", or plural *object* for him (Sartre, 1943 [2005], p. 439). Thus, Sartre's account could be stated as follows:

> **Sartre's account: Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group if M1…Mn together look at the Other, OR M1…Mn are looked at as a unit by the Other.**

Sartre's account should be classified as a non-cognitive account, since Sartre holds that the "look" is not a belief – it is an existential feeling, or a feeling relating to the nature of one's (or another's) way of being in the world.

B.3.a.ii. Objections

There are at least three problems with Sartre's view. First, if we are to accept Sartre's solution to the individual-individual problem, we should also accept his ontological framework from which the account arises. However, many would not want to commit themselves to Sartre's ontology.

Second, Sartre's account struggles to characterise large groups. On Sartre's account, I am a member of the ANCYL if either (i) I feel that I together with the other members of the league look at the Other, or (ii) I feel that the Other looks at me together with the other members of the league as a unit. But (i) is problematic, for how is it possible for me to feel that I am looking together with "the other members of the league" if I don't know who the other members of the league are? And, against (ii), how is it possible for the Other to look at all the members of the league as a unit, if the Other doesn't know who all the members of the league are?

Finally, and most damagingly, notice that *neither* of the disjunctive conditions specified in the definiens is sufficient for the definiendum (group member intra-relations).[72] That is, neither of the disjuncts satisfies *Aggregation*. First, it is possible for a mere aggregate of individuals to

[72] The definiendum of an account is that which the account is meant to define. The definiens of an account is the statement that is intended to define, or give an account of, the definiendum.

look at an Other, without transforming the mere aggregate into a group. For example, we can imagine that all the lunch-eaters and class-goers on the central concourse, upon hearing a scream, look up for a moment to see a woman fall down a flight of stairs. All the class-goers and lunch-eaters look together at the woman (the Other), and yet, we need not infer from this that the mere aggregate suddenly comprises a group, for a few seconds later the individuals may continue with their tasks without paying the woman any further attention. Sartre must hold that the lunch-eaters and class-goers are instantaneously transformed into a group while they look at the woman, but I find this position counterintuitive.

Contrary to the second disjunct, it is not the case that someone's (i.e. the Other's) viewing a collection of individuals as a group is sufficient to unify that collection into a social group. Consider John, the paranoid, who "looks" at those around him as participating in a vast conspiracy against him. On the second disjunct, the people John encounters during his daily activities together comprise a social group *because* John sees them as such. But, they are not a social group – John is a paranoid, incorrectly interpreting their behaviour. The shop teller, the baker, the train conductor and John's mother do not interact with one another, and so, are not a social group.

Perhaps Sartre would respond by arguing that John is an a-prototypical Other – he is paranoid, and this is why he can be incorrect in his ascription of grouphood. Thus, Sartre's account should be refined to allow only prototypical subjects the ability to construct social groups with their look. But the problem with this response is that it is not only the paranoid who can be mistaken about which collections are aggregates, and which are social groups. Recall Searle's objection from indistinguishability to Objectivist accounts [see **section B.2.e. Objecting to Objectivism from indistinguishability (p. 65)**]. Searle argues (or I argue on his behalf) that for any social group, there may be a mere aggregate of individuals that behave in a fashion indistinguishable to an outsider – in this case the "Other". If this is correct, then the Other, even if he is a prototypical Other, could be mistaken in his ascription of grouphood to a mere aggregate of individuals.

B.3.b. Plural subject theory

Subjectivist accounts cite group members' reflexive mental states as crucial to understanding the constitutive relations among the members of a group. Non-cognitive subjective accounts, like Sartre's, cite feelings (or similar attitudes) as constitutive of group membership. Perhaps

the reason why non-cognitive accounts fail is because individuals do not feel they are a member of a group until *after* they believe they are a member of the group. That is, it seems that if group members' attitudes are constitutive of their membership (i.e. if a subjectivist solution to the individual-individual problem is correct), it would be their cognitive states, rather than their non-cognitive states, that are relevant to their membership.

There are two influential cognitive accounts in the literature: Gilbert's plural subject theory, and Searle's constructionist account. I discuss these accounts in turn, starting with Gilbert's account.

B.3.b.i. Two versions of plural subject theory

Plural subject theory attempts to account for social groups in terms of the Simmelian concept of a "we", or plural subject (see Simmel, 1910-1911 [1971]). Gilbert has refined and developed her plural subject theory over decades (see Gilbert, 1989, 1997, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2011). Over this period, we might distinguish between two distinct versions of the account:

> **Correct Thought: Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group iff[73] each of M1…Mn "correctly thinks of himself and the others, taken together, as 'us*' or 'we*'" (1989, p. 147).**
>
> **Joint Commitment: Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group iff they are "jointly committed" to ϕ "as a body" (2003, 2006b) – where ϕ is a joint action, belief, state, attitude, or goal.**

Gilbert and her critics make no effort to distinguish these two versions of the account, and refer to both as a single account named "plural subject theory". But since it is not obviously the case that the two accounts are equivalent, I consider the two accounts separately here.[74] To start, consider the technical terms used by Gilbert, namely, (i) *us**, (ii) *we**, (iii) *jointly committed*, and (iv) *as a body*.

Gilbert uses the terms (i) "us*", (ii) "we*" and "plural subject" interchangeably. On Gilbert's account, a collection of individuals M1…Mn comprise a plural subject PS just in case each

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[73] Gilbert intends both her early and late accounts to provide necessary and sufficient conditions for group membership. However, I am interested here merely in whether or not her accounts provide *sufficient* conditions for group membership.

[74] Indeed, it turns out that it is not the case that the two accounts are equivalent, since (I will argue) they each face distinct objections.

expresses that he is a willing member of PS, and there is *common knowledge* among M1…Mn of one other's expression (1989, p. 205). A fact P is common knowledge among M1…Mn just in case P is "entirely out in the open between (or among) them, and, at some level, all are aware that this is so" (2006b, p. 139). Roughly, a fact P is *entirely open*, or "open*" (Gilbert, 1989, p. 191), to M1…Mn just in case every one of the "smooth reasoner counterparts" of M1…Mn knows that P, knows that the others know that P, knows that the others know that he knows that P, knows that the others know that he knows that the others know that P, and so on.[75] A *smooth reasoner counterpart* of an individual M is a person just like M, except that M is perfectly rational.

To say that M1…Mn are (iii) *jointly committed* to ϕ-ing as a body is to say that M1…Mn each expresses a readiness to ϕ as a body, and M1…Mn have common knowledge of one another's expressions. Unfortunately, however, Gilbert does not provide a clear account of ϕ-ing (iv) *as a body*, but I believe the following would provide a rough but faithful rendition of her meaning. To say that M1…Mn share a joint commitment JC to ϕ-ing *as a body* is to say that JC has "collective content", rather than "singular content". A commitment with *collective content* has the form "we commit to ϕ". Elsewhere, Gilbert calls these "we*-thoughts" (1989, p. 205). This should be contrasted with singular content: a commitment has singular content if it has the form "I commit to ϕ". Thus, on Gilbert's account, each of the individuals in a group who jointly commits to carrying a table as a body makes a commitment of the form "we will carry this table" (as opposed to each making the personal commitment, "I will carry this table").

To summarise, consider the following claims:

PS-1) M1…Mn together comprise a plural subject.

PS-2) Each of M1…Mn believes that PS-1.

PS-3) M1…Mn each expresses readiness to ϕ.

PS-4) PS-3 is common-knowledge among (if n>2) or between (if n=2) M1…Mn.

PS-5) The expressions in PS-3 have collective content.

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[75] Gilbert's use of "M knows that P" is equivalent to the capacity of M to infer that P in the situation in which M finds himself.

Then, **Correct Thought** holds that PS-1 and PS-2 are each necessary and together sufficient conditions for group membership, while **Joint Commitment** is the doctrine that PS-3, PS-4 and PS-5 are each necessary and together sufficient conditions for group membership.

B.3.b.ii. Critical literature on plural subject theory

Before I begin my assessment of the two versions of Gilbert's plural subject theory, I should note that I will not be focusing on the sort of objections to plural subject theory that are prevalent in the literature. These include objections concerning: whether Gilbert's account of shared states, such as joint commitments, is plausible (see, e.g., Andersen, 2010; Bouvier, 2004; Bratman, 2009; Mathiesen, 2006; McMahon, 2003, 2005; Pacherie, 2011; Tollefsen, 2003; R. Tuomela, 2007; R. Tuomela & Tuomela, 2003; Wray, 2001, 2003); whether plural subject theory can adequately capture the normative implications of belonging to a group – such as the legitimation of political authority and obligations (see Makela, 2000; M. Miller & Makela, 2005; Swindler, 1996); and whether plural subject theory provides a faithful conceptual analysis of the folk-sociological meaning of the term "we" (de Bruin, 2009; Sheehy, 2002 note 15).

Instead, I am interested here in whether Gilbert's plural subject theory can provide an adequate metaphysical account of social groups. Sheehy (2002, p. 384) considers whether plural subject theory provides adequate *necessary* conditions for group membership. But here I am primarily interested in whether Gilbert provides adequate *sufficient* conditions for social group membership. I will focus, specifically, on whether plural subject can satisfy *Groupness*, *Individuation* and *Aggregation* – a discussion conspicuously absent in the literature.

B.3.b.iii. Joint Commitment

The objection to **Joint Commitment** that I present here springs from the intuition that although **Joint Commitment** may provide us with a plausible understanding of the Folk Sociological concept of "we" or "us", it is too weak to provide an adequate account of *social groups*. That is, there are collections of individuals that **Joint Commitment** would classify as a "we" or "us", and which intuition would agree amounts to a "we" or "us", but which intuition would also suggest fails to comprise a social group. Thus, the counterexample I consider here seeks to show that **Joint Commitment** classifies certain mere aggregates as social groups, and therefore fails to satisfy *Individuation* and *Aggregation*.

♦ *Carrying a table together*

Consider the following case. It is the first day of school, and Ms Johnson, the English teacher, dislikes the location of her desk. She selects two students at random from her class, Ben and Bob, points to them (since she does not know their names), and asks them to carry her desk to a different side of the classroom (the desk is too heavy for one person to carry alone). Ben and Bob, who do not know each other at all (suppose Ben is a new student, who does not yet know any of the other students), both stand and walk towards the desk. Each says, "Sure, we will carry the desk" (or something similar). They lift the desk in unison, and carry the desk to Ms Johnson's preferred location. Without speaking to each other, they return to their respective seats.

The following observations seem uncontroversial: Ben and Bob have performed a joint action – carrying the table together, and Ben and Bob refer to the collection of the two boys when they use the term "we". What *is* controversial, however, are the implications of this joint action, and precisely what the "we" in their statement refers to. **Joint Commitment** implies that (i) *because* of this joint action, Ben and Bob comprise a social group, and that, therefore, (ii) the "we" in their statement refers to a plural subject or social group, rather than a mere aggregate of individuals. For recall that **Joint Commitment** claims that individuals M1…Mn are members of a social group just in case PS-3 through PS-5 obtain:

PS-3) M1…Mn each expresses readiness to ϕ.

PS-4) PS-3 is common-knowledge among (if n>2) or between (if n=2) M1…Mn.

PS-5) The expressions in PS-3 have collective content.

Ben and Bob express their readiness to carry the table by standing and walking to Mrs Johnson's desk, and by stating that they will carry the desk. There is common knowledge between them that they will be carrying the desk together, for this is entirely out in the open between then. Finally, because each says, "*we* will carry the desk", they have expressions with collective content.

My intuition, however, is that (i) and (ii) are incorrect: Ben and Bob are *not* a social group. They have never spoken, they do not know each other, and they have interacted for only a very brief period of time. They seem to lack the cohesion or unity that we think social groups have.

Ben and Bob are a mere aggregate of individuals[76], incorrectly characterised as a social group by **Joint Commitment**. Thus, the account fails to satisfy *Individuation* and *Aggregation*, since it counts non-group members as group members, and implies that a mere aggregate is a social group.

The most obvious response for Gilbert is to bite the bullet on this counterexample: she could deny that she shares my intuition that Ben and Bob are not a social group. Now, admittedly, intuitions in the table-carrying case are muddy: there may be divided opinions concerning this case. I do not believe, however, that this is a problem for the counterexample, for the following reason. Although it may be controversial whether or not Ben and Bob are a social group, it seems far less controversial that if Ben and Bob do comprise a social group, then their group is of a very different sort from a family, a soccer team, or a protesting group of activists. Specifically, Ben and Bob lack the *cohesion* present in these social groups. That is, Ben and Bob lack the unity, familiarity, structure, duration and quality of interaction present in cohesive social groups. This difference between cohesive groups (families, soccer teams and activists) on the one hand, and what Gilbert (2006b, p. 167) calls "ephemeral" or "transient" groups on the other (like Ben and Bob), seems more than a difference of degree: it appears to be a difference of category.

The problem for Gilbert is that **Joint Commitment** is unable to account for the categorical difference between cohesive and ephemeral groups. On **Joint Commitment**, Ben and Bob are just as much a social group as the soccer club – both have joint commitments to ϕ-ing as a body (Ben and Bob are jointly committed to carrying the table, while the soccer club is jointly committed to playing soccer together). But if the conditions used by **Joint Commitment** to account for groups like soccer clubs and the family apply equally well to collectives like Ben and Bob, then, at best, **Joint Commitment** accounts for what is common between cohesive social groups and ephemeral social groups. But this provides a bare-bones, non-cohesive conception of social groups. Yet that is not really the kind of social group we are interested in: cohesive social groups are far more interesting and important because their cohesion results in the most significant characteristics of groups, such as their capacity for responsibility and duration through time. Ephemeral groups may, arguably, under rare circumstances, display the

[76] Ben and Bob may be members of a larger group – i.e. the class. But Ben and Bob do not together, just the two of them, comprise a social group. But **Joint Commitment** implies that Ben and Bob together comprise a social group of two.

capacity for responsibility, but this capacity is significantly diminished compared with cohesive social groups. To conclude, Gilbert's account provides us with an incomplete, uninteresting account of social groups.

Gilbert provides two responses to this objection: that **Joint Commitment** adequately characterises paradigmatic social groups (which is all that matters), and that ephemeral and cohesive social groups are not categorically different. I consider these responses in turn.

First, Gilbert's response from paradigmatic social groups runs as follows:

> One might also wonder if the plural subject account is not too broad in countenancing very transient plural subjects…. These people constitute, indeed, a very small, very transient plural subject and hence they will constitute a social group of the same kind, if they do. Agreed, such encounters constitute something close to the thin end of a long wedge. If the nature of this wedge is otherwise well captured by the concept of a plural subject, however, it seems arbitrary to insist on a particular cut-off point. (2006b, p. 167)

Gilbert is quite right: it is not a serious problem if the account gets these marginal, muddy cases wrong (or places the "cut-off point" incorrectly on some people's conception of social groups), but *only if* the paradigmatic cases of social groups are "well captured" by the account. The question is: what are paradigmatic social groups? My intuition is that *cohesive* social groups are paradigmatic, at least in the sense that they are the most interesting and important type of group, and as I have argued, **Joint Commitment** fails to account adequately for cohesive groups.

Gilbert, however, takes ephemeral groups as paradigmatic social groups. Indeed, Gilbert's central case upon which she builds her account is that of two individuals going for a walk together – a social group which she readily admits is "ephemeral" (2006a, p. 168) rather than cohesive. But this approach seems back-to-front. The most fruitful, and intuitively correct, methodology for constructing an account of social groups would be to identify the central features of a social group based upon *cohesive* social groups, and thereafter tweak the conditions so that borderline cases (i.e. ephemeral groups) are included or excluded appropriately. But instead, Gilberts begins with a case (going for a walk together) which she admits is a borderline ("ephemeral") example, and then proceeds to claim that because this is her central case, her account characterises paradigmatic social groups correctly, as well as social groups generally.

Gilbert's second response is to argue that ephemeral and cohesive groups are not categorically different after all:

> If walking together is a matter of plural subject formation, as I have argued at length, this not only suggests that small and relatively ephemeral social groups generally are plural subjects. It suggests, also, that larger and less ephemeral social groups—insofar as they are indeed social groups in the same sense—are similarly constituted. (2006a, p. 168)

Why, however, should we think that cohesive groups are "social groups" in Gilbert's "sense" if what she means by "social groups" is paradigmatically captured by ephemeral and transient groups? In the sum of her work, Gilbert only seems to provide one supporting argument for this crucial assumption. She argues that ephemeral and cohesive groups often feature on the same list of what sociologists call "social groups" (Gilbert, 2006b, p. 97). Therefore, she concludes, ephemeral and cohesive collectives are social groups "in the same sense".

But the response shows merely that the "sense" in which ephemeral and cohesive groups are similar, is that both are considered by sociologists to be types of social groups. But this falls short of showing that cohesive groups are not categorically distinct from ephemeral groups, for two reasons. First, these sociologists could be mistaken – they are sociologists, rather than social ontologists, after all. Second, even if ephemeral groups and cohesive groups both belong to the same genus (both *social groups*), this does not imply that cohesive groups are not importantly different from ephemeral groups. That is, even if ephemeral and cohesive groups are similar in the sociologist's sense, this may not be the sense which counts when constructing a metaphysical account of social groups.

The conclusion of this discussion is that if Gilbert demands for collectives like Bob and Ben to be included as social groups, then the correct response is to give Gilbert what she wants: yes, she has provided an account of what *she calls* "social groups". But what Gilbert labels a "social group" is not what we are really interested in here, as well as in the social sciences: we are interested in *social groups proper* – that is, cohesive social groups.

B.3.b.iv. Correct Thought

One way to diagnose the problem with **Joint Commitment** is to point out that it is not the joint commitment itself which unifies the individuals involved into a social group. Instead, the *significance* (or importance) of the joint commitment to those who commit it, is what is important for whether or not those individuals are a social group. *Roughly*, it seems that when a collection of individuals jointly commits to ϕ, and when those individuals consider ϕ significant, then the joint commitment to ϕ is sufficient for unifying those individuals into a social group. Ben and Bob are not a social group when they carry Ms Johnson's table, because

this joint action is insignificant to the boys. But, suppose after carrying the table, Ms Johnson declares: "Ben and Bob! You two shall be my table-carriers from now on." The two boys then see significance in the joint action (perhaps they feel proud, or used), and so, may come to think of themselves as a social group (Ms Johnson's table-carriers).

Importantly, this is merely a *rough* account of a sufficient condition for social groups, since the notion of significance is vague, and so, it would be difficult to use this notion in a rigorous account of social groups. Nevertheless, the notion of significance is useful, for we might ask: *why* is the significance of a joint commitment made by M1…Mn correlated with whether or not M1…Mn are a social group? Gilbert has at her disposal a ready answer: because in those instances, and only in those instances, where the joint commitment is significant to M1…Mn, do M1…Mn *believe* that they comprise a plural subject, or social group. This is the basis of **Correct Thought**, and so **Correct Thought** may be the refinement of **Joint Commitment** that Gilbert requires to resolve the counterexample.[77] Thus, I move now to discuss **Correct Thought**.

Recall that **Correct Thought** is the following doctrine:

> **Correct Thought: Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group iff each of M1…Mn "correctly thinks of himself and the others, taken together, as 'us*' or 'we*'" (Gilbert, 1989, p. 147).**

Correct Thought, however, is ambiguous, for we might interpret "the others" either as a particular set of individuals (a *de re* interpretation), or as the other members of the group or plural subject *whoever* they are (the *de dicto* interpretation). Thus, **Correct Thought** permits two distinct formulations:

> ***De re* interpretation of Correct Thought: M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group iff each of M1...Mn believes[78] that he is part of a plural subject PS, AND each of M1…Mn is a part of PS, AND each of M1...Mn believes that each and every other individual in M1…Mn is a member of PS.**
>
> ***De dicto* interpretation of Correct Thought: Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group iff each of M1…Mn believes he is part of a plural subject PS, AND each of M1…Mn is a part of PS, AND each**

[77] **Correct Thought** was Gilbert's original account, chronologically. But conceptually, I see **Correct Thought** as more advanced than **Joint Commitment**.

[78] Throughout the remainder of this chapter I have assumed that if *x* "thinks of" *y* as a member of PS, then *x believes* that M is a member of PS. Nothing substantial rests upon this assumption: the reader may replace all instances of "believes" and "belief" with "thinks" and "thought", without altering the argument.

of M1…Mn believes that the members of PS other than himself, whoever they are, are part of PS.

In formalising the difference between these accounts, let G*x* mean that *x* is a member of social group G, let PS*x* mean that *x* is a member of plural subject PS. Then:

***De re* interpretation of Correct Thought:**
(*x*)(*y*)(((*x* ≠ *y*) & (PS*x* & PS*y*) & (*x* believes: PS*x*) & (*x* believes: PS*y*) & (*y* believes: PS*x*) & (*y* believes: PS*y*)) ↔ (G*x* & G*y*))

***De dicto* interpretation of Correct Thought:**
(*x*)((PS*x* & (*x* believes: PS*x*) & (*x* believes: (*y*)(((*x* ≠ *y*) & PS*y*) → PS*y*))) ↔ G*x*)

To clarify the distinction between the accounts further, notice that on the *de re* interpretation, *x* has a number (n) of beliefs, where n is equal to the number of members in G (one belief for every other member of G, plus a belief about *x*'s own membership in PS). By contrast, the *de dicto* interpretation requires merely that *x* has *two* beliefs: one about his own membership in PS, and a single belief that all the other members of PS (however many they are, and whoever they are) are members of PS.[79]

In her earlier work, Gilbert is opaque about which of these two interpretations she intends, although she seems to favour the *de re* interpretation (1989, pp. 147-148). Later in her career Gilbert is clear that she intends the *de dicto* interpretation (2003, p. 55; 2006b, pp. 99, 174). Most of my discussion will focus on the *de dicto* interpretation, as Gilbert settled on this version of the account. I will argue, however, the *de dicto* account caters for neither small nor large groups, and so is at best an S-5 type account. The *de re* interpretation is better, since it provides a plausible account of small groups; but it fails to characterise large social groups, and so, is an S-3 account. I discuss the *de dicto* version of **Correct Thought** first.

♦ *The de dicto interpretation*

On the *de dicto* interpretation of **Correct Thought**, *x* is a member of G just in case the following three conditions obtain:

D-1) *x* believes: PS*x*

[79] In Gallois's terminology, the *de re* interpretation is a "particular" claim, while the *de dicto* interpretation is a "general" claim (Gallois, 1998, p. Sec. 1).

D-2) *x* believes: (*y*)(((*x* ≠ y) & PS*y*) → PS*y*)

D-3) PS*x*

Notice, however, that the proposition believed in D-2 is a tautology: *x* believes that every member, whoever they are (other than himself), of the plural subject PS is a member of PS. *Of course* every member of PS is a member of PS. Any rational person (whether or not they are a member of PS or G) would, if asked, assent to believing that every member of PS is a member of PS. Thus, it is difficult to see how D-2 can contribute to a sufficiency condition for *x*'s membership of G.

To avoid the redundancy of D-2, Gilbert (2003, p. 55) refines the *de dicto* account as follows:

> **Descriptive *de dicto* interpretation of Correct Thought: Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group iff each of M1…Mn believes he is part of a plural subject PS, AND each of M1…Mn is a part of PS, AND M1…Mn share (or can be described by) a key feature F, AND each of M1…Mn believes that the individuals who satisfy F, whoever they are, are a part of PS.**

This "descriptive" version of the *de dicto* account might be formalised as follows, where F*x* means that *x* has the key feature F:

> **Descriptive *de dicto* interpretation of Correct Thought:**
> **(*x*)((PS*x* & F*x* & (*x* believes: PS*x*) & (*x* believes: (*y*)(((*x* ≠ *y*) & F*y*) → PS*y*)))**
> **↔ G*x*)**

Thus, the account implies that the following four conditions are together sufficient (and each necessary) for any individual *x* to be a member of G:

D-1) *x* believes: PS*x*

D-3) PS*x*

D-4) F*x*

D-5) *x* believes: (*y*)(((*x* ≠ *y*) & F*y*) → PS*y*)

The descriptive account avoids the redundancy charge levelled against the original *de dicto* account by replacing D-2 with D-4 and D-5. However, this new account is dubious because it fails to characterise *large* as well as *small* social groups. I consider these two sorts of groups in turn.

♦ *Large social groups and any common key feature*

In the case of at least some prototypical, large social groups, it is difficult to arrive at *any* feature F that fulfils D-4 and D-5. By D-4, having property F is *necessary* for membership in G. Moreover, by D-5, every member of G believes that having property F is *sufficient* for membership in PS. Moreover, it seems plausible that Gilbert would require that, since this belief is partly constitutive of social group membership, this belief must be *true* (unless Gilbert is willing to accept that false beliefs are partly constitutive of group membership, which seems unlikely). Thus, having property F is both necessary for membership in G and sufficient for membership in the plural subject that comprises G.

What sort of key feature F would satisfy these requirements? Gilbert provides the following examples of properties which she thinks are legitimate candidates for F in large social groups:

> Simple examples of such a conception are 'people living on this island', 'fishermen of the north shore', 'those who farm in the river delta', 'mushroom pickers', 'people of small stature who live in the forest', 'those who acknowledge their descent from the great warrior Obi'. These are simple in the sense that they make no reference to complexes of social rules or institutions – they make no reference, in particular, to already constituted countries. Thus they contrast with such conceptions as 'Americans', 'British', 'citizens of Europe', and the like, which are also conceptions of a particular population of persons. There is no obvious objection in principle or practice to the idea that a very large number of people can share either kind of conception of a population. (2006b, p. 175)

Gilbert, then, allows for members of a given group G to share either of two kinds of key features: a feature that does *not* presuppose the existence of G (e.g. the property of "living on this island" when G is, say, Hawaiians), or a feature that *does* presuppose the existence of G (e.g. the property of "being American" when G is the group of Americans). Call these two sorts of key features, *non-presuppositional* and *presuppositional* features respectively. It seems very odd that Gilbert allows for presuppositional features to play a role in her account, for substituting a presuppositional feature for F results in a circular account. For example, suppose we wish to provide an account of Americans, and use the property of "being an American" as F. Then *x* is American only if D-4` and D-5`:

D-4`) *x* is American

D-5`) *x* believes: $(y)(((x \neq y)$ & *y* is American) $\rightarrow$ PS*y*)

D-4` is clearly a source of circularity, for it is the definiendum of the account. Moreover, D-5` is also problematic, for we might ask: what does it mean for *x* to believe that *y* is "American" in D-5`? The only answer Gilbert could give, on this account, is that *x* believes that *y* is a

member of a plural subject PS, that *y* believes that he (*y*) is a member of PS, and that *y* believes that for every individual *z*, where *z* is not *y* and *z* is an *American*, *z* is a member of PS. But, we would ask, what does it mean for *z* to be an *American*? And we can continue in this fashion indefinitely. Thus, including D-5` in the account of "Americans" results in an infinite regress.

Gilbert might argue that it is not a problem to include an infinitely regressive condition (i.e. D-5`) in her account. Indeed, her notion of common knowledge, which is part of her concept of a plural subject, is infinitely regressive [see the definition of an open* expression of willingness discussed in **section B.3.b.i. Two versions of plural subject theory (p. 71)**]. But there is an important difference between these two cases of infinite regression. In the case of Gilbert's definition of common knowledge, she claims not that the group member *himself* has an infinitely regressive knowledge of the other members' expressions, but rather, that the *smooth reasoner counterpart* of the group member has this knowledge. This is acceptable because smooth reasoners, by definition, have no limit to their intellectual capacity or memory which would prevent infinitely regressive knowledge. However, D-5` claims that *x himself* has an infinitely regressive belief (that *y* believes that *z* believes that…), and we don't think that non-smooth reasoning individuals are capable of infinitely regressive beliefs.

Given that D-4` and D-5` are problematic, perhaps Gilbert could drop these two conditions from the account, and retain only D-1 and D-3? This *downsized* account would read:

> **Downsized account: Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group iff M1…Mn are members of the same plural subject PS, and each of M1…Mn believes that he is a member of PS.**

In addition to avoiding the circularity and infinite regress problems, this account, although downsized, resolves the table-carrying counterexample, for Ben and Bob lack a *belief* that they are part of a plural subject, and so, this downsized account does not imply that Ben and Bob comprise a social group.

We might wonder, however, exactly what it means for an individual in M1…Mn to believe that he is a member of PS? Recall that on Gilbert's definition, a plural subject is a collection of individuals who each openly* expresses his willingness to become a member of a plural subject *with the other individuals*. Thus, if M believes that he is a member of the plural subject PS, then M believes that he, *together with the others*, is a member of PS. This results in a familiar ambiguity: what do we mean by "the others" here? This could receive either a *de dicto* interpretation or a *de re* interpretation, and these will receive, respectively, the same objections

as those presented here against the *de dicto* and *de re* versions of **Correct Thought**. The downsized account, therefore, offers no improvement.

Given the apparently intractable problems that arise when we substitute a presuppositional feature for F in the descriptive version of the *de dicto* interpretation of **Correct Thought**, Gilbert might specify that only non-presuppositional key features are legitimate substitutions for F. But this leaves Gilbert with a problem: most of Gilbert's examples of non-presuppositional key features involve geographically determined groups – "people living on *this island*", "fishermen of the *north shore*", "those who farm in *the river delta*", "people of small stature who live *in the forest*" (emphasis added). In these cases, the key property shared by M1…Mn is obvious: the property has the form, "living within (or performing some action ϕ within) geographical location *x*". But problems arise when this account is applied to social groups that are not geographically determined, such as political parties (whose members may reside across multiple geographical locations). In these cases, it is not at all obvious what the key property shared by these individuals is. What is the key property shared by the ANCYL members, for example? Gilbert might answer in one of four ways.

First, Gilbert might posit that the key property possessed by all ANCYL members is the holding of the majority of a cluster of (in this case, political) beliefs. But, if we were to examine each of the members of the ANCYL we would most likely find that some of the members lack most or all of the beliefs in the belief set – e.g. members who join purely for the social status associated with the league. Indeed, these status-driven individuals may comprise a disappointingly large proportion of the members of the group. Moreover, other members may be sincerely misguided in their beliefs about the group, in that they may hold beliefs that *conflict* with the core beliefs in the cluster. For example, it is possible for an individual to be a sincere member of the league, and for that individual to believe that both he and the league stand for values v1… vn, when in fact the league espouses none of these values, and instead stands for values that conflict with v1…vn. Thus, it is not the case that possessing a cluster of political beliefs is necessary for group membership in the ANCYL, and therefore, this sort of key feature fails to satisfy D-4.

Second, Gilbert might hold that that the shared key property of group members is that they have *signed-up* to be members of the group. That is, groups members have undergone the process required by the group for joining, and have not undergone the process involved for leaving the group. However, this "signing-up" feature also fails to satisfy D-4 because many groups (both

large and small) do not have formal procedures or process whereby one is inducted into the group, and so, signing up is unnecessary for group membership. An informal conversationalist group and a mob, for example, do not require that any special procedures be followed for one to be considered a member of the group. Moreover, there is reason to think that the signing-up feature is not a good candidate for satisfying D-5 even for more formal groups. Although it is clear that signing up as a member of a *legal entity* is sufficient for being a member of that entity, it is not clear that signing up as a member of a *social group* is sufficient for being a member of that group, or the plural subject comprising it. For example, it seems impossible to dispute that John is married to Joanna if John and Joanna have signed papers to this effect, and these papers have been duly authorised by the relevant authorities. However, suppose John and Joanna are involved in a car accident that wipes their memories of the time they spent together. The two never see or speak to each other again after the crash. Then it seems that although John and Joanna are married, they do not together comprise a social group – the marriage is a legal entity to which they belong, but not a social group. Or, similarly, I may have signed up as a member of the ANCYL, yet I have changed my political views since, but never bothered to withdraw my membership. Then, although it is true that I am legally a member of the ANCYL *qua* legal entity, I am not a willing member of the plural subject that is the ANCYL *qua social group*. And therefore, being a signed-up member of a group fails to satisfy D-4, and is a dubious candidate for D-5.

Third, Gilbert could appeal to having performed a specified personal or joint action as the shared feature of all the members of the social group (she suggests this with the "mushroom pickers" example). The problem with this type of feature, however, is that it will not satisfy D-4 in the ANCYL case. In the case of a group of individuals who are defined by a repeated joint action ϕ (e.g. mushroom pickers or farmers), it is clear that every group member performs ϕ. However, in cases like the ANCYL, it is not clear precisely what action *every member* would need to perform. The only action that would fulfil this role, it seems, is signing up to be a member of the group. But this solution is inadequate, as discussed previously.

And fourth, Gilbert could appeal to a common *telos*: the key property is the possession of a certain end. As argued in **section B.2.c. Teleological account (p. 50)**, there is, however, significant difficulty in using the notion of a common end as a sufficient condition for group membership. If the *telos* is defined narrowly, or in great detail, then at least some members of a large group may lack that *telos* due to ignorance or dissidence (Malcom X, for example, failed

to hold the narrowly defined, radical separatist goals of the OAAU). This implies that the account would fail to satisfy D4. On the other hand, if the *telos* is defined broadly, or in less detail, then individuals outside of the group (perhaps members of similar groups) may possess that *telos*, thereby failing to satisfy D5. For example, people outside of the OAAU (such as members of the ANCYL) would hold the same broad goal of promoting black rights.

Thus far I have argued that in large social groups like the ANCYL, there is no key feature that all group members share that is both necessary for group membership and sufficient for plural subject membership. However, to show that the descriptive account fails to characterise large social groups, I do not even require such a strong claim. For notice that D-5 is the claim that every group member ascribes *the very same* feature to every other member of their group. Gilbert (2006b, p. 175) states: "Fulfilment of this condition requires, first, that all members of the population *share* a conception of the population" (emphasis added). Yet, given the difficulty in finding a common feature possessed by the members of large social groups, it seems highly implausible to assert that every group member will arrive at a common conception of group members possessing the same property F. That is, even if after a much lengthier discussion, Gilbert does provide a key feature that is both necessary for group membership and sufficient for plural subject membership, that feature will fail to satisfy D-5, for that discussion *is not conducted by every group member*, and so, will not form the basis of their beliefs concerning other group members. As philosophers we may be (although I doubt we are) in a position to provide the correct "conception" of group members as possessing a common feature, but group members themselves are not in this position, for they have not entered this discussion. Thus, to satisfy D-5, Gilbert needs to provide a pre-philosophically obvious common feature of all and only the members of a specified group. Presuppositional features would satisfy this requirement, but, as I argued earlier, substituting presuppositional features for F results in a circular account.

Therefore, the descriptive account fails to characterise large social groups. I argue now that the account also fails to characterise *small* social groups.

♦ *Small social groups, a single common key feature, and knowing one another*

The descriptive *de dicto* interpretation of **Correct Thought** does not adequately characterise small social groups for two reasons: members of small social groups share *multiple* key features;

and a *de dicto* account of small social groups does not adequately capture the intimate nature of small social groups. I start by discussing the objection from multiple key features.

In the case of large social groups it is difficult to find even a *single* shared feature among group members. Small social groups, however, suffer from the opposite problem: because there are so few group members, and because small social groups may be intimate, their members may have much in common. Consider a prototypical social group, namely, the family. Our Folk Sociological notion of the family (or at least a close family) involves members who share multiple features, including mutual love for one another, a joint goal to prosper together, a joint belief that they belong together, and the performance of multiple joint actions. However, remember that D-5 requires that group members ascribe to each other the *very same* key feature – i.e. they share the "same conception" of the group. But which of these many features is *the* key feature to the family? More importantly, why should we think that every member of the family will answer this question in the *same way*? There seems little reason to support the view that they will, and so, the account fails to characterise small social groups like families.

Gilbert might, in response, soften the descriptive *de dicto* account by holding that group members need not share the *same* conception of the other members of the group, but only some conception which fits (i.e. which the other members satisfy), and which may differ from member to member. This softening of the account, however, is problematic, since it allows for the "we*" (or plural subject) to which each M in M1…Mn believes he belongs, to be distinct. One family member believes that (B1) the plural subject to which he belongs is composed of individuals who love one another, while another member believes that (B2) she belongs to a plural subject composed of individuals who possess the goal to prosper together, and a third believes that (B3) the plural subject is composed of those individuals who live under a common roof. Why should we think, therefore, that the various family members in fact belong to the *same* group at all, since their beliefs determine their membership on the **Correct Thought** account, and their beliefs are distinct?

Gilbert might provide two answers to this question. First, Gilbert might argue that the conceptions that each member of the family has of the other members together form a cluster conception of the family. In this case, the cluster would be B1 & B2 & B3. And the reason why the individual members are part of the *same* family is that all the members of the family subscribe to beliefs in the *same* cluster. But this response fails to satisfy *Individuation* (and D5), for other families may have the same cluster of beliefs about which descriptions apply to all the

members of the family. Both the Joneses and the Smiths may believe that the members of their respective families satisfy B1, B2 and B3. So the cluster of beliefs can't individuate the families.

Second, Gilbert could respond by arguing that although the different family members have beliefs with distinct *content*, the beliefs have the same *truth conditions*. That is, while the "we*" in their respective beliefs has a distinct sense, it has the same referent – namely, the members of the family. The problem with this response, however, is that it presupposes that it is the *reference* rather than the *sense* of "we*" which determines group membership. Yet this is precisely what the *de dicto* account denies, and the *de re* account affirms. Thus, this response collapses the account into the *de re* interpretation, which I consider in the next section.

Finally, there is a reason why *any* version of the *de dicto* interpretation of **Correct Thought** is implausible as an account of small social groups. The members of small social groups may be, and often are, intimately connected in ways which the members of large social groups are not. In Gilbert's terminology, small social groups lack the feature of *anonymity*. In a family we expect that all the members know (or at least know of) each other, while in the ANCYL we do not expect this to be the case.[80] Thus, it seems that when these family members think about each other and their respective membership, they will do so by forming beliefs *about one another specifically*, rather than about some individuals, whoever they may be, who satisfy description F. When asked who the members of my family are, I answer that *my mother, my father, my brothers and myself* are. Thus, it seems that the *de re* account is a better candidate for providing an account of small social groups, since it refers to these individuals *specifically* in its account of members' beliefs about one another. That is, the *de re* account is a more phenomenologically accurate representation of our conception of small social groups. I therefore move now to consider the *de re* interpretation of **Correct Thought**.

♦ *The de re interpretation of Gilbert's account*

In her earlier work, Gilbert appears to favour the *de re* interpretation of her account.[81] Gilbert is interested primarily in small groups (such as a marriages, families and conversationalists)

[80] Gilbert might point out that extended family members may not know each other, and so, small social groups may also have the feature of anonymity. This objection is unsuccessful, however, for two reasons. First, such extended families might better be conceived as large social groups. Second, such families are a-prototypical, or at least, not the sort of families I am focusing on here (it is direct – i.e. small and intimate – families which I take to be prototypical).

[81] "For the most part I shall write as if consciousness of facts about particular individuals is at issue" (Gilbert, 1989, p. 149).

when developing her earlier account; and the *de re* interpretation may be a plausible requirement in such groupings (although I will not discuss this here). But the *de re* account is too strong for larger groups (such as large political groups, countries, etc.), for in these groups it is not the case that every member of the group has beliefs about every other member of the group specifically. For example, in the thousands of members that comprise the ANCYL, most members do not even know about the *existence*, never mind the membership, of most of the other members of the league. Thus, the *de re* account fails to satisfy *Groupness* for large groups, since the account fails to imply that many members of large groups are members (because they lack the requisite *de re* beliefs).

Gilbert recognises this problem, but argues that the account "can be modified to allow for… large populations" (1989, p. 149). Gilbert suggests two such modifications. First, she suggests that the account be weakened such that it posits not that every member has beliefs about *each and every* other member, but merely about "almost all" the other members (1989, p. 149). But an obvious question arises: what does Gilbert mean by "almost all"? She cannot mean the *majority* of members, since in any large social group with thousands of members (such as the ANCYL), it is highly doubtful that every member knows more than half of the other members. However, Gilbert suggests that another way to understand the "almost all" qualification is in terms of the core members of the group. Thus, the account would read:

> **Core account: Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group iff each of M1…Mn correctly believes that each of the core members of the social group, together with themselves, comprise a "we*" or "us*" (1989, p. 149).**

Yet this conception of a social group still will not help us to characterise many large groups, like the ANCYL. Many of the league's members may not know who all the core members of the league are, but, nevertheless, they may believe in the league's manifesto, pay membership fees, and chant with the other members: indeed, they may still be legitimate members of the league.

Finally, on Gilbert's behalf, we might attempt to enrich the account by replacing the beliefs of group members with *dispositional beliefs*. Notice that it seems that members of a group would recognise each other as members of the group *if* they knew enough about each other. A dispositional account meant to capture this intuition would read:

> **Dispositional belief account: Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group iff each of M1…Mn correctly believes that he is a member of a plural subject PS, AND for every M*x* and M*y* in M1…Mn, M*x* would believe (*de re*) that M*y* is a member of PS if M*x* were familiar with M*y* (his appearance, history, actions, mental states and situation).**

It is plausible that the dispositional belief account satisfies *Individuation*, since presumably the members of the group are disposed (under the right conditions) to the *de re* belief that *only* the other members of the group are members of the group (and not that non-members are members of the group). Notice, however, that on the dispositional account, it is possible for an individual to be a member of a group *without having any relation with the other members at all*. For on this account, "group members" need only have a belief about their own membership (specifically, that they are part of the plural subject that comprises the group), and need have no actual (as opposed to dispositional) beliefs about the other members. The only relation that group members need have with one another on this account is *dispositional* – they *would* have beliefs about one another *if* they were familiar with one another. But, intuition suggests, a plausible account of social groups should specify the relations that *do* obtain among group members (not what relations *would* obtain should they be familiar with each other). That is, specifying the relations that *do* obtain seems to be a requirement for satisfying *Groupness* – i.e. specifying that feature in virtue of which group members are group members – and so, the dispositional account fails to satisfy *Groupness*.

♦ *Conclusion*

The *de dicto* version of **Correct Thought** is problematic because it ascribes a redundant belief to group members, specifically, the belief that all members, whoever they are, of the plural subject that comprises the group are members of the plural subject. Gilbert offers a descriptive refinement to this account, which replaces the redundant belief with the belief that all individuals who satisfy a key description F are members of the group. However, this descriptive refinement incorrectly characterises large social groups because it is difficult to find any suitable key feature shared by all group members. Moreover, the account incorrectly characterises small social groups because these groups' members share more than one key feature, and because these members think about one another's membership in a *de re* rather *de dicto* manner. The *de dicto* account is therefore an S-5 type account at best. Gilbert's *de re* account is better because it provides a plausible account of small social groups. However, the account cannot accommodate the anonymity present in large social groups, and so, is an S-3

type account. Enriching the *de re* account with the notions of core members or dispositional belief is unsatisfactory.

B.3.c. Searle's constructionist account

Although Gilbert's plural subject theory is the most influential account of social *groups*, Searle's constructionist account (1990, 1995, 1998, 2007, 2010) is the most influential account of social *institutions.* In this section I discuss Searle's account, and consider whether it might be applied successfully to social groups.

B.3.c.i. The account

According to Searle,

> all of human institutional reality… is created in its initial existence, and maintained in its continued existence by a single, logico-linguistic operation.... It is a Status Function Declaration. (2010, p. 201)

Searle distinguishes between Status Function Declarations that create *types* of institutions, and those Declarations that create *token* institutions (2010, p. 75). *Types* of institutions (Searle gives "corporations" as an example) are created using what he calls "Standing Status Function Declarations", which take the form:

> We make it the case by Declaration that for any *x* that satisfies a certain set of conditions *p*, *x* has the status Y and performs the function F in C. (2010, p. 99)

Here *x* is any collection of individualistic phenomena, Y is a social institution, C is the context in which the declaration is declared, and F is a "status function" (I discuss status functions shortly). Tokens of the institutional type Y can then be created in one of three ways. First, any given set of individualistic phenomena *x* is a Y if *x* satisfies conditions *p*. Second, if the token Y has a set of individualistic phenomena X[82] that underlie it, then Y can be created using what Searle calls a *Constitutive Rule*, of the form:

> X counts as Y in C. (1995, p. 55; 2010, p. 101)

[82] I follow Searle's conventions for upper and lower-case variable letters in this section.

Third, if there are no individualistic phenomena that underlie Y (as is the case with some corporations, and electronic money), Y is created using what might be called a *Token Status Function Declaration*:

> We make it the case by Declaration that an entity Y exists that has status function(s) F in C. (2010, p. 100)

The "status function" F, for Searle, is a species of *agentive* function. Non-agentive, or latent, functions are not readily apparent, and must be discovered to belong to their object; for example, we discovered that the heart has the function of pumping blood. By contrast, agentive, or manifest, functions are readily apparent to agents because the function assigns a use to which these objects are put by people. Searle holds that agentive functions are divided into *causal* and *status* functions, where causal functions are a result of the "brute" physical features of the object, while status functions accrue to their object by virtue of the use that people put the object to represent something else (1995, pp. 123-124). For example, a screw-driver has the causal function of turning screws, since the configuration of its tip is suited to this purpose; while a river has the agentive function of being a border between two countries because we collectively recognise that the river *represents* this divide.

For Searle, status functions (but not causal functions), provide the individuals involved with "deontic powers", that is, "rights, duties, obligations, permissions, authorizations, [and] entitlements" (2010, p. 9). For example, in the case of the river, because it represents a *border*, it determines where individuals may or may not pass without the requisite authorisation. Indeed, deontic powers are crucial to Searle's understanding of status functions; so much so that Searle states that status functions should be "spelled out as a set of deontic powers" (2010, p. 99).

Now, according to Searle, all social phenomena have agentive, rather than non-agentive, functions. However, only some social phenomena, namely social *institutions*, have status functions (1995, p. 124). The reason why Searle holds that all and only social institutions have status functions is that Searle claims that a given social phenomenon is a social institution if and only if "its existence imp[lies] deontic powers" (2010, pp. 91-92), and only status functions (not causal functions) imply deontic powers.

Finally, Searle holds that Status Function Declarations (both Standing and Token) and Constitutive Rules are successful in creating social institutions with status functions just in case they are *collectively recognised* by "the individuals directly involved and a sufficient number

of members of the relevant community [i.e. in C]" (1995, p. 117; 2010, pp. 8, 94). Very briefly, Searle distinguishes between a stronger and weaker sense of collective recognition (2010, pp. 56-58). "Cooperation", the *stronger* sort of collective recognition, involves "full-blown" collective intentionality. To say that *q* is *collectively intended* in this sense is to say that a collection of individuals have intentions of the form "we intend, believe or accept *q*", where these "we-intentions" cannot be reduced to or replaced by "I-intentions". That is, Searle (1995, p. 24; 2010, pp. ch. 3-4, 50) claims that collective intentions are "biologically primitive", and a "Background capacity" of human beings (or creatures capable of social interaction). By contrast, Searle permits that *weak* collective recognition may be reducible to individual, or personal, intentionality (i.e. intentions of the form "I intend, believe or accept *q*"). For Searle, the creation of social institutions requires strong collective recognition, while the maintenance of social institutions merely requires weak collective recognition.

To summarise Searle's view on money, for example, a particular piece of paper counts as money in our society just in case: (i) that piece of paper satisfies various collectively, previously agreed-upon rules (*p*) about what counts as money in our society; or (ii) there is collective agreement that this piece of paper counts as money. In cases such as electronic money, where there is no piece of paper involved (or anything physical to represent money), money exists just in case (iii) we collectively agree by declaration that there is money. That collective agreement is sufficient to construct the piece of paper as money just in case the collective agreement is of the form "we collectively agree that …", and cannot be reduced to a sum of individuals holding statements of the form "I agree that ...".

B.3.c.ii. Applying the account to social groups

Searle's account is, primarily, an account of *social institutions* and (strong) *collective intentionality*. In these respects, the account has attracted significant critical attention (see, e.g., Brey, 2003; Fitzpatrick, 2003; Hershfield, 2011; Hindriks, 2003; Johansson, 2003; Koepsell & Moss, 2003; Meijers, 2003; Miscevic, 2003; Schmid, 2003; B. Smith & Searle, 2003; Thalos, 2003; Tsohatzidis, 2007; M. Tuomela, 2011; R. Tuomela, 2003; Viskovatoff, 2003; Xiaoqiang, 2009; Zaibert, 2003). Nevertheless, Searle intends his account as a general theory of "the nature of human society" (2010, p. 42), and as a theory of "the building blocks of social reality" generally (1995, p. ch. 1). Moreover, his goal is "to offer a logical analysis of the fundamental ontology of the entities studied by the social sciences" (2010, pp. 200-201). Thus, since social groups form an integral part of human society, social reality, and the subject matter of the social

sciences, I take it that Searle intends his account to apply to, or be adaptable to, an account of social groups.[83]

Just how the account applies to social groups, however, is unclear, since a discussion of social groups *specifically* (rather than social institutions, or social phenomena broadly) is conspicuously absent both from Searle's work, as well from criticisms of Searle's work. Perhaps the reason for the absence of a discussion of social groups is that Searle may consider social groups to be just one sort of social institution. For example, Searle writes that the "Y status can be imposed on… [p]eople" (1995, p. 97), and "[w]hat goes for the line of stones, the king, the corporation and money [i.e. institutions and institutional facts] goes for… the United States Army, the Mafia, Al Qaeda and the Squaw Valley Ski Team [i.e. social groups]" (2010, p. 100). Indeed, social groups satisfy Searle's criterion for social institutions (as all and only those social phenomena which imply deontic powers), since members of social groups have rights, obligations, duties and permissions that they would not have had if they were not members of the group. For example, group members can perform actions that individuals cannot: ANCYL members are able to protest on behalf of the group, while non-members cannot protest *on behalf of the group*; and family members have duties to one another that individuals external to the family do not (children respect their parents, while parents provide for their children).[84]

If we understand social groups as a species of social institution as on Searle's account, we arrive at two possibilities for how token social groups are created, and so, two possible solutions to Q1.

> **Searle-1: Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a token social group *g* if there is collective recognition that they count as *g* with a status function F in context C.**
>
> **Searle-2: Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a token social group *g* if the relations among M1…Mn satisfy *p*, and there is collective recognition of the Declaration that for any *x* that satisfies a certain set of conditions *p*, *x* is a social group with status function F in C.**

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[83] Whether or not Searle intends his account of social institutions to apply to social groups, I take it that it is an interesting question whether his account of institutions *could* apply to groups.

[84] For a lengthy discussion of the obligations and rights of group members, see (Gilbert, 2006b). Gilbert accounts for the obligation of citizens to obey the state in terms of the obligations of *society* (which she classifies as a large social group) to obey the state.

Searle-1 and Searle-2 elucidate, respectively, the claims that token social groups are created using collectively recognised Constitutive Rules and Standing Status Function Declarations.[85] Searle-2, unfortunately, is highly unhelpful unless *p* is specified (which Searle does not do). For the problem of specifying *p just is* Q1 (or the individual-individual problem), since both answering Q1 and specifying *p* is the task of specifying the relations among group members sufficient to unify those members into a group. That is, Searle-2 presupposes that an answer to Q1 has already been found. And therefore insofar as Searle does provide an account of social groups, I take it that Searle-1 (and not Searle-2) is that account.

Searle-1 has the advantage that, with greater clarification (which I will not perform here), the account may present adequate wiggle-room to avoid some of the problems faced by Gilbert's plural subject theory. For example, recall that the *de re* version of Gilbert's **Correct Thought** struggles to characterise large social groups, since the members rarely know each and every other member individually. It is arguably plausible, however, that in prototypical large groups, each and every member of a group is known *de re* to be a member of the group by somebody inside *or outside* of the group. That is, a member of *g* unknown to many other members of *g* may nevertheless be recognised as a member of *g* by the community in which *g* exists. Thus, if Searle defines the "they" in Searle-1 in a *de re* fashion, he arrives at a *de re* plural subject account that avoids some of the challenges facing Gilbert.[86]

B.3.c.iii. Objections

Nevertheless, Searle-1 faces at least three objections. And, interestingly, the first two of these are problems that Searle's account of social institutions does not face. First, on Searle's account of social institutions, *strong collective recognition* of a Status Function declaration is required for the construction of the group. But strong collective recognition presupposes the existence of a *social group* that does the collective recognising of the Status Function Declaration – strong

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[85] On Searle's account, social phenomena without underlying individualistic phenomena (X) are created using Token Status Function Declarations. Thus, social groups, it seems, would not be created using Token Status Function Declarations, since social groups always start with members, and so, always have individualistic phenomena underlying them upon their inception. Perhaps exceptions may include the creation of companies or trusts without members. I am sceptical that these are social groups (they are institutions, but perhaps not social groups), but if they are social groups, then Searle's account of social groups could be expanded to include:
Searle-3: A token social group *g* exists if there is collective recognition that *g* exists with status function(s) F in context C.

[86] The account would be a plural subject account if it were read as: Individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group iff there is collective recognition that they count as a *plural subject* with a status function F, in context C.

collective recognition presupposes a "we" that cannot be reduced to a sum of "I's". This is unproblematic in Searle's account of social *institutions*, but it creates a problem for the Searlian account of social *groups*. For Searle-1 implies that prior to the existence of any given social group G1, another social group G2 must have existed to collectively recognise G1. But for G2 to exist, another social group G3 must have already existed to collectively recognise G2. But G3 presupposes another social group G4, etc. Thus, Searle's account of social groups seems to imply an infinite regress.

Perhaps Searle would argue that the collective that collectively recognises the Status Function Declaration that constructs a given social group G1 can be G1 itself. That is, groups can bootstrap themselves into existence – they collectively recognise themselves, and in so doing, construct themselves. It is unnecessary, therefore, to have a distinct social group G2 to construct G1, and so, the account does not imply an infinite regress.

But preventing the infinite regress in this way comes at a cost. The advantage spoken about earlier that Searle-1 holds over Gilbert's plural subject theory, has been lost. For the advantage of Searle's account over Gilbert's account was that on Searle's account, but not on Gilbert's, individuals *outside* of the group can secure the status of group members as members. This resolves problems for the *de re* understanding of plural subject theory. But on this refined understanding of Searle-1, only the individuals *inside* the group are responsible for constructing the group. And now, notice that Searle-1 faces the same problem as the **Correct Thought** version of plural subject theory. On Searle-1, M1…Mn are a social group *g* "if there is collective recognition that *they* count as *g*…". Now, either we define "they" in a *de dicto* or in a *de re* fashion. If we understand "they" in a *de dicto* sense, then we again face the problem of finding a description of the group members that is not circular (i.e. is something other than "the other members of the group"), and picks out all and only the other members of the group – an extremely difficult task, I argued. Moreover, if we define "they" in a *de re* fashion, then the account fails to characterise large social groups, since the members of a large group usually do not know who all the other members are.

Second, Searle's account of social institutions has come under fire for its anthropocentricism (see, e.g., Wilson, 2007). On Searle's account, humans are capable of constructing social institutions because they are capable of collectively assigning status functions to sets of individualistic phenomena. But to do this, humans require a sophisticated *language*, capable of representing X as Y. That is, humans must possess a language sophisticated enough to represent

individualistic phenomena as having functions imposed by agents, rather than functions inherent in those objects (Searle, 2010, pp. ch. 4, 109). On this account, therefore, non-human animals do not have social institutions, since they lack language sophisticated enough to assign status functions to individualistic phenomena. Critics like Wilson argue, however, that this is an impoverished understanding of non-human animal behaviour, and ignores evidence of the rich and complex social lives of these animals.

Whatever the force of this objection to Searle's account of social institutions, it seems we might construct a stronger, parallel objection to Searle-1 (Searle's account of social groups). For, just as Searle's account of social institutions requires sophisticated language in the creation of institutions, Searle's account of social groups requires sophisticated language in the construction of social groups. And therefore, just as Searle's account of institutions precludes the existence of non-human animal institutions, so too does Searle-1 preclude the possibility of non-human animal social groups. But while it is somewhat controversial whether non-human animal institutions exist, it seems far less controversial to claim that non-human animal social *groups* exist. Consider gorillas, chimps, dolphins and meerkats, who form extremely well-delineated groups, with well-defined hierarchies, repetitive social practises (such as grooming), collective hunting strategies, and sophisticated warning signals passed among group members (see Wilson, 2007). Indeed, Searle is clear that non-human animals are capable of collective intentionality, and therefore, capable of conceiving of an irreducible "we" (Searle, 1995, pp. 37-38; 2007, p. 13). It seems odd to think that a collection of individuals is capable of collective intentionality without that collective being a social group. Thus, Searle-1 is overly exclusive, since it fails to characterise non-human social groups.

Searle might respond by arguing that even if his account fails to characterise non-human social groups, it may still characterise human social groups correctly. But this response misses the significance of the objection: if animal groups exist, then it is not the case that social groups (human or non-human) are constructed through the imposition of a status function, since, as Searle argues, animals do not impose status functions. But Searle's notion of a Status Function Declaration is central to his account of social institutions and social reality generally, and therefore, presumably, central to his account of social groups. And therefore, without the notion of a status function, it is unclear what is left of Searle's account of social groups, if there is anything left at all.

Maybe Searle would argue that non-human social groups are categorically distinct from human social groups. Human social groups always involve status function imposition, while animal groups do not. It is unclear, however, that human groups *do* always involve status function imposition. Do young children who are members of a social group (such as a family, or a play-group) impose status functions on the individual members? It seems not (see Rakoczy & Tomasello, 2007). Searle could argue that children are a-prototypical group members, but, again, this misses the point. For if our first and simplest social groups while we are growing up are constructed without Status Function Declarations, and if non-human social groups are constructed in a similar fashion, then this suggests that the ontogeny of, or evolutionary basis for, social group construction is *not* based in Social Function Declarations. And if this is the case, this suggests that Social Function Declarations are accidental to, rather than constitutive of, social groups. And therefore, Social Function Declarations will not assist us in arriving at a solution to Q1.

B.3.c.iv. Conclusion

Thus far I have argued that adapting Searle's account of social institutions to form a Searlian account of social groups faces two problems. First, the account implies an infinite regress, since it requires a pre-existing social group G1 to construct a distinct social group G2. But G2 requires a pre-existing social group G3, etc. This regress can be avoided only at the cost of a refinement to the account that reintroduces the objections presented to the **Correct Thought** version of Gilbert's plural subject theory. And second, the account incorrectly precludes the possibility of non-human social groups, since the account relies on the imposition of status functions, a capacity which animals lack.

These two problems apply specifically to Searle's account of social *groups*, and not to Searle's account of social institutions. However, in the next section, I provide a generic objection to Subjectivism. This objection applies to Gilbert's plural subject theory, as well as to both Searlian accounts of social institutions and social groups.

B.4. SUBJECTIVISM AND THE DARK CITY

I have considered Subjectivist accounts provided by Sartre, Gilbert and Searle, and argued that none of these positions provide a convincing account of social groups better than an S-3 type account. Now of course there may be other Subjectivist accounts of which I am unaware, or

which have not yet been constructed, and one of these accounts may, the Subjectivist could argue, provide an adequate solution to Q1. Thus, I turn now to providing an argument for the claim that *in principle* no Subjectivist account could provide an adequate solution to Q1.

B.4.a. The counterexample

Gilbert's account holds that members' *beliefs and commitments* form the principle of unity for the group, while Searle's account claims that collective *recognition* of Status Function Declarations provides the principle of unity for institutions. The counterexample I wish to consider presents a case in which all the mental states required by Gilbert and Searle are present, but the relevant social phenomena (social groups and institutions) are not. That is, the counterexample seeks to show that mental states alone are insufficient to provide the principle of unity for social groups and institutions.

Imagine a world like that depicted in the science fiction film, *Dark City* (Proyas, 1998). Every night while the occupants of the Dark City (henceforth "Dark Denizens") sleep, super-powerful aliens (the "Strangers") manipulate the environment of the Dark Denizens into a new configuration, and implant into the denizens memories and beliefs to match that environment. For example, Murdoch goes to sleep believing he is married to a beautiful woman named Emma, and has two children with her. He has apparently long-term memories of their shared past, and believes they are a family. Murdoch wakes the following morning in a different bed, none-the-wiser, believing (and apparently remembering) he has never had a wife or children. Now, notice that:

> P1: If Subjectivism is correct, when Murdoch falls asleep, Murdoch is a member of this family, and he is married to Emma.

For it seems that Murdoch and his "family" possess all the mental states that Gilbert and Searle require. Murdoch, Emma and the two children all *believe* that they together comprise a plural subject, they (we can suppose) are each *jointly committed* to being members of the family. Moreover, Murdoch and Emma *collectively recognise* themselves (and are collectively recognised by a sufficient number of the other denizens of the Dark City) as married.

But, intuition suggests that since they have only known each other for twenty-four hours:[87]

> P2: Murdoch, Emma and the children fail to comprise a family; and Murdoch is not married to Emma.

That is, intuition suggests that the Dark Denizens are *deluded* about their social situation, albeit that they share a common delusion. But such a shared delusion is impossible on Subjectivist accounts. And hence, Subjectivism is (or at least the two best-known Subjectivist accounts are) incorrect.

How might the Subjectivist respond? The most likely response would be to bite the bullet (i.e. deny P2), and argue that Murdoch and Emma *are* married, and that Murdoch, Emma and the children *do* comprise a family. I consider this response now, followed by a discussion of the denial of P1. Finally, I consider methodological objections to the counterexample, specifically objections to my use of intuitions and thought experiments, as well as the accusation that I am using straw-men versions of Gilbert and Searle's accounts by characterising them as purely Subjectivist.

B.4.b. Biting the bullet – denying P2

Consider Murdoch and his "family". On the day that the Strangers implant in them the belief that they together comprise a family, they interact just as a typical family does. Murdoch takes the children to school like he "always" does (even though he never has before), and Emma helps them with their homework. The family has its "usual" dinner at 18:30, with Murdoch and Emma sitting in their "usual" places at the table. After Murdoch reads to his smallest child what they both "remember" to be the boy's favourite story, Murdoch and Emma stay up late and reminisce about their "remembered" (but non-existent) honeymoon in Paris, and debate when they might travel "again" to Europe. The Subjectivist might therefore point out that since Murdoch, Emma and the children *believe* that they are a family, and since they *act* just like any family would, they *are* a family.

There are two problems with this line of reasoning, however. First, it is debatable whether Murdoch and the others do in fact act just as a typical family would, for a typical family would

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[87] Assume that this is not the *first* time that the Strangers have manipulated the Dark Denizens. That is, this is not the first iteration of the 24 hour manipulation cycle – this is iteration *n*, where $n>=2$.

sustain these family-type actions for *far longer than twenty-four hours*. The typical family is a long-standing social group, while the aggregate comprised by Murdoch and the others is not. Thus, in at least one important sense, Murdoch and the others do not act like a typical family would act. Second, the notion of "acting like a typical family does" is not available to the Subjectivist, for this notion refers to a *pattern* of behaviour. And patterns of behaviour are the domain of Objectivists, since patterns of behaviour are observable from the point of view of an external observer.

Perhaps the Subjectivist would be unconvinced. She might argue that 24 hours is sufficient to establish patterns of behaviour indicative of a family. Moreover, she could argue that citing patterns of behaviour is legitimate for a Subjectivist, not because patterns of behaviour determine group-ness (as on Objectivist accounts), but rather, because group members may justify their *belief that they are members of a group* by citing patterns of behaviour that they themselves observe.

In objecting to the Subjectivist's ability to cite patterns of behaviour in establishing Murdoch, Emma and the others as a family, and to further bolster the intuition that Murdoch and Emma do not comprise a family, we might again refine the case. In the film, the Strangers manipulate the Dark Denizens such that the denizens maintain their beliefs about their group membership for 24 hours. We can, however, modify the case so that the Strangers shift the environment and mental states of Dark Denizens every hour, or (why not?) every 60 seconds. Thus, every 60 seconds Dark Denizens find themselves within a unique social configuration, and have beliefs and memories that match that configuration perfectly. One minute Murdoch is making love to his "wife" Emma; the next he believes he is a lonely bachelor; and the following he believes he is in a passionate gay relationship. Although, the lives of the Dark Denizens appear chaotic or haphazard from the perspective of an external observer, the transitions are entirely seamless from the perspective of the Dark Denizens themselves. Thus, the Subjectivist is committed to the view that one minute Murdoch *is* married to Emma, the next minute he *is* single, and the next he *is* in a gay relationship. But this seems like an odd position to hold.

The issue here, it seems, is that a constitutive element of marriage and family is that these phenomena have a *history* (call this the historical intuition). The Subjectivist may nevertheless stick to her position: even in the sixty-second case, Murdoch belongs to a family, and is married to Emma. That is, if Subjectivism contradicts the historical intuition, then so much the worse for the historical intuition. However, beyond the mounting implausibility of any position that

bites too many bullets, there is a real danger for a Subjectivist who denies folk-sociological intuitions about social phenomena. For recall that Subjectivism implies that folk beliefs about social phenomena are constitutive of those phenomena. Thus, if it can be shown that Subjectivist accounts of social phenomena contradict common-sense intuitions, or beliefs, concerning the nature of social phenomena, then Subjectivism implies a contradiction. That is, if Subjectivism is correct, then social groups satisfy the historical intuition given that this is a common-sense intuition. But Subjectivist accounts deny the historical intuition, and so, Subjectivism implies that the historical intuition is both true and false. In this way, denying too many folk-sociological intuitions risks a *reductio ad absurdum*.

Thus, rather than denying the historical intuition, perhaps the Subjectivist could argue that we should understand the historical intuition to assert not that the *actual* history of a group is (partly) constitutive of its nature, but rather, that the events *believed* to form the history of a group are (partly) constitutive of its nature. In the Dark City case, the individuals involved *believe* that there is a rich, full history to their social interactions. Murdoch and Emma believe they went to Paris, raised their children, etc., and this is sufficient to construct the family. Once we understand this, the Subjectivist argues, we would see that Murdoch and Emma *are* married, and *have* a family, even though it is only for 60 seconds.

Let **Actual History** be the claim that we should understand the historical intuition in terms of the *actual* history of the social phenomena involved. And let **Believed History** be the claim that the historical intuition should be understood in terms of history collectively *believed* to apply to the social phenomena involved. Then the problem with this response is that there are two reasons why **Actual History** is a better interpretation of the historical intuition than is **Believed History**.

First, it seems that we can construct cases which illustrate that the *actual* history of a group, even if it is forgotten, is relevant to the nature of that group. Suppose, for example, that the Nazis had won WWII. Over time (say, over many generations), the Nazi party, as well as the rest of the world, forget the atrocities committed by the group in the past – perhaps the Nazis manipulate history syllabuses in schools, newspapers, etc. Intuition suggests that the crimes committed by the Nazi party in the past are at least partly constitutive of this future instantiation of the party, even though nobody remembers these atrocities. That is, part of what the future Nazi party is, is that it committed these past atrocities. And **Actual History**, but not **Believed History**, captures this intuition.

Second, suppose we concede that the Subjectivist is correct about the case, and thus concede that Murdoch and Emma *are* married for 60 seconds. Now, imagine another possible world in which Murdoch and the rest of the Dark Denizens are *not* manipulated by Strangers. In this world (DC*), Murdoch* and Emma* have veridical memories of their shared past – they really did go to Paris, they really do have children together, etc. The problem is that it seems implausible to claim that the marriage between Murdoch and Emma in the Dark City is identical in nature to the marriage and family of Murdoch* and Emma* in DC*. For, after all, Murdoch* and Emma* have known each other for decades and built a family together, while Murdoch and Emma have known each other for only 60 seconds. So, even if Murdoch and Emma are married, this does not seem to be just the same sort of marriage as the marriage between Murdoch* and Emma*. And **Believed History** cannot explain this, while **Actual History** can.

B.4.c. Denying that Subjectivism implies dark groups and institutions – denying P1

B.4.c.i. Searle

Given the difficulty associated with biting the bullet on the Dark City case (i.e. denying P2), how might the Subjectivist deny that Subjectivism implies that Dark Denizens have social groups and institutions (i.e. deny P1)?[88] For one, Searle could argue that it is not the case that his constructionist account implies that the Dark Denizens have social groups and institutions. Recall that Searle argues that social institutions may be constructed from Standing Status Function Declarations:

> We make it the case by Declaration that for any *x* that satisfies a certain set of conditions *p*, *x* has the status Y and performs the function F in C. (2010, p. 99)

The Dark Denizens, Searle could argue, do not fulfil *p*. For example, we can suppose that the *p* for marriage includes the requirement that the two parties are married by a duly authorised judge, ship's captain, or clergyman. But Murdoch and Emma, although they *believe* they were so married, were not. Therefore, Murdoch and Emma are not married.

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[88] Of course, the Dark Denizens might *form* social groups during the 24 hours (less likely in 60 seconds) – maybe during the 24 hours, a walking group could form. But the objection claims that many of the social groups and institutions that the Dark Denizens *believe* exist, do not. For example, the marriages and families that the Dark Denizens believe exist, do not.

There are two possible objections to this Searlian response, however. First, we should distinguish between *legal* marriage, and *common-law* marriage. While it is necessary for the parties involved to have been married by a duly authorised judge on a legal understanding of marriage, it is not necessary under a common-law understanding of marriage. For a common-law marriage is one in which the parties involved are understood to be married by virtue of common agreement and cohabitation (and all the relevant parties collectively agree that Murdoch and Emma are married in this sense). I should stipulate, therefore, that I am interested here in common-law marriage, rather than in legal marriage, since the counterexample relies upon the claim that Subjectivism affirms that *social institutions* exist in the Dark City, rather than that *legal entities* exist in the Dark city.

Perhaps Searle would argue that Murdoch and Emma's "marriage" fails to satisfy even the *p* associated with common-law marriage, since Murdoch and Emma have only cohabited for 24 hours (on the original example, and 60 seconds on the refined counterexample). Presumably, the *p* for common-law marriage would involve cohabiting for far more than a day.

But this line of reasoning is problematic for a Subjectivist. Consider that on this response, the *collective recognition* that Murdoch and Emma have cohabited for a sufficient period of time is less important for unifying their marriage than is the *actual* time they have cohabited. That is, the mental states of the individuals involved do not make the marriage. Instead, observable patterns of behaviour (cohabitation) makes the marriage; but this is an Objectivist position. The problem, therefore, is that this response threatens to collapse Searle's account into an Objectivist account (or at least into a hybrid account).

Second, even if Murdoch and Emma's situation fails to satisfy the *p* associated with the social institution of marriage, their marriage might still be constituted through either a collectively recognised Token Status Function Declaration or Constitutive Rule. And Searle would not want to eliminate Token Status Function Declarations and Constitutive Rules as mechanisms for constructing institutional facts, thereby relying exclusively on Standing Status Function Declarations as the mechanism for constructing institutional facts. For this strategy raises the difficulty that many institutional facts (specifically, uncodified social institutions) are *not* constructed by means of a Standing Status Function Declaration. If I draw a line in the sand between you and me, declare that I count that as a border between us, and you agree to this declaration, then the line in the sand is a border. But that border was not constructed by means of a Standing Status Function Declaration: it was constructed by means of a Constitutive Rule

of the form X counts as Y in C, where X is the line, Y is a border, and C is our circumstance. Thus, eliminating Token Status Function Declarations and Constitutive Rules as legitimate mechanisms for constructing institutional facts would limit Searle's account to characterising a select few social institutions, thereby rendering it an S-5 type account.

Perhaps Searle would object by arguing that Constitutive Rules could not create a marriage between Murdoch and Emma, since the X term in their marriage has no referent. That is, the Constitutive Rule that the Dark Denizens would use to construct the marriage would be something like, "The years of cohabitation, and the intertwining of their financial, personal and emotional lives for such a long period of time [X], count as a marriage between Murdoch and Emma [Y], in the Dark City [C]". Their lives haven't been so intertwined, since they have only known each other for 24 hours (or 60 seconds). And if the X term is not realised, then the Constitutive Rule can't be successful in constructing the relevant social phenomenon.

There are two reasons why this response fails, however. First, again, if Searle insists that X be realised (rather than merely collectively recognised as realised), then he insists on an Objectivist principle of unity. And second, even if the Dark Denizens cannot construct the marriage between Murdoch and Emma using a Constitutive Rule because the X term is not realised, they could nevertheless construct the marriage using a Token Status Function Declaration, since Token Status Function Declarations need not have an X term.

B.4.c.ii. Gilbert

Perhaps Gilbert's account fares better. On **Joint Commitment**, Murdoch, Emma and the children belong to a family only if they express their willingness to be members of a plural subject, and this expression is open*. But Gilbert could argue that Murdoch, Emma and the children would fail to express their readiness to be members of a plural subject within the very brief period of time available to them (24 hours in the original case, and 60 seconds in the refined case). In those 60 seconds, Murdoch does not proclaim his role as father or husband, for example.

Gilbert, however, is clear that the expression of willingness among group members need not be explicit, for she is at pains to distinguish her account from agreement-based accounts of collective action (2006b, p. 118), which do require explicit expressions of willingness. Instead, according to Gilbert, *any* expression will do no matter how subtle, so long as the smooth reasoner counterparts of the individuals involved would infer from this expression that the

individual is willing to be a member of the plural subject. Now, consider the 60 seconds that Murdoch, Emma and the children experience. Murdoch wakes besides Emma, kisses her forehead, and tells her he will see her after work. Emma asks, without turning over, whether he will take the children to school – she wants to sleep in today. Murdoch reluctantly agrees. The children are finishing up breakfast downstairs, packing their lunch. They call up to Murdoch to say they're ready to leave. Murdoch, Emma and the children have all, it seems, expressed their willingness to be members of a plural subject (even if they have not explicitly stated that they are members of the same family).

Gilbert might deny, however, that their expressions of willingness to be members of a plural subject are open*. Recall that on Gilbert's account of openness*, an individual's expression of willingness is open* only if the smooth reasoner counterparts of the other group members know about this expression of willingness. But, Gilbert could argue, the smooth reasoner counterparts of Emma and the children would be aware of the Strangers' deceptive activities, and infer that these activities preclude the possibility of Murdoch expressing willingness to be part of the group. That is, the smooth-reasoning counterparts of Emma and the children would understand that expressing willingness to be part of a group requires that one has sufficient background information about that group, and that since Murdoch lacks this information, Murdoch fails to express his willingness to be part of the plural subject.

The difficulty with this response is that it is not clear that the smooth-reasoning counterparts of Dark Denizens *would* be capable of becoming aware of the Strangers' activities. In the film Murdoch does become so aware. But we can imagine that the Strangers are better at hiding their activities than they are in the movie: we can imagine that the transitions from day to day (or minute to minute, in the refined case), are so seamlessly performed that not even the most skilled smooth reasoner would be capable of inferring the existence of the Strangers.

Perhaps Gilbert could refine her account of the smooth reasoner, so that smooth reasoners are not just perfectly rational, but *omniscient*. In this case, the smooth reasoners would know what is afoot in the Dark City. But this refinement of the account is suspiciously Objectivist, for the omniscient observer is the perspective from which the Objectivist judges whether or not a collection of individualistic phenomena are a social phenomenon. And, on this refined account of the smooth reasoner, it is precisely this omniscient perspective that (partly) determines whether or not a collection of individuals is a social phenomenon. The account is therefore Objectivist, or at least a hybrid account.

B.4.c.iii. Refinements to Subjectivism

The Subjectivist may utilise a different strategy to argue that Subjectivism need not imply that the Dark Denizens have social groups. The Subjectivist might point out that the reason why Murdoch, Emma and the children do not comprise a family is that their membership-beliefs have not been sustained over time. Yet, we think that family-membership beliefs (or beliefs of the form "I am a member of family X") must be sustained over time to be true. Thus, if our Subjectivist account includes a requirement that the mental states that constitute social groups must be sustained, we can avoid the Dark City counterexample, since the mental states of the Dark Denizens expire after twenty-four hours (or sixty seconds, in the refined case).

Unfortunately for the Subjectivist, avoiding the counterexample in this way comes at a cost, for some social groups are formed from sudden, *unsustained* mental states. Consider the plane full of strangers who are transformed from a mere aggregate to a social group in the course of a few minutes by working together to thwart hijackers who have overtaken their plane; or two strangers who run into a burning house together, driven by an unspoken joint commitment to save a screaming child they see in an upstairs window. Thus, an account that insists that the mental states cited are sustained, delimits the account to characterising only those types of social groups that are typically built upon sustained mental states, such as families. However, under special circumstances, even group membership to a family might be formed upon an unsustained mental state. Consider the willing and hopeful adopted child, who arrives "home" to be told she is "part of the family now". She suddenly develops the belief that she is a member of the family, and we can suppose, so do her adoptive parents. She is, it seems, a member of the family, even though that belief (and that membership) has no history, and indeed, may end shortly afterwards. Thus, at best, a Subjectivist account that insists upon sustained mental states as constitutive of social groups characterises only *prototypical* cases of *some* types of social groups, and is therefore an S-4 type account.

The Subjectivist might attempt a different tack, and argue that Subjectivism is not committed to the position that the Dark Denizens have social groups, since their beliefs are aberrantly formed. That is, the Subjectivist could qualify his account such that only membership beliefs *caused in the right way* can constitute social groups. Presumably, alien implantation is not a suitable source or cause of membership-beliefs.

Like the previous approach, this refinement is too strong, for it excludes certain legitimate cases of social groups. Suppose that the Strangers decide to cease their experimentation, and leave

the configuration of the Dark City as it is when Murdoch and Emma believe they are married with children. Thus, the Strangers leave Murdoch and Emma to raise "their" children, and grow old together as "husband and wife". It seems that after some period of time (months, or perhaps years of interacting and relating as families do), our intuitions concerning the case would shift: now Murdoch, Emma and the children *do* comprise a social group. Yet their beliefs are nevertheless caused, formed, or sourced aberrantly: their membership-beliefs were implanted by the Strangers.

The Subjectivist might respond by pointing out that over time the family's membership beliefs are reinforced by their continued interactions. That is, over time, their membership beliefs are maintained by a non-aberrant, *suitable* source (their family-like interactions). Thus, the cessation-of-experimentation refinement of the case does not pose a problem for Subjectivism if we further qualify that the membership-beliefs that constitute social groups must be either formed *or maintained* by a suitable source.

This response raises a difficult question: just what sort of interactions among individuals constitutes a suitable source for the membership-beliefs of group members? To answer this question, we would need to specify those sorts of interactions among individuals that are sufficient for group membership. But the problem of specifying these interactions *just is* the individual-individual problem. Thus, on this response, Subjectivist accounts fail to provide a solution to the individual-individual.

B.4.d. Methodological concerns

The Subjectivist might attempt two further, methodological, objections to the Dark City counterexample. First, the objector could argue that it is illegitimate to use intuition as a method of assessing solutions to the individual-individual problem in the context of bizarre thought experiments like the Dark City case. Subjectivism, the objector could argue, gives us an account of social phenomena in *this* world, not in distant possible worlds. So intuitions we have concerning these worlds are irrelevant – and therefore should not be used as assessment tools against Subjectivism.

This, however, is a very short-sighted approach to Folk Sociological intuitions. For the objection misses the point of the counterexample: we are less interested in whether or not Murdoch and Emma are married than we are interested in what our intuitions about their marriage (or lack thereof) suggest about marriages *generally* – i.e. marriages in *our* world. What

the counterexample seeks to show is that social phenomena like marriage and family are *historical* in nature. Subjectivism struggles to account for this in an intuitive way – while Objectivism lacks this struggle. And this is true, whether we consider the Dark City or our world. The Dark City case merely highlights the importance of the role of the historical intuition in our Folk Sociological concepts of certain social phenomena in this world.

Second, Gilbert and Searle might argue that the purely Subjectivist versions of their accounts that I have presented here are straw men. For their accounts to be represented fully, they should be understood as hybrid accounts, thereby avoiding the counterexample in the ways discussed previously.

There are two points to note here. First, providing a hybrid reading of Searle's account would be unfaithful to his account. Consider, for example, that he claims that status functions are never discovered, and always created by agents (1995, pp. 123-124). But if social phenomena were characterised in an Objectivist fashion, at least in part, then Status Functions would be discoverable, or at least discoverable in part. This is not something that Searle permits. Moreover, in his later work, Searle is explicit that it is irrelevant for the construction of social phenomena whether the beliefs of the constructors are *false*. All that matters is that they have the beliefs, and that they are collectively recognised as true:

> The acceptance of an institutional fact, or indeed, of a whole system of status functions, may be based on false beliefs. From the point of institutional analysis, it does not matter whether the beliefs are true or false. It only matters whether the people do in fact collectively recognize or accept the system of status functions. (2010, p. 119)

This strongly suggests a purely Subjectivist, rather than a hybrid, reading of Searle's account.

Second, it is an interesting question whether mental states alone are sufficient to construct social phenomena. Ultimately, the Dark City counterexample asks the question: could we be wrong in our collective belief that that a certain social phenomenon exists? This is an important question, and I have sought to object to a negative answer, through objecting to Gilbert and Searle's accounts. So I have attempted to provide the strongest versions of these accounts that will provide a negative answer to the question, even if this discussion has been unfaithful to Gilbert or Searle's work (although I do not think that it has), since scholarship is not my primary focus here. My primary fidelity is to arguing that a negative answer to the question is implausible, rather than to the details of the Gilbertain and Searlian accounts. In **section B.5.**

Hybrid solutions to Q1 (p. 109), I discuss whether we might append an Objectivist element to the account, to arrive at a successful hybrid solution to the individual-individual problem.

B.4.e. Conclusion

I presented two Subjectivist accounts that attempt to provide sufficient conditions for social phenomena: Gilbert's plural subject theory of social groups, and Searle's constructionist account of social institutions. Both accounts, I argued, face the Dark City counterexample, in which all the mental states specified by the accounts are present, but the social groups and institutions implied by the accounts are not. I then considered three types of responses the Subjectivist might offer. First, I considered ways that one might bite the bullet – i.e. argue that the groups and institutions implied by the accounts *do* exist in the Dark City. Second, I considered ways that Gilbert and Searle might deny that their accounts are committed to the existence of these social phenomena in the Dark City. And third, I considered objections to the methodology of the counterexample. I argued, however, that none of these three types of responses are successful.

B.5. HYBRID SOLUTIONS TO Q1

Q1 is the problem of specifying the constitutive relations among group members sufficient to unify them into a group. I considered Objectivist and Subjectivist solutions to this problem. Objectivist accounts cite features other than the reflexive mental states of the members of a group when specifying the relations that occur among those members – that is, patterns of behaviour observable to individuals outside of the group. By contrast, Subjectivist accounts claim that the reflexive mental states of group members are essential (or at least sufficient) to specify intra-group relations.

I then argued that none of the Objectivist or Subjectivist solutions to Q1 present in the literature are convincing. Moreover, there are reasons why we should think that neither Objectivism nor Subjectivism can, in principle, provide an adequate solution to Q1. Objectivists cannot adequately account for the intuition that for any given social group, there may be a mere aggregate indistinguishable from the social group by an external observer; and Subjectivists cannot adequately account for the intuition that it is possible for there to be collectively accepted membership-beliefs that are nevertheless false, as in the Dark City case.

Tuomela and Miller seem to recognise this problem. Tuomela (2007, p. 18) appends to the teleological account (i.e. the best Objectivist account) a Subjectivist requirement, namely that the members "must believe (or be disposed to believe) that they are members of the group (under some description of membership) and also that the other group members (noncircularly characterised) belong to the group." Miller (2001, p. 59) adds a second, Subjectivist, qualification to the account, namely, that a shared *telos* must be "open" to all members of the group. These two Subjectivist additions to the account are together equivalent to the conditions laid out in Gilbert's **Correct Thought** version of her plural subject theory. Effectively, then, Tuomela and Miller suggest combining the teleological account with Gilbert's **Correct Thought**, to create a hybrid Objectivist-Subjectivist account.

This is a clever amalgam, since **Correct Thought** provides a way to avoid the objection from indistinguishability associated with Objectivism, and the teleological account avoids the Dark City counterexample faced by Subjectivism. The individuals in the mere aggregate indistinguishable from the social group will lack the mutual beliefs about group membership required by **Correct Thought**. On the other hand, collectives, like Dark Denizens, that operate on false beliefs will lack the history of (patterns of) joint action towards a common end that the teleological account requires for group membership.

Moreover, the teleological account and **Correct Thought** also seem to complement each other more intricately. The best version of the teleological account, namely, the broad teleological account, is problematic because it incorrectly agglomerates distinct social groups with the same broad *telos*, and therefore fails to fulfil the *Individuation* criterion. It is plausible, however, that the teleological account goes some way towards satisfying the *Groupness* criterion – an individual who works towards a common end with other individuals is likely part of a social group (even if the teleological account doesn't tell us just *which* group). By contrast, the best version of **Correct Thought**, i.e. the *de re* version, struggles to account for the anonymity in large groups – the members do not know about each other individually. The best solution to the anonymity problem is the dispositional belief version of the *de re* account, which holds that the condition for group membership is that the members of the group are disposed, under the right conditions, to believe they together form a plural subject. The dispositional belief account satisfies the *Individuation* criterion, since presumably the members of the group are disposed to the *de re* belief that *only* the other members of the group are members of the group. However, the dispositional belief account fails to satisfy the *Groupness* criterion, since collections of

individuals who never interact may nevertheless fulfil the conditions laid out by the dispositional account.

Thus, the teleological account fulfils *Groupness* but fails *Individuation*, while **Correct Thought** fails *Groupness* but fulfils *Individuation*. So amalgamating the two accounts seems promising, since the two accounts seem to resolve the other's failing. It is unclear, however, exactly how the hybrid account should be formulated as a solution to Q1. The following, I think, are the four most *prima facie* plausible formulations of the hybrid account (not in any particular order). Let **C** be the claim individuals M1…Mn relate in such a way that they comprise a social group, let **T** be the claim that M1…Mn work towards a common *telos*, and let **W** be the claim that each of M1…Mn correctly thinks of himself and the others, taken together, as "us*" or "we*", as on **Correct Thought**. Then:

Conjunctive Account: (T & W) → C

Disjunctive Account: (T v W) → C

First Complete[89] Account: (T → C) & (C → W)

Second Complete Account: (W → C) & (C → T)

Now, consider the various versions of the teleological account and plural subject theory that might participate as children in a hybrid account:

[89] These accounts are labelled "complete" because they provide both necessary and sufficient conditions for group membership.

Table 1: Solutions to the individual-individual problem

Account	Satisfies Individuation	Satisfies Groupness	Other objections
Analytic *telos*	×	×	✓
Narrow *telos*		×	
Broad *telos*	×	×	
Plural subject theory – Joint Commitment			✓
Plural subject theory – *De dicto* version of Correct Thought			✓
Plural subject theory – *De re* version of Correct Thought		×	

Note the following. First, if an account fails to satisfy *Individuation*, then it is too weak, for it is overly *inclusive* – i.e. it counts non-members as group members. On the other hand, if an account fails to satisfy *Groupness*, then it is too strong, since it is overly *exclusive* – that is, the account fails to characterise certain group members as members. Second, I take it that the accounts that suffer from "other objections" are excluded as candidates for hybridisation. This leaves the narrow and broad teleological accounts, and the *de re* version of **Correct Thought**. Thus, there are two candidate hybrid accounts: Narrow *de re* (the narrow teleological account combined with the *de re* account of **Correct Thought**) and Broad *de re* (the broad teleological account combined with the *de re* account of **Correct Thought**). Given these notes, consider the four methods for combining the teleological and plural subject accounts.

First, the **Conjunctive Account** has sufficiency criteria at least as stringent as the stronger of its children accounts. That is, the account is at least as strong as its strongest child account. But both Narrow *de re* and Broad *de re* contain the *de re* version of **Correct Thought**, which is too strong. And therefore, a **Conjunctive Account** is too strong (i.e. it fails to fulfil *Groupness*). To illustrate, suppose we hold, as Tuomela (2007, p. 18) and Miller (2001, p. 59) seem to, that the correct solution to the individual-individual problem is the **Conjunctive** version of Narrow *de re* (see footnote 59). I argued previously that the *de re* version of **Correct Thought** is too strong because it cannot characterise large groups, since many large groups (like the ANCYL) possess anonymity among group members. But appending the teleological account as an

additional (conjunctive) requirement for group membership will not resolve this problem. On Tuomela and Miller's **Conjunctive Account**, a member of a group must *both* (i) believe that he together with the other members comprise a plural subject, AND (ii) work towards the common *telos* of the group. But, the objection to **Correct Thought** shows (if sound) that certain legitimate members fail to fulfil (i). Specifying that these members should also fulfil (ii) does nothing to alter the fact that they fail to fulfil (i).

Second, the **Disjunctive Accounts** will be at least as weak as the weaker of its children. Thus, if either of the children fails to satisfy *Individuation*, then the **Disjunctive Account** will also fail to satisfy *Individuation*. This rules out Broad *de re* as an option, since the broad teleological account fails to satisfy *Individuation*, leaving only Narrow *de re* as an option. Now, since both the children accounts of Narrow *de re* fail to satisfy *Groupness*, the **Disjunctive Account** will succeed in satisfying *Groupness* only if each child fails *Groupness* in a way that the other does not. That is, child account A1 should include those members of a social group *g* that child account A2 does not, and A2 should include those members of *g* that A1 does not. Unfortunately, however, there are instances in which it is not the case that the *de re* version of **Correct Thought** includes those group members that the narrow teleological account fails to include.

Recall that the *de re* version of **Correct Thought** fails to satisfy *Groupness* because it fails to include group members in large groups who do not know about one another individually. On the other hand, the narrow teleological account fails to include ignorant and dissident group members as members, since these members do not work towards the common *telos* of the group. But, ignorant group members may be non-central group members in a large group – indeed, they typically are non-central members. That is, ignorant members are typically members that not all the other members know individually. And although Malcolm X (the dissident group member discussed in objection to the narrow teleological account) was a central member of the group, and therefore known to all the other members of the group, we needn't use him as our example. Some group members are non-central, but nevertheless dissident. We can imagine, for example, that a non-central member of the OAAU worked together with Malcolm X to alter the group's goals. This non-central member, we can assume, was unknown by many other members of the group. Thus, these ignorant and dissident group members will satisfy neither the conditions specified by the *de re* version of **Correct Thought**, nor the conditions specified

by the narrow teleological account. And therefore Narrow *de re* cannot account for ignorant or dissident group members.

Third, the **First Complete Account** will be even worse than Gilbert's account at satisfying *Groupness* – i.e. it is even stronger than the *de re* version of **Correct Thought**, which is itself too strong. This is because the **First Complete Account** implies that the conditions specified by **Correct Thought** are *necessary* for group membership, while Gilbert's original account holds merely that the conditions specified by **Correct Thought** are *sufficient* for group membership. That is, for any given social group *g*, let $<\text{Excluded}_{\text{Gilbert}}>$ be the set of legitimate members of *g* that the *de re* version of **Correct Thought** fails to characterise as members of *g*. Then while it is not the case that Gilbert's original account implies that $<\text{Excluded}_{\text{Gilbert}}>$ are members of *g*, the **First Complete Account** implies that $<\text{Excluded}_{\text{Gilbert}}>$ are *not* members of *g*.

And finally, the **Second Complete Account** is at least as strong as the *de re* version of **Correct Thought**, since it includes the *de re* account as one of its conjuncts – i.e. the claim that the conditions specified in the *de re* account are sufficient for group membership. Adding the claim that the conditions specified by the narrow teleological account are *necessary* for group membership only makes the requirements for group membership *stronger*. But the *de re* version of **Correct Thought** is too strong (since is fails to satisfy *Groupness*), and so, the **Second Complete Account** is also too strong, and therefore fails to satisfy *Groupness*.

This discussion suggests that it is not the case that there is an adequate formulation of the hybrid account that improves on its child accounts.

B.6. Moving from the Individual-individual problem to the Social-individual problem

What I hope to have shown in **section B** is that we have grounds for being uncertain about whether we will eventually find an adequate solution to Q1 (the individual-individual problem). It would be prudent, therefore, to proceed to consider Q2, or the social-individual problem, since if we can find an adequate solution to the social-individual problem, then we can with more confidence conclude that the individual-individual problem can be adequately resolved, and so, we can with greater confidence assert that social groups exist. However, if we can find no such resolution to the social-individual problem, then we have reason for scepticism

regarding the claims that there is an adequate solution to the individual-individual problem and that social groups exist.

C. THE SOCIAL-INDIVIDUAL PROBLEM (Q2)

C.1. INTRODUCTION

C.1.a. The literature

I argued in **section A.2.b.ii. The macro-micro-link problem and the social-individual problem (p. 16)** that the social-individual problem has received little attention in the literature for a number of reasons, namely, that the social-individual problem is seen as: (a) interchangeable with the individual-individual problem; (b) reducible to the individual-individual problem, and hence, resolved once the individual-individual problem is resolved; (c) an instance of the whole-part problem; (d) analogous to the mind-body problem; (e) outside the boundaries of social ontology; or (f) easy to resolve. I argued that claims (a) through (f) are false, however.

Moreover, in addition to the scarcity of attention to the social-individual problem as a problem about social phenomena *generally*, there is even less attention devoted to Q2, or the social-individual problem as it applies to social groups *specifically*. The vast majority of the literature that is directly relevant to the nature of social groups focuses on whether the social supervenes upon the individual, and on the possibility of reducing types of social phenomena to types of individualistic phenomena. I discuss these issues in **sections C.2.b. Non-Reductive Individualism (p. 124)** and **C.3.b. Type Individualism (p. 159)** respectively. However, there are a number of other possible solutions to the social-individual problem that have received little to no attention at all, such as Social Functionalism (as a claim about the metaphysics, rather than the explanation, of social phenomena), and Eliminative Individualism (the claim that the social does not exist).

Moreover, Searle (1990, 1995, 1998, 2007, 2010) has created a large following of supporters and critics of what he calls his "social ontology". Indeed, social ontology as a field is now dominated by a discussion of Searle's work [consider the dominance of Searlian themes at the 2013 European Network on Social Ontology (ENSO-III) conference, for example]. The problem is that Searle's social ontology focuses exclusively on social *institutions*, which has

diverted attention away from social groups. But, as I argued above, it is not the case that Searle's account of social institutions can be applied to social groups without causing fresh problems for the account that it did not face as an account of institutions.

In this portion of the thesis I intend to go some way towards filling these gaps in the literature, by not only considering supervenient and reductive accounts of groups, but also by considering other possible (albeit neglected) solutions to the social-individual problem as well. Moreover, I will focus almost entirely on social groups, rather than on social institutions.

C.1.b. Criteria for evaluation

First, consider the criteria I will use to evaluate the various solutions to the social-individual problem. I take it that there are four necessary (although not sufficient) requirements that an account *a* must meet if it is to resolve the social individual problem successfully.

First, the account should not undermine the Folk Sociological intuitions mentioned at the beginning of the thesis – that groups have the capacity to act, be responsible for their actions, can persist through time, and may have value.

Second:

Aggregation: it is not the case that *a* implies that some mere aggregates are social groups.

See **section B.1. Criteria for success (p. 40)** for Q1 for a fuller statement of this criterion.

Third:

Diachronic: *a* individuates groups diachronically.

Essential to our Folk Sociological conception of a group is that it can persist through time. Thus, we should expect a complete account of social groups to individuate social groups diachronically. Assuming that social group G1 exists at t1, social group G2 exists at t2, and G1=G2, an account provides adequate diachronic individuation conditions $C_{diachronic}$ just in case $C_{diachronic}$ is necessary and sufficient for the claim that "SP1=SP2".

Finally, it is an interesting question whether a solution to the social-individual problem must individuate groups *synchronically* (as well as diachronically). Recall that one of the criteria for an adequate solution to Q1 is that it should *individuate* social groups. Thus, one way to

understand solutions to Q1 is that they provide synchronic identity criteria for social groups.[90] That is, they provide the conditions in virtue of which a given collection of individuals comprise a given social group at a given moment in time. On an Objectivist account, the patterns of interaction among group members at a given time are sufficient to unify the group, while on a Subjectivist account, the reflexive beliefs of group members at a given time unify them. Thus, if the solution to Q1 provides synchronic identity criteria for social groups, it is unnecessary for an adequate solution to Q2 to individuate groups synchronically. Nevertheless, I take it that if a solution to the social-individual problem is inconsistent with, or undermines, the possibility of providing an adequate criterion of synchronic identity for social groups, then that solution is problematic. Hence, whatever solution is offered to Q2 must not contradict the solution to Q1:

Synchronic: *a* does not undermine the synchronic individuation of groups.[91]

I move now to apply these four criteria to various proposed solutions to the social-individual problem.

C.2. NON-REDUCTION

We might divide the literature into two broad approaches to resolving the social-individual problem: reductive and non-reductive accounts. Non-reductivists, the most notable proponents of which include Archer (1995), Bhaskar (1989), Durkheim (1895 [1982]), Elder-Vass (2007), Jarvie (1964), Sawyer (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004) and Sheehy (2006a), claim that:

R1) the social exists;

R2) the social and the individual are logically or conceptually independent; and

R3) social terms can refer successfully to entities in the world.

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[90] This suggests an interesting response to my Dark City counterexample to Subjectivist solutions to the individual-individual problem **(p. 97)**. The Dark City counterexample relies upon the *historical intuition*, or the intuition that the history of a social phenomenon is constitutive of its nature, at least for some types of social phenomena, such as marriages and families. The Dark City counterexample argues that Subjectivism cannot accommodate the historical intuition, although Objectivism can. But, given that the individual-individual problem should be understood as demanding merely *synchronic*, rather than diachronic identity, criteria for social phenomena, perhaps this demand is too strong, for the historical intuition seems to concern the *diachronic identity* of social groups.
However, this response is unsuccessful, for it seems that the history of a social phenomenon *does* impact its synchronic identity – that is, the history of a social group impacts its nature *now*. Whether a given collection of individuals is a family *right now* depends in part on whether they have a history of familial relations.

[91] In **section B** I test whether a proposed solution to Q2 satisfies *Synchronic* by seeing whether the account is consistent with the existence of coextensional groups (i.e. distinct groups with the same members).

All non-reductivists hold that social phenomena and individual phenomena are in some sense independent (R2). To say that the social and the individual are independent in the sense used here is not necessarily to say that the social can exist independently of the individual. Rather, what is meant is that the social exists as something ontologically distinct from the individualistic entities that underlie them. Put otherwise, social phenomena cannot be *reduced* to the individualistic phenomena underlying them. Non-reductivists often cash out this notion by claiming that social phenomena are *emergent*, or something more than the sum of their parts.

However, non-reductivists differ in exactly what sort of social emergence they posit. That is, non-reductivists differ in how they characterise the distinction between social and individualistic phenomena. Social Dualists argue that social phenomena, like groups, are distinct *entities* from the individuals that underlie them (by an "entity" I mean an independent *object*, rather than property). Non-Reductive Individualists, by contrast, claim that the independence of social phenomena obtains because social phenomena are a distinct type of *property* possessed by collections of individualistic phenomena. The distinction between entity-dualism and property-dualism is sometimes understood as the distinction between *strong* and *weak* conceptions of the emergence of the social (see, e.g., Theiner & O'Connor, 2010, p. 80).[92]

C.2.a. Social Dualism

Social Dualists hold that social phenomena are distinct *entities*. Thus, when I look out onto the Wits Central Block concourse at the chanting students I see both a number of individual entities (i.e. each of the students), but I also see another *entity*: the ANCYL (or a sub-set of the league). But Social Dualists disagree on the category (or type) of entity to which social groups, like the ANCYL, belong. Durkheim holds, while Sheehy denies, that social groups are non-material entities, of a distinct category or substance from their members. I consider the Durkheimian and Sheehian versions of Social Dualism in turn.

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[92] Debate around non-reductivism is rife within the field of collective rationality. Some philosophers, such as Rovane (1998, 2004a, 2004b), argue that groups make decisions that the individuals underlying them do not. This implies a non-reductive position, and possibly a strong, entity dualist position. On the other hand, some argue that it is possible to account for the apparent emergent character of group rationality in terms of a weak, property-dualist view (see, e.g., Theiner & O'Connor, 2010). Finally, others hold that even group rationality can be reduced to individualistic rationality, or at least to functionalist states (Flew, 1985 ch. 3).
This is, however, effectively the social-individual problem as it applies to collective rationality, which although fascinating, is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis.

C.2.a.i. Social groups as entities of a distinct category

The original Social Dualists, most notably Durkheim, claimed that social groups belong to a category of entity *other* than that category to which individual persons belong: "…it is undeniably true that social facts are… *sui generis*… facts" (Durkheim, 1895 [1982], ch. V). Social Dualists cash out this view either by categorising social groups as abstract objects, or as objects with a "social", rather than a material, substance (whatever that means). Durkheim supports this latter Social Dualist view by arguing for an organic account of groups [see **section B.2.b. Organic account (p. 44)**]. If groups did behave in an organic fashion, this would lend support to the claim that social groups are entities of a distinct "social" kind, since it seems that the group would operate in a fashion undetermined by its members. There are three problems with Durkheimian Dualism, however.

First, I have argued that the organic account faces numerous problems, and so, I take it that Durkheim's view is unsupported. Second, if social groups and their members are entities of distinct types, then the group is bifurcated from its members to such a degree that it is unclear how the agency, responsibility, value and persistence of the group can be grounded in its members (call this the bifurcation problem). The bifurcation problem parallels the problem of mechanism faced by Substance Dualist theories of mind, since these theories (which claim that the mind and the body are distinct substances) must perform the seemingly impossible task of providing a causal mechanism between a physical and a non-physical object. Jung (1922) suggests a mysterious "ectoplasm" that provides a link between the group and its members, while McDougall (1920) posits "telepathic" communication between the group and its members. I take it that both of these suggestions are, at best, unpalatable, and at worst unintelligible. At the very least, they are no more plausible than Eliminative Individualism, and so cannot form part of a social ontology that prevents us from giving Eliminative Individualism serious consideration.

Third, if Durkheim is correct, then there are non-individual, "superhuman or subhuman, agencies at work in history" (Watkins, 1958, p. 395); but the idea of a ghostly, supra-individual consciousness seems counterintuitive. Put otherwise, the Durkheimian *reification* of groups seems counterintuitive. S. Miller (2011, p. Sec. 1) expresses this objection in terms of sophistication. If social groups are independent entities capable of action and responsibility, then social groups must, *in themselves*, possess all of the prerequisites for agency and responsibility. Yet, consider that these prerequisites are rather sophisticated. Mele (1995)

presents what is a largely uncontroversial view of the "springs" of actions for which an agent may be held responsible. For any given agent S at a given time t, S has a set of reasons[93] upon which S might act at t. S takes stock, or becomes aware, of a subset of those reasons, compares that subset of reasons according to some criterion, and performs a practical judgement concerning which of the reasons compared is the best reason upon which to act. S then makes a practical decision to act upon this practical judgement, forms an intention to so act, and then acts on that intention. The problem for Durkheim is that when a social group acts, Durkheim must ascribe this long and complex process to the group itself, rather than to its members, since Durkheim claims that the group is an *entity* in its own right, distinct from its members. Yet it seems implausible to ascribe such a sophisticated process to a social group: how could groups *themselves* have complicated propositional attitudes (like preferences), self-awareness, self-reflection, high level thought, and therefore language, and indeed, be a fully conscious being.

Perhaps Durkheim would be prepared to bite the bullet on the existence of such sophisticated, conscious social groups when considering cultures or societies as such beings. But why stop at the level of society and culture? Why not ascribe a sophisticated consciousness to "governments, universities, schools, supermarkets, armies, banks, political parties, trade unions, [and] English soccer teams' supporters' clubs" S. Miller (2011, p. Sec. 1)? This proliferation of social consciousnesses seems at least as counterintuitive as the denial that there are any social groups at all (i.e. Eliminative Individualism).

C.2.a.ii. Social groups as material entities

Sheehy (2006a) defends a different sort of Social Dualism: he claims that social groups, although distinct entities, are entities of the *same* category as individual persons, namely, both social groups and persons are *material objects*. Sheehy (2006a, p. 99) holds that material objects have five characteristics. Material objects:

- O-1) have a unity of form;
- O-2) have a causal capacity;
- O-3) can be individuated both from other material objects at any given point in time (i.e. synchronically), and through time (i.e. diachronically);

[93] Roughly, a reason is a combination of a desire (or pro-attitude of some sort) together with a belief about how that desire can be fulfilled.

O-4) are located spatio-temporally; and

O-5) have a collection of parts related in a way that determines O-1 through O-4.

Sheehy points out that social groups possess all of these characteristics. For example, the ANCYL is a unit (O-1), able to act (O-2), distinguishable from other groups (e.g. the Democratic Alliance and its youth league) both at a given point in time and over time (O-3), has been located in South Africa since 1944 (O-4), and has a collection of members that relate in a way that appears to determine these other four features (O-5). Social groups, then, appear to be good candidates for being material objects.

Sheehy argues that this account avoids two of the problems associated with the Durkheimian view. Social groups are not strange, ghostly entities: rather, they are entities of a sort with which we are already familiar. Moreover, if social groups are material entities, just like their members, then the gap between groups and their members is far smaller than on Durkheim's account, thereby avoiding, or at least lessening, the bifurcation problem. Nevertheless, Sheehy's account faces at least two challenges.[94]

First, Sheehy seems to commit the previously noted error [see **section A.2.b.ii. The macro-micro-link problem and the social-individual problem (p. 16)**] of conflating the social-individual problem with the whole-part problem. Sheehy holds that the relation between a group and its members is exactly that relationship that obtains between a material entity and its component parts. On Sheehy's interpretation of this view, the only parts of a social group are its members and their intra-relations; but, as noted by Mandelbaum (1955 [1973], p. 115), any given social phenomenon may have *other social phenomena* as its parts. For example, part of what it is to be the ANCYL is to stand in certain relations to other political entities in South Africa: e.g. to be the youth branch of the ANC, and to be in opposition to the DA youth league. On Mandelbaum's view, these relations are partly constitutive of the ANCYL, and so, are parts of the league. Hence, it seems that the ANCYL has more than just its members and their intra-relations as its parts.

[94] The critical literature on Sheehy's account focuses on the problem of synchronic cohabitation, or the problem of explaining how it is possible that the group, since it is a material entity, can cohabit the same space at the same time as other material entities, namely, its members (see Sheehy, 2006b). I focus here on other objections to Sheehy's account.

And second, it is unclear whether Sheehy's account does in fact present a Social Dualist view. Both a reductive account and a Non-Reductive Individualist account of social groups would agree that social groups are material objects [see **sections C.2.b. Non-Reductive Individualism (p. 124)** and **C.3. Reduction (p. 154)**]. Sheehy (2006a) criticises both of these views, and intends his account to be distinct from both. But what is the difference between his view and these two alternatives? Perhaps Sheehy holds that on his account, but not on the others, social groups are *distinct* entities – i.e. they should be counted over-and-above their members as material objects in space and time. If we were to count the number of distinct material objects on the central block concourse while the ANCYL is chanting, we should count each of the individuals, plus one (i.e. the league itself). By contrast, on the reductive and Non-Reductive Individualist accounts, the total number of material entities on the concourse is just the number of individuals standing on the concourse (i.e. one fewer than on Sheehy's account).

Putting aside the *prima facie* implausibility of this position, there is a further problem with this response. If social groups are distinct entities, then Sheehy's account does not avoid Miller's objection from sophistication raised against Durkheim's account. If social groups are distinct entities, and if social groups have agency and responsibility, then they must have the sophisticated properties and processes that individualistic agents have – e.g. a mind and the ability for awareness, practical reasoning, practical judgement, intentionality and choice. Positing that these social entities are material rather than of a distinct Durkheimian category does little to remedy the problem – it is still strange to ascribe all these properties and processes to *social groups*, as distinct entities, rather than their members.

Perhaps Sheehy and Durkheim would insist that it is intelligible to ascribe to groups, rather than to their members, a mind. But the problem with this insistence, and this is crucial, is that this group mind thesis does *not* imply that groups are distinct *entities* from the individualistic phenomena that underlie them. For these group minds might be better understood on a weaker, less ontologically extravagant, account of emergence, namely, a property-dualist view (see Theiner & O'Connor, 2010). This weaker, property-dualist view, can accommodate the group mind thesis because on this view social (or group) properties are categorically distinct from individualistic properties, and so, in some important sense, the *group* can do things its members cannot. But a property-dualist view is not committed to the unpalatable implication that groups are full-blown conscious *entities* distinct from the members that underlie them. I turn now,

therefore, to consider Non-Reductive Individualism, since it is the best candidate for a property-dualist view.

C.2.b. Non-Reductive Individualism

C.2.b.i. The account

Sawyer (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004) provides an account he calls "Non-Reductive Individualism", meant to parallel the Non-Reductive Materialist account of mind.[95] His account makes five claims:

NRI-1) Ontological Individualism is true: i.e. there are no entities other than individualistic entities;[96]

NRI-2) social phenomena supervene upon individual phenomena (groups supervene upon their members);

NRI-3) any given token social phenomenon is identical with a token collection[97] of individual phenomena (any given social group is identical with its members);[98]

NRI-4) a given type of social phenomenon can be realised by wildly disjunctive types of individualist phenomena (a given type of social group can be instantiated by wildly disjunctive types of members); and

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[95] Non-Reductive Materialism makes five claims (see Davidson, 1970 [1980]). First, Non-Reductive Materialism holds that Physicalism is true, or the claim that there is only one type of substance existent in the universe – namely, the physical. Second, Non-Reductive Materialists claim that the mental supervenes on the physical. Third, (on Davidson's version of the thesis, also called Anomalous Monism) token mental states are identical with token physical states. Fourth, Non-Reductive Materialists claim that mental types can be instantiated in wildly different types of physical states. For example, pain could be instantiated in C-fibre stimulation in the human brain, but also in inflating gill cavities in Martians. And last, the account posits a dualism of properties rather than a dualism of substances. Thus, while Cartesian Dualism posits both physical and mental substances, Non-Reductive Materialists hold instead that there are ontologically distinct physical and mental properties.

[96] Here I am following Sawyer's usage of the phrase "Ontological Individualism". Epstein (2009) uses the same phrase to denote NRI-2, or the claim that the social supervenes upon the individual. Nothing substantial rests upon this difference in usage.

[97] Note that my usage of the term "collection" is meant in a neutral sense – it is neutral on whether that collection of individuals is a social group or a mere aggregate.

[98] It is unclear whether Sawyer intends NRI-3 to form part of his account. I have assumed NRI-2 does form part of the account, since Sawyer intends his account to parallel Davidson's Non-Reductive Materialism (see footnote 95). Moreover, inserting NRI-3 into the account even if Sawyer does *not* intend this should not be seen as a problem by the Non-Reductive Individualist, since NRI-3 only strengthens the account. Indeed, I will argue later that NRI-3 is required to supplement NRI-2.

NRI-5) social properties (e.g. being a group) and individualistic properties (being a member of a group) are ontologically distinct.[99]

Sawyer asserts NRI-1 to protect the account against reifying the social (and hence, against the unpalatable consequences that follow from Social Dualism). NRI-2 and NRI-3 specify two relations between the social and the individual, namely, supervenience and token-token identity. Thus, NRI-2 and NRI-3 attempt to answer the social-individual problem. Sawyer uses NRI-4 to support token-token identity (i.e. NRI-3), rather than type-type identity, obtaining between social and individual phenomena [see **section C.3.b. Type Individualism (p. 159)** for a discussion of NRI-4]. And finally, NRI-5 ensures that the account is a non-reductive account of social phenomena by maintaining a logical distinction between social and individualistic *properties* (rather than a logical distinction between social and individualistic entities, as on Social Dualism).

The critical discussion of Sawyer's account has centred around NRI-5. Specifically, the discussion focuses on whether property dualism can secure a real autonomy of the social (see, e.g., Greve, 2012a, 2012b; Sawyer, 2012). That is, on Sawyer's account, do social groups have causal efficacy over-and-above the causal efficacy of their members? If not, then the account is non-reductive in name but not in spirit, for the ontological distinction between the social and the individual specified in NRI-5 seems superfluous. I wish to set this debate aside, however, since I am interested here in the social-individual problem, and therefore I am interested primarily in NRI-2 and NRI-3.

In what follows, I argue that both of these claims are problematic, and so, Sawyer's solution to the social-individual problem is unconvincing. I begin by considering NRI-2.

C.2.b.ii. Supervenience

NRI-2 is the claim that the social supervenes upon the individual. Roughly, to say that a higher-level entity, property or fact H "supervenes" upon a set of lower-level entities, properties or facts L is to say that H is *dependent* upon L, or that L *determines* H (Kim, 1984, p. 153). More accurately, a change in H requires a change in L; or, if L remains constant, so does H. However, this stated definition is vague in three respects, namely, as to: the unit of supervenience (local,

[99] Sawyer (2001; 2002, pp. 540, 553) argues that the accounts of other property-dualists (such as Bhaskar, Blau, Archer, Collier, and Lawson) are incomplete because they omit NRI-3 or NRI-4.

global or regional), the scope within which a change of H requires a change of L (weak[100] or strong[101]), and the time-span over which H depends on L (synchronic[102] or diachronic[103]). Hence, there are three dimensions of accounts that attempt to clarify these areas of vagueness. I will be focusing exclusively on accounts belonging to the first of these dimensions – accounts which specify the unit of supervenience (local, global and regional). The reason for this is that I will argue that there are successful objections against the local, global and regional accounts; and that the accounts belonging to the other two dimensions do nothing to avoid these objections. All of the accounts I will be discussing, however, presuppose strong supervenience, although all the accounts (except the global account) could be reformulated with a presupposition of weak supervenience instead, without altering the efficacy of the objections I raise.

Before I discuss local, global and regional accounts, I wish to clarify the criteria of evaluation I will use when evaluating the accounts. For each account of supervenience, I will offer objections of either or both of the following types, namely, that the account:

Ob-1) contradicts folk-sociological intuitions about social groups; or
Ob-2) does not adequately capture the dependence of H on L.

If the account suffers from a successful objection of type Ob-1, then it is inadequate to rule out Eliminate Individualism as a viable alternative, and so, can be put aside for the purposes of this discussion. However, if the account faces a successful objection of type Ob-2, then at best it offers a weak, limited solution to the social-individual problem, and will need to be supplemented by another claim (such as NRI-3). I will argue that all of the accounts of social-individual supervenience that I consider, suffer from either Ob-1 or Ob-2 type objections. With these criteria in mind, I begin the exposition with local accounts of supervenience.

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[100] Weak supervenience is the claim that H supervenes upon L iff for all *x* and *y* within the same possible world, if *x* and *y* possess L, then *x* and *y* possess H.
[101] Strong supervenience is the claim that H supervenes upon L iff for all *x* and *y*, where *x* and *y* occur within the same or different possible worlds, if *x* and *y* possess L, then *x* and *y* possess H.
[102] Synchronic supervenience is the claim that H supervenes upon L iff, for all *x* and *y*, if at time *t*, *x* and *y* do not differ with regards to L, then *x* and *y* possess the same H at *t*.
[103] Diachronic supervenience is the claim that H supervenes upon L iff, for all *x* and *y*, if up till and including *t*, *x* and *y* do not differ with regards to L, then *x* and *y* possess the same H at *t*.

♦ *Local supervenience*

Local supervenience accounts claim that:

> **Local supervenience: H supervenes upon L iff for all *x* and *y*, where *x* and *y* are different individuals or sets of individuals, if *x* and *y* possess property L, then *x* and *y* possess property H.[104]**

The most obvious application of the local supervenience account to the social-individual problem is the claim that two groups with qualitatively identical members are qualitatively identical groups. More formally:

> **Local member supervenience: Social groups supervene upon their members iff for any two collections *x* and *y* of individual persons, if *x* and *y* are qualitatively identical collections of persons (i.e. have the same properties), then *x* and *y* are qualitatively identical social groups.[105]**

The local account of group-member supervenience suffers from two objections of type Ob-1 (the more damaging type of objection). First, if local member supervenience is correct, then a given social group depends upon nothing but its members for its existence. But this is counterintuitive, since social groups seem to depend not just upon their members, but also upon (i) other social phenomena, (ii) individual persons who are not members of the group, and (iii) the environment of the group.[106] Call this objection the *external dependence* objection.

A bank, for example, depends upon not just its employees, but also upon (i) the reserve bank and its policies, upon (iii) the existence of a capitalist market, and upon (ii) the individuals who make up that market. Or, to take a different example, the ANCYL is partly determined by factors beyond its members, such as (i) other political parties, (iii) global politics, and (ii) the individuals who affect global politics – e.g. Barack Obama. For example, suppose that tomorrow Obama decides that South Africa should be occupied by American forces. This might have the result that ANCYL is eliminated from the face of South African politics. Or, suppose that tomorrow the US stock market crashes. This may have enormous repercussions for South

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[104] All of the formal definitions of supervenience I provide here take the form of property supervenience. However, I regularly cash out these formal definitions in terms of entities, such as groups and their members. Horgan (1993) and Sheehy (2006a) hold that this is overly charitable to the supervenience theorist, but I have qualms with supervenience that do not rest on such technicalities.

[105] I take it that if two groups are qualitatively identical, then the two groups are indiscernible with regard to their social properties.

[106] See Horgan (1993, p. 569) and Kincaid (1986, p. 498) for a discussion of (i) and (ii); and see Epstein (2009, p. 196) for a discussion of (iii). Moreover, see **section C.3.a. Logical Individualism (p. 154)** for a defence of (i), also known as the "holism of the social" doctrine.

Africa and its political landscape, such that ANCYL is forced to make a radical shift in its policies. Since these are logically possible scenarios, it seems fair to say that ANCYL is partly determined by Obama and the US stock market.

The local supervenience proponent might respond to the external dependence objection by arguing that the objection conflates two distinct senses of the clause "depends upon". On one meaning of the clause, A depends upon B if A is constituted by, or comprised of, B (call this constitutive dependence). A second sense of the clause is that A depends upon B if A is causally affected by B (call this causal dependence). An adequate account of the supervenience of H on L must include all of the *constitutive* dependencies of H, but need not include all of the *causal* dependencies of H. Thus, the external dependence objection is successful only insofar as I have shown that local supervenience accounts omit the *constitutive* (rather than causal) dependencies of social groups. However, the proponent of local supervenience could hold that the external dependencies involved in (i), (ii) and (iii) are causal, and not constitutive. To support this claim, the proponent might ask us to consider the following analogy.

Shift focus to the mind-body problem, and specifically, consider the claim that a particular belief supervenes upon a particular brain state. Suppose John possesses a belief B that ice-cream is sweet. Now it is true that if, say, aliens were to invade the planet and in so doing kill John, the aliens would thereby eliminate B. We would readily admit that because alien invasions determine the future of B, B causally depends upon the invasion of aliens. But, what we would *not* want to infer is that B *constitutively* depends upon alien invasions. Similarly, we should not infer that just because Obama and the US stock market partly determine the future of the ANCYL, Obama and America constitutively (rather than causally) determine the ANCYL.

I disagree, however, that Obama's decisions and the USA stock market are merely causal dependencies of the ANCYL: they are indeed constitutive dependencies. The difference between the case of John's belief about ice-cream and the case of the ANCYL is that while there is no *conceptual* connection between ice-cream beliefs as a type of phenomenon and alien invasion as a type of phenomenon, there *is* a conceptual connection between political parties as a type and global political events as a type. The concept of a large political party is the concept of a type of group that operates within the broader stage of global politics. However, it is not a

conceptual truth that the nature of beliefs about ice-cream is determined by alien invasions.[107] For this reason, beliefs about ice cream are not constitutively dependent upon alien invasions, while the ANCYL is constitutively dependent upon global political events. Thus, an adequate supervenience account of beliefs need not make reference to alien invasions when specifying the lower-order entities or properties upon which ice-cream beliefs supervene, but an adequate supervenience account of political groups must make reference to global politics (or the individualistic entities which underlie global politics) in its account of large political groups.

A second Ob-1 type objection to the claim that groups supervene locally upon their members is that common-sense suggests that it is possible to have two qualitatively distinct groups, but with identical members. To borrow an example from Sheehy (2006a, pp. 36, note 44), notice that a small town's rugby team and male choir may have the same members, yet be distinct social groups. That is, the rugby team and choir have the same individuals, but distinct social properties. However, the local supervenience account denies that this is possible, and so, cases where there are distinct yet coextensional groups provide counterexamples to the local supervenience account. Put differently, the local supervenience account does not provide individualistic properties that guarantee a unique social group.

The local supervenience theorist does have recourse to a somewhat more sophisticated account, however, which may do a better job at accommodating these objections. Call this the "local intra-relational supervenience account":

> **Local intra-relational supervenience: Social groups supervene upon the intra-relations among their members iff for any two collections *x* and *y* of individual persons, if the individuals in *x* relate with one another in a manner qualitatively identical with the manner in which the individuals in *y* relate with one another, then *x* and *y* are qualitatively identical social groups.**

This revised local supervenience account appears to resolve both the external dependence objection, and the problem of coextensional groups. Consider that in specifying how the individuals in a group relate, we would be utilising the solution we find to Q1. Now recall that

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[107] Perhaps the local supervenience proponent would point out that mental states *are* conceptually related to environmental features. For example, beliefs about ice cream are conceptually related to ice creams. And so, the similarity between mental states and social phenomena is closer than I suggest.
The problem is, however, that social phenomena are conceptually related to a much *wider* base of environmental factors than are mental states. The belief that "This is an ice-cream" is conceptually related to ice creams, but not to global ice-cream price increases. By contrast, the belief that "This is the ANCYL" *is* conceptually related to global politics and global markets.

one of the possible answers to Q1, namely, the broad teleological account, spells out a group's intra-relations in terms of its broad goals, and these broad goals may include reference to (i) other social phenomena, (ii) individuals outside of the group, and (iii) the context, or environment, of the group. For example, the ANCYL may include as part of its broad *telos* (i) its opposition to other youth leagues, (ii) its support of all black South African youth, and (iii) an ultimate goal to transform the political landscape in South Africa in a certain way. It seems, then, that the local intra-relational account accommodates features (i) through (iii) in its account of supervenience, since the relations among group members can be specified in terms that include (i) through (iii).

Moreover, turning to the problem of coextensional groups, if we examine the relations among the rugby players when they relate *as rugby players*, and we compare these relations to the type of relations that we find occurring among the members of the male choir when they relate *as members of the choir*, we will undoubtedly notice dissimilarities. For example, while practising rugby, the individuals involved throw an oblong ball to one another, but while singing in the choir, the group members harmonise their voices. Thus, the intra-relational account succeeds where the original local account failed, since on the intra-relational but not the member account, the lower-order properties upon which the rugby team and choir supervene are qualitatively distinct.

I concede that the intra-relational account resolves the problem of coextensional groups, but I do not think that the account resolves the external dependencies objection.[108] To support the

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[108] Sheehy (2006a) argues that the local intra-relational account also fails to accommodate coextensional groups: the intra-relational account merely *appears* to accommodate coextensional groups. Let groups G1 and G2 be distinct but coextensional social groups with members M. M will relate differently with each other when they are relating *qua* members of G1 compared with when they are relating *qua* members of G2. Thus, because G1-intra-relations will be distinct from G2-intra-relations, the local intra-relational account does not imply that G1 and G2 are qualitatively identical. The problem with this solution to the problem, according to Sheehy, is that it is impossible to specify which relations among M count as G1-intra-relations, and which count as G2-intra-relations, without referring to G1 and G2. That is, it is impossible to specify what it means for M to relate *qua* being members of G1 (or G2), without referring to G1 (or G2). But this is a problem, for this implies that the individualistic properties upon which G1 and G2 supervene are themselves dependent upon G1 and G2 (respectively), which makes a mockery of the notion that G1 is determined solely by, or depends solely upon, these individualistic properties. Put otherwise, if a supervenience account is to capture adequately the dependence of H on L, the account cannot imply that L is in turn dependent on H. Thus, the intra-relational version of the local account faces an Ob-2 type objection to the way it handles the problem of coextensional groups.
The problem with Sheehy's objection, however, is that it is a highly contentious claim that it is impossible to specify the intra-relations of group members without referring to the group itself, since this claim effectively implies that the best solution to the individual-individual problem would be circular. Now it may be the case that the best solution to the individual-individual problem is circular, but this claim would require much more support than Sheehy provides.

latter claim, consider that although the local account is able to smuggle in some content of types (i) through (iii) into its account, this will not necessarily be the *right* content to capture adequately the dependence of a social group on the numerous external factors that constitutively determine it. For example, it is not the case that Obama or the US stock market figure into the ANCYL's broad *telos*. I suspect that nowhere in the league's charter will you find any reference to a threat of an American invasion, or to the possibility of the US stock market crashing.[109] Thus, even though the ANCYL's goals may include reference to some external forces, it will certainly not refer to *all* of the external forces that constitutively determine the league's future. Thus, ultimately, the problem for the local intra-relational supervenience account is that the intra-relations in question will not necessarily (and indeed, do not in many cases) refer to all the relevant external dependencies required.

♦ *Global supervenience*

To accommodate the objections against the local accounts, Sawyer may increase the unit of supervenience from a particular entity (or social group), to a possible world:

> **Global supervenience: H supervenes upon L iff for all *x* and *y*, where *x* and *y* are <u>possible worlds</u>, if *x* and *y* possess L, then *x* and *y* possess H.**

Like the local supervenience account, the global supervenience account might be applied to the social-individual problem either in terms of group members, or in terms of the relations among those members:

> **Global member supervenience: Social groups supervene upon their <u>members</u> iff for any two possible worlds *x* and *y*, if *x* and *y* have qualitatively identical individuals, then *x* and *y* have qualitatively identical social groups.**
>
> **Global intra-relational supervenience: Social groups supervene upon the <u>intra-relations among their members</u> iff for any two possible worlds *x* and *y*,**

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[109] The local intra-relational supervenience proponent could argue that although the ANCYL's charter does not include reference to Obama or the US stock market, it may nevertheless include information that is relevant to these phenomena. For example, the ANCYL charter may include ideologies that conflict with US or capitalistic policies, even if these ideologies fail to mention the US or its market. Thus, these external dependencies are at least in some sense smuggled into the account, albeit indirectly, or by implication.
There are two problems with this response, however. First, this response seems to require that we adopt a *narrow* teleological account, since we require the detailed *telos* of the league, and not its broad goals, to secure these external dependencies (the charter is the narrow *telos* of the ANCYL). But, I argued that the narrow teleological account is problematic. And second this indirect, very weak sense, of smuggling in external dependencies does not seem to capture adequately the *dependence* of the social on these external phenomena. I will not argue for this point here, except to say that this indirect sense of dependence appears distinct (and weaker) than the direct dependence that a group has on its members (or their intra-relations) on the local supervenience account.

> **if the individuals in *x* relate with one another in a manner qualitatively identical with the manner in which the individuals in *y* relate with one another, then *x* and *y* have qualitatively identical social groups.**

Both of these versions of the global account resolve the objection from external dependencies, since the accounts expand the entities upon which social groups depend to *all* social and individualistic phenomena within the possible world to which that social group belongs. However, like the member version of the local supervenience account, the member version of the global account fails to accommodate the problem of coextensional groups, albeit in a slightly different form. Suppose that in this world, Howick has a rugby team, but no male choir. Call the collection of members of Howick's rugby team C_{Howick}. Now, imagine a world w* that has identical individuals to this world, and so has identical counterparts to C_{Howick} (call the counterparts C_{Howick}*). Because the same individuals can comprise distinct social groups, it is possible that in w* there is no Howick rugby team, and that, instead, C_{Howick}* comprise the male choir. Thus, contradicting global member supervenience, the actual world and w* are indiscernible with regard to their individuals, but distinct with regard to their social groups. So, the account fails to accommodate the intuition that social groups may be coextensional, yet qualitatively distinct.

Happily for the global supervenience theorist, however, the intra-relational version of the account does solve the problem of coextensional groups. Although the actual world and w* have identical individuals, the relations among the individuals in these worlds are qualitatively distinct. For example, in the actual world, C_{Howick} pass rugby balls to one another, while in w*, C_{Howick}* harmonise their voices. Thus, it is not the case that the global intra-relational account is committed to the claim that C_{Howick} and C_{Howick}* are qualitatively identical groups.

Nevertheless, both of the global supervenience accounts face an Ob-2 type objection that does not apply to either of the local accounts. Like any global account, global supervenience accounts imply that the tiniest of differences in the supervenience bases of two worlds is consistent with enormous differences in the supervening properties of these worlds. For example, let the individuals in the actual world at the present moment be abbreviated by <I1…In>. Moreover, suppose that another possible world w* has the same individuals in the actual world, except that w* is missing one politically dormant individual (e.g. an apathetic street-sweeper) – i.e. w* has <I*1…I*n-1> (assuming that the street-sweeper in the actual world is abbreviated by "In"). Then, on the global member account, it is possible that while the US is democratic in the actual world, the US is communist in w*. Or, to adapt the objection to the global intra-relational

account, suppose that although w* has the same individuals as in the actual world, w* has slightly, apparently insignificant, different interrelations among its individuals. For example, suppose that while in the actual world street-sweepers are unionised, in w* street-sweepers are not. Then, similarly, on the global intra-relational account, it is possible that while the US is democratic in the actual world, the US is communist in w*. These examples show that the global accounts do not adequately capture the dependence of social groups on their members, or the intra-relations among their members, since the smallest change at the individual level is consistent with an enormous change at the social level. (Call this problem the "dependence problem").

♦ *Regional supervenience*

Horgan (1993) espouses what he calls "regional physical supervenience", which he believes solves the dependence problem, as faced by global supervenience accounts of the mind-body relation. His account reads:

> There are no two *P*-regions [i.e. spatio-temporal regions] that are exactly alike in all qualitative intrinsic physical features but different in some other qualitative intrinsic feature. (1993, p. 571)

Horgan defines a feature "intrinsic" to a region R as any feature of R that depends solely on events, individuals or entities within R. A "qualitative" intrinsic feature of a region R is any feature that depends solely on "specific individuals" within R (1993, p. 570). Horgan uses as an example the fact that Tommy is a jazz pianist. Tommy's having this property is a qualitative intrinsic feature of the region in which Tommy lives, because Tommy's being a jazz pianist does not depend on anyone outside of R, and because Tommy's being a jazz pianist depends on the existence of Tommy.

Now recall that the dependence problem arises for the global accounts because an apparently irrelevant difference in the supervenience base (L) is consistent with an enormous difference in the higher-order property (H) supervening on that base. Horgan's account is designed to solve this problem by reducing the size of the region from a possible world to a space in which the only differences in L that determine a difference in H are those differences in L that are qualitative intrinsic features of the region in question. Presumably, irrelevant differences in L will not qualify as qualitative intrinsic features of the region, and so, will be inconsistent (on Horgan's account) with a vast difference in H. This is a plausible solution to the mind-body problem because it is *prima facie* likely that within regions of the correctly specified size,

physical differences irrelevant to the mental states of the two regions will not be qualitative intrinsic features of the regions, and so, will not be consistent with vast mental differences between the regions.

Unfortunately, however, the regional account does not work as easily in the case of the social-individual problem. If we generalise Horgan's account, we obtain:

> **Regional supervenience: H supervenes upon L iff for all *x* and *y*, where *x* and *y* are regions, if (both *x* and *y* possess L as a qualitative intrinsic feature), and (H is a qualitative intrinsic feature of *x*), then *y* possesses H.**

Applying this account to the social-individual relation, we arrive at either of the following accounts:

> **Regional member supervenience: Social groups <G1…Gn> supervene upon their members iff for all *x* and *y*, where *x* and *y* are regions, if (both *x* and *y* possess the same individuals), and (these individuals are qualitative intrinsic features of *x* and *y*), and (<G1…Gn> are qualitative intrinsic features of *x*), then *y* possesses social groups qualitatively identical to <G1…Gn>.**

> **Regional intra-relational supervenience: Social groups <G1…Gn> supervene upon the intra-relations among their members iff for all *x* and *y*, where *x* and *y* are regions, if (*x* and *y* possess the same intra-relations among their individuals), and (these intra-relations are qualitative intrinsic features of *x* and *y*), and (<G1…Gn> are qualitative intrinsic features of *x*), then *y* possesses social groups qualitatively identical to <G1…Gn>.**

Notice that, like the global member supervenience account, the regional *member* supervenience account does nothing to alleviate the objection from coextensional groups, since any two regions (whether one defines a region as a possible world, or as a smaller area), may have the same individuals, but distinct groups (since the same individuals may form qualitatively distinct groups).

Moreover, the regional intra-relational account as it stands is unhelpful, for on this account it will *never* be the case that a social group supervenes upon its members. The reason for this is that a qualitative intrinsic feature of R is defined by Horgan as a feature that depends solely on the "existence of specific individuals" within R (1993, p. 570). But if the intra-relations among the members of a group are to be specified in a way that adequately addresses the individual-individual problem, then those relations *do not* depend on the existence of specific individuals – anyone relating in that way will do. Consider, for example, that if the relations among the members of the ANCYL required the existence of those specific individuals, then every time a

member of the league terminates his membership the intra-relations among the individuals in the league change. This becomes highly problematic if many or most of the members of the league were to be replaced, for then (on the assumption that group intra-relations are qualitative intrinsic features) the ANCYL's intra-relations would change radically. But this is counterintuitive, since we understand large social groups like the ANCYL to be precisely those entities whose members are interchangeable without any necessary significant changes in the members' intra-relations. It seems perfectly conceivable, for example, for the league to replace its leadership with leaders who have the same goals, and relate in the same ways, as the previous leaders (perhaps, for example, the old leaders die in a plane crash, and are replaced by their aids). Therefore, because the intra-relations among group members are not qualitative intrinsic features of social groups, the regional intra-relational account implies that social groups do not supervene upon their members' intra-relations.

We might therefore weaken the regional intra-relational account to refer merely to intrinsic features, rather than *qualitative* intrinsic features. Intrinsic features of a region are merely those that depend solely on what happens inside of the region (but not on specific individuals in the region), and member intra-relations would satisfy this description if the region is defined appropriately. Thus:

> **Weak regional intra-relational supervenience: Social groups <G1…Gn> supervene upon the intra-relations among their members iff for all *x* and *y*, where *x* and *y* are regions, if (*x* and *y* possess the same intra-relations among their individuals), and (these intra-relations are intrinsic features of *x* and *y*), and (<G1…Gn> are intrinsic features of *x*), then *y* possesses social groups qualitatively identical to <G1…Gn>.**

This account faces another challenge: it does not appear possible to specify the size of the region in a way that is large enough to accommodate the external dependencies of social groups, while keeping the region small enough to ensure that irrelevant differences in individualistic phenomena are not intrinsic features of the region. As our test case, consider the ANCYL. We want an account of supervenience that captures both: (i) the external dependencies of the league (e.g. other political parties and global political events); as well as (ii) the fact that if the region in which the league resides remains constant but for a small change in how street-sweepers interact, this is inconsistent with a massive change in the nature of the ANCYL.

To illustrate the difficulty, let us begin by defining the region in which the ANCYL resides as broadly as possible – i.e. as a possible world. Then, all of the numerous events and phenomena

upon which the ANCYL depends will be included as intrinsic features of the region, and so, may be correctly included by the account as dependencies of the league. Hence, the regional account will accommodate the problem of external dependences. However, the problem now is that the regional account faces the same dependency problem as the global intra-relational account: the smallest difference in the relations of street-sweepers in Russia* in another possible world w* exactly like ours in every other respect is consistent with w* having a radically different ANCYL*. Thus, defining the region in terms of a possible world again fails to capture the dependence of social groups on their members' intra-relations.

On the other hand, if we define the region of supervenience very narrowly, then although we can demonstrate adequately the dependence of social groups on their members' intra-relations, we cannot account for the external dependencies of social groups. For example, suppose we define the region of the ANCYL as the immediate spatial region inhabited by the league's members. Then, it seems plausible that any changes in the relations among individuals in this region will be relevant to the nature of the ANCYL, and so, the account will not face the dependency problem. However, none of the external phenomena (e.g. Obama, or the US market) upon which the ANCYL depends exist within this region, and so, the narrow regional account cannot accommodate these external phenomena (such as global political and economic events) in its account.

Most damagingly, specifying the size of the region somewhere between the size of an entire possible world and the size of the space immediately occupied by the social group in question does not help us. If we define the size of the region as anything smaller than an entire possible world (or at least the earth), then the account will fail to accommodate all of the external dependencies upon which social groups depend, at least in the case of political groups. So, for example, if we define the region of supervenience when accounting for the ANCYL as Africa, then we incorrectly omit the US and its economy and politics as relevant dependencies of the league. We might then include the US as part of the region, but then we should also include Europe, whose economy and politics may also influence the ANCYL through their relationship with the US. Ultimately, we are forced to increase the size of the region until the region is defined in terms of the entire possible world (or at least the earth), and then we again face the problem that we cannot adequately demonstrate a dependence of social groups on their members' intra-relations. The problem with the regional account, then, is that social groups like

the ANCYL have such a wide range of external dependencies that they cannot be accommodated by a region smaller than the entire world.

Horgan could argue that there is a limit to how large we need to expand the size of the region to accommodate external dependencies, since changes very, very far away from the ANCYL would not, it seems, have a significant impact on the league. There are two problems with this, however. First, how do we draw this line in a way that is not entirely arbitrary? Second, as discussed earlier, the nature of social groups like large political groups is such that they are conceptually connected to other large political and economic groups and events, no matter where in the world they are. For all we know, World War III may start because of events in a small town in Bulgaria, and this war would most certainly impact the league. Thus, because the concept of a large political group is the concept of a group that depends partly upon global events of a particular magnitude, and because those global events could happen anywhere, there seems to be good reason for us to demand that the region in the regional account be defined very broadly. And defining the region so broadly, as we have seen, fails to capture the dependence of social groups on their members' intra-relations.

♦ *Conclusion*

Therefore, to conclude, every supervenience account suffers from either an Ob-1 or an Ob-2 type objection:

Table 2: Supervenience accounts

Supervenience Account	External dependencies (Ob-1)	Coextensional groups (Ob-1)	Adequate dependence (Ob-2)
Local member	✗	✗	✓
Local intra-relational	✗	✓	✓
Global member	✓	✗	✗
Global intra-relational	✓	✓	✗
Regional member	✓	✗	
Broad weak regional intra-relational	✓	✓	✗
Narrow weak regional intra-relational	✗	✓	✓

Thus, the best supervenience accounts (i.e. those that do not suffer from an Ob-1 type objection) do not adequately capture the dependence of the social on the individual. This is problematic because if the social were not dependent on the individual in a strong enough sense of "depends", then the social might be said to exist in its own right, independently of the individual. But if this is the case, then we are again threatened with the prospect that groups are the reified, strange social consciousness that Social Dualism posits, thereby undermining NRI-1 (Ontological Individualism).

Sawyer might respond by arguing that the supervenience accounts that suffer from an Ob-2 type objection do put forward *some* relationship between the social and the individual. To make this relationship more robust, and to avoid the charge of reifying the social, we could then supplement the supervenience account with NRI-3, or the token-token identity between social groups and their members (or the intra-relations among their members). Thus, I move now to evaluate NRI-3.

C.2.b.iii. Token-token identity

In this section I consider a number of ways that NRI-3 might be interpreted or enriched. I conclude by arguing that the best version of NRI-3 struggles to account for the existence of groups that, at some point in time, persist despite lacking members.

NRI-3 is the claim that any given token social phenomenon is identical with a token set of individualistic phenomena. Applied to social groups, I can see two obvious construals of this claim:

> **NRI-3$_{\text{member}}$: any given social group is identical with its members.**
>
> **NRI-3$_{\text{member relational}}$: any given social group is identical with the relations among its members.**

Moreover, each of these accounts can be disambiguated, by specifying whether they are *de re* or *de dicto* claims:

> **NRI-3$_{\text{member }\textit{de re}}$: any given social group is identical with specific members M1…Mn.**
>
> **NRI-3$_{\text{member }\textit{de dicto}}$: any given social group is identical with its members, whoever they are.**

NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ re \text{ relational } de\ re}$: any given social group is identical with the specific relations that exist among specific members M1…Mn.

NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ re \text{ relational } de\ dicto}$: any given social group is identical with whatever relations exist among specific members M1…Mn.

NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ dicto \text{ relational } de\ re}$: any given social group is identical with the specific relations that exist among its members, whoever those members are.

NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ dicto \text{ relational } de\ dicto}$: any given social group is identical with whatever relations exist among its members, whoever those members are.

NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ re}$ is a *de re* formulation of NRI-3$_{\text{member}}$, since it claims that a social group is identical with a collection of specific members (i.e. M1…Mn). By contrast, NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ dicto}$ is a *de dicto* formulation because it does not specify precisely who is in the collection of individuals with which the group is identical – merely that those individuals are members of the group. Moreover, NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ re \text{ relational } de\ re}$ is a *de re* claim about both the relations that exist among group members, and about which members participate in those relations. NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ re \text{ relational } de\ dicto}$ is less specific, since it involves a *de dicto* claim about the relations that occur among the members of the group, but also contains a *de re* claim about which members participate in those relations. NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ dicto \text{ relational } de\ re}$ is about as specific as NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ re \text{ relational } de\ dicto}$, except that it makes a *de re* claim about the relations in the group, but a *de dicto* claim about the group's membership. And finally, NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ dicto \text{ relational } de\ dicto}$ is the least specific (and most general) account, since both of its claims, about intra-group relations and which members comprise the group, are *de dicto*. In what follows I argue that only one of the above six accounts is *prima-facie* plausible.

♦ *Assessing the disambiguations of NRI-3*

Consider the following data:

Datum$_1$ – *coextensional groups*: some groups are coextensional; i.e. there may be two numerically distinct groups that have the same members (e.g. the Howick rugby team-choir example).

Datum$_2$ – *changing membership*: most groups undergo changes in membership over time (e.g. members may join or leave the ANCYL).

Datum$_3$ – *changing intra-relations*: groups are forever in flux, not just in their membership, but also in how a group's members relate with one another.

Datum 1 describes a common-sense intuition about the nature of group identity at a given point in time: it is possible for two groups to be coextensional at a given point in time. Thus, any account that wishes to satisfy *Synchronic* (i.e. be consistent with the Folk Sociological intuitions about the synchronic identity of groups) should be consistent with datum 1. Data 2 and 3, by contrast, are two intuitions we have regarding the diachronic identity of social groups: social groups may endure changing membership, and changing member intra-relations. As an example of Datum 3, consider that although the ANCYL today provides a voice for the masses of black youth in South Africa, it might change radically, such that in future the league no longer takes an interest in the majority of black youth, but instead adopts policies that support higher-class South African youth regardless of their race. In this case, while today's league members relate in such a way that they promote the interests of the majority of black youth, the future league's members relate in such a way that they promote the interests of upper-class South African youth.

Hence, any account that wishes to provide an adequate criterion for the diachronic individuation of social phenomena should be consistent with data 1 through 3. I argue now, however, that only one of the six disambiguated accounts is consistent with all three data.

Both the *de re* and *de dicto* versions of NRI-3_{member} fail to accommodate the **coextensionality of groups**. I will assume that identity is a *transitive* relation (see Williamson, 1998, sec. 1). That is, if *x* is identical with *y*, and *y* is identical with *z*, it follows that *x* is identical with *z*. However, it is not the case that the relation between every social group and its members is transitive. Recall the Howick rugby team, whose members are also the members of the Howick choir. In this case (assuming NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ re}$ or NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ dicto}$ is correct), the rugby team is identical with its members, and its members are identical with the male choir. Thus, on NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ re}$ or NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ dicto}$, the rugby team and the male choir are identical. But this is counterintuitive: the rugby team and the male choir are numerically and qualitatively distinct social groups. Thus, NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ re}$ and NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ dicto}$ are inconsistent with the coextensionality of groups.

We can accommodate the coextensionality of groups, though, by turning to the four NRI-$3_{\text{member relational}}$ accounts. Consider again the rugby-choir counterexample. Although the two groups' membership is identical, the members relate differently in the two groups: the rugby players' relations with one another *qua* members of the rugby team centre around playing rugby, while the choir members' relations *qua* choir members involve singing. NRI-$3_{\text{member relational}}$ accounts

therefore accommodate coextensional groups. There are further problems, however, for the NRI-$3_{\text{member relational}}$ accounts.

Notice that any account that makes a *de re* claim about the members with which a group is identical will struggle to account for the **changing membership** of social groups, since these accounts claim that a group is identical with a specific (i.e. unchanging) set of members.[110] On the popular view of identity, identity operates according to Leibniz's Law, which states that if *x=y* and *x* has property F, then *y* also has property F [see Kripke (1981) for a defence of this view of identity]. Now suppose that at a given point in time t1, a social group *g* is composed of individual members M1…M100. Moreover, suppose that the first moment that all of M1…M100 exist as members of the group is at t0, and that the moment when at least one of M1…M100 ceases to be a member of the group is at t2. If NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ re}$ is true, then *g* is identical with members M1…M100, and therefore, by Leibniz's Law, *g* comes into existence at t0, and ceases to exist at t2, since the set of members M1…M100 has the properties of coming into existence (as members) at t0, and ceasing to exist (as members) at t2. However, it does not follow that just because *g* has members M1…M100 at t0, *g* only came into existence at t0. For example, the ANCYL, although it has a particular set of members now, came into existence long before all of the current members joined the group – when the group started, it was much smaller, with different members. Moreover, it is not the case that just because *g* has members M1…M100 at t0 but not at t2, that *g* will cease to exist at t2; since if this were the case, then the ANCYL would cease to exist every time it lost a member. But this contradicts the fundamental Folk Sociological intuition that the ANCYL persists through time. Thus, NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ re}$, NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ re \text{ relational } de\ re}$, and NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ re \text{ relational } de\ dicto}$ all fail to accommodate the changing membership of groups.[111, 112]

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[110] See **section C.2.b.iii. Copp's account (p. 142)** for a discussion of mereological sums, which for my purposes here, are sets.

[111] Notice though that changing membership is not a problem for the accounts that provide a *de dicto* claim about group membership, since these accounts merely require that groups are identical with *some* members (or their interrelations), *whoever they are*.

[112] In response, Sawyer could deny that Leibniz's Law applies to contexts other than the present moment [much as Gibbard (1975, p. 201) denies the applicability of Leibniz's Law to non-actual contexts and dispositional properties]. Thus, while it may be true that if *x=y* and *x* is F *now*, then *y* is F now, it is false that if *x=y* and *x* is F at t2 (where t2 is a specific time other than now), then *y* is F at t2. This would be consistent with the idea that while a group *g* is identical with M1…M100 at t0, at t2 *g* may be identical with M1…M99 instead. There are two problems with this move, however. First, this denial of Leibniz's Law is ad *hoc*. And second, the denial of Leibniz's Law would render the relational accounts highly controversial.

Finally, consider the third datum. The two accounts that make *de re* claims about the member intra-relations with which a group is identical, are inconsistent with the intuition that groups endure **changing intra-relations** among their members. Consider the case of the ANCYL, which, at the start of writing this dissertation, had radical policies geared towards nationalisation of key industries in South Africa. Moreover, to enact those policies, the party was run in a particular fashion, with some or all of the members relating such that they worked towards bringing about that policy.[113] Let *x* abbreviate the ANCYL, and let *y* be the set of intra-group relations that existed in *x* at the start of writing this dissertation. Then, on NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ re \text{ relational } de\ re}$ and NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ dicto \text{ relational } de\ re}$, *x* is identical with *y*, and so, by Leibniz's Law, the moment that *y* ceases to exist (i.e. the set of intra-group relations in the ANCYL changes either by addition or subtraction of an element), *x* ceases to exist. But this conclusion is counterintuitive, since over time, we can imagine that although the league's overarching goal of supporting the masses remains the same, the group's policies may soften somewhat, leading to change in the way the party is run. Indeed, this is precisely what has happened. Since Julius Malema was removed as the league's leader due to his radical politics, the league's goals have softened. Thus, it seems that the intra-group relations of the very same party have changed – a contradiction on NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ re \text{ relational } de\ re}$ and NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ dicto \text{ relational } de\ re}$, assuming Leibniz's law is correct.

Thus, only one (the least specific) of the six accounts considered is consistent with all three data: NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ dicto \text{ relational } de\ dicto}$. Now, I wish to consider two enrichments to NRI-3 that Sawyer could have used (but didn't): Copp's account, and Baker's account of constitution. After I have presented these two alternative accounts, I will object to these two accounts together with NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ dicto \text{ relational } de\ dicto}$ using a further datum that, I will argue, none of the accounts can accommodate.

♦ *Copp's account*

Copp holds that a social group is identical with "mereological sums" of "person-stages" linked by a "unity relation" (see Sheehy, 2006a, pp. 21-22, 46-51). A *mereological sum* of entities <a…n> is that entity which includes each of a…n, and nothing else. For example, the

[113] This is a weakened statement of the narrow teleological account of intra-group relations discussed in **section B.2.c. Teleological account (p. 50)**. It is weaker than the narrow teleological account, because this formulation only requires that *some* of the group members work towards the group's goals, while the narrow account requires that *all* of the group members work towards the group's goals.

mereological sum "the people on the Wits Central Block concourse" includes every person walking on the concourse, but does not include anyone not on the concourse. A *person-stage* is a time-slice of a person – i.e. it is a person as at a specific point in time. Finally, the *unity relation* that binds the mereological sums of person stages will differ from group to group, and is determined by the most important features of the group under consideration.

Consider Copp's account of a nation. At every successive moment in South Africa's existence, it is composed of a mereological sum of individuals (i.e. South Africans). Let those moments be called <t1…tn>. Now, let the time-slice of South Africans that exist at tj be called SAj. Moreover, for Copp, the key features of a nation are its history and tradition. Then, on Copp's account, South Africa (*qua* social group, rather than *qua* institution) is identical with <SA1…SAn>, where SA1…SAn are unified, or bound, by historical and traditional continuity.

To conclude, if Sawyer were to adopt Copp's analysis, then NRI-3 would read:

> **NRI-3$_{Copp}$: any given token social group is identical with a token set of mereological sums of person-stages linked by the appropriate unity relation.**

Fortunately, Copp's account is consistent with all three data considered. First, Copp's account is consistent with coextensional groups. Consider again the rugby-choir counterexample. Although the rugby team and choir have identical members, they have distinct unity relations that unify their mereological sums. The unity relation of the rugby team is something like, "plays rugby for the town", while the choir's unity relation is "sings for the town's male choir". Hence, although the two groups possess the same members, they will not be identical on Copp's account. (Two groups are identical on Copp's account only if they possess identical unity relations). Second, Copp designed his account to accommodate changes in group membership while retaining Leibniz's Law. Because each mereological sum is a *time-slice* of the members in the group, while at t1 the mereological sum MS1 contains a time-slice of a certain set of members, a future mereological sum MS2 at t2 may contain the person-stages of a different set of members (provided MS1 and MS2 are linked by the appropriate unity relation). Since Copp is not claiming that MS1 and MS2 are identical (but are merely connected by the appropriate unity relation), Leibniz's Law does not imply that MS1 and MS2 must have the same properties. Hence, even assuming that Leibniz's Law is correct, there is no contradiction in asserting that MS1 and MS2 have distinct members, and therefore, that a group can change its membership over time. And last, Copp's account accommodates the fact that a group can survive changes in its members' intra-relations, since the account makes no reference to the members' intra-

relations in its specification of the elements in the mereological sums with which the group is identical.

Nonetheless, Copp's account faces two objections. First, on Copp's account, some mere aggregates would count as social groups, and so, Copp's account fails to satisfy *Aggregation*. Consider the case of the lunch-eaters and class-goers on the Central Block concourse. For each moment on a weekday afternoon there is a mereological sum of person-stages where those persons are individuals on the concourse. Moreover, the unity relation that links these mereological sums together is the property of "being on Wits Central Block concourse". Therefore, on Copp's account, the lunch-eaters and class-goers are a social group. Or, to take a different example, consider persons who wear black shoes: the mereological sums of their person-stages can be linked by the unity relation of "wearing black shoes", and so, on Copp's account, there is a black-shoes-wearers social group. Yet, it is counterintuitive that the lunch-eaters and class-goers, and the black-shoe-wearers, are social groups. The problem, then, is that since mere aggregates of individuals can possess a unity relation, mere aggregates will be incorrectly included as social groups on Copp's account.

Copp, therefore, will need to specify limitations, or necessary conditions, on what counts as a unity relation that unifies a social group. To do this, he would likely turn to the teleological solution to Q1: the unity relation involves working towards a common goal. I have argued, however, that the teleological account suffers from its own problems.

Second, Sheehy (2006a, p. 48) points out that Copp's account claims that social groups are a special sort of mereological sum (specifically, mereological sums of person-stages linked by a unity relation). But, a mereological sum is an *entity*, specifically, that entity which overlaps its parts and nothing else. But if Copp is claiming that social groups are entities, then we are once again reifying the social, thereby contradicting NRI-1 (Ontological Individualism), resulting in the objections faced by Social Dualists [discussed in **section C.2.a. Social Dualism (p. 119)**].

♦ *Constitution*

An alternative to identity is to use a different sort of relation, namely, *constitution*. According to L. R. Baker (2000) and Johnston (1992), constitution and identity are distinct relations. However, this is not to say that if *x* constitutes *y*, then *x* and *y* exist as separate entities. Rather, constitution is a "third category, intermediate between identity and separate existence" L. R. Baker (2000, p. 29), meant to capture the notion that it is possible that although *x* and *y* occupy

the same space at t1, at t2 *x* and *y* do not. Substituting constitution for identity in NRI-3 results in:

NRI-3$_{\text{constitution}}$: any given social group is constituted by its members.

Like Copp's account, the constitution view is consistent with Data 1 through 3 given above. First, constitution is not a transitive relation (L. R. Baker, 2000, pp. 45-46), thereby avoiding the rugby-choir counterexample. Second, the constitution account is consistent with changes in group membership, since on this account although at t0 the group *g* and it members M1…M100 occupy the same space, at t2 they may not (some of M1…M100 may have left the group, and others may have joined). Third, the constitution view does not require that members relate in a certain way, and so, it is consistent with changing member intra-relations. And finally, in addition to the account being consistent with the three data, Baker argues that if *x* constitutes *y*, then *y* derives, or inherits, a host of causal properties from *x* that *x* would not have had if *x* had not constituted *y* (L. R. Baker, 2000, p. 41). This seems to be a good way of grounding the agency of social groups in their members, since social groups derive their capacity for agency from their individual members, but their individual members would not have been capable of group agency if they were not members of (i.e. did not constitute) the group.

Despite these advantages, however, NRI-3$_{\text{constitution}}$ is problematic. What exactly *is* constitution if it is not identity? L. R. Baker (2000) provides what is probably the most popular account of constitution, and the most commonly used account of constitution in the social ontology literature (see A. Baker, 2008; Laitinen, 2013; Wilson, 2005). A slightly simplified version[114] of her account runs as follows:

Baker's account of constitution: Let F and G be the "primary kinds" of *x* and *y* respectively, where F and G are distinct; let "G-favourable" circumstances be those circumstances required for something to be G; and let D be G-favourable circumstances. Then, *x* constitutes *y* at time *t* just in case all of C1 through C5 are satisfied:

- **(C1) *x* and *y* occupy the same space at *t*;**
- **(C2) *x* is in D at *t*;**
- **(C3) It is necessary that for any *z*, if *z* is F and *z* is in D at *t*, then some *u* exists such that *u* is G at *t* and *u* occupies the same space as *z*;**

[114] Baker employs not only the notion of a primary property ("F"), but also the notion of the property of having F as one's primary property ("F*"). This distinction is irrelevant for the criticisms I present against the account, so I have omitted it.

(C4) It is possible that: *x* exists at *t*, while nothing occupying the same space as *x* at *t* is G; and
(C5) If *y* is immaterial, then *x* is also immaterial.

Note that for Baker, the "primary kind" of *x* is that kind of thing that *x* is essentially, or "fundamentally" (2000, p. 38). That is, it would be impossible for *x* to exist unless it were an instance of that primary kind.

How might Baker's schema be applied to social groups and their members? Taking the ANCYL as an example, *x* would stand for the league's members, *y* would substitute the league itself, D would be the political climate in South Africa that permits the existence of the league (such as the existence of its parent body, the ANC), and G would be the kind "a radical political youth party". But we run into a problem when we attempt to specify the primary kind F of the ANCYL members. Perhaps we would want to say something like: the primary kind of the league members is the kind "an ANCYL member". But being an ANCYL member is not a *primary* kind, since it is entirely possible for the individuals who make up the ANCYL *not* to belong to the league. That is, we can conceive of a possible world where this set of individuals exists, but they do not belong to the ANCYL (perhaps the league does not exist in that world).

So, the primary kind of the individuals who make up the youth-league would have to be something far more fundamental to their existence, like being "a human being". But, if this is the primary kind of the members of the league, then the schema does not work, since C3 is false. Substituting the ANCYL case into C3 results in C3`:

(C3`) It is necessary that for any collection of human beings, if the collective is in the current political climate in South Africa, then there is a radical political youth party that occupies the same space as the collective.

C3` is false, since it entails that every human being in South Africa at present is part of a radical youth party, which is patently not the case.

The problem, then, with utilising Baker's schema of constitution to characterise the relation between social groups and their members, is that group members cannot be awarded a primary

kind that satisfies the schema.[115] Perhaps, though, the proponent of the constitution view could make a move similar to that made by the identity theorist above – that is, claim that groups are constituted by their members' *intra-relations* (rather than by the members themselves):

> **NRI-3$_{\text{intra-relational constitution}}$: any given social group is constituted by the intra-relations among its members.**

This is a better account, since this refinement yields a plausible application of C3. Again, taking the ANCYL as an example, *x*, *y*, D and G are as before. The difference now is that F would abbreviate whatever kind of relation is essential among members of the ANCYL (i.e. whatever results from the correct answer to the individual-individual problem). Let us call this kind of relation, R. Thus, we reach:

> **(C3``) It is necessary that for any collection of individuals who relate in an R-manner, if the collective is in the current political climate in South Africa, then there is a radical political youth party that occupies the same space as the collective.**

This claim, it seems, is correct. Indeed, assuming that there is an adequate answer to Q1, it must be correct, since an adequate solution to the Q1 would specify R such that R is sufficient for the existence of a radical political party.

♦ *Absent members*

Let us review the various NRI-3 accounts discussed so far. I began by arguing that Sawyer's initial NRI-3 is six-ways ambiguous. However, I argued that only one of the six disambiguations of the account – NRI-3$_{\text{member }\textit{de dicto}\text{ relational }\textit{de dicto}}$ – accommodates all three data discussed (the coextensionality, changing membership, and changing member intra-relations of groups). I then proceeded to discuss Copp's account, which I argued fails to satisfy *Aggregation*. Finally, I explored how Baker's notion of constitution might be applied to the social-individual problem. I argued that if we construct the constitution account in terms of member intra-relations, we arrive at an account that solves all of the problems faced by the previous accounts. Thus, there are two serious contenders for being adequate reformulations of NRI-3: NRI-3$_{\text{member }\textit{de dicto}\text{ relational }\textit{de dicto}}$ and NRI-3$_{\text{intra-relational constitution}}$. Unfortunately, however,

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[115] Of course one might develop a different account of constitution, but this is beyond the scope of the dissertation. It suffices to say that much more work has to be done by the Non-Reductive Individualist before we should adopt NRI-3$_{\text{constitution}}$.

both of these accounts face a further objection, which gives some evidence for concluding that the accounts are counter-intuitive. This further objection rests upon a fourth datum:

Datum$_4$ – *absent members*: some groups endure periods without members.

To support the datum, consider the following case. Suppose John Smith runs a chess club in 2005, called the "Knights of War". The Knights of War possesses a number of members who meet weekly. However, due to the increase in popularity of other board games, like Go and Backgammon, and the popularity of other chess clubs in the area, the club slowly loses its members until only John remains. Unfortunately, John eventually dies as well. A few months after his death, John's son comes across the documents pertaining to the Knights of War, which are still legally valid, and decides, in his father's honour, to grow the club. Slowly, the Knights of War grows in size, and within a few years, it returns to its former glory. Now, what has happened here?

My intuition is that the very same club, the Knights of War, at t1 (in 2005) possesses members, at t2 (upon John's death) lacks any members at all, and at t3 (today) possesses members yet again. Thus, from t1 to t3 the club never ceases to exist, although at t2 it lacks any members and hence lacks any member intra-relations. But this is inconsistent with NRI-3$_{\text{member } de\ dicto \text{ relational } de\ dicto}$ and NRI-3$_{\text{interrelational constitution}}$. On these two accounts, the Knights of War must, at *every* given point in time in its existence, be (respectively) identical with or constituted by some set of member intra-relations. Yet, at t2, the Knights of War both exists, and is not identical with, nor constituted by, any set of members or member intra-relations.

Sawyer might respond to the counterexample by denying the fourth datum – i.e. by denying my intuition that the Knights of War persists from t1 through to t3 inclusively. I take it that there are three possible interpretations of what might be happening in the counterexample, namely, that the Knights of War:

Int-1) exists at t1, at t2, and at t3;
Int-2) exists at t1, ceases to exist at t2, and then returns to existence at t3; or
Int-3) exists at t1, ceases to exist at t2, and a numerically distinct chess club (i.e. not the Knights of War) comes into existence at t3.

The objection I presented asserts Int-1, but Sawyer may hold either Int-2 or Int-3 instead. I consider Int-2 and Int-3 in turn.

Sawyer might support Int-2 by citing an apparently parallel case. Suppose Smith is in a car accident, and his heart stops for a minute before paramedics are able to revive him. Thankfully, Smith goes on to make a full recovery. Then, we would describe the situation by saying that Smith exists before the accident (t1), ceases to exist while his heart stops (t2), and exists again after he is resuscitated (t3). It seems the Knights of War case is much the same as Smith's case, thereby supporting Int-2.

I would deny, however, that Smith ceases to exist at t2. It is interesting that doctors only call the "time of death" of a patient *after* they have failed to resuscitate the patient. The reason behind this is that we possess the intuition that a person can only die once. It is true that Smith's body is "technically" dead at t2, since his heart has stopped. However, to take this "technical" death to imply non-existence appears hasty in light of the fact that Smith may still be resuscitated. Only once all attempts at resuscitation have failed would we want to declare Smith's time of death, and so, declare the non-existence of Smith.

There is an interesting refinement of the heart-stopping case, however, which may render an Int-2 type interpretation. Consider a person who is cryogenically frozen at death, and then, decades later, is revived. Here we may be more inclined to say that the person exists before his death (at t1), does not exist while frozen (at t2), and returns to existence when revived (at t3).

Why should we think, however, that the cryogenics case is any different from "temporary" death? The timeframe is longer, but the principle is the same: in both cases, we *resuscitate* the same person whose heart stopped previously. If the Int-2 proponent insists on his intuition in this case, however, I am prepared to concede that an Int-2 type interpretation of the cryogenics case may be the correct interpretation, yet I deny that the cryogenics case is a good analogy for the Knights of War case. The difference between Smith's case and the cryogenics case is the duration of discontinuity involved: Smith's heart and brain stop for a minute, while the cryogenic patient's heart and brain activity cease for decades. This significant difference in duration seems to result in a categorical distinction between the two cases – Smith exists at t2, while the cryogenic patient does not exist at t2. The question, then is, does the Knights of War case parallel Smith's case, or the cryogenics case? If the former, then Int-2 is not supported; if the latter, then Int-2 is supported. The answer to this question, however, is easy: the Knight's of War case parallels Smith's case. The reason for this is that we can construct the case in such a way that the club has only a relatively short time without members (for example, a week,

rather than a few months). Thus, neither Smith's case nor the cryogenics case provides convincing support for the Int-2 interpretation of the Knights of War case.

Moreover, Int-2 itself (rather than its supporting argument) faces an objection. Why should we think that the very same club exists at t1 and t3, if there is no *continuity* between the club at t1 and t3? Identifying *x* as existing at both t1 and t3, it seems, requires some criterion that continues in some form or other between t1 and t3 – and continuity is entirely lacking in the Int-2 interpretation. In the cases of John and the cryogenics patient we can use bodily continuity to link the persons at t1 and t3. However, we cannot use the members or their intra-relations as criteria of continuity between t1 and t3. It seems magical that the *same* (i.e. numerically identical) group that existed at t1 pops back into existence at t3, despite it failing to exist at t2. Why does the *Knights of War* pop back into existence at t3, and not some other, numerically distinct, chess club come into existence at t3? The Int-2 proponent might provide two answers.

First, the Int-2 proponent might point out that the *name* of the club at t1 and t3 is the same – i.e. the "Knights of War" – and this allows the same group to come into existence at t3. But the name of a social group is not a good diachronic identity criterion for the group, since, firstly, a group may endure a change in its name; and secondly, distinct groups may have the same name.

Second, the Int-2 proponent could argue, following Searle, that the society in which the Knights of War exists collectively agrees that the Knights of War exist at t1, ceases to exist at t2, and then exists again at t3. That is, Sawyer could appeal to a Searlian solution to Q1 to support Int-2. However, in addition to the objections already presented against Searle's account, there is a problem with this solution. Why should we think that society *would* hold Int-2? Making this claim begs the question against the Int-1 and Int-3 proponents, since it presupposes that the Folk Sociological intuition in this case is Int-2, and not Int-1 or Int-3. But this is precisely the question at issue here.

I move, therefore, to consider Int-3. Notice that this interpretation does not have the continuity problem faced by Int-2, for it does not require that the Knights of War resumes its existence at t3, and so, does not need to explain how the Knights of War comes back into existence at t3. Nevertheless, Int-3 has a different problem, namely, that it conflicts with John's son's feelings and actions, as well as legal precedent. John's son chooses to grow the club precisely because it was *his father's* club, the Knights of War. We can imagine that as the club grows, John's son feels proud of *continuing* his father's legacy (rather than starting a new one). When John tells

the history of the club, he tells of the activity of the club under his father's leadership. And when he does so, nobody corrects him – nobody tells him that this is not the same club his father started. Moreover, suppose that John initially registered the club as a closed corporation. Today's growing club has exactly the same CC number as the original, and indeed, is considered the same club by law (see Grant Thornton, 2011, p. 12). Thus, while Int-2 suffers from the problem of identifying the club over time despite its lacking continuity, Int-3 seems to fly in the face of various common-sense and legal intuitions we have about the case.

To defend Int-3, Sawyer might concede that although it is true that the chess club that exists at t1 and t3 is considered *legally* to be numerically identical, the club at t1 and the club at t3 are numerically distinct if considered as *social groups*. The point made here is that the identity criteria for a legal entity and a social group are different. This response, however, raises a dilemma. At t1 when the club is not an exceptional case because it has members, is the legal entity "Knights of War" numerically distinct from the social group "Knights of War"?

If Sawyer asserts that the legal and social clubs are numerically *identical* at t1, then he must explain how they are no longer numerically identical at t2 (and t3) – i.e. how does the legal entity survive despite the death of the social group? Such an explanation would be difficult; but furthermore, any such explanation will violate Leibniz's Law, and so, be controversial.

On the other horn of the dilemma, if Sawyer claims that the social club and the legal club are numerically *distinct*, then he faces the following problem. It does not seem that the legal Knights of War is numerically distinct from the social Knights of War, since the rules for joining, maintaining membership and leaving the Knights of War are the same for both clubs – e.g. joining involves signing certain disclaimers, maintaining membership involves paying membership fees, and leaving the club involves the failure to pay membership fees or sending a written letter with the intent to terminate membership. Given these coincidences, why should we think that the two clubs (legal and social) are numerically distinct?

Sawyer might answer this question by arguing that at t1 the legal Knights of War is *constituted* by the social Knights of War, but this is not the case at t2 and t3. However, recall the third condition in Baker's account of what it means for *x* to constitute *y*:

> **(C3) It is necessary that for any *z*, if *z* is F and *z* is in D at *t*, then some *u* exists such that *u* is G at t and *u* occupies the same space as *z*;**

Applying this condition to the Knights of War case results in:

(C3```) It is necessary that for any social chess club, if it has multiple members, then there is a legal entity that occupies the same space as the social chess club.

Unfortunately for Sawyer, C3``` is false, since it is not the case that every chess club with multiple members is a legal entity: it seems conceivable that at least some chess clubs with members may not be registered as closed corporations or companies.

A different way for Sawyer to handle the Knights of War case is to accept my intuition (Int-1), but refine the two NRI-3 accounts. Notice that although a group can survive having no members at some point in its existence, a group must have members *at some time or another*. So, Sawyer might, instead of biting the bullet, refine the two strongest candidate reformulations of NRI-3 as follows:

NRI-3`member *de dicto* relational *de dicto*: any given social group is identical, *at some point in time*, with whatever relations exist among its members, whoever those members are.

NRI-3`intra-relational constitution: any given social group is constituted by the intra-relations among its members *at some point in time*.

These refinements, however, undermine NRI-2 (the claim that social phenomena supervene upon individual phenomena). Any adequate account of what it means for H to supervene upon L must capture the intuition that if H supervenes upon L, L *determines* H (Kim, 1984, p. 153). The problem with NRI-3`member *de dicto* relational *de dicto* and NRI-3`interrelational constitution is that on these accounts the individual does not determine the social at all times: sometimes, other factors determine the social. At t2, it is not the members of the Knights of War that determine its existence as a social group, but rather, other non-member-related factors (perhaps legal factors). And if the individual does not determine the social, then the logical gap between the group and its members widens, making it hard to understand just how it is possible for the agency, responsibility, value and persistence of groups (especially value in the case of the Knights of War at t2) to be grounded in the agency, responsibility, value and persistence of its members.

♦ *Conclusion*

So, where does this leave the Non-Reductive Individualist? I have argued that NRI-3member *de dicto* relational *de dicto* and NRI-3intra-relational constitution cannot accommodate the fourth datum (that social groups have the capacity to survive periods in which they lack any members). However, although I defended this datum, and argued that alternative interpretations of cases like the

Knights of War are problematic, I concede that the datum remains somewhat controversial. Therefore, I do not think that I have provided a knock-down objection to the two best versions of NRI-3. Nevertheless, I believe that I have shown that these reformulations of NRI-3 should be regarded as contentious.

Table 3 summarises the accounts considered thus far, and the data with which they are consistent:

Table 3: Variations of NRI-3

Account	Coextensional groups	Changing member-	Changing relations	Absent members	Other objections
NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ re}$	✗	✗	✓	✗	
NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ dicto}$	✗	✓	✓	✗	
NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ re \text{ relational } de\ re}$	✓	✗	✗	✗	
NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ re \text{ relational } de\ dicto}$	✓	✗	✓	✗	
NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ dicto \text{ relational } de\ re}$	✓	✓	✗	✗	
NRI-$3_{\text{member } de\ dicto \text{ relational } de\ dicto}$	✓	✓	✓	✗	
NRI-3_{Copp}	✓	✓	✓	✗	Reifies groups; counts mere aggregates as groups
NRI-$3_{\text{consituition}}$	✓	✓	✓	✗	Cannot apply Baker's schema (C3)
NRI-$3_{\text{intra-relational constitution}}$	✓	✓	✓	✗	

So, none of the formulations of NRI-3 considered is clearly adequate, since none of the accounts is consistent with all of the four data, and all of the accounts are inconsistent with the existence of groups with absent members. I conclude therefore that NRI-3 is contentious. Moreover, I argued earlier that no supervenience account adequately captures the dependence of the social on the individual, and so, NRI-2 is weak. Non-Reductive Individualism, then, offers a contentious account of the relation between the social and the individual.

C.3. REDUCTION

Recall that non-reductive accounts claim that:

R1) The social exists;
R2) The social and the individual are logically or conceptually independent; and
R3) Social terms can refer successfully to entities in the world.

The problem, we have seen, is that non-reductive accounts struggle to provide an account of the independence between social and individual phenomena (i.e. R2) that neither reifies the social (as on Social Dualism), nor provides a link between the social and the individual that excludes certain types of legitimate social phenomena (i.e. the problem of absent members as faced by Non-Reductive Individualism). Thus, since we failed to find a convincing non-reductive account of the social, I move now to consider our first category of reductive accounts.

Reductive accounts deny R2 (the independence of the social). Instead, they hold that the social domain can be "absorbed" into the individual domain (Kim, 1998b, sec. 1). However, what I call "reduction" involves the *conservation* of the social, rather than its elimination, and so, reductive accounts affirm R1 and R3.

The advantage of a reductive account is that if it is successful, it shows that the social domain is "grounded" in the individual domain, and so, the social sciences are no less legitimate than the individualistic sciences. Moreover, if the social can be reduced to the physical, then social entities are nothing but sets of individual entities, thereby avoiding the possibility of reifying the social.

I will consider three reductive accounts in order of their plausibility, from least to most plausible: Logical Individualism, Type Individualism and Social Functionalism.

C.3.a. Logical Individualism

Logical Individualists, such as Neurath (1944) and Quinton (1975-76), hold that every social concept or social term is translatable without loss of meaning into, and hence can be fully

defined in terms of, individualistic concepts or individualistic terms.[116] Thus, Logical Individualism (or Analytic Individualism) claims that the meaning of every concept of a social phenomenon can be specified by reference to purely individualistic concepts or terms. Hence, to determine whether Logical Individualism is correct, we need not conduct empirical research into social phenomena; rather, we should carefully analyse our social concepts. On this account the reduction of the social to the individual is analytic[117], *a priori*[118] and necessary[119].

Neurath (1944) supports this account of the social in much the same way that the Philosophical Behaviourists support their account of mind.[120] Philosophical Behaviourists argue that (i) we verify mental statements (i.e. statements about mental states) by observing behaviour. For example, we verify the statement that "John is in pain" by observing pain-behaviour in John (he winces, screams in a certain way, exclaims "ouch!", etc.). Moreover, (ii) the meaning of a proposition is constituted by its verification conditions – that is, Verificationism (also known as Logical Positivism) is true. The Philosophical Behaviourist concludes from (i) and (ii) that every mental term or concept is identical with a set of behavioural terms or concepts. Thus, the concept of pain just is the concept of someone who winces, screams or exclaims "ouch!". Similarly, Neurath argues that (i) we verify social statements by observing individualistic phenomena (1944, p. 3). Moreover, (ii) Verificationism is true (1944, p. 4).[121] And therefore, every social concept or term can be translated into individualistic concepts or terms.

There are two problems with Logical Individualism. First, subsequent to Neurath's work, Verificationism has received significant criticism as a theory of meaning, and is largely regarded today as dubious.[122] Thus, the support for Logical Individualism is highly

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[116] Logical Individualism parallels the Philosophical Behaviourist account of mind. Philosophical Behaviourism, also known as Logical Behaviourism or Analytic Behaviourism, is the thesis that mental concepts can be translated without remainder into behavioural concepts.

[117] P is an analytic truth iff P is true in virtue of the meaning of the concepts involved, and not in virtue of facts about the world.

[118] P is an *a priori* truth iff P can be known independently of experience.

[119] P is a necessary truth iff P is true in every possible world.

[120] See Neurath (1944, pp. 16-17) for a discussion of the parallels between Logical Individualism and Philosophical Behaviourism.

[121] Neurath does not use the term Verificationism, but he writes in the spirit of Verificationism when he writes: "Sometimes sentences in which such [social] expressions appear can hardly be connected with observation-statements and have to be dropped as parts of metaphysical speculations…." (1944, p. 4) Like the Verificationists that eschew talk of mental states that cannot be verified through observable behaviour, Neurath eschews talk of social concepts that cannot be verified by observing the actions or configurations of individuals.

[122] See Friedman (1998) for a discussion of the history of Verificationism.

controversial. Second, Logical Individualism itself (rather than its support) faces a serious objection: it cannot account for the holism of the social.

Mandelbaum (1955 [1973]), Ryan (1970, p. 156), and Kincaid (1986, p. 499) argue that social concepts are *holistic*; that is, any given social concept can only be understood as part of a web of other, interrelated social concepts.[123] Mandelbaum asks us to imagine that we take a Martian, who knows nothing of human society, to the bank. The Martian might wonder what exactly is happening upon seeing a human standing behind a glass partition exchanging slips of paper with another human on the other side of the partition. We explain that the man behind the partition is called a "teller", who works for a "bank", and that the slips of paper he passes to the "customer" are a form of "money". We continue by explaining that money is a medium of exchange, used by "citizens" of "South Africa", which is a "country", etc. Mandelbaum's point is that to understand the meaning of one social concept, we must understand the meanings of other social concepts, which in turn can only be understood with reference to other social concepts. Thus, every social concept is embedded in the total social conceptual framework:

> …the behaviour of a 'defendant' vis-a-vis 'judge' is conceptually underpinned; to play one such role, it is necessary that others play logically related roles. In this way explaining what one person is doing [i.e. which social role he is fulfilling, or which social action he is performing] implies a host of conceptually related activities on the part of other people and in explaining even one person's behaviour, we necessarily elaborate a shared conceptual scheme. (Ryan, 1970, p. 156)

> Predicates such as teacher, employee, inmate, soldier, citizen, etc.… involve social terminology as well. To have true statements employing these role predicates, we must also have true statements about social entities, for there are presumably no inmates without prisons, a judicial system, laws and norms, and no teachers without schools etc. Applying any of these role predicates to someone seems to presuppose or entail a host of further facts about the social institutions that give them meaning. (Kincaid, 1986, p. 499)

Now if the social is holistic, then social concepts cannot be analysed without remainder into individualist terms because these analyses will in turn contain social terms, and the analyses of those analyses too will contain social terms, ad infinitum. Hence, Logical Individualism is false.

Notice that Linguistic Individualism, as I have defined it, is atomistic: *each and every* social concept can receive a purely individualistic definition. Social atomism is therefore difficult to hold in light of the objection from holism: how could we possibly define the concept of a teller

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[123] The doctrine of social holism, as I discuss it in the thesis, should not be confused with a different doctrine that often goes by the same name, and is sometimes called "Methodological Holism". Methodological Holism is the thesis that Methodological Individualism is false. I discuss Methodological Individualism in **sections A.2.a.i. Philosophy of social science (p. 6)** and **D.2.b.ii. Kemeny-reduction (p. 196)**.

without reference to the concept of a bank? Now, let a "basic" social concept be a social concept that can receive a purely individualistic definition. Then, one way that Logical Individualists may respond is by dividing the web of social concepts into parts, with each part containing a basic social concept which underlies all the other social concepts in that part of the web. We might call each of these parts of the web, "molecules". Then, molecular accounts would reduce molecules (or clusters) of social concepts to clusters of individualistic concepts, and avoid an infinite regress by grounding the molecule in a basic social concept, and in turn ground that basic social concept in a set of individualistic concepts. This molecular reduction is more plausible than an atomistic reduction, since the molecular account requires merely that each molecule contains a basic social concept, and not that every social concept is basic.

For example, while the holist's definition of a teller defines the teller's role in relation to South Africa's financial system, political system, economic system, and then, global systems of finance, politics, etc., a molecular understanding of the bank teller might define the teller's role exclusively in terms of financial concepts (for example), and would stop the definition there rather than progress to political and economic terms. Then, financial concepts would be given a purely individualistic definition (perhaps this should be the role of economics?). Or, to take a different example, the teleological account discussed as a purported solution to the individual-individual problem is consistent with the molecularist view. The teleological account defines a social group in terms of the following limited cluster of concepts: "shared goals" and "collective action" and "working together towards a goal". Then, (at least) one of these concepts shall, on a molecularist account, be defined in purely individualistic terms.

But let us investigate the molecularist's strategy in more detail. Let SC be a cluster of social concepts to be reduced, and let IC be the cluster of individualistic concepts to which the molecularist wishes to reduce SC. Then, I take it that if SC can be reduced to IC, then for every concept *x* in SC, either *x* can be defined exclusively in terms of concepts in IC (without reference to any social concepts in SC or outside of SC), or *x* can be defined in terms of another concept *y* in SC, which can be defined in terms of another concept… *z* in SC, where *z* can be defined exclusively in terms of concepts in IC. Thus, if SC can be reduced to IC, then there must be at least one (basic) concept in SC that can be defined in purely individualistic terms. But here is where the problem lies: it is not clear that there are *any* social concepts that can receive an adequate, purely individualistic definition. Consider the **Standard** versions of the teleological account: none of the concepts in the cluster is amenable to a purely individualistic

definition. The "group" is defined in terms of the rest of the concepts in the cluster: "collective action", "shared goals", and "working together towards a goal". But "collective action", "shared goals" and "working together towards a goal" all utilise the concept of the "we-mode" in their respective definitions. And the "we-mode" references the notion of a "we", or "group". Thus, the **Standard** teleological accounts do not satisfy the conditions for a cluster reduction, since defining social concepts involves a circularity that the molecularist cannot accommodate. Indeed, I am sceptical that any account would satisfy the molecularist's conditions.

Perhaps the Logical Individualist would point out that although the stronger **Standard** versions of the teleological account would fail to satisfy the molecularist's conditions for reduction, the **Weak** versions of the teleological account would. The **Weak** versions holds that one can understand the notions of "collective action", "shared goals", and "working together towards a goal" in terms of the "I-mode". And the I-mode, according to Tuomela, need not reference the notion of a group. Thus, the circularity (problematic for the molecularist) involved in defining social terms present in the *Standard* teleological accounts is absent in the *Weak* accounts.

The problem now, however, is that we might doubt whether weak, or I-mode, definitions of social concepts are adequate. Recall that the **Weak-Broad** version of the teleological account suffers from the problem of illegitimate agglomeration [see **section B.2.c.iv. Broad *telos* (p. 59)**]. And I argued that social groups that are understood in terms of I-mode, or personal, actions of group members, may be indistinguishable from mere aggregates [see **section B.2.e. Objecting to Objectivism from indistinguishability (p. 65)**]. This is a problem because teleologists (and I-mode theorists of social groups generally) are Objectivists, and Objectivists hold that the features sufficient to unify groups are distinguishable from an outsider's perspective.

Although the molecular solution is dubious, there are two other ways that the reductivist might deal with the objection from holism, both of which accept the holistic nature of the social. For one, the reductivist could attempt an empirical, non-conceptual method of reduction. I consider this type of reduction in the next section, on Type Individualism. And second, the Logical Individualist might notice that social concepts can be defined, rather than individualistically, in terms of the functional role they play within Folk Sociology, or the web of social concepts. I discuss this solution in **section C.3.c. Social Functionalism (p. 170)**.

C.3.b. Type Individualism

C.3.b.i. The account

Like Logical Individualists, Type Individualists, such as Mellor (1982) and Van Hees (1997), hold that types of social phenomena can be reduced to types of individualistic phenomena. That is, types of social groups can be reduced to types of members or types of intra-relations among members. However, unlike Logical Individualists, Type Individualists claim that the identity between social phenomena and individualistic phenomena is synthetic and *a posteriori*. On this account, then, the reduction of the social to the individual is not conceptual, but rather, empirical. Once social scientists have conducted research that yields perfect correlations between types of social phenomena and types of individualistic phenomena, we can reduce the former to the latter, since we have evidence that terms referring to the former and terms referring to the latter are co-extensional (i.e. refer to the same objects).

Notice that the problem of holism arises for Logical Individualism because its reductive strategy uses the *intension*, or meaning, of social concepts, but the intension of social concepts cannot be specified without reference to other social concepts. By contrast, the extension of social terms need not refer to other social phenomena – only to individualistic phenomena (or so the Type Individualist claims). Thus, by utilising the extension, rather than the intension, of social terms in its reductive strategy, Type Individualism avoids the problem of holism.

If social research yields the conclusion that every type of social phenomenon can be bi-directionally correlated with a type of individualistic phenomena, then we will have arrived at what Nagel (1961) calls "bridge principles" between the social theories and individualistic theories. These bridge principles allow us to deduce social laws or social generalisations from individualistic laws or individualistic generalisations. So, take, for example, the following Durkheimian generalisation: if there is a breakdown in the regulative powers of society, then "anomic" suicides occur (see Durkheim, 1951 [1997]). To reduce this social generalisation to an individualistic generalisation, we would need two bridge principles that look something like: (i) "*x* is a breakdown in the regulative powers of society iff *x* is *y*", and (ii) "*x* is anomic suicide iff *x* is *z*". *y* and *z* would be types of individualistic phenomena that social scientists bi-conditionally correlate with breakdowns in regulative powers of society and anomic suicide (respectively). Then, we can reduce Durkheim's generalisation to the individualistic generalisation: "$y \rightarrow z$".

Now on Nagel's model of reduction, once we can reduce all social generalisations to individualistic generalisations using appropriate bridge principles, we will be able to reduce Folk Sociology to purely individualistic theories. Some philosophers label the assertion that such a reduction is possible, "Methodological Individualism" [see Dore (1961 [1973], p. 77)[124], Kincaid (1986, p. 493)[125] and Mellor (1982, p. 537)[126, 127]]. This version of Methodological Individualism implies that Type Individualism is true, for if we can reduce the social sciences (i.e. social generalisations) to individualistic sciences (i.e. individualistic generalisations), then types of social phenomena can be reduced to types of individualistic phenomena.

There is massive debate about the truth of Methodological Individualism [see **section A.2.a. Types of individualism (p. 3)** and **section D.2.b.ii. Token Explanatory Methodological Individualism (KO-2) (p. 198)** for this discussion]. However, rather than assessing Methodological Individualism as a premise in a supporting argument for Type Individualism, I will focus here on the plausibility of Type Individualism itself, as a solution to the social-individual problem. I will argue that Type Individualism faces two serious objections: multiple realisation and the failure of token identity. If the objections are successful, then Type Individualism is unsatisfactory. I consider these two objections in turn.

First, like proponents of the type identity account of mind, or Central State Materialism (CSM)[128], Type Individualists face the objection from multiple realisation (see, e.g., Kincaid, 1986, pp. 496-503; 1996; Little, 1991; Sawyer, 2001, pp. 564-565; 2002, pp. 544-553; 2004, pp. 267-269). Fodor (1974, pp. 98-101) formulates the problem as follows. If one domain can be reduced to another using Nagel's model of reduction, the bridge principles involved between the two domains must be *laws* expressing identity statements, and laws always involve *natural kinds*. Following Fodor, N is a natural kind of a domain D iff N is either the antecedent or consequent of a law in D. Thus, if we are to reduce the social to the individual, there must be

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[124] "The methodological individualist doctrine… holds that all sociological laws are bound to be such as can ultimately be reduced to laws of individual behaviour" (Dore, 1961 [1973], p. 77).
[125] Kincaid writes that Methodological Individualism asserts that "social theories are reducible to individualistic theories" (Kincaid, 1986, p. 493).
[126] "Does sociology reduce in principle to individual psychology? I follow custom in calling the claim that it does 'individualism'" (Mellor, 1982, p. 537).
[127] See **section A.2.a. Types of individualism (p. 3)** for more information on the different theses that fall under the label of "Methodological Individualism", as well as **section D.2.b.ii. Token Explanatory Methodological Individualism (KO-2) (p. 198)** for a discussion of the explanatory version of Methodological Individualism.
[128] The Type Identity account of mind, or Central State Materialism, holds that types of mental states are identical with types of brain states.

true statements of the form "S = I", where S abbreviates a social kind, and I abbreviates an individualistic kind. The difficulty, however, is that many social kinds are not amenable to such lawful identity statements, since the same type of social phenomenon can be realised variably, or instantiated by various types of individualistic phenomena. Sawyer, the most important proponent of the multiple realisation objection against Type Individualism, cites churches and competitive team sports as examples of natural kinds that are multiply realised:

> The collective entity that has the social property "being a church" also has a collection of individual properties associated with each of its component members. For example, each individual I_n may hold properties "believing in X_n" or "intending Y_n," where the sum total of such beliefs and intentions are (in some sense) constitutive of the social property "being a church." Yet the property of "being a church" can be realized by a wide range of individual beliefs and dispositions. (2001, p. 557)

> A reduction of the group-level natural kind term "competitive team sport" to natural kind terms of individuals would involve the disjunction of all past and potential players' individual properties, in every past and potential competitive team sport, in all of the world's cultures. (2002, p. 549)

Sawyer argues that distinct token churches and token competitive team sports are each realised by distinct individuals with distinct properties. Thus, because the social kinds "church" and "competitive team sport" are realised by a wide variety of individualistic phenomena, it seems that the disjunction of all of these individualistic entities (or properties) will be "wild", or heterogeneous. A disjunction of individualistic entities <I1 v I2 v I3…v In> is wild iff it is not the case that all of <I1…In> belong to the same individualistic kind. Sawyer concludes, therefore, that it is impossible to identify the social kinds "church" and "competitive team sport" with specific individualistic kinds.

Sawyer's adaptation of Fodor's multiple realisation objection, so that it applies to Type Individualism, might therefore be summarised as follows:

MR-1s: If Type Individualism is true, then every social kind is identical with an individualistic kind.
MR-2s: Some social kinds are realised by individualistic entities belonging to distinct individualistic kinds.

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Conc: Type Individualism is false.

Similarly, the parallel objection against CSM runs:

MR-1m: If CSM is true, then every mental kind is identical with a bodily kind.
MR-2m: Some mental kinds are realised by bodily structures belonging to distinct bodily kinds.

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Conc: CSM is false.

Since the argument is deductively valid, the Type Individualist or Central State Materialist must object to at least one of the premises if they wish to resist the conclusion. Hence, there are two categories of responses, each objecting to one of the premises. Since responses to the problem of multiple realisation have for the most part been explored by Central State Materialists, I provide a brief survey of the various responses within these two categories offered by CSM, and consider whether any of these might be appropriated successfully by the Type Individualist. I begin with objections against MR-1s and MR-1m.

C.3.b.ii. Objections to MR-1(s/m)

♦ *Local reduction*

The examples of multiple realisation provided against CSM usually involve the claim that the same mental state might be realised by very different physical structures in different species. For example, while pain is realised in human beings by C-fibre stimulation (for example), the very same feeling of pain might be realised by inflated cavities in the case of Martians. Thus, following Lewis (1980), Kim (1992) points out that we might reduce mental states *locally*, or per species, rather than globally, or across all species. That is, we should refine CSM such that types of mental states are identical with types of physical states *relative to a species*; while human pain is reduced to C-fibre stimulation, Martian pain is reduced to inflated cavities. Hence, the local reduction response involves a refinement of CSM, as follows. Let M be a mental kind and let <B1…B*n*> be distinct bodily kinds. Then, the refined CSM states: for each species, M is identical with exactly one element in <B1…B*n*>.

If we apply this approach directly to Type Individualism, we arrive at the following. Let S be a social kind and let <I1…I*n*> be distinct individualistic kinds. Then, the refined Type Individualism reads: for each species, S is identical with exactly one element in <I1…I*n*>. This, of course, does not avoid the objection from multiple realisation as faced by the Type Individualist, since the examples of multiple realisation discussed by Sawyer (churches and competitive team sports) all involve multiple realisation *within* the human species. Thus, if Sawyer wishes to adopt Kim's approach, he would need to define the domain relative to which identities between social and individualistic kinds obtain, in terms of something smaller than a species. It would be difficult, however, to know exactly what the domains are to which we should limit our reduction. For example, do we perform our reduction of competitive team sports relative to a country? Yet delineating domains by country does not make sense in our

reduction of churches, since the same country could have very different sorts of individuals in their various churches. In the mental case we have a simple answer concerning how to delineate our reductive domains: via a species. There is no such answer readily available in the social case.

♦ *Even-lower-level reduction*

Another way that Central State Materialists have objected to MR-1m involves arguing that CSM identifies types of mental states with types of physical states at the wrong *level*. On the traditional account, types of mental states are identical with types of bodily states, such as brain states. However, while there may be multiple realisation of types of mental states by types of bodily states, there may not be multiple realisation of types of mental states by types of atomic or sub-atomic states (see Bickle, 2003; Bickle, 2013, sec. 2.7; Churchland, 1982; P. S. Churchland, 1986, chap. 9). While Martians and humans may possess different bodily states when they experience pain, they may very well possess identical microscopic states. Indeed, although no Martians have been studied, Bickle points out that cross-species research has yielded impressive cross-species similarities at the molecular level involved in memory storage. Thus, mental states might be reduced to microscopic, rather than to macroscopic, states.

Unfortunately, again, this response is unavailable to the Type Individualist. Type Individualism identifies types of social phenomena with types of individualistic phenomena. In the case of social groups, the "individualistic phenomena" involved are individual persons, their mental states, dispositions and actions; or to take another example, when considering social phenomena such as money, the individualistic phenomena that constitute them are individual material objects (e.g. pieces of paper). Thus, a level below individualistic phenomena would be bodily states or microscopic states. But it seems strange, indeed false, to identify types of social groups with types of bodily states, or money with types of molecules or atomic structures. Admittedly, there are exceptional social groups that must, by definition, have members in certain types of bodily states. A group of runners, for example, must have members whose bodily states involve running. Yet, for the most part, social groups may comprise members in just about any type of bodily state that a human being can adopt. ANCYL members might run, sit, swim, sing, or sleep horizontally. Similarly, money, it seems, could be made of just about anything, from silicone

to silver. Thus, reducing social phenomena to these lower levels of physical states appears impossible. Indeed, money need not be physical at all – consider Bitcoin.[129]

Consequently, since the reductive program ultimately wishes to reduce all phenomena (such as mental states, bodily states, and chemical states) to those entities posited by physics, there are serious doubts raised as to whether social phenomena can possibly enter into such a reductive program. Therefore, the proponent of a general reductive strategy is probably better off eliminating the social – a suggestion I consider later in the thesis [see **section D. Eliminative Individualism (p. 188)**].

C.3.b.iii. Objections to MR-2(s/m)

Thus far I have provided two traditional CSM responses to MR-1m, and argued that, whether or not these responses are helpful for the CSM proponent, neither of these strategies is available to the Type Individualist as a response to MR-1s. Perhaps we would do better then to consider responses to MR-2s/m.

♦ *Empirical evidence*

Some proponents of CSM have attacked the major claim in the multiple realisation argument – namely, that the same mental kind can be realised by wildly different bodily structures in different species (MR-2m). If this premise were correct, so the argument goes, then we should see significant inter-species differences in mental processing – yet we do not. Indeed, much about the human physiology, and specifically human neurology, is learned by studying other animals (see Bechtel & McCauley, 1999; Bickle, 1998; Kim, 1992). For example, we study monkeys to understand human visual processing. Indeed, the very basis for much neuroscience today, these CSM proponents argue, is the assumption that multiple realisation of mental states does *not* occur. Thus, there is significant empirical evidence that suggests that MR-2m is false.

Once again, whether or not this response is helpful for the CSM proponent, it has far less value for the Type Individualist. Sawyer points out that there is no empirical evidence for any significant correlation between types of social phenomena and types of individualistic phenomena (2002, p. 551). On the contrary, Sawyer argues, we have good reason to believe

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[129] Bitcoin is a currency that relies on no central authority or banking system, and has no physical resource against which it is backed. Instead, it is transferred directly from one peer (or computer user) to another, by mutual agreement (Bitcoin Project, 2014).

that no such correlations will be found. Complex system theorists have identified four main characteristics of systems which are likely to be wildly disjunctive in their realisation (Sawyer, 2001, pp. 576-579), and social groups seem to fit these characteristics. Wildly disjunctive systems are likely to be: (i) *non-aggregative*, (ii) *non-decomposable*, (iii) *non-localised*, and (iv) *complex*.

(i) A system is non-aggregative if there is synthesis, or cooperation, among its parts; this is obviously a hallmark of our Folk Sociological notion of social groups. (ii) In a non-decomposable (as opposed to a decomposable) system, the system as a whole has a causal effect upon, or impacts, its parts. Again, this is a common feature of social groups, for consider how the actions of the state affect its citizens. (iii) A system is localised just in case each of its functions corresponds to a physical component. Social groups like churches are non-localised, since their various functions may be spread amongst multiple members. For example, the function of spreading the word of God might fall upon the shoulders of many, or all, of its members. (iv) Finally, the more complex the interactions among the component parts of a system the more likely that system will be realised in wildly disjunctive fashion. It should be clear that the interactions among the members of a social group are complex for two reasons. First, if the interactions were simple, it would be easy to provide an account of which interactions provide the principle of unity for the group – but, as we have seen in attempting to answer Q1 in **section A**, this is no easy task. And second, if social groups possess features (i) through (iii), this suggests that social groups display significant complexity. So, empirical evidence is unlikely to yield an objection to MR-2s.

♦ *Individuating higher-order kinds*

Some CSM proponents, such as Zangwill (1992, p. 218), make a different objection to MR-2m, namely, that in the cases (e.g. inter-species cases) where we supposedly have the same mental kind with distinct bodily kind realisations, we may not in fact have the same *mental* kind. How do we know, asks Zangwill, that Martians and molluscs experience the very same pain that we do? It seems we do not, and perhaps cannot, know this; and if this is the case, we cannot verify MR-2m.

Yet again, I do not think this strategy can be utilised by the Type Individualist. The problem in the mental case seems to be epistemological: we cannot know exactly what type of mental state occurs in other creatures because we do not have direct access to their mental states. Whether

or not this epistemological claim is true in the case of the mental (and it is a somewhat controversial claim), it is not true in the case of the social. Social groups are not *internal* states hidden from public view; rather, on the Folk Sociological view of social groups, they exist as publicly accessible entities. Anyone, it might be said, has the potential to see the ANCYL. This is because social phenomena are *social* - they are determined by, or depend upon, more than one individual – and so, are not limited to mere private accessibility.

♦ *Individuating lower-order kinds*

While Zangwill questions how mental kinds (i.e. higher-order kinds) are individuated, Shapiro (2000, pp. 643-645) argues that MR-2s/m presupposes a false view about how *lower-level kinds* are individuated. Shapiro argues that in statements of the form, "higher level property or entity H is realised by lower-level property or entity L", the natural kind to which L belongs is individuated by, or is determined "relative to", those causal properties of L which are relevant to the *telos* of H. Therefore, to claim that two lower level properties or entities L1 and L2 belong to distinct natural kinds, and that both realise the same higher-order property H, L1 and L2 must differ in those properties that contribute to the *telos* of H. As an example, Shapiro cites the higher-order property of being a corkscrew. We might think that this property can be multiply realised by aluminium objects as well as steel objects, and that these are distinct physical kinds. Yet, Shapiro argues that this is not a genuine case of multiple realisation of the corkscrew by different physical kinds, since the aluminium and steel objects do not differ with regards to any properties that affect the *telos* of the corkscrew to open wine-bottles, and so, do not belong to distinct physical kinds in this context.

Similarly, the Type Individualist could argue that Sawyer's examples do not involve legitimate cases where the same social group is realised by individualistic phenomena belonging to distinct individualistic kinds, since these individualistic phenomena do not differ in ways that affect the *telos* of the social groups in question. Although different competitive team sports may involve different individuals with different psychological states, beliefs, intentions, etc., these differences are irrelevant to the *telos* of the teams: to compete at the sport in question. All of the team members will possess the same *relevant* properties, whatever these are (see R. Tuomela, 1990, p. 135, footnote 2). These relevant properties might involve the way that the group members interact with one another (e.g. kicking a soccer ball to one another), a belief that they are part of the team, and a desire to win. So, all of these individuals will belong to the same individualistic kind.

Although Shapiro's response is more promising than any of the previous responses considered thus far, since it seems to be equally useful to the Type Individualist and the CSM proponent, the response has a serious problem. On Shapiro's view, lower-order natural kinds are individuated *relative to* the higher-order kinds they realise. For example, steel and aluminium belong to the same physical kind "relative to the properties that make them suitable for removing corks", yet "this point does not imply that steel and aluminium *never* qualify as alternative realisations of a kind. Relative to some [higher-order] kinds they may be" (Shapiro, 2000, p. 644 emphasis in the original). But if lower-order kinds are individuated relative to the higher-order kinds they realise, it is impossible to reduce these higher-order kinds to lower-order kinds, since reduction of H to L requires that L can be individuated, or defined, independently of H (Kincaid, 1986, p. 497). Thus, on Shapiro's analysis, we cannot individuate individualistic kinds (or bodily kinds) independently of the social kinds (or mental kinds) they realise, and so we cannot reduce the social (or mental) to the individual (or body). Hence, whatever the value of Shapiro's analysis of natural kinds, it has no use for the Type Individualist or the Central State Materialist as a response to the problem of multiple realisation.

♦ *Disjunctive kinds*

There is one final objection to MR-2(s/m) that Kim (1992) offers. Kim argues that just because the same higher-order kind may be realised by a number of distinct lower-order entities or properties that appear to vary significantly, this does not imply that these lower-order entities or properties do not together comprise a natural kind. This is because natural kinds may, Kim argues, be *disjunctive*. For example, the social kind "church" may be realised by hundreds of distinct collections of individuals (or intra-relations among individuals), and so, there could be a disjunctive individualistic kind of the form <I1 v I2 v I3…v I*n*> with which the social kind "church" can be identified.

The standard objection (see Kim, 1998a, pp. 106-110) against Kim's position that there may be genuinely disjunctive kinds is to argue that natural kinds must, on Fodor's definition of a natural kind [which is generally accepted, even by Kim (1992, p. 9), although perhaps not by Shapiro], be capable of functioning in laws. But *projectibility* is a necessary feature of a law; to say that a law is projectible is to say that observation of positive instances of the law in question increases our certainty that the law is correct, and increases our certainty that future observations will comply with the law. Take for example the law: "If a closed system decreases in volume, then the pressure of the system increases". This law is confirmed by observing

instances where we have a closed system which, after decreasing in volume, increases in pressure. After each such instance, we become more certain that this law is correct, and that in future when we decrease the volume of a closed system, its pressure will increase. The problem with laws involving disjunctive kinds is that such laws are not projectible.

Suppose, for example, that social kinds S1 and S2 are identified by Type Individualists with the disjunctive individualistic kinds <I1 v I2 v I3…v I*n*> and <I1* v I2* v I3*…v I*n**> respectively. Moreover, suppose that sociology contains a law L1, "S1 → S2". Then, Type Individualists are committed to the claim that L1 can be reduced to the individualistic law L2: "<I1 v I2 v I3…v I*n*> → <I1* v I2* v I3*…v I*n**>". Now the problem is that it seems that L2 is not a law because it is not projectible. Suppose, for example, that we have a case in which we observe that after I2 occurs, I3* occurs. Then, in this case, we have an observation consistent with L2, since I2 is an antecedent of L2 and I3* is a consequent of L2. Yet, after making this observation, we are no more certain that L2 is true, or that L2 will hold in future, since we do not yet know whether "I1 → I3*" is also correct, or whether "I3 → I2*" is correct, or whether "I3 → I3*" is correct, etc.

For example, let us return to Durkheim's generalisation (L1) concerning anomie. Durkheim asserts that if there is a breakdown in the regulative powers of a society (S1), then anomie will occur (S2). Now, suppose social scientists bi-conditionally correlate a breakdown in the regulative powers of society with a disjunctive set of individualistic phenomena, such as (I1) persons rioting outside the Reserve Bank meetings, (I2) individuals frequently waving placards outside government buildings, or (I3) the parliament buildings burning down, etc. Moreover, social scientists also bi-conditionally correlate anomie with something like the disjunctive set: (I1*) stock-brokers jumping off buildings, (I2*) murder-suicides among poverty-stricken families, or (I3*) business-owners shooting themselves, etc. Then, Type Individualists adopting Kim's suggestion would claim that there is an individualistic law (L2) stating that: "If <there is rioting outside the Reserve Bank's meetings OR there is much placard-waving OR the government-buildings burn down OR…> then <stock-brokers will jump off buildings OR there will be murder-suicides among poor families OR business-owners will shoot themselves OR…>". The problem is that this individualistic claim (L2) is not projectible, and so, is not a law. For suppose social scientists observe that after individuals frequently wave placards outside government buildings, there is an increase in business-owners shooting themselves. We are no more certain that L2 is true, since we are no more certain after the observation than we

were before the observation that in future we will observe that after riots outside the Reserve Bank meetings, there will be an increase in murder-suicides among poor families. Thus, the observation does not confirm L2, and so, L2 is not projectible, since this is precisely the sort of observation that, if any, would confirm L2. Thus, L2 is not a law.

Kim replies to the objection from projectibility by arguing that we have arrived at a dilemma: psychology too contains disjunctive kinds, and so, either psychology lacks laws, or laws are not projectible. Kim supports the first horn, and acknowledges that although there are no general psychological laws, there are domain-restricted psychological laws, since each of the disjuncts in a disjunctive kind may participate in projectible laws [see the discussion of species-relative or domain-restricted reduction in **section C.3.b.ii. Objections to MR-1(s/m) (p. 162)**]. For example, while there may not be laws about pain generally, there are laws about Martian pain, and other laws about human pain, etc.

Unfortunately for the Type Individualist, the first horn of the dilemma is unavailable, since I have already argued that domain-restricted reduction is not a working solution for the Type Individualist. Thus, the Type Individualist must deny that laws are necessarily projectible. But this denial, it seems, is rather implausible, and flies in the face of the dominant view of the philosophy of science. Hence, Kim's claim that there are genuine disjunctive kinds is of little use to the Type Individualist.

C.3.b.iv. Doubts about token identity

I have argued that, compared with the Central State Materialist, the Type Individualist has far fewer resources available to respond to the multiple realisation objection. Moreover, the two *prima facie* available responses he does have – Shapiro's relative lower-level kinds, and Kim's genuinely disjunctive kinds – are unsuccessful. Furthermore, in addition to the multiple realisation objection, there is a second problem with Type Individualism. If Type Individualism is correct, then every *type* of social phenomenon is identical with a *type* of individualistic phenomenon, which implies that every *token* social phenomenon is identical with a *token* set of individual phenomena.[130] That is, Type Individualism implies NRI-3 from Sawyer's Non-Reductive Individualism, but I have already argued that NR-3 is unconvincing. Moreover, I argued that the best enrichment to NRI-3 may be the claim that social phenomena are

[130] See Fodor (1974, p. 100) for a discussion of the relationship between type and token identity.

constituted by (rather than identical with) individualistic phenomena. But this enrichment is not available as a resource to the type identity theorist, since constitution claims cannot act as the bi-directional bridge principles required for reduction. This is because if *x* constitutes *y*, this does not imply that *y* constitutes *x* – indeed, the constitution relation is meant to capture an asynchronous relation between *x* and *y*. Thus, Type Individualism suffers from the same objections presented against NRI-3, yet, unlike the Non-Reductive Individualist, does not have the notion of constitution as a resource to deal with these objections.

I conclude then, that Type Individualism is an unsatisfactory solution to the social-individual problem.

C.3.c. Social Functionalism

C.3.c.i. Types of Functionalism

The way that many philosophers of mind dealt with the problem of multiple realisation in the latter half of the 20th century was to adopt Mental Functionalism (also known as "Functionalism"), or the thesis that types of mental states are identical with, and can be reduced to, types of functional states. A functional state might be characterised by its typical causes and effects (i.e. causally) or by its *telos* (i.e. teleologically). So, on Mental Functionalism, pain is identical with a particular type of functional state (call this state F1). Then, F1 may supervene upon bodily states, resulting in the possibility that pain may be realised by wildly different bodily states.

It would seem sensible, then, to resolve the multiple realisation objection against Type Individualism by positing a parallel account of the social, a "Social Functionalism". Applying the lessons of Mental Functionalism to the social-individual problem, we could hold that types of social phenomena are identical with types of functional phenomena. I will call this doctrine, "Social Functionalism". For example, suppose that the function of political parties as a type, is F: "those phenomena typically caused by the presence of a political ideology, and which typically result in social actions furthering that ideology". Then, since political parties are identical with F, and since very different collections of individuals could realise F, political parties can be realised by wildly disjunctive individuals.

Social Functionalism is attractive, moreover, because it solves the problem of social holism presented against Logical Individualism. Specifically, there are two ways the account might

resolve the problem of holism, depending on how the account is formulated. To see why there are two possible formulations, consider that Mental Functionalism comes in two forms: as a conceptual claim (Lewis, 1972), and as an empirical claim (Putnam, 1981). Lewis's conceptual version of the account claims that types of mental states are *conceptually* identical with types of functional states. For example, the concept of pain is the concept of that state typically caused by bodily trauma, and that typically gives rise to behaviour such as exclaiming "ouch!" and attempts to lessen or end the bodily trauma. Thus, the identity that obtains between types of mental states and types of functional states is *a priori* and necessary. By contrast, Putnam posits that psychologists will discover perfect bi-conditional correlations between types of mental states and types of functional states. On Putnam's account, there is no conceptual connection between pain and expressing "ouch!". Rather, the connection is contingent, and can only be known *a posteriori*.

Similarly, we might construct Social Functionalism as a conceptual claim (see Schmaus, 1999), or as an empirical claim. The conceptual claim reads that the concept of a type of social phenomenon just is the concept of a phenomenon with a certain type of function (i.e. typical cause and effects, or a type of *telos*). Thus, the identity between social phenomena and their function is necessary and *a priori*. Conceptual Social Functionalism therefore involves *functional analysis* of social concepts to arrive at the nature of social phenomena. The empirical variant also claims that types of social phenomena are identical with types of functional phenomena, but this identity is contingent and *a posteriori*. Thus, Empirical Social Functionalism implies that social scientists will discover perfect bi-conditional correlations between certain types of social phenomena and certain types of causal roles.

To see how these two versions resolve the problem of the holism of the social, recall that Logical Individualism cannot accommodate the holism of social concepts because (i) Logical Individualism's reductive strategy uses the *intension* of social concepts, and (ii) the account defines this intension atomically. Now, if Social Functionalism is formulated as a conceptual claim, then the functional specification of a type of social phenomenon S will cite the conceptual role that S plays within our Folk Sociological framework, and so, S will be defined in terms of other social phenomena (e.g. political parties are defined in terms of political ideologies). Thus, unlike Logical Individualism, Social Functionalism involves a holistic, rather than an atomistic, reduction of social phenomena: on this account, S can be reduced together with the Folk Sociological framework of which it is a part, to a functionalist framework. Hence,

the conceptual version is inconsistent with (ii). On the other hand, the empirical version of Social Functionalism would resolve the problem of the holism of the social in much the same way that Type Individualism does. Like Type Individualism, the empirical version of Social Functionalism utilises the extension, rather than the intension, of social terms to reduce the social to the individual. Hence, the empirical version avoids (i).

Moreover, in addition to resolving the problems of multiple realisation (as faced by Type Individualism) and the holism of the social (a problem for Logical Individualism), Social Functionalism is also consistent with the existence of groups that can persist despite lacking members, and so, does not suffer from the chief objection against Non-Reductive Individualism. Recall that I argued for the intuition that, at least in certain instances, groups can persist despite losing all their members (e.g. the Knights of War chess club). This datum poses a challenge for Non-Reductive Individualism because this account identifies a group with its members or the relations among those members, and so, is committed to the view that groups cannot persist without members. Notice that even though a group may (or so I argued) undergo periods without members, during those periods it may still possess a function. For example, even though the Knights of War lacks members at a particular point in time, it still has a function (whatever the function of a chess club is). It just so happens that during the period when it lacks members, its function is not being fulfilled – but the club possesses the function nevertheless. Thus, because the Social Functionalist identifies a group with its function, rather than its members, Social Functionalism is consistent with the existence of groups without members.

Given the advantages of Social Functionalism (its consistency with the multiple realisation, the holism of the social, and absent membership), it is striking that a consideration of the plausibility of Social Functionalism as a solution to Q2 is largely absent from the sociological and philosophical literature. Instead, sociologists (such as Malinowski, Parsons, Merton, Radcliffe-Brown, Durkheim and Marx) have focussed upon *Explanatory Social Functionalism*, or the thesis that social phenomena are best *explained* in purely functionalist terms (see Kincaid, 1990 [1995]). Moreover, insofar as philosophers have engaged with Social Functionalism, they too have focused upon the legitimacy of functional explanation (i.e. Explanatory Social Functionalism) in the social sciences (see, e.g., de Jong, 2003; Dore, 1961 [1973]; Elster, 1994 [1995]; Hempel, 1959 [1995], 1966; Homans, 1964 [1973]; Kincaid, 1990 [1995]; Mayntz, 2004; Ryan, 1970 ch. 8; Steel, 2005), upon functional solutions to the individual-individual problem [see **sections B.2.b. Organic account (p. 44)** and **B.2.c. Teleological account (p.**

50)], or upon the inference from Explanatory Social Functionalism to Social Functionalism (see McGinley, 2012).[131, 132]

Since I am concerned here with answering Q2, I will focus here on Social Functionalism as a metaphysical claim about the relation between social phenomena and their constituent parts, rather than as a theory of how to explain social phenomena best (and not about the intra-relations that obtain among the constituent parts of social phenomena – as in Q1). This is not to say that Explanatory Social Functionalism and functional accounts of Q1 have no bearing on Social Functionalism. Indeed, McGinley (2012) argues that if social phenomena are best *explained* by their causal role, this would provide support for the claim that social phenomena *just are* phenomena with a certain causal role. That is, Explanatory Social Functionalism supports Social Functionalism.[133] Moreover, if a teleological account of Q1 is correct, then we should look first to a teleological formulation of Social Functionalism as the solution to Q2: if what is crucial to membership of a group is that members act towards a common *telos*, this provides abductive support for the claim that the group should be identified with its *telos*.[134]

Nevertheless, even though Explanatory Social Functionalism and a teleological account of Q1 support Social Functionalism (as an answer to Q2), it is still a legitimate question whether there are successful objections to Social Functionalism itself (rather than objections to its support). The fact that this question has not been considered explicitly in the literature is a gap that I intend to begin addressing here. In what follows I argue that although Social Functionalism may provide synchronic individuation conditions for social phenomena, it struggles to provide diachronic individuation conditions. That is, although the account may satisfy *Synchronic*, it fails to satisfy *Diachronic*.

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[131] To clarify the distinct functionalist doctrines, *Social Functionalism* refers to the metaphysical claim that types of social phenomena can be reduced to, or are identical with, types of phenomena with a certain causal role. *Conceptual* Social Functionalism is the view that the reduction of social phenomena to their causal roles is conceptual, analytic and *a priori*. *Empirical* Social Functionalism is the claim that the reduction of social phenomena to their causal roles is empirical, contingent, and *a posteriori*. Finally, *Explanatory* Social Functionalism is the doctrine that social phenomena are best explained by their causal roles.

[132] An exception to the absence of discussion around Social Functionalism in the literature is Schmaus (1999), who argues in favour of Conceptual Social Functionalism by showing how this account accommodates the holism of the social. Schmaus does not, however, consider any of the objections to Social Functionalism I present in the next section.

[133] McGinley (2012, p. 381) argues that this support is not deductive. Instead, he holds that Explanatory Social Functionalism is "disposed or oriented toward" Social Functionalism (2012, pp. 381, 385), and that Explanatory Social Functionalism is "at least necessary" for Social Functionalism (2012, p. 388).

[134] A proposition P abductively supports another proposition Q just in case Q is the best explanation of P.

C.3.c.ii. The analogy between cognitive states and social groups

On Mental Functionalism, the *type* of mental state to which **a cognitive state CS** belongs is determined by the form, or structure, of the functional role of CS. CS is a belief, for example, if its functional role is something like, "that mental state typically caused by *p* conditions in the world, and which typically causes certain behaviour, such as statements of the form "I believe that *p*" when asked certain types of questions". Then, Mental Functionalists can individuate CS synchronically, or distinguish CS as a particular *token* of its functional type, by substituting *p* with the propositional content of CS. For example, if CS is the belief that it is cold today, then CS is distinguished from other beliefs by its propositional content "it is cold today", since it (unlike beliefs about grass, for example) is typically caused by cold conditions, and typically causes effects such as statements of the form "I believe that it is cold today" when asked about the weather. Thus, the propositional content of CS individuates CS by giving its functional role determinate content (i.e. by providing *p* with a value).[135]

Now, notice that the particular propositional content that a cognitive state possesses is essential to that cognitive state. For example, if my belief changed such that I now believe that the weather is hot (rather than that it is cold), it is no longer the same belief that I had earlier but with different propositional content – rather, I now have a numerically distinct belief. That is, although I can supplant one belief with another, a particular belief cannot change its content. So, because the function of CS is given determinate content by the propositional content of CS, and because that propositional content cannot change, the function of a cognitive state cannot change, and so, individuates CS diachronically.

Therefore, on Mental Functionalism, the function (including its propositional content) of a cognitive state CS: **(i) determines the type of mental state to which CS belongs, (ii) provides a synchronic individuation criterion for CS, and (iii) provides a diachronic individuation criterion for CS**. Now, consider whether the function of a social phenomenon performs these three roles.

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[135] Admittedly, this discussion over-simplifies the Mental Functionalist's criteria for individuation. For two agents might have beliefs with the same propositional content, yet have numerically distinct beliefs. Thus, we should add that the propositional content of a cognitive state, together with a statement about its owner (and perhaps about the time of the cognitive state?) individuates that state. These considerations do not, however, impact the discussion about Social Functionalism to follow.

If Social Functionalism is correct, then it is possible to determine the type to which a given **social phenomenon SP** belongs by citing its functional role. On a causal version of the account, political parties are (say) those phenomena typically caused by the presence of a political ideology, and which typically result in the social actions furthering that ideology; or, on a teleological account, political parties are those phenomena whose *telos* is the furthering of a political ideology. Thus, it is plausible that the function of a social phenomenon performs role (i) – i.e. the function of a social phenomenon determines that phenomenon's type.

It is less certain, however, whether (ii) we can individuate token social phenomena using their function, since social phenomena, unlike cognitive states, lack propositional content: it is not the case that to be a social group is to be a social group that *p*. Instead, the causal Social Functionalist would hold that SP (a social phenomenon) is individuated by the particular causes and effects of SP – i.e. no other social phenomena would have the precise causes and effects that SP has. Similarly, the teleological solution would appeal to the *telos* of a social phenomenon as the method for individuating it. For example, the ANC belongs to the type "political party" because it is caused by the presence of political ideology, and because it furthers this ideology; and the ANC is the particular token political party it is because its *telos* (in this case its ideology) is distinct from the *teloi* of other political parties.

In my discussion of the teleological account of Q1 **(p. 50)**, however, I argued that the *telos* (or function) of a group can be defined analytically, narrowly or broadly. I argued that the analytic and narrow definitions are inadequate, and that the broad definition does not adequately individuate groups synchronically (the agglomeration problem). However, let us continue under the assumption that my objections raised in that section were unsuccessful, and that it is possible to distinguish groups synchronically by citing their *telos*. That is, let us assume that the function of social phenomena performs role (ii) – that the function of SP provides an adequate synchronic individuation criterion for SP. In what follows I will focus on whether the function of social phenomena fulfils (iii) – i.e. whether or not the function of a social phenomenon can individuate the phenomenon diachronically.

C.3.c.iii. Diachronic identity

On Mental Functionalism, the function of a token cognitive state cannot change because its function is individuated by its propositional content, and its propositional content cannot change. But on Social Functionalism, the function of a token social phenomenon is individuated

either by its causes and effects, or by its *telos*, yet the effects and *telos* of a social phenomenon *can* change, and so, the function of a social phenomenon may change over time. For example, recall the case discussed earlier [in **section C.2.b.iii. Token-token identity (p. 138)**] concerning a radical shift in the policy of the ANCYL. One of the effects, and a part of the *telos*, of the ANCYL today is to provide a voice for the masses of black youth in South Africa. However, although it is unlikely, it is not impossible to imagine a future in which the league might change slowly but radically, such that at some point in the future, the league no longer takes an interest in the majority of black youth, but instead adopts policies that support higher-class South African youth, regardless of their race. Then the effects and *telos*, and therefore the function, of the ANCYL will have changed. Similarly, the Labour Party in the UK, which once supported the working class, changed to the New Labour Party, which (arguably) supports the middle class instead. It seems then that the Social Functionalist faces a challenge that the Mental Functionalist lacks: accounting for changing functions.

The Social Functionalist could dig in his heels at this point, and argue that if there were such a radical shift in the policies of the ANCYL, this would no longer be the same social group. Instead, the league would have ceased, and a numerically distinct league would have supplanted it. Thus, I have not presented a legitimate example of the same group changing its function. I find this response problematic, however, for two reasons. First, it seems we could use the very same term "ANCYL" to refer to both the ANCYL of today, and the radically different league of the future. This coincidence in reference suggests that we are referring to a numerically identical league. Second, this bullet-biting response eschews common-sense intuitions about social groups: namely, that they do change their goals. Indeed, some might argue at the time of writing this thesis, that the policies of the ANCYL have already undergone a massive shift from earlier in its history. But whether or not this is true, the point is that intuition suggests that such shifts are possible. Thus, the bullet-biting response at best renders Social Functionalism controversial.

I will proceed, therefore, on the assumption that it is possible for a social group to change its function, and therefore, the Social Functionalist faces the challenge of developing an account of the identity between social phenomena and their function which permits changing functions and provides diachronic identity criteria. That is, the account should provide necessary and sufficient conditions in virtue of which a social group G1 with function F1 at time t1 is identical with G2 which has F2 at t2, where F1 is qualitatively distinct from F2 but G1 is numerically

identical with G2. How might the Social Functionalist fulfil this task? Consider that since Social Functionalism posits that types of social phenomena are identical with types of functions, the account entails that a token social phenomenon is identical with a token function. Thus, like Non-Reductive Individualism, this token identity claim might be interpreted either as a *de re* or as a *de dicto* claim, and so, applied to social groups, the token identity claim might be disambiguated as follows:

> **$SF_{de\ re}$: any given social group is identical with a specific function F.**
>
> **$SF_{de\ dicto}$: any given social group is identical with a function, whatever that function is.**

$SF_{de\ re}$ is the problematic disambiguation, since it is inconsistent with change in a social group's *telos* or effects, and therefore function. If $SF_{de\ re}$ is correct, then the ANCYL at every point in its existence aims to nationalise key industries in South Africa (which is false). Fortunately, $SF_{de\ dicto}$ avoids this problem, since $SF_{de\ dicto}$ is consistent with the ANCYL possessing different functions at different times, since $SF_{de\ dicto}$ merely demands that at any given time that the league is identical with some function or other (and not necessarily with a specific function).

Thus, $SF_{de\ dicto}$ is *consistent* with the possibility of the very same social group persisting despite a change in its function. But the account fails to imply that a group at a later point in time is identical with a group at an earlier point in time. That is, it fails to imply that G1 is identical with G2, even though it fails to imply that G1 is not identical with G2. In response, the refinement that the $SF_{de\ dicto}$ proponent would likely provide is that G1 is numerically identical with G2 insofar as G1 and G2 are *functionally continuous*:

> **$SF_{diachronic}$: social group G1 with function F1 at time t1 is identical with G2 which has F2 at t2 iff G1 and G2 are functionally continuous.**

But now there are two important questions:

Q3. What does it mean for G1 and G2 to be functionally continuous?

Q4. Does functional continuity provide the correct principle for the diachronic individuation of social groups? i.e. Does $SF_{diachronic}$ satisfy *Diachronic*.

I discuss these questions in turn.

♦ *Q3: What is functional continuity?*

It is important that the Social Functionalist answers Q3, for without an adequate answer, Social Functionalism is incomplete, and we should approach Q4 with a degree of scepticism. I can think of three ways one might define functional continuity. Where F1 and F2 are the respective functions of G1 at t1 and G2 at t2, G1 and G2 are functionally continuous iff:

FC-1) F1 resembles F2 more than F1 resembles the function of any other social group existing at t2;
FC-2) F2 causally depends upon G1 to a greater degree than F2 depends upon any other social group existing at t1; or
FC-3) there is an overlapping "goal-progression chain" between F1 and F2.

I will argue that both FC-1 and FC-3 are inadequate, while FC-2 is at best incomplete. Let us begin with FC-1.

Assuming that we utilise functional continuity as our principle of diachronic individuation, we should drop FC-1 as a possible definition of functional continuity because of cases of the following sort. Let G3 be a group that exists at t2, and has function F3. Moreover, suppose G3 is not identical with either G1 or G2. Then, contrary to FC-1, it seems possible that even though G1 and G2 are identical, F1 resembles F3 more closely than F1 resembles F2. For example, suppose the function of the ANCYL at t1 (i.e. G1) is the representation of the majority of black South African youth (F1), but at t2 the function of the ANCYL (G2) is furthering the goals of upper-class South African youth, no matter their race (F2); moreover, suppose at t2 the function of the COPE youth-league (G3) is to support poverty-stricken black youth in South Africa (F3). On FC-1, G1 is functionally continuous with G3, and not with G2. Therefore, on FC-1, the ANCYL at t1 is identical with COPE at t2, and not with the ANCYL at t2. But this is intuitively incorrect. The first account of functional continuity, then, is inadequate.

FC-2 is Nozick's (1981) definition of continuity for any given diachronic criterion of identity, and he uses it to characterise psychological and bodily continuity in the case of personal identity. However, FC-2 faces the following interesting problem case. Suppose that the functions of the ANCYL at t1 and t2 are as before. Moreover, suppose that at t1 the function of the South African government is to kill any members of a social group that further the interests of the masses of black South African youth. As a result of the South African government's policies, the ANCYL changes its goals, and so, at t2, arrives at the function of promoting black

youth who belong to the higher-classes. Then, it seems that the function of the ANCYL at t2 is better explained by, and so is causally dependent upon to a greater degree, the South African government's policies at t1 rather than the ANCYL at t1. Thus, on FC-2, the ANCYL at t2 turns out to be functionally continuous with the South African government at t1, rather than continuous with the ANCYL at t1. This is unacceptable for the Social Functionalist, since this implies on $SF_{diachronic}$ that the ANCYL at t2 is identical with the South African government at t1, and the ANCYL at t1 is not identical with the ANCYL at t2.

Nozick might, however, object to my claim that the ANCYL at t2 is more causally dependent on the South African government's policies at t1 than it is dependent on the policies of the ANCYL at t1. Nozick might argue that the change in the league's policies are as a direct result of a decision made by the members of the league at t1, and not as a direct result of the government's policies at t1. It is true that the league members' *decision* at t1 is causally influenced by the government's policies, but ultimately, it is the league's decision, not the government's. Thus, the league at t2 is more causally dependent on the league at t1 than it is causally dependent on the government at t1.

Diagnosing the problem, it seems that the disagreement that arises here illustrates that the notion of degrees of causal dependence is unclear. What we need is an account of the necessary and sufficient conditions for *x* to depend causally upon *y* to degree *d*; or, at the very least, we need an account of the conditions under which *x* causally depends upon *y* to a greater degree than *x* causally depends upon *z*. Nozick has not provided us with such an account, and so, he has merely taken the problem of giving an account of continuity and replaced it with the problem of giving an account of degrees of causal dependence. This is not to say that such an account of causal dependence cannot be provided – just that it has not been provided yet. Thus, FC-2 is incomplete.

Finally, FC-3 is modelled on Parfit's (1986, p. 206) definition of psychological continuity. For Parfit, persons P1 and P2 are psychologically continuous iff P2 and P1 have overlapping chains of "quasi-memories". P2 and P1 have *overlapping chains* of quasi-memories just in case P2 has a quasi-memory of an experience of someone who has a quasi-memory of an experience of someone who has a quasi-memory of an experience… of P1. P*n* has a *quasi-memory* of an experience of P*n*-1 just in case P*n* seems to remember experiencing an experience E, P*n*-1 did experience E, and P*n*'s quasi-memory of E is caused in the right sort of way by E. Similarly, we might attempt to find a relation between social functions, and through overlapping this

relation, form continuity between F1 and F2. The best candidate for such a relation that I can think of is the relation of "goal-progression". F*n* is a *goal-progression* of F*n*-1 iff Fn grows out of, or can be explained by, the satisfaction or frustration of F*n*-1.[136] Then, F1 and F2 will be functionally continuous iff there is an overlapping goal-progression chain between F1 and F2; i.e. it must be the case that F2 can be explained by the satisfaction or frustration of some other goal, which can be explained by the satisfaction or frustration of yet another goal, which can be explained by the satisfaction or frustration of… F1.

The problem with this Parfitian account of functional continuity, however, is that it seems possible for a social group to change its function not because a previous function of the group was satisfied or frustrated, but because of the whims of its members. Suppose, for example, that the reason why the ANCYL changes its goal of supporting the majority of black youth at t1 to the furthering of upper-class youth at t2 is (rather than a bizarre policy of the SA government) that between t1 and t2 the league's leaders realise that since they have substantial ownership of private-sector black companies, they will benefit far more if their policies support upper-echelon youth. Then, the change in the function of the ANCYL should be attributed to its leaders' interests, rather than to the satisfaction or frustration of the goal to support the majority of black youth in South Africa. And so, on this example, the Parfitian account of functional continuity implies, counter-intuitively, that the ANCYL at t1 and at t2 are not functionally continuous, and hence, not the same group. Thus, the Parfitian account of functional continuity would need to be supplemented with an account of the interests of the group's members, and how these interests contribute to the decision-making processes (and hence Parfitian functional continuity) of the group. A Social Functionalist account utilising such an account of functional continuity would, therefore, need to include a membership-based criterion of diachronic identity, and so, would become what I call a hybrid account. I discuss hybrid accounts in **section C.4. A Hybrid (p. 184)**.

♦ *Q4: Is functional continuity an adequate criterion of diachronic identity for social groups?*

Thus far I have argued that we have not yet found an adequate account of what it means for G1 and G2 to be functionally continuous. This should raise suspicion about whether functional continuity, however it is defined, could be an adequate criterion of diachronic identity for social groups. With the goal of exploring this suspicion, let us be charitable to the Social Functionalist,

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[136] I have borrowed the "grows out of" and "can be explained by" terminology from Nozick (1981, p. 35).

and assume for the moment that we *can* provide an adequate account of what it means for G1 and G2 to be functionally continuous. Given such an adequate account, I argue nevertheless that functional continuity is an inadequate criterion of diachronic identity for social groups. That is, it is not the case that G2's functional continuity with G1 is sufficient for G1 being identical with G2, even if we can adequately define functional continuity. I have in mind here three types of problem cases. The first two cases involve fission (or splitting) of social groups, while the third utilises sudden changes in function. I begin with the two fission cases.

In fission cases, a social group G1 is split into groups G2 and G3. In the first type of case I wish to consider, G2 and G3 are equally functionally continuous with G1, but G2 has more membership-continuity with G1 than G3 has with G1. (The degree of membership continuity between two groups can be defined as the similarity in membership between the two groups, perhaps taking into account the weighting or importance of higher-ranking members). Here, I will argue that G2, rather than G3, is identical with G1, and so, membership-continuity (rather than functional continuity) determines diachronic identity where there is a tie on functional continuity. Thus, membership-continuity counts. In the second type of problem case, G3 is more functionally continuous with G1 than is G2 with G1. However, as before, G2 has significantly greater membership-continuity with G1 than G3 has with G1. I will argue that in this case, at least some of the time, G1 is identical with G2 (and not with G3), and so, membership-continuity trumps functional continuity as the relevant criterion of diachronic identity at least some of the time. To clarify, let me flesh out these counterexamples.

As an illustration of the first type of case, suppose that the ANCYL splits into two parts: ANCYL1 and ANCYL2. After the split, ANCYL1 and ANCYL2 operate in similar fashions, with neither operating more divergently from the goals of the original ANCYL. Moreover, suppose that the original ANCYL contained 10 000 members, and that ANCYL1 inherits 9 990 of these members, while ANCYL2 inherits a mere 10 of these members. Nozick's intuition[137] (with which I concur) in this type of case is that the original ANCYL continues as ANCYL1, and not as ANCYL2 – ANCYL2 is a mere offshoot (or by-product) of the group, and so,

[137] This example is inspired by Nozick's (1981, pp. 32-33) Vienna circle example, in which some members of the Circle flee to America, whilst others flee to Istanbul. His intuition is that the sub-group with the greater number of members (in this case the American group) continues to be the Vienna Circle, whilst the other is a mere offshoot. I have used the ANCYL example instead because Nozick frames his example in a way meant to illustrate a different claim: namely, that whether G1=G2 depends upon whether there are other groups closer to G1 than G2 is. Nozick uses this claim to support his Closest Continuer view, which I examine in **section C.4. A Hybrid (p. 184)**.

becomes a distinct social group. However, this is not the result we obtain by applying a functionalist criterion of diachronic individuation, since ANCYL1 and ANCYL2 are equally functionally continuous (however one defines functional continuity) with the original ANCYL. Thus on the functional continuity criterion, we must either say that the original ANCYL is identical with both ANCYL1 and ANCYL2, or that the original ANCYL is identical with neither; i.e. we cannot arrive at the correct result using functional continuity as our criterion of diachronic identity.

The Social Functionalist may attempt a Parfitian solution to the problem: he could argue that in such fission cases, diachronic identity is unimportant; all that counts in such cases is *survival*. Thus, the Social Functionalist could argue that although the original league is identical with neither ANCYL1 nor ANCYL2, it *survives* as both. Parfit (1986) has provided compelling argument for the claim that in similar cases involving the fission of persons, identity is unimportant – survival is all that counts. Why, then, should we not accept such a Parfitian solution to cases involving the fission of social groups?

There are two problems with this Parfitian response. First, while I can accept that the original league survives as both ANCYL1 and ANCYL2, I do not accept that the degree of survival of the original league in ANCYL1 is the same as the degree of survival of the original league in ANCYL2. The Parfitian Social Functionalist must claim that the degree of survival in both cases is identical, since there is equal functional continuity, and functional continuity can be all that the Social Functionalist utilises as his criterion of survival. However, this seems intuitively false: the original league seems to survive to a far greater degree in ANCYL1 than it does in ANCYL2.

The second problem with the Parfitian response is that it helps none at all for the second type of fission case. Let us flesh out the case now. The second case is just like the first, except that in this case ANCYL1 and ANCYL2 do not share equal functional continuity with the original league. We can imagine that ANCYL2 (the tiny sub-group) remains faithful to the original goals of the league, while ANCYL1 (the vast majority of the original league) evolves its *telos*. My intuition here remains the same as in the previous case: ANCYL1, since it has so many more members from the original, is numerically identical with the league, while ANCYL2 is a numerically distinct social group. However, counter-intuitively, the Social Functionalist is committed to claiming that ANCYL2 and not ANCYL1 is identical with (or survives to a greater degree, if he adopts a Parfitian stance) the original league.

The first fission case shows that functional continuity is not all that counts: membership-continuity is also important for determining the diachronic identity of social groups. The second fission case, which also involves a split in the ANCYL, is more serious in its implications. It shows that membership-continuity is more important for diachronic identity than is functional continuity in at least some cases.

The Social Functionalist might attempt to save face by pointing out that in both the problem cases discussed so far, functional continuity plays *some* role in determining diachronic identity, even if functional continuity does not play the only role. Thus, we should conclude that Social Functionalism is incomplete, rather than simply false. The third problem case, to which I turn now, is meant to show that in certain cases functional continuity plays *no role at all* in determining the diachronic identity of social groups.

Recall the original case involving the ANCYL changing its *telos*. At time t1 the league supports the majority of black youth in South Africa. At a later time t2 the league supports the upper-echelon youth, regardless of their race. Although this change is radical, we have assumed that the change is gradual. Thus, there would be functional continuity between the ANCYL at t1, and the ANCYL at t2, since between t1 and t2, there may be a series of changes in policy that gradually move from the policy at t1 to the policy at t2. However, we can refine the case so that t2 occurs immediately after t1 – i.e. so that the radical shift in policy is not gradual. Perhaps, for example, a change in leadership of the youth league suddenly ushers in a new league policy. In this case, however one defines functional continuity, it seems there is insufficient functional continuity between the league at t1 and the league at t2 to act as the criterion according to which we can identify the league at t1 with the league at t2. Thus, the Social Functionalist is committed to the position that it is impossible for a social group to persist when there is a radical, sudden change in its function. This is counterintuitive, and so, threatens the importance of functional continuity as a feature for individuating groups diachronically.

C.3.c.iv. Conclusion

Social Functionalism, then, faces a challenge that Mental Functionalism does not: providing an adequate diachronic criterion of identity. It seems the best that the Social Functionalist can offer as a candidate for such a criterion is functional continuity. However, functional continuity is problematic as a criterion of diachronic identity for two reasons. First, it is difficult to provide an adequate account of what it means for two social groups to be functionally continuous.

Second, even if we can provide such an account, there are counterexamples that seem to show that functional continuity is less important than membership-continuity in determining diachronic identity in certain cases, and that in other cases, functional continuity is entirely irrelevant to diachronic identity.

These problem cases suggest that if an adequate criterion of diachronic identity for groups is to be found, we must incorporate membership-continuity in our account. However, in objecting to NRI-3 I argued that group membership alone is unlikely to provide an adequate criterion of diachronic individuation, since groups may persist despite lacking any members at all. Thus, we may need to develop a hybrid account: an account that incorporates both functional continuity and membership-continuity in its criterion of diachronic identity. I consider this possibility next.

C.4. A HYBRID SOLUTION TO Q2

One way we might construct such a hybrid is to disjunctivise Non-Reductive Individualism and Social Functionalism, such that they form a "Disjunctive Functional-Tokenism":

> **Disjunctive Functional-Tokenism: For any given social group G, G is identical with its members OR G is identical with its function.**[138]

Recall that the two most difficult data for which the token identity claim, i.e. NRI-3, must account are the coextensionality of groups (the rugby-choir example) and the possibility of groups persisting without members (the Knights of War). This account accommodates these problem cases, since at those times when the group lacks members, or in cases when a group is coextensional with another group, G is identical with its function F; while in all other cases, the group is identical with its members. Moreover, Disjunctive Functional-Tokenism could utilise either or both continuity in membership and functional continuity as criteria of diachronic identity for social groups, thereby providing the resources to resolve the three problem cases presented against Social Functionalism. The way this might work is by adopting Nozick's (1981) Closest Continuer Schema, on which a social group G1 existing at t1 is identical with a social group G2 existing at a later time t2 iff all of the following four conditions obtain:

CC-1) G2 is the closest continuer of G1;

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[138] Both disjuncts should be read in a *de dicto* sense.

CC-2) G1 is the closest predecessor of G2;

CC-3) G2 is close enough to G1; and

CC-4) the degree to which G2 is close to G1 is significantly greater than the degree to which any other group G3 is close to G1 (where G3≠G2).

In saying that G2 is "the closest continuer" of G1, Nozick (1981, p. 35) means that the relevant properties of G2 causally depend upon the relevant properties of G1 (i.e. consistent with FC-2), and that no other group G3 has relevant properties that are as causally dependent upon G1's relevant properties (I discuss which properties are relevant on Nozick's schema shortly). Moreover, G1 is the closest predecessor of G2 just in case there is no other G1a at t1 such that G2 is the closest continuer of G1a. Now according to Nozick (1981, p. 60), the criterion for which properties are "relevant" (i.e. that decides whether G2's properties or G3's properties are more closely associated with G1's properties) may be a combined weighting of various measures of continuity. Thus, in this case, the criterion might include a weighting for both continuity in function and membership.

Nozick (1981) uses the closest continuer view to account for the diachronic identity of *persons*. Specifically, Nozick argues that such an account should include both psychological and bodily continuity. On this view, psychological continuity is weighted higher than bodily continuity, but in certain types of problem cases, bodily continuity alone is sufficient for diachronic identity. Such cases would include fission cases and cases in which there is an absence of psychological continuity (e.g. Alzheimer's cases). Similarly, it seems what is needed here is an account of the diachronic identity of social groups where functional continuity is weighted higher than membership-continuity, but membership-continuity suffices for diachronic identity in cases involving fission or an absence of functional continuity [see **section C.3.c.iii. Diachronic identity (p. 175)**].[139]

[139] In the first ANCYL fission case, since ANCYL1 and ANCYL2 have equal functional continuity with the original ANCYL, and since ANCYL1 has significantly greater membership continuity with the original ANCYL than does ANCYL2, ANCYL1 is the closer continuer of the original league (as implied by the Nozickian account). Moreover, in the second case, the Nozickian schema results in the correct result: ANCYL1 is the continuer of the league, since it has membership-continuity with the league, and membership-continuity suffices for group-membership in fission cases. Finally, in the third problem case, the sudden change in function is not a problem for the hybrid account, since there is still membership-continuity between the old league and the new league. Therefore, the hybrid account, together with a Nozickian schema, resolves all three problem cases raised against functional continuity as a criterion of diachronic identity for social groups.

So, should we rest content that we have found the solution to the social-individual problem? I think not, for three reasons. First, although the hybrid account solves some of the problems with Non-Reductive Individualism and Social Functionalism, it does not resolve all of the problems associated with these accounts. The hybrid account would, it seems, still need to employ the notion of supervenience to distinguish itself from Type Individualism. I argued, however, that it is very difficult to find a convincing account of supervenience.

Second, the proponent of the hybrid account must still furnish us with an adequate definition of functional continuity. This too, I have argued, is a difficult task without an obvious solution. Therefore, although the hybrid account resolves some problems that its ancestral accounts cannot resolve alone, it also accumulates their other problems.

Third, there may be interesting cases in which a group's diachronic identity seems to be determined by neither its function, nor its membership, but instead by the decisions of *other* social groups. That is, the holism of the social is a problem: neither membership continuity nor functional continuity can adequately account for the dependence of social groups on other social phenomena (such as other social groups). The sort of case I propose to examine might proceed as follows. Suppose, due to the recent[140] events surrounding Julius Malema, today's ANCYL splits into two sub-groups: ANCYL1 and ANCYL2. Moreover, suppose that Malema and 70% of ANCYL's members become members of ANCYL1, while only 30% of the members of ANCYL form part of ANCYL2. Thus, ANCYL1 has significantly greater membership continuity with ANCYL than does ANCYL2 with ANCYL. Moreover, assume that ANCYL1 sustains significantly greater functional continuity with ANCYL than does ANCYL2 with ANCYL – we can imagine that ANCYL1 sustains all the controversial ends that the original held, while ANCYL2 loses these goals.

In this case, according to the hybrid account, ANCYL1, but not ANCYL2, is identical with the original league. However, suppose the ANC (the parent body of the youth league) decides that ANCYL2, rather than ANCYL1, is the survivor of the league. For example, the ANC might point out that the *telos* of ANCYL2, but not the *telos* of ANCYL1, is aligned with the *telos* of the ANC. It seems, in this case, the ANC's decision trumps continuity in both membership and

[140] Since writing this section, Malema did leave the ANCYL and started his own party, called the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). Although, contrary to the counterexample presented here, Malema left with a minority of ANCYL supporters rather than the majority.

functionality, since the ANC's decision seems final. Thus, the hybrid account gives the incorrect answer.

I take it therefore that the hybrid account, although superior to its children accounts, is not free of problems. Much more work needs to be done on both the children accounts, and to the hybrid account (to accommodate the holism of the social) before we should accept the hybrid account as correct. I will proceed, therefore, to consider my (tentatively) favoured solution to the social-individual problem: Eliminative Individualism.

D. ELIMINATIVE INDIVIDUALISM

D.1. DRAWING CONCLUSIONS FROM Q1 AND Q2

So far I have considered the two questions raised by our alien interlocutor at the beginning of the thesis:

Q1. What relationships obtain among the members of a social group (the individual-individual problem)?
Q2. What is the relation between a social group and its members (the social-individual problem)?

As possible answers to Q1, I considered both Objectivist accounts (Elster's, the organic, and the teleological accounts), as well as Subjectivist accounts (Sartre's look, Gilbert's plural subject theory, and Searle's constructionism), and a hybrid between the teleological account and plural subject theory. I argued, however, that none of the answers to Q1 was convincing, and so, whether we could find an adequate answer to Q2 would determine whether we should conclude that an adequate answer to Q1 might yet be found. However, none of the answers to Q2 were convincing either. Non-reductionism (Social Dualism and Non-Reductive Individualism), Reduction (Logical Individualism, Type Individualism, and Social Functionalism), and a hybrid between Non-Reductive Individualism and Type Individualism, all suffered from their own problems. So, where does this leave us?

We are left, I think, without any certainty as to whether there are adequate solutions to Q1 and Q2 after all. This is not to say that such adequate resolutions are *impossible*, since the accounts I have considered may not be the best possible (although I have endeavoured to do the best I can on behalf of the sociologist). Nevertheless, the alien would most likely suggest that we should at least *consider* the possibility that Q1 and Q2 cannot receive an adequate solution. In this case, there are two possible conclusions.

First, in my discussion of Q1 and Q2, I assumed what I take to be common-sense intuitions about the nature of social groups. During the discussion I assumed that social groups are distinct from mere aggregates, that they can perform actions, are responsible for those actions, have value, and persist through time. Thus, we might conclude, from our failure to provide adequate solutions to Q1 and Q2, that our common-sense intuitions about social groups are problematic.

If we are prepared to sacrifice or alter some of these common-sense intuitions, we might arrive at successful answers to Q1 and Q2 (call this view the "Intuition-sacrifice account"). On the other hand, we might keep our intuitions constant, and arrive at the conclusion that the alien has believed right from the start: **social phenomena do not exist after all**. I call this claim, "Eliminative Individualism".[141] On this account, when we look out onto the Central Block concourse at Wits University, there is no social group called the "ANC youth-league": there are only individuals.

Let us consider each of these alternatives in reverse-order: Eliminative Individualism and then Intuition-sacrifice. The social scientists present in the discussion with the alien would become rather agitated if Eliminative Individualism were raised as a serious possibility, for if Eliminative Individualism is correct, then the sum of the social sciences (Folk Sociology) would seem to constitute a radically misleading, indeed false, theory that should be replaced by purely individualistic theories (such as Psychology and Neurophysiology). But not just social scientists would be uncomfortable with this result. For it seems strange to assert that the political parties we support, the governments we obey, and the countries of which we are patriotic citizens, do not exist. War, for example, seems an odd activity if there are no countries to fight for; and elections are strange events if there are no political parties for which to vote. Indeed, since war and elections are social phenomena, they would not exist on this account. Thus, on the face of it, Eliminative Individualism may appear ridiculous. Indeed, Flew describes the reality of the social as "inexpugnable" (1985, p. 102), and Lukes declares the denial of the existence of social reality "absurd" (1973, p. 124). Sheehy (2006a, p. 16) writes that "it is difficult to identify any compelling reasons to endorse" Eliminative Individualism, while Roth (2010) points out that in the literature "it is hardly controversial" that the social exists.

But the Intuition-sacrifice account is no more plausible than Eliminative Individualism. Suppose we begin to alter or rid ourselves of some of our fundamental, common-sense intuitions about social groups. It is difficult to know just which intuition(s) to deny. Should we sacrifice the intuition that social groups are distinct from mere aggregates? If we do, it seems we have collapsed into Eliminative Individualism, for Eliminative Individualism (about social

[141] Of course, one might argue that one of our intuitions regarding social groups is that social groups *exist*. And so, this second, Eliminative, option also involves intuition sacrifice. So, we can distinguish the intuition-sacrifice approach from Eliminative Individualism by pointing out that while the first involves maintaining the intuition that social groups exist, while sacrificing at least one of our other social intuitions, the Eliminative approach maintains all of our social intuitions but the intuition that social groups exist.

groups) might be seen as the view that social groups are nothing more than mere aggregates. Then perhaps we are better off sacrificing the intuition that social groups can perform joint actions. In this case, we might question whether there is any importance or value to social groups at all, since if social groups have no agency, they cannot make an impact on the world – they are inert, unimportant entities without which the world would continue unaffected. Maybe we should rather question the intuition that groups persist through time. Yet this would make a mockery of most of our common-sense and social-scientific talk of social groups. I cannot identify myself as a member of the ANCYL if the party ceases to exist before I have an opportunity to join. Thus it seems that sacrificing any of our common-sense intuitions about social groups provides us with little more comfort than adopting Eliminative Individualism. [For further reasons against adopting the intuition-sacrifice account, see **section A.4.b. Intuition (p. 36)**].

My preferred answer to the dilemma is to support Eliminative Individualism, since I do not think this is as hopeless a task as Flew, Lukes, Sheehy and Roth take it to be. I turn now to clarifying the scope of Eliminative Individualism and its model of elimination, and then defend the account against objections.

D.2. CLARIFYING THE ACCOUNT

D.2.a. Scope

As I have defined it, Eliminative Individualism is the claim that social *phenomena* do not exist. This is stronger than the claim that social *groups* do not exist. But almost all of the discussion thus far has concerned affirmative accounts of social groups, and so, an objector could argue that my argument for Eliminative Individualism supports merely an eliminativism of social groups rather than social phenomena generally.

There are reasons, however, for thinking that if social groups fail to exist, then neither do social phenomena generally. First, I argued that Searle uses social groups in his account of social institutions. For on Searle's account, a social institution exists only if there is *collective recognition* of a Status Function Declaration that asserts the existence of the institution. And I argued that this collective recognition presupposes the existence of a social group. Thus, on the most popular account of social institutions, institutions fail to exist if groups fail to exist. And,

together, social groups and institutions make up many, many social phenomena (arguably the vast majority of social phenomena).

Second, there does not seem to be a *prima facie* reason for thinking that the considerations I presented against affirmative accounts of social groups could not be extended against social phenomena more broadly. We might construct a similar taxonomy of accounts of money, for example. The economist might assert (reduction) that money can be reduced to the paper on which it is printed, or perhaps to the laws governing its exchange, or to the function it serves in society. Or the economist could hold (non-reduction) that money is distinct from its substrate, the laws that govern it, and its function. Against reductive accounts, we might assert objections from the holism of the social and its variable realisation in different economic systems. And against non-reductive accounts, we might argue that the token identity or supervenience asserted would be difficult to defend. Of course, much more work would need to be done here to expand these accounts and objections, but there does not seem to be any obvious reason for thinking that such an expansion cannot take place. I take it, then, that the objections I provided to social groups provide inductive support for similar objections to social phenomena generally.

I will proceed, therefore, under the assumption that Eliminative Individualism applies to social phenomena generally, and assess the account as such.

D.2.b. Models of elimination

The central claim of Eliminative Individualism is that:

EI-1) Social phenomena do not exist.

It is important to note that EI-1 is *not* the claim that the individualistic phenomena that comprise social phenomena do not exist. So, while EI-1 implies that the ANCYL does not exist, EI-1 does *not* claim that the individuals who call themselves "members" of the league do not exist. EI-1 is consistent with aggregates of individuals existing, but it is inconsistent with the idea that these aggregates are anything more than *mere* aggregates – i.e. EI-1 denies the existence of social groups that have collective agency, collective responsibility, collective value and collective persistence.

There are different ways of understanding EI-1, or different models of elimination. I consider four such models now (Instrumentalism, Kemeny-reduction, Rovane's group-persons, and eliminative explanation), and favour only the fourth.

D.2.b.i. Instrumentalism

♦ *Tuomela's Instrumentalism*

Interestingly, a search of the literature reveals that EI-1 once had a proponent. In Tuomela's earlier work (1983), he presents what he calls an "Eliminativist" view of social phenomena. The early Tuomela views the collection of common-sense and social scientific beliefs about the social as a theory, namely, "Folk Sociology". This theory, according to Tuomela, is correct in limited instances, and in those instances, it can be explained individualistically and defined in individualistic terms. Thus, some social phenomena can be reduced to individualistic phenomena, while others cannot. For this reason, Tuomela argues, social phenomena do not exist. However, although social phenomena do not exist, we should not yet eliminate Folk Sociology, for if we continue our Folk Sociological endeavours, we will eventually have more material to reduce to the individualist theory that replaces our social theories. Thus, although social phenomena do not exist, forming theories about them is useful for now. Social phenomena are thus "useful fictions".

Notice that Tuomela's account has something that my Eliminative Individualism lacks: Tuomela claims that talk about the social is useful in predicting and explaining behaviour. Thus, Tuomela supplements EI-1 with EI-2:

EI-2) Folk sociology is useful.

We could, therefore, label Tuomela's account as Instrumentalist, rather than Eliminativist.

I am unconvinced that Tuomela's Instrumentalism is satisfactory, however, because his support for the account is inadequate. If we let S refer to Folk Sociology, S* refer to a corrected version of S, and let T abbreviate the individualistic theory to which S* is reduced, we might summarise Tuomela's argument for EI-1 (the non-existence of social phenomena) as follows:

P1: If S* is reducible to T, and T is superior to S, then S is eliminated in its reduction to T.

P2: If (i) the well-defined terms in S derive their meaning from T, and (ii) the phenomena referred to by the well-defined terms in S are best explained by T, then S* is reducible to T, and T is superior to S.

P3: (i) and (ii) are true.

P4: So, S* is reducible to T, and T is superior to S. *[From P2 and P3]*

P5: So, S is eliminated in its reduction to T. *[From P1 and P4]*

P6: If S is eliminated in its reduction to T, then the social phenomena posited by S exist only if they are also posited by T.

P7: Social phenomena are not posited by T.

_____

Conc: Social phenomena do not exist. *[From P5 to P7]*

P3, however, is implausible because both (i) and (ii) are implausible. First, (i) amounts to the claim that Logical Individualism is true; but, I argued (with Mandelbaum) that Logical Individualism is implausible because of the holism of the social – i.e. because social terms are defined not exclusively in terms of individualistic concepts, but rather in terms of other social concepts [see **section C.3.a. Logical Individualism (p. 154)].** Tuomela would need to show, therefore, that all well-defined social terms are exceptional, in that they are definable exclusively individualistically, and do not display this holism – something he has not shown, and which it seems, would be rather difficult. Moreover, (ii) is the claim that terms in the corrected version of Folk Sociology (S*) will be explained by the individualistic sciences, which is a version of Explanatory Methodological Individualism. In **section D.2.b.ii. Kemeny-reduction (p. 196)**, however, I argue that Explanatory Methodological Individualism is dubious.

Thus, Tuomela's argument for EI-1 (the claim that social phenomena do not exist) is unconvincing. Moreover, Tuomela's support for EI-2 (the claim that Folk Sociology is useful) is also problematic. Tuomela argues that we should not yet eliminate Folk Sociology because the social sciences will eventually yield more material to reduce to the individualistic theory that eventually replaces our social theories. However, recall that Sawyer, Kincaid and Little present significant objections to the possibility of reduction for any but the simplest social phenomena, since more complex social phenomena are realised by wildly different individual phenomena [see **section C.3.b. Type Individualism (p. 159)**]. But it is precisely the more

complex social phenomena that the social sciences attempt to explain. Thus, I deny that the social sciences will in future furnish more material for reduction to individualist theories.

♦ *Dennettian Instrumentalism*

Thus far I have argued that the supporting argument that Tuomela provides for the combination of EI-1 and EI-2 is problematic. We might, however, attempt to reach the combination of EI-1 and EI-2 using a different supporting argument. I turn now to consider Dennett's Instrumentalist account of mental states, to assess whether we might construct a parallel account of social groups.[142] Dennett (1987) argues that in explaining and predicting events in the world, we might adopt a number of different *stances*. We might, for example, adopt a *physicalist* stance, which attempts to explain and predict events by citing laws about the movement of physical entities (microscopic or macroscopic). We predict that a tennis ball will drop to the earth at a certain velocity and at a certain time after we have thrown it up into the air, by using certain Newtonian laws of motion. On the other hand, we might adopt a *design* stance when explaining and predicting certain events. We explain why a calculator displays a "4" symbol after we press buttons on its surface in the order "2", "+", "2", "=" by citing the fact that the calculator was *designed* to solve maths equations. Finally, when we explain and predict human actions, we usually adopt what Dennett coins the "intentional stance".

On the intentional stance, we ascribe to the entity displaying the behaviour to be explained certain intentional states such as beliefs and desires. When a person leans backwards and puts his hand on a hot stove, we can predict that the person will remove his hand quickly thereafter. The primary reason for how we can predict this behaviour is neither because of Newtonian laws of motion, nor because the stove or the person is designed in a certain way. Instead, we can predict the person's behaviour because we ascribe to the person: a belief that the stove is causing him pain, a belief that removing his hand from the stove will alleviate that pain, and a desire to alleviate the pain. Viewing the subject as having these beliefs and desires allows us to predict his behaviour accurately in a way that would be far more tedious (assuming it is possible at all) from a physicalist or design stance.

Dennett (1987) holds that while the intentional stance provides us with a view of certain *objective* patterns in the world that would not otherwise be discernible using the physicalist and

[142] This alternative, Dennettian account, was suggested by Beck (2011, p. 2).

design stances, those patterns do not exist as anything more than patterns viewed from the intentional stance. So, while it is an objective fact about the world – i.e. it is true regardless of whether or not anyone notices this fact – that, all things being equal, persons try to alleviate their own physical pain, this fact is nothing but a pattern viewed from the intentional stance. On this view, for a subject S to perform an action A or to hold a belief B, just is for S to be an "intentional system" in which A or B forms part of the best "interpretation" of S. An *intentional system* is a system whose behaviour can be reliably predicted using the intentional stance, and an *interpretation* of S is a strategy for predicting the behaviour of S.

Now, the most obvious way to construct a parallel, Dennettian account of social phenomena would be to see explanations and predictions of social events as issuing from either an "individualist stance" or a "social stance". The individualist stance attempts to explain and predict social events by citing the behaviour of individuals, while the social stance cites social phenomena in its explanations and predictions. A social Dennettian position would claim that adopting a social stance will give us access to objective social patterns that would be extremely difficult to see from an individualistic stance, but these social patterns are nevertheless nothing more than patterns viewed from the social stance. A social phenomenon, on this account, would just be a phenomenon that forms part of a "social system", the best interpretation of which includes that phenomenon.

Applied to social groups, the account would most likely read: for a social group G to perform an action A or hold a belief (or other shared state) B, just is for G to be a social system in which A or B forms part of the best "interpretation" of G.[143] Although this view is primarily an account of group actions or shared states, it also provides, by implication, an account of social groups as *social systems*. But what does this *mean* exactly? I can see two possible candidates for answering this question.

One possible answer is to see a social group as an organism, capable of reproduction, growth and self-regulation (or some combination of these capacities). This is the organic account of social groups, which I argued is problematic [see **section B.2.b. Organic account (p. 44)]**.

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[143] The "best" interpretation of a phenomenon *at a given time* would not necessarily be the best interpretation at a later time. Right now, the best interpretation of groups is as social systems, but in future, an individualistic view may be better. If so, then the "fiction" of social groups will no longer be useful, and can be dropped.

A second interpretation of groups as systems is understanding social groups as collections of individuals with a shared *telos*. As discussed previously, the problem with the (best version of the) teleological account is that it agglomerates distinct social groups, and therefore requires the inclusion of an account of collective action to distinguish between social groups [see **section B.2.c. Teleological account (p. 50)**]. This, however, raises a problem. A social group is to be understood as a *social system*, which in turn should be understood as a collection of individuals with shared ends capable of collective action, but collective action (on the Dennettian account) is to be understood as that phenomena forming part of the best interpretation of the *social system*. Thus, the account appears circular. To avoid this circularity, the social Dennettian would need to solve the agglomeration problem associated with the **Broad** teleological account without using the notion of group action: not an easy task.

♦ *The conjunction of EI-1 and EI-2*

I have argued so far that the Tuomelian and Dennettian supporting arguments for the conjunction of EI-1 and EI-2 are problematic. In addition, it seems that, regardless of the support for EI-1 and EI-2, the *conjunction* of these two claims is incoherent, because they pull in opposing directions. If talk about social phenomena was useful in predicting and explaining events, then this would present strong support for the existence of social phenomena. For if social phenomena did not exist (in some sense or another), we would be surprised if we came to observe that social theories are indeed accurate. As Smart remarks,

> Is it not odd that the world should be such as to make a purely instrumental theory true? On the other hand, if we interpret the theory in a realistic way, then we have no need for such a cosmic coincidence. (Smart in Papineau, 1986, p. 269)

Put differently, if EI-2 is true, it seems that EI-1 is false. Perhaps this objection is not conclusive against the Instrumentalist, for it is logically possible that talk of social phenomena provides accurate predictions without social phenomena existing. Nevertheless, I take it that this objection, together with the objections raised against Tuomela's support for EI-1 and EI-2, is enough to place the burden of proof squarely on the shoulders of the Instrumentalist.

D.2.b.ii. Kemeny-reduction

There is another way that Eliminative Individualism may be understood to have appeared in the literature. Traditionally, Explanatory Methodological Individualism (the claim that all social phenomena can be fully explained individualistically) has been used to support Type

Individualism (a Nagel-reductive account that conserves the existence of the social). This is because Explanatory Methodological Individualism has often been asserted as a theory about the explanation of *types* of social phenomena, namely:

> **Type Explanatory Methodological Individualism: any given <u>type</u> of social phenomenon can be fully explained by a given <u>type</u> of individualistic phenomenon.**

If every type of social phenomenon can be explained by a corresponding type of social phenomenon, this strongly supports Type Individualism **(p. 159)**. I previously argued, however, that Type Individualism cannot account for the variable realisation of the social. I am more interested here, though, in a weaker version of Explanatory Methodological Individualism, specifically, a claim about the explanation of *token* social phenomena:

> **Token Explanatory Methodological Individualism: any given <u>token</u> social phenomenon can be fully explained by a given <u>token</u> set of individualistic phenomena.**

On the token account (as on the type account) social phenomena of a given type must be fully explicable by individualistic phenomena, but (contrary to the type account) those individualistic phenomena need not belong to the same individualistic type, and so the token account does not support Nagel reduction (and therefore is not faced with the challenge of variable realisation). Nevertheless, the token account could be used to perform an eliminative (i.e. non-conservative) reduction of the social to the individual, as on Kemeny and Oppenheim's model of reduction.

The traditional model of elimination used by Eliminative Materialists, or those who hold that mental states do not exist, is the Kemeny-reductive model.[144] Kemeny and Oppenheim (1956) propose that for any two theories (or any two sets of theories) T1 and T2, T2 can be replaced by, and hence can be eliminated in favour of, T1 if the following three conditions are met:

KO-1) T2 cannot be Nagel-reduced to T1.

---

[144] Notice that Eliminative Materialism implies Eliminative Individualism, but it is not the case that Eliminative Individualism implies Eliminative Materialism. If there are no mental states, then it seems there are no individuals, and therefore, no groups of individuals. But it is possible that there are no groups, and yet, there are mental states. We can imagine, for example, that an individual could live alone in the universe [consider the alien interlocutor introduced in **section A.1. The problem (p. 1)**]. That individual could have mental states, but not be a member of any social group.
Some philosophers would argue, however, that certain mental states cannot exist without social groups. Burge argues that propositional attitudes with content that successfully refer to states, events or objects in the world require a *community*. I consider this claim in **section D.4.a. Burge's account of content (p. 230)**.

KO-2) All observations that can be explained by T2 can be fully explained by T1.[145]

KO-3) T1 is at least as simple as T2 after T1 has explained all observations made by T2.

The idea here is that if T1 can explain everything that T2 can explain (i.e. KO-2) without adding any undue complexity to the explanation (KO-3), and there are no type-type laws linking T2 to T1 (KO-1), then T2 is redundant, and so, should be replaced by T1. So, let T2 be Folk Sociology and let T1 be the individualistic sciences (e.g. psychology, neuroscience, etc.). Then, KO-1 is plausible, since I argued against Type Individualism that Nagel-reduction of Folk Sociology to individualistic science is problematic because of the variable realisation of the social. Thus, the Eliminativist wishing to perform a Kemeny-reduction of the social to the individual has two tasks remaining. He must show that Token Explanatory Methodological Individualism is true, since this will imply that KO-2 is true. Moreover, he must argue that the individualistic sciences used to explain the observations explained by Folk Sociology are at least as simple as Folk Sociology itself (KO-3). I consider each of these tasks in turn.

♦ *Token Explanatory Methodological Individualism (KO-2)*

Is it true that every token social phenomenon can be explained fully in purely individualistic terms? The question appears to be three-ways ambiguous. Consider the following three statements:

S-1) Every instance of paranormal activity (e.g. stigmata, poltergeists, ESP, alien abduction, etc.) can be explained scientifically.

S-2) The hardness of diamonds can be explained by chemistry.

S-3) The death of Mrs Smith can be explained by the burglar firing his gun.

When cynics about the paranormal claim that paranormal activity can be *explained* scientifically, what they mean is that we can explain why some people *believe* they experience paranormal activity, by citing a set of scientifically accepted entities or events. Thus, we can explain *away* the experience of these individuals as misperception of non-paranormal phenomena. For example, scientists can explain away the experience of alien abduction by citing a range of factors, such as false memory implantation through hypnosis, hallucination caused by sleep paralysis, a response to the trauma of undergoing surgery, or a fabrication by

[145] Precisely what is meant by "explained" in the Kemeny-Oppenheim model will be discussed shortly.

those with a prior fascination with reports of extra-terrestrial or paranormal activity (Clancy, 2005; Forrest, 2008). Thus, explaining away paranormal activity involves operating from the assumption that paranormal activity does not in fact exist, and that persons who have experiences of these phenomena have false beliefs about what they perceived.

By contrast, explaining the hardness of diamonds chemically does not involve explaining *away* the appearance of hardness. When chemists attempt to explain the strength of diamonds, they explain that the underlying chemical bonds which make up diamonds are such that they create an incredibly hard substance. Rather than explaining *away* the hardness of diamonds, chemists explain *why* diamonds do in fact have the property of hardness. Thus, explaining the hardness of diamonds chemically operates from the assumption that diamonds are indeed hard, and that the belief that diamonds are hard is true.

Finally, like the diamond case, explaining the death of Mrs Smith by citing the burglar's gun firing involves explaining *why* her death occurred, rather than explaining away the mere appearance of her death. However, there is a crucial difference between the diamond case and the murder case. Chemists explain the hardness of diamonds by citing a property of diamonds. But, the death of Mrs Smith is not explained by citing a *property* of her death – instead, it is explained by citing the *cause* of her death: the burglar's firing of his gun *caused* the death of Mrs Smith. By contrast, the property of having strong chemical bonds does not *cause* the hardness of diamonds; rather, having strong chemical bonds *is*, or *constitutes*, the hardness of diamonds.

So, we might distinguish among three types of explanation. "X explains Y" could mean that (i) X explains away the apparent existence of Y, that (ii) X is constitutive of Y, or that (iii) X caused Y. I will call these three types of explanation: eliminative, constitutive and causal explanations respectively. Now, we see that Token Explanatory Methodological Individualism might be interpreted in three ways:

> **$TEMI_{eliminative}$: any given token social phenomenon can be explained away as a misperception by citing a token set of individualistic phenomena.**
>
> **$TEMI_{constitutive}$: the underlying nature of any given token social phenomenon can be explained fully by citing the token set of individualistic phenomena that comprise it.**
>
> **$TEMI_{causal}$: the cause of any given token social phenomenon can be fully specified by citing a token set of individualistic phenomena.**

Methodological Individualists (whether they espouse the token or type version of the account) do not specify which of the three senses of "explain" they mean, but vacillate and ambiguate between the constitutive and causal meanings of "explanation", leaving the eliminative account unconsidered. But what is important here is which of the three senses of "explanation" Kemeny and Oppenheim intend when they use the term "explain" in KO-2, and so which of the three senses of "explain" are required for Kemeny-reduction. Unfortunately, Kemeny and Oppenheim are not explicit about precisely which sense of "explanation" is involved in KO-2, but the following paragraphs are helpful in deciphering an implicit definition of explanation in their work:

> It is further important to note that from a logical point of view there is no difference between explanation and prediction. The distinction is a pragmatic one, depending on whether the fact deduced is already known or yet observed. Hence we will use "explain" to cover both processes…. A certain oversimplification is involved in this schematic representation. We intentionally overlook the fact that most observations involve a margin of error. (Kemeny, 1956, p. 8)

Kemeny and Oppenheim are explicit that they do not intend "explanation" to be understood under the eliminative explanation interpretation, since they state that they "intentionally overlook the fact that most observations involve a margin of error", and they would not *overlook* error if utilising an eliminative explanation. Moreover, notice that Kemeny and Oppenheim hold that observations are "deduced" from their explanations. Here, Kemeny and Oppenheim seem to be referring to the deductive-nomological model of explanation, in which the explanandum (i.e. the observation) is meant to follow deductively from the explanans (i.e. the explanation), where the explanans comprises two statements: one asserts certain laws or generalisations, while the other concerns the conditions under which the explanandum phenomenon occurs (Hempel, 1966, sec. 5.2). That Kemeny and Oppenheim mean explanation as on the deductive-nomological model is further supported by their assertion that explanations and predictions are interchangeable, since both past and future observations follow equally from the explanans in a deductive-nomological explanation.

Now a deductive-nomological explanation may be either a *causal* explanation or a *constitutive* explanation. A causal deductive-nomological explanation is given when the laws or generalisations involved in the explanans are causal, of the form: "whenever G events occur, F events occur" (Hempel, 1966, p. 53). By contrast, the explanation is constitutive if the laws or generalisations given in the explanans are of the form "observable entities of type O are concomitant with underlying theoretical entities of type E". So, for example, the generalisation "whenever a bullet passes through certain parts of the brain, the brain ceases to function" is a

causal generalisation (used to explain Mrs Smith's death at the hand of the robber). By contrast, the generalisation that "hardness in substances is concomitant with strong molecular bonds" is a constitutive explanation (used to explain the hardness of diamonds).

Thus, because Kemeny and Oppenheim seem to intend to use the term "explain" in KO-2 to refer to deductive-nomological explanation, and because deductive-nomological explanation can be either causal or constitutive, this suggests that Kemeny and Oppenheim might intend to use either causal or constitutive explanation in their reductive model. However, further consideration shows that constitutive explanation cannot be used in a Kemeny-model reduction, for the following reason. Suppose that a given social phenomenon S is correctly constitutively explained by citing the individualistic phenomena <I1…In> that comprise it. Then, insofar as <I1…In> exist, so too does S exist. But <I1…In> do exist, by hypothesis (since the explanation is correct), and so, S exists. But, the Kemeny-reductive model is not conservative, and so S does *not* exist on this model. And so, constitutive explanation cannot be the form of explanation used in a Kemeny-reduction. I take it, then, that the form of explanation required for a Kemeny-reduction of the social is *causal*, and so, $TEMI_{causal}$ (the claim that the cause of every social phenomenon can be specified in entirely individualistic terms) is the relevant disambiguation of Token Methodological Individualism that would imply KO-2.[146] Let us consider, then, whether $TEMI_{causal}$ is true.

Recall that Folk Sociology asserts the *holism* of the social – i.e. the claim that all social concepts are embedded in the total social conceptual framework. Thus defined, the doctrine of social holism is a conceptual claim. However, Folk Sociology also supports a *causal* holism of the social, or the claim that social phenomena are embedded in a causal network in which the nodes are other social phenomena. For example, the *election* of Obama (social phenomenon [SP1])

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[146] One might object to the claim that causal explanation is utilised in KO-2 in much the same way that I objected to the claim that constitutive explanation is utilised in KO-2. I argued that Kemeny and Oppenhemin cannot use constitutive explanation in their model of reduction, since a correct constitutive explanation of a social phenomenon would imply that the social phenomenon exists (but Kemeny-Oppenheim reduction is meant to eliminate the social). Similarly, one could argue that a causal explanation of a social phenomenon also implies the existence of that phenomenon, and so, cannot be utilised by Kemeny and Oppenheim. However, it is possible to explain social phenomena causally without implying their existence, since we can cite the causes of the *individualistic phenomena that we take to constitute those social phenomena*, rather than cite the causes of the social phenomena themselves. For example, when explaining the voting patterns of white South Africans, we can give the causes that explain why each individual who is both white and takes himself to be a citizen of South Africa makes a particular mark on his ballot, rather than explaining why white South Africans as a group vote as they do. Then, our explanation implies the existence of individuals who take themselves to be South Africans, and it implies the existence of pieces of paper called "ballots", but it does not imply the existence of South Africa, nor of an election.

was caused by a number of factors, such as *dissatisfaction of the American public over the Bush administration* (SP2), which was caused by *the way the Bush administration handled the war on terrorism* (SP3), which was caused by the *Republican policy on war* (SP4), etc. Thus, to give a full causal explanation of SP1, we need to cite SP2, SP3, SP4, etc. Hence, if the full causal explanation of SP1 can be given in purely individualistic terms, the $TEMI_{causal}$ proponent must hold that *each* of the social phenomena (i.e. SP2, SP3, SP4, etc.) in the causal network in which SP1 is embedded can be fully described in purely individualistic terms. This, it seems, would presuppose that that every token social phenomenon in the causal network (i.e. SP1, SP2, SP3, SP4, etc…) is token identical with a token set of individualistic phenomena (i.e. that NRI-3 from Non-Reductive Individualism is true), but I argued earlier that NRI-3 is problematic. Thus, $TEMI_{causal}$ is problematic at least to the extent that NRI-3 is problematic.

Thus far I have argued that KO-2 is problematic because $TEMI_{causal}$ is problematic. Now I turn to consider KO-3, or the claim that individualistic theories are at least as simple as Folk Sociology.

♦ *Simplicity (KO-3)*

Two criteria might be used to assess whether one theory is simpler than another in accounting for the same observations: parsimony and elegance (see A. Baker, 2010). Parsimony is a measure of the ontological simplicity of a theory, or a measure of how many distinct types of entities the theory postulates; elegance is a measure of the syntactic simplicity of the theory, or a measure of the quantity and complexity of the hypotheses posited by the theory. Just how these two criteria of simplicity should be weighted in coming to an overall judgement of simplicity is debatable, and often the two criteria pull in opposite directions (as we shall see shortly). Nevertheless, judgements concerning the weighting of the two criteria can often be made intuitively on a case-by-case basis.

In KO-3, Kemeny and Oppenheim insist that for T2 to be Kemeny-reduced to T1, T1 must be at least as simple as T2 even after T1 has fully explained the observations that T2 explains. Now consider that a complete individualistic causal explanation of the election of Obama would look like something like this:

> The election of Obama was caused by the dissatisfaction of <American citizen 1 & American citizen 2 & …. American citizen *n*> with <Bush administration member 1 & Bush administration member 2 & …. Bush administration member *n*>, which was caused by the way <Bush administration member 1 & Bush administration member 2 & …. Bush administration member *n*> handled the attempt to eliminate <Al-Qaeda member 1 & Al-Qaeda member 2 & …. Al-Qaeda member *n*>,

> which was caused by <doctrine 1 & doctrine 2 & … doctrine *n*> held true by <Republican member 1 & Republican member 2 & Republican member *n*>, which was caused by…

This explanation is abbreviated for the sanity of the reader, since the fully specified explanation would cite every single American citizen, every member of the Bush administration, etc. The fully specified individualistic explanation might continue for many hundreds or thousands of pages. By contrast, the corresponding social explanation would take no more than a handful of lines.

On the other hand, however, individualistic theories are more parsimonious than Folk Sociology. Folk Sociology postulates the existence of *both* social phenomena and individualistic phenomena, whereas individualistic theories merely postulate the existence of individualistic phenomena. Hence, Folk Sociology is committed to the existence of more types of entities than are individualistic theories. My intuition is that in this case Folk Sociology's significant elegance (when compared with purely individualistic explanation) outweighs its comparatively small lack of parsimony. This is especially so because the postulation of the existence of social phenomena need not be taken to involve the postulation of a distinct type of *entity* (as on Social Dualism), but only a distinct type of *property* (as on Non-Reductive Individualism).

I take it, then, that KO-3 is dubious, since Folk Sociology appears simpler than individualistic theories in causally explaining social phenomena. But if KO-2 is problematic and KO-3 is dubious, then the successful elimination of the social by means of a Kemeny-reduction is unlikely.

D.2.b.iii. Rovane's group-persons

Rovane (1998, 2004a, 2004b) argues that social groups are *persons*, in the same sense that individual humans are persons. As such, groups are *individuals* in the same sense that humans are individuals. On this view, then, there are no social groups – only individuals. So in some sense, groups do not exist. Rovane argues for this view as follows:

> P1: *x* is a person iff *x* is a rational agent (1998, ch. 3; 2004a, p. 555).

P2: *x* is a rational agent iff *x* is capable of deliberation and having a point of view (1998, ch. 3; 2004a, p. 556).[147]

P3: Social groups are capable of deliberation and having a point of view (1998, ch. 4; 2004a, p. 556).

P4: So, social groups are persons. *[From P1 to P3]*

P5: If *x* is a person, then *x* is an individual (1998, ch. 6; 2004b, p. 188).

———

Conc: Social groups are individuals. *[From P4 and P5]*

The critical literature on Rovane's account has focused on P1, P2 and P4: i.e. on whether persons are equivalent to rational agents (Degaynesford, 2002, p. 173; Wallace, 2000, p. 315); whether Rovane's account of rational agency is correct (Wallace, 2000, pp. 316-318); and whether social groups are persons proper (Levi, 2004). I will constrain my discussion here, instead, to what Rovane means by an "individual" in P5 and the conclusion.

What exactly does Rovane mean by an "individual"? Rovane (2004a, p. 555) states that her account "entails that there could be group persons composed of many human beings and multiple persons within a single [i.e. individual] human being." An *individual* human being, on this view, is an important sense a *multiple* (see Ward, 2011). As an individual human being, I contain within myself multiple points of view, each of which can enter in my deliberation process to reach an "all-things-considered judgement" (2004b, p. 188). Each of these points of view within me are "engaged as a person" during this deliberation process, and so (for Rovane) each of these points of view within me *is* a person (1998, p. 123; 2004a, p. 557). What makes *me* a person that contains these distinct persons within me, is that I come to an all-thing-

[147] Wallace (2000) understands P2 as asserting that *x* is a rational agent iff *x does in fact* deliberate and has a point of view. By contrast, my reading of Rovane holds that on her account, rational agents need only have the *capacity* for deliberation and a point of view. Thus, on Wallace's view, Rovane's account is not committed to the view that all social groups *are* persons, but merely that only those groups *that exercise these capacities* are persons. That is, "Rovane is arguing only for the *possibility* of group persons" (Wallace, 2000, p. 313 emphasis in the original). I have not adopted Wallace's reading, however, for two reasons.
First, I do not think Wallace has provided an accurate representation of Rovane's account. Rovane is explicit that she means to include agents *capable* of rationality as rational agents. For example, Rovane (2004a, p. 556) writes: "When I say that anything that is *capable* of arriving at and implementing all-things-considered judgments qualifies as a person, I mean to include, in particular, groups" (emphasis in the original).
Second, Wallace's reading won't provide the conclusion I wish to support with Rovane's account: that *no* social groups exist (i.e. EI-1). For the sake of the argument, then, I am interested in exploring my reading of Rovane (i.e. P2), even if it is unfaithful to her account (although I believe it is faithful) since I am primarily interested here in supporting EI-1.

considered judgement. That is, I arrive at rational unity by engaging these disparate individual persons within me.

For example, suppose one part of me wants to eat the chocolate placed before me, while another part of me suggests that I should not: I have worked too hard on my diet to capitulate now. On Rovane's view, there are two persons within me, the chocolate-lover and the dieter, each with his own perspective. Each presents his view for deliberation, and I arrive at an all-thing-considered judgement. I am an individual human being who is also a person, with multiple persons within me. (Similarly, a group is an individual person, with multiple persons within it).

But this conception of an individual as a *multiple* is problematic in the context of considering Rovane's account as providing support for EI-1. Rovane has provided an account of social groups as individuals, but at the cost of characterising individuals as *multiples*. Indeed, we might say that an individual on Rovane's account is a *collection of persons*. And this collection of persons on Rovane's account is unified by the pursuit of a rational unity, or an all-things-considered judgement. The structure of Rovane's "individual", therefore, is suspiciously similar to the structure of a social group specified by the teleological solution to Q1 **(p. 50)**, in which group members work towards a common goal (in this case rational unity). Indeed, Rovane seems to have constructed an account of personal identity that reduces *the individual to a social group*, rather than an account of the group that (eliminatively) reduces social groups to the individual. That is, even if we accept the conclusion of Rovane's argument, we have not eliminated the social, since Rovane's individual is social. And therefore, Rovane's account fails to support EI-1.

D.2.b.iv. A fourth approach: eliminative explanation

Thus far I have rejected three strategies for supporting EI-1 (the claim that social phenomena do not exist): Instrumentalism (both Tuomelian and Dennettian), Kemeny-reduction and Rovane's Group-persons account. In discussing Kemeny-reduction, I argued that neither causal nor constitutive explanation can be used as a successful ground for eliminating social phenomena. However, what has not been discussed in the social literature is the possibility of using eliminative explanation as a model for eliminating social phenomena. I wish to consider this possibility now.

Recall that paranormal activity is *explained* by science insofar as experiences of paranormal activity are explained *away* by scientists (as hallucinations or false-memory implants, for

example). I called this form of explanation, "eliminative explanation", and defined $TEMI_{eliminative}$ as the claim that any given token social phenomenon can be explained away as a misperception by citing a token set of individualistic phenomena. In much the same way that psychology and logic can explain away the "observation" that there are prophetic crystal balls (see Ramsey, 2007, sec. 1), $TEMI_{eliminative}$ (if correct) would explain away the experience of social phenomena. This position would deny the Instrumentalist claim about the usefulness of talking about the social (EI-2) just as the scientist would deny the usefulness of talking about paranormal activity. That is, $TEMI_{eliminative}$ implies that we replace EI-2 with the combination of EI-3 and EI-4:

EI-3) Folk Sociology is a radically false and misleading theory.

EI-4) Social terms have no referent.

On this view, the common-sense intuitions and basic social scientific hypotheses regarding the social together comprise a theory that is both radically false and misleading. This account posits that talk about the social is harmful to scientific progress, just as talk about crystal balls and demons is harmful to scientific progress. Social terms are not, as Tuomela would have it, "placeholders" for the individualistic terms to which we will later find they correspond (see Rorty, 1979, p. 81); but, instead, we should eliminate social terms from our vocabulary entirely. Just as the terms "demons" and "magic" have no referent (by "magic" I mean the purported ability to alter physical objects by supernatural means), so too do social terms refer to nothing in the world. The task of the individualistic sciences is not to explain social phenomena *causally* (as on a Kemeny-reduction), but rather, to explain *away* social phenomena the same way that scientists have explained away paranormal activity, crystal balls and demons.

Henceforth, to distinguish Eliminative Individualism from Instrumentalism and a Kemeny-reductive approach, let the term "Eliminative Individualism" refer to the conjunction of EI-1, EI-3, and EI-4, and let the model of elimination utilised by Eliminative Individualism be $TEMI_{eliminative}$.

In the next section, I respond to the charge that Eliminative Individualism is absurd. Thereafter, I discuss objections to Eliminative Individualism from areas of philosophy other than Social Ontology. And finally, I consider whether Eliminative Individualism is capable of explaining "thick" social phenomena, which involve complex patterns that emerge as a result of human interaction.

D.3. RESPONDING TO THE ABSURDITY OF ELIMINATIVE INDIVIDUALISM

Perhaps the reason why Eliminative Individualism, as I have defined it, has not been considered in the literature is that it seems *prima facie* "absurd" (Lukes, 1973, p. 124; Sheehy, 2006a, p. 16). I take it that if a claim, or conjunction of claims, T is absurd, then either T is impossible (logically or nomologically), or T contradicts common belief and no reason can be given for how T could be true. Thus, the argument I will sketch for the claim that Eliminative Individualism is not absurd, has two parts. First, I argue that it is possible that $TEMI_{eliminative}$ is correct, and that we can provide a reason for how $TEMI_{eliminative}$ could be true. Then, I do the same for EI-3; and since EI-4 follows from EI-3, and EI-1 follows from EI-3 and EI-4, I thereby also indirectly object to the absurdity of EI-1 and EI-4. Importantly, I am not arguing in this section that $TEMI_{eliminative}$ and EI-3 are *true* – merely that they are not absurd.

D.3.a. Eliminative explanation model ($TEMI_{eliminative}$)

Suppose that in a thousand years from now it is *known* that God does not exist, neither as Theists define Him (as an omnipotent, omniscient, omni-benevolent person who created the universe and exists outside of it), nor in any other sense (such as the Pantheistic concept of God as one with the world). In this future world, philosophers, scientists and the ordinary citizen have, through some form of reasoning unknown to us now, reached infallible certainty that God does not exist. The belief that God exists is no longer held by anybody, except perhaps by a handful of the most delusional psychotics.

In this future world, one of the most fruitful and interesting areas of inquiry amongst historians and psychologists is what they call "Psychology of Religion", in which they attempt to understand how it is possible that so many of the people who lived a thousand years prior to them could have believed in something as implausible as the existence of God. Religio-psychologists notice two trends among those who believed in God's existence. First, many of these individuals *wanted*, or were motivated, to believe in God's existence despite lacking sufficient evidence for the existence of God. And second, Religio-psychologists discover that those who strongly believed in the existence of God had a neurological makeup that lent itself to such a belief – Religio-psychologists posit that Neurotheology can be utilised to explain why many of the most ardent believers had apparently "divine" experiences. So, Religio-psychologists utilise both **psychological** and **neurological** explanations to explain away the belief in God's existence.

Similarly, the lone alien who knows nothing of the social might attempt to explain away our beliefs concerning the existence of social phenomena in much the same way. First, the alien would attempt to provide a **psychological** explanation for our belief in social phenomena, by explaining why we are motivated to believe in the existence of social phenomena despite lacking sufficient evidence for their existence. Second, it would show how our **neurological** makeup leads us to believe in the existence of social phenomena.

D.3.a.i. Psychological explanation

Consider the psychological explanation that Religio-psychologists might offer for why people might believe in the existence of God. They would most probably argue that those who believed in God did so because: (i) they felt the world lacked **meaning and purpose** without God (Cottingham, 2003, pp. 9-15; Stroope, 2013); (ii) they felt **anxious** without the ability to call upon God as an authority (Sartre, 1943 [2005]); (iii) they longed to **connect** with something greater than themselves (Nozick, 1981, ch. 6); (iv) they wanted the feeling of being **held** by the perfect parent (Rempel, 1997); and because (v) they wanted to feel a sense of **belonging** (Stroope, 2011).

Social phenomena, and specifically social groups, seem to play precisely the same role as God does (or did) in our psychology. In a world where God is losing his foothold, social groups are planting themselves securely. We join *clubs*, *political groups* and enter into *relationships* and *marriages* to find **meaning and purpose**; we call upon our *family* and *circle of friends* to support and quell our **anxiety** over our choices and decisions; we fight as members of *armies* and *protest groups* with the hope that this will allow us to **connect** to a cause greater than ourselves; we seek to be **held** by the security of belonging to the *in-group* of our *work colleagues*; and we emigrate, travel and search for the *culture* or *country* where we feel we **belong** (Stroope, 2011). Indeed, social groups are so important to us, that whether or not we feel that we belong to a social group can impact our identity, psychological well-being, and physical health (Kraus & Wulff, 2005; Tajfel, 1981; Ueno, 2005).

Thus, a case can be made for the view that we believe in the existence of social phenomena because they hold enormous psychological value to us. We believe in the existence of social phenomena, because, ultimately, without feeling their presence we would feel entirely alone in the world. It is no wonder then why people cling so desperately to the belief that social phenomena exist. Importantly, however, just because we may not like a world without social

phenomena, this is no reason to support the claim that such a world is not the actual world. As Schopenhauer points out, the truth may be rather unpalatable, but this is no reason to deny it:

> I shall be told, I suppose, that my philosophy is comfortless—because I speak the truth; and people prefer to be assured that everything the Lord has made is good. Go to the priests, then, and leave philosophers in peace! (Schopenhauer, 2004, p. 3)

D.3.a.ii. Neurological explanation

♦ *The Gestalt Laws*

Thus far I have discussed how we might provide a psychological explanation for why individuals cling to the notion that there are social phenomena. However, we can give a deeper reason why humans believe in the existence of social phenomena: the human brain is designed to group together objects (or people) in its perceptual field (see Kohler, 1920; Metzger, 1936 [2006]; Wertheimer, 1923 for the original statement of the Gestalt Laws). Gestalt psychologists postulate various principles in accordance with which the human brain experiences groupings of shapes or stimuli as a single object. These principles include the laws of: (i) Pragnanz, (ii) similarity, (iii) common fate, and (iv) familiarity.

The law of *Pragnanz* involves experiencing a stimulus in the simplest fashion possible. Consider the Olympic symbol in **Figure 5**:

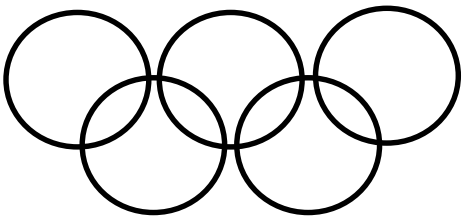


Figure 5: Olympic symbol

The brain experiences this picture as five overlapping, complete circles because this is the simplest possible experience. The picture could, for example, have been experienced as involving nine non-overlapping circle-parts, but the law of Pragnanz does not favour this more complex experience.

The law of *similarity* states that the brain experiences similar objects as grouped together. Consider **Figure 6** (from E. B. Goldstein, 2008, p. 75):

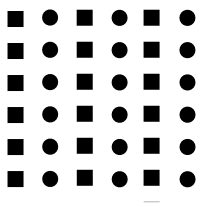


Figure 6: Squares and circles

Rather than experiencing the diagram as involving 36 individual dots, some square and some circular, the brain organises the experience as comprising six distinct vertical groups of dots.

The law of *common fate* posits that the brain tends to group objects that are moving in the same direction, or towards a common goal.

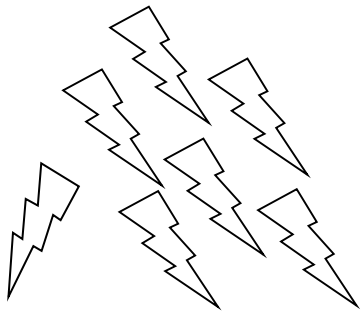


Figure 7: Lightning bolts

Looking at **Figure 7**, we experience all the thunderbolts but one as belonging to a group, since they (but not the left-most) are moving in the same direction.

Finally, the law of *familiarity*, or Pareidolia, states that we experience objects as grouped together if the grouping is meaningful or familiar. Consider this photograph (**Figure 8**) taken of the surface of Mars by the NASA Viking spacecraft in 1976 (from Garvin, 2001):

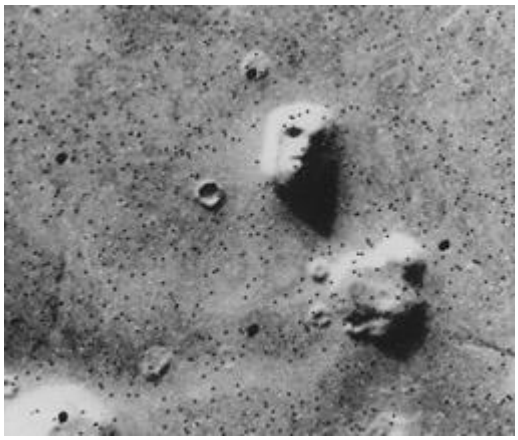


Figure 8: "Face" on Mars (1976)

When NASA released this photograph there was mass interest, with many proclaiming that there was a "face" on Mars that must have been placed there by a current or ancient civilisation by altering the landscape. However, after careful photography with better resolution and lighting, it was later discovered that the location does not resemble a face at all (from Garvin, 2001):

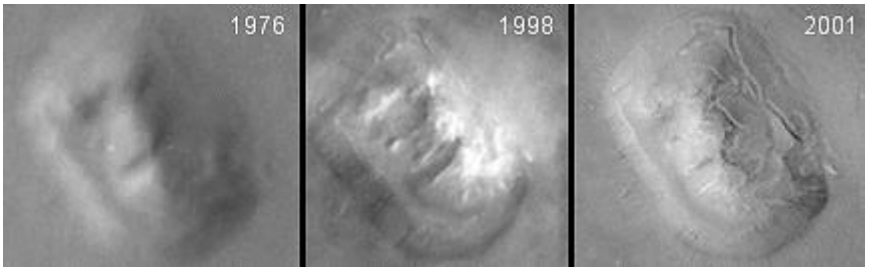


Figure 9: Enhanced "face" on Mars (1976-2001)

People saw a face in a mass of mountains because of the law of familiarity – the lines and shadows of the photo were grouped together as a face because the grouping held meaning and familiarity to those who saw it. That some conspiracy theorists today still insist that there is a face on Mars and that NASA has doctored the photos to make the face "disappear", is testament to the law of familiarity.

The Gestalt Laws (also known as the Gestalt principles) are invoked by cognitive psychologists to explain how the human brain groups certain shapes together. However, the very same laws might be used to show how we group *individuals* together into social groups. The law of *Pragnanz* explains why when we see a number of individuals together, we tend to count them as one object (i.e. a social group) rather than seeing them as a number of unrelated individuals.

We use the law of *similarity* when we ascribe collective actions and attitudes (such as beliefs and intentions) to groups – i.e. because we see a number of individuals acting in a similar fashion or expressing similar attitudes, we experience these individuals as collectively acting or collectively believing. Gilbert's *de dicto* plural subject account is a good example of this: a collection of individuals belongs to a plural subject if they share a common description. And the law of *common fate* explains why *telos* is such an important notion in many of the answers to the individual-individual and social-individual problems: if our brains are wired to experience individuals with a common goal as belonging to the same group, it should be expected that we would define groups by their goals. Finally, the law of *familiarity* suggests that our brains prime us to experience groups wherever we can, since groups are familiar and meaningful [as on the psychological explanation discussed in **section D.3.a.i. Psychological explanation (p. 208)**].

So, assuming that the Gestalt Laws correctly describe the way the brain represents our experiences, we can explain why people report that they can quite literally *see* groups, the same way we see faces. This accounts for one reason why common-sense suggests that Eliminative Individualism is absurd: it seems absurd to deny what we all seem to *see* in our everyday experience. Lukes (1973, p. 123) elucidates this objection when he argues that because we have direct perceptual access to the social, it is ridiculous to deny social reality. Thus, the Gestalt Laws provide a further explanation over and above the psychological explanation for why we believe in the existence of social groups: our brains are wired to see groups.

However, the Folk Sociologists will legitimately point out that this neurological explanation does not, as it stands, explain *away* social phenomena. Consider as an analogy the perceptual apparatus required to see the shapes of objects. If the neurological explanation I have offered explains away the existence of social phenomena, then so too does the claim that our eyes and brains are wired to experience objects as shaped, explain away the existence of shape. But of course we cannot explain away the existence of shape in this way, and so, I have not adequately explained away social phenomena. Indeed, that our brains are wired to experience social groups might be evidence *for* the existence of groups, in the same way that the fact that our brains are wired to see shape is evidence for the existence of shaped objects. To reach the conclusion I desire, to explain away social groups, I need the further claim that our perceptual apparatus (i.e. the Gestalt Laws) may be radically and consistently mistaken specifically with regard to our apparent perception of social groups. Notice that this further claim cannot be made in the case

of shape, for it seems impossible that the senses could be radically and consistently mistaken with regard to the shape of objects (see Bennett, 1971, ch. 4; Leon, 2002).

♦ *Explaining away social phenomena using the Gestalt Laws*

Fortunately, however, I believe I can make a case for this further claim (that we could be radically and consistently mistaken) with regard to the experience of social groups, in two parts. First, I argue that in *any* given case, we could be wrong in an apparent perception of a social group. This does not imply, however, that we could be wrong in *every* experience of a group, but it does raise some doubt about what seem to be infallible experiences of social groups. Second, I present an evolutionary objection to the claim that we could be consistently mistaken in our perception of groups. I argue, however, that the objection is unsuccessful.

To support the first part of the argument, consider the following two cases. The first case seeks to show that in any given case in which common-sense would agree that a social group exists, the group members or an onlooker may *incorrectly* experience an individual as a member of the group because of the Gestalt Laws. The first gay-pride march in Belgrade was held in 2002, and was a very red affair, with all of the marchers wearing red to mark their affinity with the cause. A Serbian friend of mine, who had no dealings with the gay community, and indeed had no idea that the march was taking place, just so happened to be wearing a red jersey that day, and was walking in the vicinity of the march. Without knowing what had befallen him, he was swept into the crowd of activists, who naturally mistook him as a member of the group because of the colour of his jersey. Here, the law of simplicity led the protestors (and perhaps onlookers) to group my friend incorrectly with the rest of the activists.

The second case seeks to show that we can incorrectly experience a social group where there is only a mere aggregate. Consider again the example provided by Searle:

> Imagine that a group of people are sitting on the grass in various places in a park. Imagine that it suddenly starts to rain and they all get up and run to a common, centrally located, shelter. Each person has the intention expressed by the sentence "I am running to the shelter." But for each person, we may suppose that his or her intention is entirely independent of the intentions and behavior of others. In this case, there is no collective behavior; there is just a sequence of individual acts that happen to converge on a common goal. Now imagine a case where a group of people in a park converge on a common point as a piece of collective behavior. Imagine that they are part of an outdoor ballet where the choreography calls for the entire *corps de ballet* to converge on a common point. We can even imagine that the external bodily movements are indistinguishable in the two cases; the people running for shelter make the same types of bodily movements as the ballet dancers. Externally observed the two cases are indistinguishable…. (Searle, 1990, pp. 4-5)

Due to the law of common fate, an onlooker in both of Searle's cases would see the aggregate of individuals as a social group: both the rain-fleers and the ballet dancers move in a way that suggests to the onlooker's brain a common purpose. However, whilst in the ballet dancer case common-sense suggests that the onlooker sees the situation correctly, the onlooker does not experience the situation correctly in the rain-fleer case, since the rain-fleers lack the requisite intra-group relations to comprise a social group. What this example suggests is that for *any* given situation in which an onlooker seems to perceive a group, he may be mistaken, since a mere aggregate and a social group may look exactly the same – they may be externally "indistinguishable".

Nevertheless, the Folk Sociologists will most likely fail to be convinced that I have yet explained away the widespread belief in social groups. The Folk Sociologist will point out that the human brain utilises the Gestalt Laws to organise its perceptual experiences because these methods of organising experiences have provided humans with a crucial survival advantage, and been instrumental in our evolution as a species. Of course the Gestalt Laws are not infallible, as the face-on-Mars case plainly shows, and so, admittedly, it is possible that we may *sometimes* ascribe group membership when there is none, or have isolated experiences in which we experience a mere aggregate as a social group. But the point is that most of the time the Gestalt Laws *do* get things right. For if the Gestalt Laws usually or always misrepresent reality, then they would have provided us with a survival *disadvantage*, and so, either humans would have evolved in such a fashion that their brains do not operate as on the Gestalt Laws, or the human species would have ceased to exist long ago. But, of course, the human species is around today, replete with Gestalt-organised experiences, and so, it is not the case that *all* of our experiences of social groups organised by the Gestalt principles are non-veridical.

Notice that this objection rests upon what might be called the "evolutionary-perception-inference":

> **Evolutionary-perception-inference (EPI): Because a given perceptual apparatus PA provided humanity with a crucial survival advantage, PA represents reality accurately most of the time.**

EPI is problematic, however, because the terms "perceptual apparatus" (PA) and "reality" are ambiguous. PA may be an apparatus used to perceive more than one category of object; i.e. the very same perceptual apparatus, in this case the Gestalt principles, may be used to perceive *concrete* objects (such as faces and groups of dots), or *social groups*. Thus, the term "reality"

in EPI might refer to the reality of concrete objects, or to social reality. So, substituting the Gestalt principles for PA, we could arrive at any of the following four principles:

> **$EPI_{concrete\text{-}concrete}$: Because using Gestalt principles to organise experiences of concrete objects provided humanity with a crucial survival advantage, the Gestalt principles represent concrete reality accurately most of the time.**
>
> **$EPI_{social\text{-}concrete}$: Because using Gestalt principles to organise experiences of aggregates into social groups provided humanity with a crucial survival advantage, the Gestalt principles represent concrete reality accurately most of the time.**
>
> **$EPI_{concrete\text{-}social}$: Because using Gestalt principles to organise experiences of concrete objects provided humanity with a crucial survival advantage, the Gestalt principles represent social reality accurately most of the time.**
>
> **$EPI_{social\text{-}social}$: Because using Gestalt principles to organise experiences of aggregates into social groups provided humanity with a crucial survival advantage, the Gestalt principles represent social reality accurately most of the time.**

$EPI_{concrete\text{-}concrete}$ and $EPI_{social\text{-}concrete}$ do not support the conclusion that the Folk Sociologist wishes to support – that the Gestalt principles represent *social* reality accurately most of the time. Moreover, although I suspect $EPI_{concrete\text{-}social}$ is the implicit form of inference used in the Folk-Sociologist's objection, it is fallacious, since it infers facts about the use of Gestalt principles for one category of object (social objects) from facts about the use of Gestalt principles for a different category of object (concrete objects). This leaves $EPI_{social\text{-}social}$ as the only plausible disambiguation.

I am prepared to accept that $EPI_{social\text{-}social}$ is a strong inference. However, consider that the premise required to use $EPI_{social\text{-}social}$ is:

P-1) Using Gestalt principles to organise experiences of aggregates into social groups provided humanity with a crucial survival advantage.

A trait that provides a species with a "crucial" survival advantage is a trait without which that species would not survive. Suppose human beings had never evolved the ability to experience a social group. Could the human species have survived? If we could have, then P-1 is false, while if we could not have, P-1 is true.

Consider, the Folk Sociologist might suggest, the experiences of our pre-historic hominid ancestors. Back then, hominid collectives were much smaller than they are today: collectives

took the form of families or small communities. It seems that experiencing ourselves as members of these small groups was essential to our survival, since without experiencing ourselves as part of a group we would not have lived in close proximity to other hominids, nor shared our resources with other hominids. Living in close proximity is crucial at certain times, such as during infancy and in the presence of hostile packs of animals; and sharing resources aids a collective to survive more efficiently, through methods such as pooling resources and division of labour.

I think there are two reasons why we should not accept this line of reasoning as supporting P-1 adequately. First, the argument shows at best that experiencing *small* groups was essential for our survival as a species. Then, P-1 could be used to support the claim that small communities and families exist, but could not be used to support the existence of the much larger social groups we have today, such as political parties and countries. For notice that it is debatable whether experiencing ourselves as belonging to such huge groups provides a survival advantage today. Countless individuals die in wars because the opposing sides believe themselves to comprise distinct "armies" representing distinct "countries". How many people (e.g. Zimbabweans and Mexicans) starve because the borders of their "country" separate them from resources available to the individuals mere kilometres away? So, P-1 does not seem to support the existence of *large* social groups.

The second problem with the line of reasoning given above is this. Suppose we concede that if our ancestors had not had the ability to experience social groups, our ancestors would not have lived in close proximity, nor shared resources; and hence, we would not be the species we are today. This does not imply, however, that those ancestors without the ability to experience social groups would not have survived *in any form*. We may, for example, have evolved into a species much like our alien interlocutor – a species whose members have no conception of social phenomena, and once fully grown and independent, live isolated, exploring the stars. We could have evolved as such a species, and so, it is false that the ability to experience groups was essential to human survival.

In response, the Folk Sociologist could take the Kripkean view that if there were a species around today that evolved in this way it would not be *human* – it would be some other species (see Kripke, 1981, pp. 127-128). The Kripkean intuition is that if two substances, like twater and water, have a different underlying chemical composition, then they cannot be the same stuff, or substance. In much the same way, if species S1 and S2 have different underlying

genetic code (which would likely be the case if S1 has neural structures capable of experiencing social groups, while S2 does not), they cannot belong to the same species, even if they share many other features. Then, it is not the case that *humans* could have survived without the experience of social groups (although perhaps some other species could have). In the same way "water" rigidly designates H_2O, so too does "humanity" rigidly designate that species with a particular genetic code.[148]

I accept this Kripkean intuition, but this leads to a different problem. If "humanity" is construed in this narrow sense, as rigidly designating a particular species that evolves in a particular way, then we may question the $EPI_{social\text{-}social}$ inference. If a given perceptual apparatus PA provides a critical survival advantage merely to a single evolutionary branch of a particular species, this provides only weak support for the conclusion that PA represents reality correctly most of the time. Consider, for example, a race of aliens called the "Burrowers", which has evolved in a peculiar fashion. Due to a neural feature of Burrowers, whenever any Burrower looks up at the sky, it experiences the sky as containing vicious monsters that will attack and eat it if it spends any time above ground. Let us call the neural feature responsible for the Burrowers' experiences of monsters, "monster-perception". As a result of monster-perception, Burrowers spend all of their existence below ground. Now, it just so happens that there are no vicious monsters floating in the sky of this alien world – i.e. monster experiences are entirely non-veridical. Nevertheless, it is lucky that the Burrowers experience these monsters, because if the Burrowers *were* to venture above ground for any period of time, they would asphyxiate due to a lack of some important mineral that can only be found below ground, and which is integral to Burrower respiration. The Burrowers, however, do not know about this crucial mineral, and so, if it were not for monster-perception, the Burrowers would not survive (we can suppose, for example, that Burrowers are a curious race, who would venture above ground without the fear of monsters). Thus, monster-perception provides a crucial survival advantage to Burrowers, and yet monster-perception massively misrepresents reality.

Of course if Burrowers had evolved a different perceptual apparatus that allowed them to notice that they require the minerals in the ground to sustain their livelihood, monster-perception would not be crucial to them. But, on the Kripkean view of species, *Burrowers* could not have

[148] A term "t" rigidly designates an object or type t iff "t" refers to t in every possible world in which "t" refers at all.

evolved this other perceptual apparatus (we can suppose that this perceptual apparatus requires genetic modification). If Burrowers had evolved this other perceptual apparatus, they would be a different species.

So, to summarise, the Gestalt Laws are accurate and useful in certain situations – e.g. when compiling lines and shadows as a threatening animal or a spouse's face.[149] That is, Gestalt Laws are helpful in constructing experiences of concrete objects. But it is possible that these principles of perceptual organisation are misrepresentative in a different context, specifically, in experiencing aggregates of individuals as social groups. Importantly, I have not established that all our experiences of social groups *are* misrepresentative of reality. All I hope to have established so far is that there is a nomologically possible explanation for why we experience social phenomena, where that explanation does not require the existence of social phenomena.[150] Thus, I have argued that it is *nomologically possible* that our experiences of groups massively misrepresent reality.

D.3.a.iii. Ichikawa and explaining away

I have provided two explanations (psychological and neurological) to explain away the experience of social groups, and therefore, the intuition that social groups exist. Beck (2011, p. 3), however, argues that these explanations are unconvincing in light of Ichikawa's recent work on explaining away intuitions. Ichikawa (2009, pp. 96-97) holds that there are three conditions each necessary for a given explanation to explain away an intuition:

> …[the] claims to which the explaining-away appeals must (a) be true, and (b) predict the offending intuition… [and] (c) the explanation must not rely on the truth of the target intuition.

Let E be the explanans offered to explain away the intuition I. Then, (a) and (b) can be understood as (i) and (ii) respectively:

(i) E is true.
(ii) E predicts I.

---

[149] Spouses, though, don't exist on Eliminative Individualism. Although there are individuals who believe they are spouses.
[150] A proposition P is nomologically possible iff P does not contradict the laws of nature.

(c), however, is ambiguous because the term "explanation" in (c) could mean E, or it could mean the prediction of I using E (i.e. the inference from E to I). Let *p* be the probability with which E predicts I. Then (c) could mean either (iii) or (iv):

(iii) It is not the case that: if I is incorrect, then E is false (or highly improbable).

(iv) *p* is the same whether I is correct or incorrect.

Indeed, Ichikawa appears to support both readings. Consistent with (iii), Ichikawa states:

> One's explaining away is successful insofar as *the psychological thesis [i.e. E]* (a) is true, (b) predicts the offending intuition, and (c) does not depend upon the truth of the offending intuition. (2009, p. 107 emphasis added)

And supporting a reading of (c) as (iv), Ichikawa writes:

> the explaining-away must have it that the target intuition be insensitive to its truth, in that, were its content not true, the subject would have the intuition anyway. (2009, p. 97)

To simplify matters and give Ichikawa the most demanding account possible, assume that both (iii) and (iv) must be satisfied for (c) to be satisfied.

Now, let us return to the psychological explanation for the intuition that social groups exist. On this explanation, there is a common intuition (I) that social groups exist because: (E) social groups provide our lives with meaning, because social groups quell our anxiety over the choices we make as individuals by supporting those choices, because we want to connect to something greater than ourselves, and because we derive a sense of belonging from social groups.

First, I take it that social groups perform (or the belief in the existence of social groups performs) the function described by the psychological explanation in many (although not in all) individuals' lives, and so, (i) will be true in many cases, although not in all cases. This limits the scope of the psychological explanation, but does not significantly damage it. Second, it seems plausible to suggest that if individuals derive meaning, reduced anxiety, a feeling of connecting with a greater cause, and a sense of belonging from the notion of a social group, they will have the intuition that social groups exist: the mechanism linking the psychological value of groups and the intuition that groups exist is *wishful thinking*. Hence, the psychological explanation fulfils (ii) because it predicts (correctly) that individuals who derive psychological value from social groups (or a belief in social groups) will have the intuition that social groups exist.

Third, suppose for a moment that social groups do not exist (i.e. I is incorrect). It seems this would have no bearing on whether or not we derive psychological value from the belief that they exist. As discussed, consider the parallel between social groups and God. Many people derive psychological value from their intuition, or belief, that God exists: the religious derive meaning, reduced anxiety, a feeling of connecting with a greater cause, and a sense of belonging from their belief in God. Most importantly, they derive this psychological value from their belief in God whether or not God in fact exists. The same, I contend, holds true for social groups: we derive psychological value from our belief in social groups regardless of whether or not they in fact exist. Thus, I take it that the psychological explanation satisfies (iii).

And fourth, it is somewhat debatable whether the psychological explanation satisfies (iv). Supporting an affirmative position on this point, it seems plausible that whether or not social groups exist, if people derive psychological value from groups we can predict with the same degree of certainty that they will believe in the existence of social groups. An objector could contend, however, that whether we believe in social groups depends at least in part on another important factor: namely, whether or not social groups do in fact exist. This explanation presumes that our beliefs about social facts track the truth about social facts. As such, the tracking explanation is obviously a rival explanation to mine, and so, begs the question against the psychological explanation if the tracking solution is used as a reason for why the psychological explanation fails. I take it, then, that it is plausible that the psychological explanation satisfies (iv).

Finally, consider the neurological explanation, which attempts to explain away the intuition that social groups exist by arguing that the human brain is wired to believe in the existence of social groups, where this wiring is correctly described by the Gestalt Laws. The neurological explanation posits that it is possible that the Gestalt Laws are radically and systematically misleading. It seems that this explanation satisfies (i), for the Gestalt Laws are supported by almost a hundred years of research, and remain a fruitful area for psychological and neurological research (see, e.g., Ali & Peebles, 2013; Cloonan, 2008; E. B. Goldstein, 2008, pp. 72-80; Kubovy & van den Berg, 2008; Oyama & Miyano, 2008). Moreover, the neurological explanation satisfies (ii), for it seems uncontroversial that we can form a strong prediction that if the human brain is wired to believe in the existence of social groups (as on the Gestalt Laws), then humans will have the intuition that social groups exist. Moreover, it is clear that the neurological explanation satisfies (iv). A man who wears green glasses will experience

the world as green regardless of whether or not the world is green. Similarly, if our perceptual apparatus is designed to experience collections of individuals as groups, then we will experience those collections as social groups, regardless of whether or not they are social groups.

However, the neurological explanation does not satisfy (iii). If social groups do not exist, it appears unlikely that our brains would be wired to believe in them, for it is likely that evolution has rewarded us with a neurological makeup that perceives reality correctly. I argued that it is *nomologically possible* that our perceptual apparatus is radically misleading. Nevertheless, it is *unlikely* that this is the case.

Thus, to conclude, the psychological explanation satisfies Ichikawa's criteria for explaining away, while the neurological explanation does not. However, the neurological explanation still has an important role to play in explaining away social intuitions (i.e. the intuition that groups exist), since explaining away social intuitions should be seen as a two-step process. First, the neurological explanation, if successful, establishes that it is nomologically possible that the perceptual apparatus which produces our social intuitions is radically misleading. Thus, it is nomologically possible that our social intuitions are incorrect. Thereafter, the psychological explanation, if successful, establishes that the fact that we have these social intuitions does not provide support for the view that social groups exist over the view that social groups do not exist (since it is equally likely that we would have these social intuitions whether or not social groups exist, given the psychological value associated with having these intuitions).

D.3.a.iv. Conclusion

I have argued that the psychological and neurological explanations may tell us why we believe so firmly in the existence of the social, without the need to postulate the existence of the social in our explanation. This does not, however, imply that the social does not exist. Instead, it implies that it is not absurd that social phenomena may ultimately be explained away (i.e. $\text{TEMI}_{\text{eliminative}}$ is not absurd). In the next section I object to the absurdity of EI-3, or the claim that Folk Sociology is a radically false and misleading theory.

D.3.b. Folk Sociology as a radically false and misleading theory (EI-3)

EI-3 is the claim that Folk Sociology is a radically false and misleading theory. Thus, EI-3 might be divided into the conjunction of three claims:

EI-3a) Folk Sociology is a theory.

EI-3b) Folk Sociology is radically false.

EI-3c) Folk Sociology is radically misleading.

I consider each of these claims in turn, starting with EI-3a.

D.3.b.i. Folk Sociology as a theory (EI-3a)

By "Folk Sociology" I mean the conglomeration of common-sense intuitions about the social, together with the basic, underlying claims about the social that social scientists assume in their inquiry. Hempel (1966, p. 70) characterises theories as possessing the following features, namely, theories:

F-1) are introduced to explain a set of apparent regularities;

F-2) use laws or generalisations in their explanations;

F-3) posit underlying theoretical entities in their explanations; and

F-4) predict new regularities using the laws (or generalisations) and theoretical entities introduced in F-2 and F-3.

Folk Sociology satisfies all four of these characteristics. First, Folk Sociology is introduced to explain apparent patterns in the way groups interact, and patterns that seem to emerge as a result of this, despite these patterns being unintended. In Smith's oft cited words, each individual in a Capitalist society seems to be "led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intentions" (as cited in Flew, 1985, p. 54). Flew (1985, p. 21) mentions the division of labour and the development of natural languages as further examples of patterns explained by Folk Sociology. Second, Folk Sociology employs countless generalisations, such as "if there is a breakdown in the regulative powers of society, then anomic suicides occur", or "if *x* is a Democrat, then *x* will vote for the Democratic Party". Third, Folk Sociology posits a host of theoretical entities, including political groups, money, governments, football clubs, universities, etc. And last, Folk Sociologists, such as political analysts, make predictions like the following: "The ANC will win the election, but not achieve a two-thirds majority."

So, Folk Sociology possesses all of Hempel's characteristics of a theory. Moreover, Folk Sociology could also be constructed as a (functionalist) theory in much the same way that Lewis (1972) suggests we could construct Folk Psychology as a theory. Suppose we amass all of the "platitudes" of Folk Sociology – i.e. the common-sense intuitions that we have regarding social

phenomena, together with commonly accepted social-scientific claims. Then, convert this mass into one long conjunction, where $s_i \ldots s_n$ are social terms, $o_i \ldots o_n$ are terms other than social terms (such as individualistic terms) that appear in the conjunction, and $P_i(x, y, z \ldots)$ is a platitude that includes *x*, *y*, and *z*. This results in what Lewis terms the "postulate" of Folk Sociology:

> **Postulate of Folk Sociology: $P_1(s_i \ldots s_n, o_1 \ldots o_i)$ & $P_2(s_i \ldots s_n, o_i \ldots o_n)$ &… $P_z(s_i \ldots s_n, o_i \ldots o_n)$**

So, for example, let P_1 and P_2 be the propositions, respectively, "All sports clubs are social groups", and "all social groups are composed of individuals". Then, if we let s_1 abbreviate sports clubs, s_2 be social groups, and o_1 be individuals, then we arrive at (roughly[151]):

> $P_1(s_1, s_2)$ & $P_2(s_2, o_1)$

Now, returning to our postulate, if we replace all of the "s" terms in the postulate with variables, we arrive at a conjunction with only o-terms:

> **O-termed Postulate of Folk Sociology: $P_1(x_i \ldots x_n, o_1 \ldots o_i)$ & $P_2(x_i \ldots x_n, o_i \ldots o_n)$ &… $P_z(x_i \ldots x_n, o_i \ldots o_n)$**

Finally, we can bind the x variables with an existential quantifier, and thereby reach the Ramsey sentence of Folk Sociology:

> **Ramsey sentence of Folk Sociology: $\exists x_i \ldots x_n [P_1(x_i \ldots x_n, o_1 \ldots o_i)$ & $P_2(x_i \ldots x_n, o_i \ldots o_n)$ &… $P_z(x_i \ldots x_n, o_i \ldots o_n)]$**

The Ramsey sentence of Folk Sociology claims that there are social phenomena that satisfy the role they play in the platitudes P_1, $P_2 \ldots P_z$. If we follow Lewis's suggestion that mental states in the Folk Psychological platitudes are specified causally, we could specify that the role played by social phenomena in the Folk Sociological platitudes will always be causal. So, the Ramsey sentence of Folk Sociology will be the claim that there exist social phenomena that fill the causal roles specified in the platitudes. Folk Sociology, then, would be the theory that the social phenomena characterised by Social Functionalism do exist.

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[151] Terms like "contains", "are", "all", etc. are, strictly speaking, o-terms, and so, they should be included in the formalisation of the platitude. I have omitted these terms for sake of brevity and clarity.

D.3.b.ii. Folk Sociology as radically false (EI-3b)

Thus far I have outlined why we should, and how we could, understand Folk Sociology as a theory. Now one property of a theory, or at least of a scientifically legitimate theory, is that it is possible for it to be *radically false*. I take it that a theory T is radically false iff the inclusive disjunction of RF-1 and RF-2 obtains:

RF-1) The theoretical entities posited by T do not exist.
RF-2) The apparent regularities for which T is introduced to explain do not in fact occur.

Accepting the Lewisian construction of Folk Sociology as a theory explains why Folk Sociology would be radically false if RF-1 were true, for if none of the social phenomena posited by Folk Sociology exist, then each of the existential claims made by Folk Sociology would be false.

Moreover, if we extend the Lewisian construction of Folk Sociology further, we can also see why RF-2 would imply the radical falseness of Folk Sociology. Since the o-terms are any terms that are not social terms, some of the o-terms in the Ramsey sentence will be causal terms, relations, conjunctions, quantifiers, and other miscellaneous terms, such as "contains", "are", "all", "causes", "if", "then", etc… For clarity, let us omit all of these sorts of o-terms from our analysis, leaving us with o-terms denoting only *observational* terms, where observational terms are those terms in the regularities for which Folk Sociology was introduced to explain.[152] Then, replace each of the remaining o-terms in the Ramsey sentence of Folk Sociology with *y* variables, and bind the *y*-variables with existential quantifiers:

Ramsey sentence of Folk Sociology & observations: $\exists x_i \ldots x_n, \exists y_i \ldots y_n$ $[P_1(x_i \ldots x_n, y_1 \ldots y_i) \,\&\, P_2(x_i \ldots x_n, y_i \ldots y_n) \,\&\ldots\, P_z(x_i \ldots x_n, y_i \ldots y_n)]$

As before, this extended Ramsey sentence claims that all of the social phenomena represented by *x*-variables are realised by entities in the world, but, in addition, the extended sentence claims that each of the *regularities*, or observations, represented by the *y* variables are realised in the world. That is, the extended Ramsey sentence claims both that social phenomena exist, and that

[152] I have assumed here that the observational terms will be non-social terms, but the general force of my arguments does not rely upon this assumption.

the regularities for which Folk Sociology was introduced to explain, exist. If RF-2 is correct, then this latter claim is radically false.

Notice that the conditions under which T is "radically false" should be contrasted with the conditions under which T is "false", but not *radically* false. T is false iff the inclusive disjunction of RF-3 and RF-4 obtains:

RF-3) A significant number of the generalisations utilised by T are false.
RF-4) The generalisations utilised by T do not explain adequately the apparent regularities for which T is introduced to explain.

Notice that if either RF-1 or RF-2 is true, then RF-3 is true. So, if a theory is "radically false", it is also "merely false". But the converse is not true: a theory that is false is not necessarily radically false, since the conjunction of RF-3 and RF-4 does not imply either RF-1 or RF-2.

So, to show that EI-3b is not absurd (i.e. to show that it is possible, and not incredibly unlikely, that Folk Sociology is radically false), one needs to show either that RF-1 is not absurd, or that RF-2 is not absurd. I take it that it is difficult to make a case for the claim that social regularities do not occur (i.e. RF-2) – it seems difficult to deny that there are patterns of some form or another in the way that individuals interact. Thus, the more plausible route to denying the absurdity of EI-3b is to deny the absurdity of RF-1, or the claim that the theoretical entities posited by Folk Sociology do exist.

How might one support the claim that RF-1 *is* absurd? I can think of two such supporting arguments. First, the Folk Sociologist might argue that it is *inconceivable* that social phenomena, such as social groups, do not exist. But this is problematic, for three reasons. First, it does seem conceivable (even if it does require some reflection and imagination) to deny the existence of social phenomena. Second, I have argued that it is difficult if not impossible to reduce social phenomena to individualistic phenomena. This failure of reduction leaves us with non-reductive accounts and Eliminative Individualism as options. But non-reductive accounts are also problematic, I argued. This leaves Eliminative Individualism as a serious alternative – a *conceivable* alternative. And third, even if it were inconceivable to deny the existence of the social, this does not imply that Folk Sociology cannot be radically false. What we can and cannot conceive is limited by our conceptual apparatus, which in turn is impacted by our perceptual apparatus. But our perceptual apparatus includes the Gestalt principles, which favour the experience of social groups, even in situations where there are no such groups. Thus, it is

to be expected that we would find it difficult, if not impossible, to imagine that the world lacks the entities we believe we see all the time. But this does not imply that our world *must* have social phenomena, since, as I argued previously, our perceptual apparatus *may* radically misrepresent our social reality (or lack thereof).

A second way one might argue for the claim that it is impossible or absurd for Folk Sociology to be radically false is to claim that the mere existence of Folk Sociological beliefs is sufficient to create the entities that Folk Sociology posits, and the regularities that Folk Sociology seeks to explain. For example, the fact that there is common agreement among social scientists and lay persons that social groups exist is sufficient for the existence of social groups.[153] But this is effectively Searle's account of social phenomena, to which I have already objected [see **section B.3.c. Searle's constructionist account (p. 90)**].

Finally, the Folk Sociologist might argue that there is ample empirical evidence for the existence of social phenomena. The social sciences as a category rest upon, and serve to support, the empirical evidence for the existence of social phenomena. The existence and progress of anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, political science, international relations and social (but not individual) psychology seem to provide strong empirical support for the existence of social phenomena.[154] However, in what follows I attempt to disarm this supposed empirical evidence – that is, show that it is not absurd to deny the evidence.

Kuhn (1962 [1970]) argues that the defining mark of a science is that it has a dominant "paradigm" (see Chalmers, 1994, ch. 8). There are two senses in which we might understand a paradigm. First, the paradigm of a given science is the set of fundamental assumptions and methodological techniques used by that scientific community. For example, the dominant paradigm in modern physics is the equation of conventional non-relativistic quantum mechanics, which is specified by three quantities: the charge and mass of the electron, the charges and masses of atomic nuclei, and Planck's constant (see Laughlin & Pines, 2000). Or, taking another example, the dominant paradigm in medicine today is allopathic. While there

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[153] This objection parallels Leon's objection to the claim that Folk Psychology could be radically false. Leon (1996, p. 85) argues that we could not be proven radically wrong about the existence of subjective states, such as pain. How could one be wrong in believing that one is in pain? The belief that one is in pain seems to be sufficient for the existence of pain.

[154] Perhaps some pure branches of economics could survive Eliminative Individualism. Such pure economics would not study the actual economic processes within an actual society, but rather, discuss "ideal types" of individuals, and how such ideal individuals would interact (see Watkins, 1952 [1973] for a discussion of ideal types).

are other paradigms in medicine, such as homeopathy and energy-healing, there is little doubt that the allopathic approach is dominant.

It is essential to a science that it has a dominant paradigm in this first sense because without it, the members of the scientific community will lack common assumptions and techniques to guide their research, and will therefore struggle to synthesise their efforts. The problem with the social sciences is that although they each possess multiple approaches, none of them possesses a dominant paradigm. For example, social scientists differ with regard to being Functionalists[155], Structuralists[156], Social Network analysts[157], Marxists[158,] Feminists[159], Post-modernists[160], Post-structuralists[161], etc. In addition, social research is both qualitative and quantitative, and so, there is no single, universally accepted research methodology among social scientists.

A second sense in which a science has a paradigm is that the science has concrete exemplars, or instances where it is successful. These exemplars provide reason to utilise the methodologies and underlying hypotheses posited by the science in further situations. For example, Newtonian physics was used to predict that a previously unobserved planet would be found because of gravitational disturbances on nearby observable planets. These Newtonian formulae predicted the size and location of the planet, which was later confirmed when Neptune was observed. This spurred greater confidence in Newtonian physics, which motivated scientists to apply the theory to other areas of inquiry, such as engineering.

The problem that social sciences face is that they have produced precious few, if any, examples of superb social predictions (like the case of Neptune). That is, the social sciences seem to lack

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[155] Functionalists claim that all social phenomena can be explained by their function. Previously I labelled this claim "Explanatory Functionalism" [see **section C.3.c. Social Functionalism (p. 170)**].
[156] Structuralism attempts to explain social phenomena by seeing them as structures with interrelated parts (see Colman, 2009).
[157] Social network analysis views social phenomena in terms of their nodes and ties. A node is an individual, and a tie is the relationship among individuals in the network (Castree, Kitchin, & Rogers, 2013). See **section D.5.c. Networks (p. 241)** for a discussion of networks.
[158] Broadly, Marxists see class struggle as central to an analysis of change in Western societies (see Blackburn, 2008b).
[159] Feminism is a conglomerate of theses that have in common the assumption that women are unfairly oppressed or disadvantaged compared with men (see James, 1998).
[160] As might be expected, "Post-modernism" is difficult to define. Roughly, Post-modernism is the conjunction of two claims: that there are no universal truths, and that the physical world has a linguistic, or narrative, structure (see Ermarth, 1998).
[161] Post-structuralism is the thesis that precise definitions for fundamental concepts cannot be provided (see Gutting, 1998).

concrete exemplars. Social scientists are unable, for example, to predict precisely what the election results will be – they predict results, but with nowhere near the accuracy of Newtonian physics predicting the location of celestial bodies. And this results in the first paradigmatic failure discussed: since the social sciences lack concrete exemplars, there is no central hypothesis or theory that has been applied to all social scientific areas of inquiry. That is, there is no convergence upon a dominant paradigm.

Thus, in at least two important senses, the social sciences lack a paradigm – they lack concrete exemplars, and they lack a *dominant* paradigm. This calls into question whether the social sciences should be counted as legitimate sciences at all. And if the social sciences are illegitimate, then it is possible that the conclusions they reach could be radically false.

Moreover, consider that the social sciences contain glaring explanatory gaps. Although it is true that the social sciences can offer elegant explanations for many social phenomena, or more elegant than individualistic explanations of those same phenomena, there are countless social phenomena that the social scientist *cannot* explain, namely, *exceptions* to social laws. Social scientists can explain why some individuals commit suicide after the regulative powers in their society have collapsed through the law of anomie. But how could the law of anomie, or any other social law for that matter, explain why *specific* individuals commit suicide, but not others? Why John and not Henry? Indeed, why not everyone? Or, consider that social scientists can tell us why the *majority* of voting white South Africans vote for the DA (e.g. by citing the socio-politico-historical climate of South Africa, and the place of white South Africans in that climate), but can social scientists tell us why those white South Africans who do *not* vote for the DA vote as they do? Perhaps they will explain this minority's voting choice in terms of the complexity of socio-politico-historical factors, yet this will obviously not suffice for many of the exceptional voters. Exceptional voters may vote as they do for a variety of reasons that have nothing whatsoever to do with the political or social climate. Exceptional voters may vote as they do because they think the candidate of their favoured party is attractive, or because they like the way the word "ANC" feels on their tongues, or because they experience a sudden Damascus experience brought on by standing in the voting queue, or because they undergo a momentary neural dysfunction. For example, suppose John calls himself a member of the DA, promotes the DA to all his friends, and genuinely believes the DA is the right party to vote for. Moreover, suppose that John has every intention while entering the voting booth to vote for the DA. However, while looking at the voting sheet, John has a localised seizure in his visual

cortex, which causes him to place an "X" beside "ANC". How could the social scientist explain such an event? He simply cannot, other than by calling upon the individualistic sciences, such as psychology or neurology.

It seems, then, that the empirical evidence provided by the social sciences for the existence of social phenomena is suspect for two reasons. First, the social sciences lack a dominant paradigm with concrete exemplars, and so, have inadequate standards for producing and filtering empirical evidence. Second, the social sciences have significant explanatory gaps, which can only be filled by the individualistic sciences. This fails to imply that the evidence provided by the social sciences *is* radically false – but merely that it is not absurd to assert that the evidence *could be* radically false.

D.3.b.iii. Conclusion

I have considered and rejected three arguments for the absurdity of RF-1 (the claim that the social phenomena posited by Folk Sociology do not exist). Thus, I take it that RF-1 is not absurd. But if RF-1 is not absurd, then it is not absurd to claim that Folk Sociology is radically false (i.e. EI-3b is not absurd). Moreover, if EI-3b is not absurd, then neither is EI-3c (the claim that Folk Sociology is radically misleading).

D.4. OBJECTIONS FROM OTHER AREAS OF PHILOSOPHY

So far I have explicated Eliminative Individualism, and defended the account against the charge of absurdity. An objector could argue, however, that even if Eliminative Individualism is not absurd, it nevertheless has implications that contradict central doctrines in areas of philosophy other than Social Ontology.[162] Specifically, Eliminative Individualism contradicts Burge's (1979) externalist account of content and Winch's (1958 [1990]) account of meaningful behaviour. I consider these in turn.

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[162] The implications of Eliminative Individualism considered here are *theoretical* implications – i.e. implications that are important when considering other areas of philosophy. But the *practical* implications of Eliminative Individualism are also interesting. These include questions around the sort of state we should have, whether an Eliminative Individualist should pay taxes, get married, etc. I explore some of these practical implications in my novel, *Solace Inc.* (Werbeloff, 2013). Unfortunately it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss these practical implications here.

D.4.a. Burge's account of content

Burge holds that the content, or meaning, of our beliefs is broadly, specifically socially, determined, since we defer to experts in our community when we assign meaning to the terms we use. That is, the content of an agent's beliefs depends on something more than factors intrinsic to the agent. (For my purposes here, features intrinsic to the agent are features that occur within the body of the agent). Burge's oft-cited example is of an individual who believes, "I have arthritis in my thigh". Such an individual in today's Western society would hold a false belief, since modern Western medical experts hold "arthritis" to refer to a disease of the joint, rather than the muscle. However, suppose there is another possible world w*, where all of the intrinsic features of the agent a* are qualitatively identical to the agent's intrinsic features in this world, but in w* the experts use the term "arthritis" to include ailments of the muscle. In w*, when a* asserts "I have arthritis in my thigh", a* may hold a *true* belief (if he has a sore leg muscle that satisfies the conditions laid out by experts in w* for what they term "arthritis"). Thus, because in the actual world and w* all intrinsic features of the agents involved are qualitatively identical, but the truth value of their beliefs are distinct, their beliefs must have distinct content; and this distinction in content can only be accounted for by citing features *extrinsic* to the agent, specifically, expert opinion. But because experts are a social phenomenon, Burge may argue, Eliminative Individualism implies that we lack content to our beliefs, since belief content is socially determined, and Eliminative Individualism denies the existence of social phenomena.

In response, the Eliminative Individualist might construct an Eliminative-Individualism-friendly account of content that nevertheless attempts to accommodate Burge's insights. Specifically, Burge seems to express two claims that require accommodation: (i) there are people with expertise on the meaning of terms; and (ii) other individuals' use of these terms is parasitic upon (i) – i.e. non-experts use terms with the meaning defined by experts. Even though (i) and (ii) are generally characterised in social terms, they need not be. (i) is often characterised in terms of *experts* within a *community*, and (ii) is discussed in terms of a *community*. But we could (i) define those with expertise rather as individuals with more knowledge about the meaning of terms than other individuals have; and (ii) define a community of speakers as a mere aggregate of individuals whose members speak a certain language. This explanation, however, involves the notions of *language* and *meaning*, which in turn seem to be social concepts.

Language is a social phenomenon because it seems that, absent a social context, no individuals would develop a language (Wittgenstein, 1953 secs. 244-271). That is, language is not something which is developed privately, but rather in community. Similarly, Winch argues that behaviour cannot be meaningful without a pre-existing social context. The sociality of language is a challenge for the Eliminativist, but perhaps not an insurmountable problem, since the sociality of language is controversial (Canfield, 1996; Hacker, 2010; Stewart, 2012 sec. 4.1): a detailed discussion of Wittgenstein's arguments for the sociality of language would need to be considered. I leave this as a future challenge for the Eliminativist.[163] Instead, in what follows I discuss Winch's assertion that meaningful behaviour requires a social context.

D.4.b. Winch's account of meaningful behaviour

While Burge holds that the meaning of our *beliefs* is socially determined, Winch holds that the meaning of our *behaviour* depends on a pre-existing social context, where that social context does not in turn depend upon the behaviour of individuals. For Winch (1958 [1990], p. 44), it is mistaken to think that

> first there is language (with words having a meaning, statements capable of being true or false) and then, this being given, it comes to enter into human relationships and to be modified by the particular human relationships into which it does so enter. What is missed is that those very categories of meaning [and therefore meaningful behavior], etc., are *logically* dependent for their sense on social interaction between men.

On Winch's account, if Eliminative Individualism is correct, then human behaviour is meaningless. The problem with Winch's account, however, is that it implies a very strong form of dualism, namely, Social (or entity) Dualism, on which social phenomena exist independently of (since they pre-exist) individualistic phenomena, in a strong sense. But I argued in **section C.2.a. Social Dualism (p. 119)** that Social Dualism is implausible. Thus, I take it that the Eliminative Individualist should not be overly concerned that his account contradicts Winch's.

Nevertheless, an objector might drop the strong Winchean (dualistic) account of social phenomena, but still hold that Winch was correct in arguing that a view like Eliminative Individualism cannot account for the meaningfulness of human behaviour. Such an objection could run as follows:

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[163] Unfortunately it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the sociality of language because of the enormity of the literature on the issue.

P1: If Eliminative Individualism is correct, then there are no social phenomena.

P2: The meaning of some meaningful individual behaviour depends upon social phenomena.

P3: So, If Eliminative Individualism is correct, then some meaningful individual behaviour is not meaningful. *[From P1 and P2]*

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Conc: Eliminative Individualism is false. *[From P3]*

P2 is weaker than Winch's version of the premise, for Winch claims that the meaning of individual behaviour depends upon *pre-existing* social phenomena, while P2 merely claims that social phenomena exist, perhaps concurrently with (or constructed out of) the individualistic phenomena that comprise them. Thus, P2 avoids the dubious dualistic implications of Winch's account.

To support P2, the Winchean objector might cite the case of Winch's voter:

> Suppose that it is said of a certain person, N, that he voted Labour at the last General Election because he thought that a Labour government would be the most likely to preserve industrial peace. What kind of explanation is this? The clearest case is that in which N, prior to voting, has discussed the pros and cons of voting Labour and has explicitly come to the conclusion: 'I will vote Labour because that is the best way to preserve industrial peace'. (1958 [1990], p. 46)

Winch asserts that the voter votes Labour because the Labour government is "most likely to preserve industrial peace". This presupposes that the Labour party, the government, industry, and peace all *exist*. For "if this were not so, the idea of [N's] reason for an action would be in danger of completely losing its sense" (1958 [1990], p. 46). That is, if Eliminative Individualism were correct, then the voter's behaviour would be meaningless.

The Eliminative Individualist should respond, however, by arguing that it is possible for an agent's beliefs underlying his reasons for action to be false, while his actions are nevertheless meaningful. The reigning scientific theory of heat in the 18th century was that combustible objects contained an element called "phlogiston", which was responsible for heat produced by the object. Today we know this theory is incorrect, and so, when individuals in the 18th century avoided touching hot objects because they thought they were phlogiston-filled, they were acting on a false belief. Nevertheless, their actions were nevertheless *meaningful* – they were not senseless, in the way that the actions of the insane may be senseless.

So, although it is the case that the voter's beliefs are false on Eliminative Individualism, the voter's behaviour is nevertheless *meaningful*. The voter behaves as he does because he *believes* that the Labour party exists, because he *believes* that industrial peace exists, and because he *believes* that there is a collective called the "Labour party" that would extend what he *thinks of* as industrial peace if this collective were to perform the role of what he *thinks of* as governing what he *believes* is the country. That is, we can understand the meaningfulness of the voter's behaviour in terms of the *beliefs* of the voter, even if these beliefs lack referents, and so, even if these beliefs are false. We can do this because although social phrases like "Labour party", "industrial peace", "government" and "country" have no referent (on Eliminative Individualism), they do nevertheless have a sense, or meaning. And that sense, or meaning, is captured by Folk Sociology. (Just which theory of social phenomena best describes Folk Sociology is up for contention – either a teleological account or plural subject account of Q1, and either a property-dualist or functionalist account of Q2). Moreover, we can explain away why the voter believes these social phenomena exist by citing the psychological[164] and neurological explanations as in **section D.3.a Eliminative explanation model (TEMIeliminative) (p. 207)**.

The objector may not be satisfied with this response, however. For the objector could argue that although Eliminative Individualism can explain, or find meaningful, the behaviour of individuals in simple acts like voting, there are other social phenomena that are far more difficult to explain eliminatively. I consider the explanation of these "thick" social phenomena in the following section.

D.5. EXPLAINING THICK SOCIAL PHENOMENA

The sociologist may point out that Eliminative Individualism is less plausible than Folk Sociological solutions to the individual-individual and social-individual problems because there are certain social phenomena that affirmative accounts (i.e. accounts that affirm the existence of social phenomena) can explain that Eliminative Individualism cannot. In the previous section

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[164] By the "psychological explanation" I mean the explanation offered in **section D.3.a.i. Psychological explanation (p. 208)** to explain away the appearance of social groups by citing the agent's desire for there to be groups, because there are so many psychological needs fulfilled by groups. Reason-based explanations like the one offered here for Winch's voter are also "psychological" in a sense, since they concern the beliefs and desires of agents. To clarify the distinction between these types of explanations, I call the former the "psychological explanation", and the latter "reason-based explanation".

I considered Winch's voter, and argued that the voter's actions can be explained by citing his *reasons* for action without citing any existing social phenomena, even if the social terms in the beliefs underlying those reasons have no referent. A reason, for my purposes here, is a desire (or pro-attitude) and belief pair. The agent desires a particular outcome, believes that performing a certain action will bring about that outcome, and so, performs that action.[165] The reason makes meaningful, or sense of, the agent's actions regardless of whether the beliefs involved in the agent's reason are true (and regardless of whether the terms in those beliefs have a referent), because those terms have a *sense* or content. There are, however, "thick" social phenomena that some objectors argue are impossible to explain using reason-based explanation.[166] I have in mind here two kinds of thick phenomena: the wisdom of the crowds and the unintended consequences of intended action. I consider these two types of phenomena in turn.

D.5.a. Wisdom of the crowds

Surowiecki (2005) provides a plethora of cases in which groups (what he interchangeably calls "crowds") appear to have knowledge, or are able to solve problems. What is most striking about these cases is that few, and sometimes none, of the members of those groups have this knowledge, or can solve these problems, themselves. Consider the following two cases.

Galton (1907) set about constructing a social experiment to show that politically uneducated individuals are unsuitable voters. That is, what counts as legitimate authority should not be decided by a Democracy, since, on the whole, the masses are uninformed with regard to politics. Unfortunately for Galton, his experiment indicated precisely the opposite of the conclusion he was attempting to support.

Galton sent an ox to the market, and asked the collection of individuals at the market, many of whom were uninformed about cattle, how much the meat from the ox would weigh once the ox

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[165] Roughly, Weber (1922 [1978]) calls reason-based explanations in the social sciences, *verstehen* explanations. But this is only a rough label, since Weber also had in mind that *verstehen* explanation involves citing *only* the agent's reasons for acting. Flew (1985) discusses at length the implication of this claim, that no extra theories that the agent does not already believe can be used in explaining his behaviour. But in supporting Eliminative Individualism I *do* utilise theories that the agent does not possess in explaining the agent's behaviour (such as the psychological and neurological explanations offered thus far).

[166] It is difficult to define exactly what a "thick" social phenomenon is. Perhaps the central feature of thick social phenomena is that they are *unintended*. By contrast, the voter *intends* to vote, and so, his action is "thinly" social because it is easily understandable in terms of his reasons for action.

had been slaughtered and its meat prepared for sale. Galton asked 800 patrons at the market to enter a competition, each submitting their estimate of the ox-meat's weight on a slip of paper. Galton expected, once he collected and analysed estimates, to find that the estimates were radically inaccurate – that the collection of individuals uneducated in cattle and butchery would provide poor estimates of the weight of the ox's meat. And this, he argued, would support by analogy his claim that the masses are unsuitable voters in an election:

> The average competitor was probably as well fitted for making a just estimate of the dressed weight of the ox, as an average voter is of judging the merits of most political issues on which he votes, and the variety among the voters to judge justly was probably much the same in either case. (Galton, 1907, pp. 450-451)

But although many of the estimates were indeed radically different from the correct weight of the ox-meat, Galton found to his surprise that the *average*, or mean, estimate provided by the competition entrants was almost exactly correct. The actual weight of the ox-meat was 1,198 pounds, and the average estimate of the crowd was 1,197 pounds. The crowd, it seems, *knew* what the correct weight of the ox-meat was, in a way that each of the individuals underlying the crowd did not (Surowiecki, 2005, p. xiii). Galton had, unfortunately, provided support for the claim that a large uninformed crowd *could* vote appropriately.

In another case, in 1968 a US submarine named the *Scorpion* went missing. Little was known about the location of the *Scorpion*, but the Navy estimated that the search area was a circle twenty miles wide and thousands of feet deep. The search area was immense. A naval officer named John Craven, however, had a solution. Craven asked a group of mariners, mathematicians, salvage men and submarine specialists to guess where the submarine was, with the promise of a bottle of Chivas Regal being awarded to the closest estimator. Using Baye's theorem, Craven calculated what the "group's guess" was. And it turned out that the group's guess was just 220 yards from where the submarine was eventually found. Moreover, the group's guess was more accurate than any single individual in the group guessed. The group, it seems, knew something that the individuals in the group did not.

D.5.a.i. Wise crowds and social groups

One way of understanding these cases is to posit that the crowd, or group, has a *mind of its own*, over-and-above the individuals involved. That is, we might understand Surowiecki's assertion that "the group has knowledge" literally. This understanding of the cases implies not only that there *are* social groups, but that a non-reductive solution to the social-individual problem (either

Social Dualism or Non-Reductive Individualism) is successful, which would obviously be problematic for the Eliminative Individualist. But what alternative understanding of the cases can the Eliminativist offer? Using reason-based explanation alone is unhelpful, for something seems to be going on at the level of the group that is not going on at the level of the individuals' intentions or reasons. In the *Scorpion* case, for example, none of the individuals involved guessed the location of the *Scorpion* as closely as the group did.

The Eliminativist could deny that there is anything more than chance at work here, or that there is inaccurate reporting. That is, the Eliminativist could hold that it was simply lucky that Galton's competition entrants guessed on average as they did, and it was an anomaly that the *Scorpion* was found where the group suggested it would be (or perhaps the *Scorpion* case was misreported). The problem with this approach is that there are many additional examples of crowd wisdom, many of which are replicable.[167]

But perhaps there is a third option: resisting the inference from the cases to the conclusion that an affirmative, Non-reductive account of social groups is correct. To start, the Eliminative Individualist might examine carefully the conditions under which crowd wisdom arises. Surowiecki (2005, p. 10) points out that crowd wisdom arises only when the crowd displays "independence" and "diversity".[168] The group members are *independent* just in case their guesses are unaffected by the guesses of other members of the group. Galton's competition entrants, presumably, did not discuss amongst themselves what the correct weight would be before they entered the competition. That is, their guesses are unrelated. And the group members' guesses are *diverse* just in case there is variance in the guesses. That is, there is a range of estimates, which if graphed along a distribution would fall on both sides of the correct answer. Galton's competition entrants guessed high and low, varying widely around the correct weight.

Now, the independence condition is telling. For consider that one of the fundamental features of a social group is that its members are *related* in some important sense. This is why I raised the individual-individual problem: what is the *relation* that obtains among the individuals within a group? But one of Surowiecki's requirements is that the members of the group are

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[167] See, for example, Treynor's (1987) jelly-bean experiment, where the group's guess about how many jelly-beans there are in a jar is "invariably better than the vast majority of the individual guesses" (Surowiecki, 2005, p. 5).
[168] Surowiecki also cites decentralisation as a necessary condition for crowd wisdom. This condition is unimportant for my discussion here.

unrelated (or independent), at least while solving the problem at hand. Indeed, Surowiecki (2005, pp. xix-xx) writes: "Paradoxically, the best way for a group to be smart is for each person in it to think and act as independently as possible." And this paradox, or contradiction, is crucial: it is not a social group if the members are unrelated. Thus, it is not the case that a "wise crowd", in Surowiecki's sense, is necessarily a social group.

But if the collectives in these cases are *not* social groups, how do we explain the "wisdom of the crowd"? That is, what explanation can the Eliminative Individualist offer that cites no social phenomena? In response, the Eliminativist could argue that the mechanism involved in wise crowd cases is the statistical principle of *cancellation of random error*. Cancellation of random error occurs when there is a large collection of *independent* observations that vary randomly (i.e. are *diverse*) around the population mean, or average (Field, 2013, p. 876). The mean may be thought of as the balance point of a distribution, meaning that the deviations of the scores lower than the mean will always balance (or cancel) the deviations of the scores higher than the mean (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013, p. 76). And the mean will tend towards the correct answer because the error in each observation (if there is error) is random.[169] So, Surowiecki's independence and diversity criteria enable the cancellation of random error, which explains how the "group" appears to come to the correct answer, where the group's estimate is the mean.

Thus, we can explain individualistically what is happening in the case of wise crowds using statistical principles. There are, however, thick social phenomena that are not susceptible to statistical explanation of this sort, nor to reason-based, psychological or neurological explanation. I have in mind here Flew's unintended consequences of intended action.

D.5.b. Unintended consequences of intended action

The problem with reason-based explanation, Flew (1985) argues, is that it explains the consequences of an agent's actions in terms of an agent's reasons for action, and therefore, in terms of an agent's *intentions*. But, when multiple individuals act intentionally, sometimes *unintended* social consequences arise. Thus, it seems impossible to explain these unintended

[169] This explanation assumes that all variability in the scores is random. Diversity, strictly speaking, does not imply randomness, since there could be true individual differences – i.e. experts among the crowd. Indeed, there *are* experts among the crowd in the cases provided by Surowiecki (there were cattle experts that guessed the cattle weight, and tidal experts who guessed the location of the *Scorpion*. So, Surowiecki may be better off using measures of central tendency other than the mean, such as the median or the mode, which are known to be superior in certain situations of non-symmetry (see Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013).

consequences by citing merely the intentions, or reasons, of the agents involved, since there is no intelligible link between the agents' intentions and the unintended consequences which follow. Reason-based explanation is therefore limited in its scope, and is inferior to Folk Sociological explanation in this respect: reason-based explanation cannot, while Folk Sociology can, explain these thick, unintended social phenomena. Folk Sociology can explain these phenomena, because it can cite other social phenomena as causes.

Consider, Flew (1985, ch. 4) suggests, a Capitalist society: it is not the case that every citizen has knowledge of the goal of promoting the prosperity of the society as a whole. Indeed, most care only about their own prosperity (and perhaps about the prosperity of those closest to them). Nevertheless, when viewed from an external, Objectivist perspective, each individual in a Capitalist society seem to be "led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intentions" (Smith, as cited in Flew, 1985, p. 54), namely, the prosperity of the society as a whole.

For example, Flew points out that in a Capitalist society individuals tend to divide labour in a way that greatly promotes the functioning of the society as a whole. In any society, there is a multitude of tasks (or labours) that needs to be performed for people's everyday survival and flourishing, such as growing crops, governing the state, baking bread, and building automobiles. The most efficient way to perform these tasks is to divide labour: assign specific persons to specific tasks, thereby providing those persons with a profession. Thus, we arrive at farmers, politicians, bakers and car manufacturers. But no single person or institution in a Capitalist society explicitly makes the decision to divide society in this way – the government does not explicitly assign these roles to its citizens. Instead, this division of labour evolves as a result of the self-interest of individuals and the economic structure of Capitalistic society: the division of labour is a helpful unintended consequence of self-serving action. And as such, it cannot be explained by reason-based explanation. And yet, it can be easily explained by utilising social terms: the individuals involved choose to adopt a *profession* that fills a gap in the *market*, since filling gaps in a Capitalist market results in a *higher income* for that person.

How might the Eliminative Individualist deal with the problem of explaining the unintended consequences of intended action? Thus far I have outfitted the Eliminativist with three resources: eliminative explanation (the psychological and neurological explanations), reason-based explanation, and statistical explanation. I concede that Flew has argued convincingly that reason-based explanation alone is unable to account for the unintended consequences of

intended action. Moreover, it seems difficult to construct an eliminative explanation for thick social phenomena that parallels the eliminative explanation offered earlier for social groups. I argued that the experience of social groups can be explained away by citing the psychological need to belong to a social group, and the grouping effect of the Gestalt Laws. But does believing we are part of a labour-divided Capitalist society satisfy a psychological need? And how do the Gestalt Laws explain, for example, why in a Capitalist society we see a correlation between interest rate increases and inflation [also known as the Fisher (1930) Hypothesis], or an inverse correlation between interest rate increases and currency strength (see Froot & Thaler, 1990)? The psychological and neurological explanations do not seem to work as easily, or at all, in the case of explaining away thick social phenomena like Capitalism and labour-division. Finally, statistical explanation seems unhelpful here as well – the statistical laws involved would likely cite social terms (e.g. "the probability of earning greater *income* correlates with variation in *profession* adoption."). Where does this leave the Eliminativist? I can envisage three responses.

First, we could conclude that Eliminativism is false in the case of certain thick social phenomena (like the division of labour), but still correct in the case of social groups. That is, the Eliminativist could hold that Capitalism and the division of labour exist, but that there is no social group ("country" or "society") that is Capitalist, or labour-divided. But this seems like an odd, if not contradictory, conclusion. For if there is no country that is Capitalist, in what sense does Capitalism exist?

Second, the Eliminativist could bite the bullet, and deny the existence of thick social phenomena. On this response, the Eliminativist argues that although we do not yet have an eliminative explanation for why we seem to experience phenomena like Capitalism and labour-division, in time we will develop such an explanation. If thick social phenomena imply the existence of social groups, and Eliminative Individualism holds that there are no social groups, then so much the worse for thick social phenomena.

I think there is *limited* merit to this response. For there does seem to be something to the strategy of resisting Flew's assumption that there is a *single* social phenomenon here, which is present in multiple societies. That is, Flew assumes that the very same phenomenon (Capitalism, division of labour) is present in very different collections of individuals. But why should we accept this assumption? In two distinct "Capitalist" societies there may be different government policies regarding the ownership of goods, different degrees of obedience of these laws, the presence of a larger or smaller grey or black market, etc. What exactly makes these two societies

Capitalist? Merely citing similarity in the laws of the two countries ignores important differences.

Nevertheless, even if it is unclear exactly why two societies are "Capitalist", it seems undeniable that there is *something* common between these two societies, even if that something is not exactly what Folk Sociology would like us to believe is common (i.e. Capitalism). At the time of writing this, there seems to be something systematically similar in the financial policies of the US and England, that is not present in North Korea for example. Perhaps the Eliminativist could, with time, argue that what is similar between the US and England (but absent in North Korea) is not what Folk Sociology means by "Capitalism", due to obvious and relevant differences between the two countries. But, still, there is *something* similar that cannot be adequately captured using reason-based, statistical or eliminative explanation.

This brings us to the third possible response that the Eliminative Individualist might offer. Perhaps the Eliminativist could argue that although there is *something* non-individualistic going on when we characterise a society as Capitalist, that although *something* is happening when labour divides among the citizens of a Capitalist society, what is going on here is *not a social phenomenon*. Consider again the phenomenon of division of labour in a Capitalist society. Just what type of social group is required here for division of labour? We need a collection of individuals that works towards a common end (the division of labour), but does so in such a way that each individual in the collection acts individually, for his self-interest. But this is precisely what Tuomela calls an I-mode group, what I called a *weak* sense of collective action. I argued, however, that this weak teleological account of social groups is insufficient to capture adequately the notion of a social group [see **section B.2.c.iv. Broad *telos* (p. 59)**]. To come closer to capturing what we mean by a group, we need to employ the stronger, we-mode collective action proposed by Tuomela. Thus, although division of labour within a Capitalist society implies a weakly characterised, I-mode collective, it does not imply a (we-mode) social group.

This response presupposes that what makes a thick phenomenon *social* is that it involves or implies the existence of a *social group*.[170] If the thick phenomenon implies something less than

[170] This seems as good a definition of what counts as "social" as any. One might use Searle's social ontology to support this position [see **section B.3.c. Searle's constructionist account (p. 90)**]. Searle holds that social institutions (such as Capitalism) are constructed through collectively recognised Status Function Declarations; and

a social group, then it is not a *social* phenomenon. But, Flew may object, it appears that I have conceded that something more than the individualistic is implied by cases of thick social phenomena. Even if Capitalism and the division of labour imply an I-mode collective rather than a (we-mode) social group, this I-mode collective appears to be something more than a mere aggregate of individuals. And what is this non-individualistic phenomenon if not a *social* phenomenon?

D.5.c. Networks

D.5.c.i. The unified-aggregate problem

Thus far I have considered two types of thick social phenomena: the wisdom of the crowds (Galton's ox and the *Scorpion*) and the unintended consequences of intended action (Capitalism and the division of labour). I argued that although the wisdom of the crowds can be explained individualistically (using statistical explanation), the unintended consequences of intended action are not so amenable to individualistic explanation. The problem is that unintended consequences, although they fail to imply the existence of social groups, nevertheless imply the existence of something more than a mere aggregate. The challenge is to specify exactly what this *something* is, without providing an account that is too weak to account for unintended consequences, nor so strong that it collapses into a social group (or something similar enough to a social group that it is performs the role that the concept of a social group performs in Folk Sociology). Call this challenge the "unified-aggregate problem".

The unified-aggregate problem is a significant challenge for the Eliminative Individualist, and one that I cannot fully address here. I will attempt, however, to outline one strategy that the Eliminativist might adopt as a solution. Before outlining this strategy, however, I should point out that it is unclear whether the unified-aggregate problem is more serious than the problems faced by other solutions to the individual-individual and social-individual problems. That is, even if the Eliminativist has no solution to the unified-aggregate problem, it is not clear that we should instead adopt an affirmative account of social phenomena. For example, is the unified-aggregate problem more damaging than the supervenience theorist's *prima facie* inability to provide an account that is neither so strong that it collapses into reduction, nor so weak that it

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as I argued, collective recognition here implies collective recognition by a *social group*. Thus Searle implies that social phenomena generally (or social institutions at least) imply the existence of social groups.

cannot capture the dependence of the social on the individual [see **section C.2.b.ii. Supervenience (p. 125)**]?

D.5.c.ii. A network theory explanation of the division of labour

Now, consider one strategy the Eliminativist might adopt. A good candidate for what is involved in the unintended consequences of intended action is a *network* (see Castree et al., 2013). A network is "a set of actors or nodes along with a set of ties of a specified type (such as friendship) that link them" (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011, p. 2). Network theorists have developed two models for understanding how these ties function in a network: the pipes model, and the bond model (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011, pp. 5-8). On the pipes model, the ties among nodes in the network function as pipes along which information is passed, or flows. That is, what links nodes A and B in a network is that A passes information to B or B passes information to A. By contrast, on the bond model, a tie between two nodes enables one node to act as if it can perform a function that the second node can perform, but which the first node could not have performed absent its tie to the second node. That is, A and B are bonded because some capacity or property of B that A lacks prior to their bond, is transferred to A when they are bonded.

Both the pipes model and the bond model may be used to explain what is happening in the division of labour case – that is, they explain how it is that Capitalist societies motivate individuals acting from self-interest to divide labour in such a way that benefits the society as a whole. Let all the individuals in a Capitalist society be the nodes in a network. Then, on the pipes model, the tie among these nodes is the transfer of knowledge about market conditions.[171] Hughes (2007), for example, argues that knowledge transfer is the crux of a Capitalist economy. In the division of labour case, by offering more or less money[172] for the exercise of a particular skill or service, individuals transfer knowledge to one another regarding the value of that skill. This motivates each individual in the network to offer more highly-valued (i.e. highly-demanded) skills. As a whole, the system accrues greater value this way. Doctors are offered more money than gardeners, for example, and so, the individuals in a capitalist network acquire the knowledge that doctors are in greater demand than gardeners. This leads to more individuals

[171] The market is, in turn, another network, whose most significant nodes are corporations, and whose ties are the transfer of money or other resources.
[172] Network theorists might understand money as a tie, especially on a pipe-based approach. A dollar bill "flows", or "walks" from node in a network to another node (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011, p. 5).

choosing to be doctors (until this need is satisfied), which in turn benefits society as a whole. Filling these gaps in the market in this way results in the division of labour.

This pipes-based model of the division of labour is, however, thickly social. It seems difficult (although perhaps not impossible – see footnotes 171 and 172) to understand the notions of the "market" and "money" in terms that do not refer to social groups. Fortunately, though, the bond-based model of network ties may be more suitable for the Eliminativist in constructing an explanation of the division of labour. I consider the application of the bond model to Capitalism now.

On the bond model, the individuals in a Capitalist society are tied together because each individual (or node) offers a service to another individual that the other could not have performed himself. In this way, each node in the network benefits because it can perform a task it could not otherwise have performed, but the network as a whole benefits as well. A doctor is tied, or bonded, to a gardener because the doctor heals the gardener's influenza in a way that the gardener could not easily have done himself. This makes the gardener more productive, which benefits the individuals to which the gardener is in turn bonded. For example, the gardener is bonded to the home-owner, because the gardener manicures the garden in a way which the home-owner has no time to do himself. And in healing the gardener's flu, the gardener is able to provide his services to the home-owner more efficiently. In this way, the bonds among network members benefit both each other, and the network as a whole.

But notice that for two nodes in the network to be bonded in this way, they must offer a service that the other *cannot* (or would not easily) perform himself. And therefore, if every individual in the society offered the same service, he *would* be able to perform the service that each of the other nodes offers, and therefore the nodes would not bond. Hence, bonding only occurs if services (or labour) are *varied* (or divided) among the nodes in the network. Therefore, because bonds benefit the individuals involved, and because bonds are maximally produced through the division of labour, bond-based network theory explains why self-interested nodes in a network divide labour.

D.5.c.iii. Networks and social groups

The Folk Sociologist could point out at this point that even if network theory can explain the division of labour, why should we think that networks resolve the unified-aggregate problem?

That is, why should we think that networks are any different from social groups? Why are networks acceptable to an Eliminative Individualist, while social groups are not?

The Eliminativist should respond as follows. While in social groups we expect there to be some sort of relationship or connection between each member and at least one other member of the group, we do not require this in a network. In the case of a social group, if an individual does not interact with any other member of the group, then he is not a member of the group. However, network theorists often discuss networks containing nodes that fail to interact in any way with any other node in the network. That is, we can have "disconnected networks", but not disconnected social groups. "A disconnected network is one in which some nodes cannot reach certain others by any path, meaning that the network is divided into fragments" (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011, p. 2).

For example, the network analyst might examine the evolution of a network of school children from their first day in a new school onwards. On the first day of school, the children are largely disconnected, with perhaps isolated pre-existing ties among the children, as in **Figure 10**:

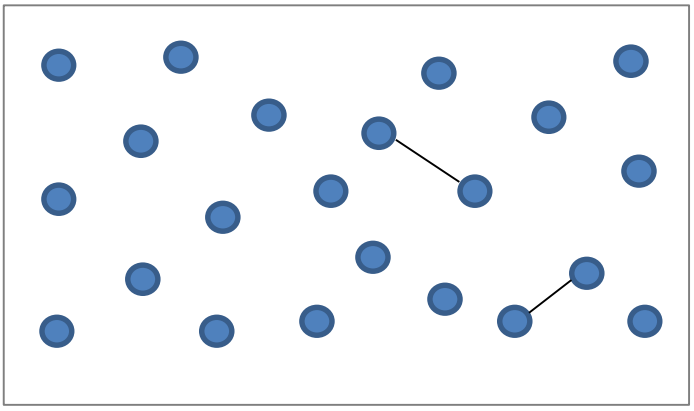


Figure 10: Day one of school

Over time, perhaps by day 14, fragments, or components, evolve in the network through friendship ties (**Figure 11**):

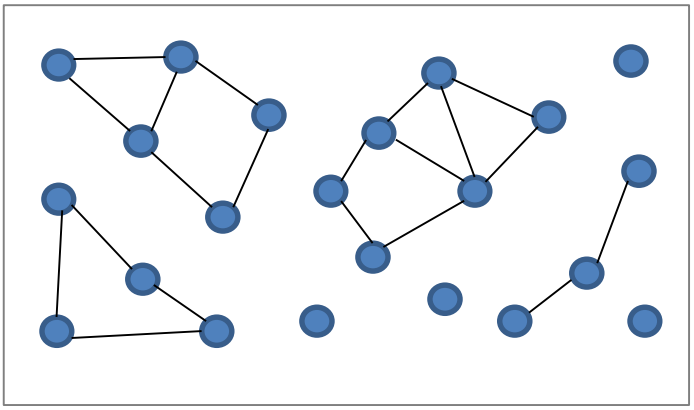


Figure 11: Day 14 of school

A network analyst might examine which factors or variables preceded the formation of ties among children, but were absent in the case of children who did not connect. This might aid in the analysis of the conditions for friendship, for example. But this sort of analysis would be impossible if every node in the network must be connected at the initiation of their membership in the network to at least one other node in the network. Disconnected network members are therefore important for network analysis. By contrast, an individual cannot become a member of a social group without any relation to another member of the group at the time of his joining the group.

This distinction between social groups and networks (that social groups may not have disconnected members, while networks may have disconnected nodes) implies that networks are less unified, or less coherent, than social groups. Moreover, this distinction implies that networks lack some of the crucial capacities that social groups have. These capacities are crucial because they are central to Folk Sociological discussions of groups. I have in mind here three capacities: collective action, collective responsibility, and value. I discuss these in turn.

One of the central features of social groups is that they have the capacity for collective action. A social group has this capacity because the links, or relations, among its members are strong enough to unify their individual actions into a joint, or collective, action. By contrast, the ties among nodes in a network may be so weak that the nodes are disconnected (as on **Figure 10: Day one of school**). The school children on day one of school do not have the capacity for collective action, since they are almost entirely un-unified. And therefore it is not the case that all networks have the capacity for collective action.

Second, in the case of social groups, we regularly ascribe responsibility to a group and its members based upon the group's actions: the Nazis, for example, were responsible for various atrocities. But since I may be a (disconnected) node in a network, and have no dealings whatsoever with any other nodes in the network, it seems incorrect, therefore, to think that I am responsible for something that the others nodes in the network did purely because I am a node in the network. By contrast, if I am a member of the Nazi party (a social group), I do appear to be at least somewhat responsible for the atrocities committed by the party, just because I am a member.

And finally, networks do not seem to have the value that social groups have. This is partly because (as discussed) networks lack, while social groups have, the capacity to act collectively in a way that holds the group responsible for its actions. Moreover, since I as a node in a disconnected network may have no relations with other nodes in the network, belonging to a network may not impact my life in any tangible or obvious way. This suggests that networks do not perform the role that social groups perform in our lives: networks do not fulfil the psychological needs (i.e. do not have the psychological value) that social groups do.

I conclude, therefore, that networks do not play the role that social groups play in Folk Sociological discussion of social groups. And so, the Eliminative Individualist might consistently permit the existence of networks while denying the existence of social groups. This allows the Eliminativist to use networks in explaining thick social phenomena, where networks are something more unified than a mere aggregate, but less unified than a social group.

A final comment should be made about the use of network theory. It is unclear, the Folk Sociologist could argue, just what it means when we say that networks "exist". Are networks identical with or distinct from the nodes and ties they contain? This question parallels the social-individual problem; indeed, we might call it the network-node problem. One reason why the Eliminativist should answer this question (in addition to completeness) is that a popular view of networks is Instrumentalist (see Borgatti & Halgin, 2011, pp. 2-3), on which networks do not exist, but are nevertheless useful. On this Instrumentalist view of networks, networks are merely useful fictions defined by the researcher for the purposes of illuminating interesting connections among individuals. This position presents a problem for the account of thick social phenomena I have presented here, for if networks do not exist, it may be difficult to show how they can adequately ground, or explain, thick social phenomena. This suggests that the Eliminativist is saddled with the challenge of providing an adequate affirmative solution to the

network-node problem. This may not be an insurmountable task (see Laumann, Marsden, & Prensky, 1983), but it is work the Eliminativist needs to perform before Eliminative Individualism is complete. Resolving the network-node problem is unfortunately, however, beyond the scope of this thesis.

D.6. CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have argued in two parts for the claim that **it is not the case that Eliminative Individualism is clearly less plausible than the accounts with which it competes**. First, I argued that the individual-individual and social-individual problems are difficult, if not impossible, to resolve adequately. Thus, the alternatives to Eliminative Individualism are unattractive, and so, Eliminative Individualism should be considered as a serious alternative to its rivals. Then, I attempted to show that Eliminative Individualism might be supported, or the objections to Eliminative Individualism resisted, if Eliminative Individualism rests upon an eliminative explanatory approach ($TEMI_{eliminative}$) rather than upon the other eliminative approaches offered in the literature (Rovane's Group-persons approach, Instrumentalism, and Kemeny-reduction). That is, I argued that a case can be made for the possibility that social groups can be explained *away* in the same way that paranormal, or errant religious beliefs, can be explained away. However, I argued that reason-based explanation, statistical principles and network analysis should be used as additional models of elimination for certain types of social phenomena other than social groups (specifically, thick social phenomena).

I conclude, therefore, that Eliminative Individualism is a serious contender to affirmative social ontologies in the literature, but has certain challenges. First, Eliminative Individualists need to provide a response to the problem of developing a language absent a social context. Second, more work needs to be done on the network-node problem – is there an adequate affirmative account of networks? These two challenges, however, do not appear any more serious than the challenges faced by affirmative accounts of social groups.

E. CONTRIBUTION

This thesis contributes to the literature in six ways. First, I distinguish between the task of specifying the relations that exist among the members of a group (the individual-individual problem), and the task of specifying the relation that exists between a social group and its members (the social-individual problem). This distinction has not been made in the literature, and yet, it seems to me, is critical to clarifying the differences between the various accounts of the social on offer. Moreover, in clarifying this distinction, I hope to have clarified the core concerns of social ontology as a field of inquiry.

Second, I provide a systematic survey and critique of the recent advances in resolving the individual-individual and social-individual problems, which have not received such an extensive survey until now. Moreover, some of the positions I consider in this survey have not yet been elucidated properly in the literature. For example, insofar as philosophers discuss Functionalism in the sphere of the social, they are entirely concerned with an explanatory (rather than metaphysical) version of this claim, namely, that social phenomena are best explained by their function. Perhaps because the metaphysical claim has been ignored, the objection from the changing functions of social groups has never been discussed explicitly. Thus, my second contribution is to fill the gaps in the repertoire of accounts that might be provided by the social philosopher, but then to critique these alternative solutions.

Third, my discussion of the social-individual problem highlights the analogies and disanalogies between the social and the mental, and I argue that solving the social-individual problem cannot be resolved in the same way that we might solve the mind-body problem. This is important because Sawyer (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004), Horgan (1993) and others have assumed that parallel solutions might be found.

Fourth, my discussion of social phenomena focuses on *social groups*. There is a growing trend among social ontologists to focus on *social institutions*, rather than on social groups. Searle's work on social institutions, and the considerable debate this has sparked, is valuable, but I argued that his account presupposes the notion of a social group. Yet this basic concept of a group has not been given the critical attention it deserves by Searle, his followers, and his critics.

Fifth, I construct hybrid accounts as possible solutions to the individual-individual and social-individual problems. Hybrid accounts are likely the best solutions to the individual-individual and social-individual problems, and yet they have received no explicit attention in the literature. I discuss how such accounts might be constructed, and the challenges such accounts face.

And finally, I construct an original, detailed Eliminative Individualist account of social phenomena, and argue that we should seriously consider this account as an alternative to the competing social ontologies in the literature.

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