

## **EXTENDED ESSAY**

### **Normative Sociology: the Intuitionist Crisis and Animals as Absent Referents**

#### **Part I of II essays on animals and normative sociology**

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...the aim is to construct a normative sociology.

— Bryan S. Turner

*Abstract:* Let us newly distinguish between positive normative sociology, which holds that sociologists should assert ethical norms such as social justice, and negative normative sociology, which defends the Weberian thesis that sociologists should not assert any moral values or norms. Ethical relativism, endemic to so much sociological work, equally affirms (animal) liberation and oppression. However, the current methodology of ethics—intuitionism—is not enough to counter moral relativity. Thus far, positive normative sociologists do not effectively meet objections from their negative counterparts. This state of affairs invites the question as to whether an anti-intuitionist sociology can be articulated that transcends ethical relativism while also defeating Weberian objections (a project reserved for Part 2).

#### **Introduction**

Max Horkheimer, co-founder of critical theory, was a German sociologist and philosopher of Jewish extraction. He wrote in *The Eclipse of Reason*:

The real individuals of our time are the martyrs who have gone through infernos of suffering and degradation in their resistance to conquest and oppression, not the inflated personalities of popular culture... These unsung

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heroes consciously exposed their existence as individuals to...terroristic annihilation....The anonymous martyrs of the concentration camps are the symbols of the humanity that is striving to be born. The task...is to translate what they have done into language that will be heard, even though their finite voices have been silenced by tyranny. (Horkheimer, 1947, p. 161)

Thankfully, Horkheimer resided in the United States during the Holocaust. His thoughts appear relevant to me, as an “indirect Holocaust survivor.” Bernard Sztybel, my father, barely escaped the Nazi murder machine. His father, David Sztybel, Senior, led his family out of Zamosc, Poland while under attack by planes and tanks. Still, the suddenness of the strike meant that many other relatives were left behind. My Aunt Helen remembers holding my father’s small hand as they ran through a field, bombs exploding all around. They made it onto a train into what was then the Soviet Union.

Knowing almost nothing of the relatives who did not escape (they are thoroughly shrouded by the pains of survivors who prefer not to speak on such matters) I picture those who were caught in the concentration camps, perhaps awaiting execution for being Jews, or being worked to death. They likely longed for a liberation that never came, although my Great Uncle, Harry Sztybel, the brother of my namesake, wrongly presumed dead, got himself to what we call freedom from underneath a pile of “refuse”—*corpses*.

I hope to articulate a form of normative sociology faithful to the “blank slate memories” of those unfortunate Sztybels who never got out. I have to believe they longed for *liberation* for themselves and others, although I would not romantically imagine that they were necessarily free of racist or other anti-liberation views. Yet surely they would have wished that societies would be protected from murderous and oppressive regimes such as the Nazis’.

What is normative sociology? It does not merely study norms, but *proposes* them, or else *negates* sociologists proposing them. It is not merely moral anthropology or the like. Sociologists often catalogue and analyze norms without making value judgments, as in Max Weber’s study of the Protestant work ethic. Weber believed positive normative sociology was illegitimate—which is itself a value judgment. Was he right?

## Is Normative Sociology “Real” Sociology?

Let us first address this question directly and rationally seeking as far as possible a scientific typology. It is plausible to consider that there are criteria for “real sociology” that are already implicit in widely accepted forms:

(1) *How was the idea of sociology first intended by its originator?* Auguste Comte, we will see, posed a *sociology* (a term he coined) in which he defends ethical commitments.

(2) *Has sociology traditionally been concerned with normative sociology?* This paper shows that Comte, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Theodor Adorno, Max Weber (the latter in the sense of negative normative sociology—see (6)’s discussion), Adam Smith and Jane Addams all practiced normative sociology as do more modern-day figures such as Max Horkheimer, G. H. Mead, Herbert Blumer, Talcott Parsons (in a conflicted way), Herbert Marcuse, Jurgen Habermas, Steven Buechler, Robert Bellah, Raymond Boudon, Maeve Cooke, Bryan S. Turner, Steven Lukes, David Nibert, and John Sorenson, to use just some examples. This covers all of the major schools.

(3) *Is the etymology and internal logic of the term “sociology” consistent with normative sociology?* I will show that the scientific study of society is indeed consistent with even asserting ethical norms. I neither need nor desire any philosophy that is distinct from science. I am strictly interested in *hypotheses supported by evidence*. Favoring any other kind of belief would merely be arbitrary or prejudicial *favoritism*. I will show in Part 2 how, surprisingly or not, ethics can strictly be conducted in terms of hypotheses supported by evidence. In a revolutionary way, this would make ethics a subdiscipline of social science, such that ethics would be an *intradisciplinary* study for sociologists, and not merely an *interdisciplinary* concern. “Ethics” derives from *ethos* (social norms), while “morality” stems from *mores* (customs). That is partly why a science of ethics, if that were possible, would be *social* science. My concern with scientific justification is not a case of scientism or scientific imperialism, but merely insists on the need to try to *justify* all beliefs. However, scientism could rear its head in the form of dismissing ethics

out of hand because it does not fit into traditional (social) scientific study. It is not automatically irrational to discuss ethics in scientific terms, but it would be irrational to deny that ethics is scientific if it can be conducted solely in terms of evaluating evidence for hypotheses. It would be *ad hoc* to merely *stipulate* that ethics is outside of science.

(4) *Can normative sociology use a generally acceptable definition of “sociological theory”?* Ira Cohen defines sociological theory in the *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*: “Any form of sustained reasoning or logic that endeavours to make sense of observable realities of social life via the use of concepts, metaphors, models, or other forms of abstract ideas may be legitimately classified as sociological theory.” (Cohen in Turner, 2006a, p. 595) I and other normative sociologists are engaged precisely in making sense of observable social reality using concepts and other forms of abstract ideas.

(5) *Is normative sociology of sufficient importance?* What could be more significant than liberation? Durkheim, for one, posits that the “ethical” fundamentally explains social phenomena more than any other factor (Durkheim, 1958, p. 247).

(6) *Is normative sociology logically inescapable?* I distinguish between positive normative sociology - whose sociologists defend norms rationally - and negative normative sociology - which asserts that it is not right for sociologists to call for ethical agreement in general (exception: professional ethical standards in sociology - but even these are viewed as relative). I am not using “positive” and “negative” evaluatively, but merely to refer to present or absent rational defense of moral norms in sociology. Normative sociology is logically inescapable because we need to rationally defend either advocating moral norms or else refusing to do so. A contradictory view would be illogical.

I do not consider *fashionability* as a criterion, although that factor is indeed socially influential. Normative sociology may be more trendy in Europe, which is more theoretical than in North America as the latter tends to be more pragmatic. (Turner, 2006a, xiii) Fashions change and reflect prejudices, but we need to evaluate whether normative

sociology is *rational*. Similarly, just taking any sociologist's say-so, without justification, would be a case of inappropriate appeal to authority.

It would be wrong to "correct" sociologist Bryan Turner that he is not doing "real" sociology when he openly practices normative sociology. For some sociologists not to tolerate or even welcome normative sociology would be an arbitrary and indefensible case of failing to honor academic rights and freedoms. It is ironic that sociologists teach wariness of "common sense" and often rue uncritical consumerism in society, but they may swallow whole social influences in their own discipline that *irrationally* lead to the exclusion of normative sociology. Normative sociology is eminently sociological given all of the factors considered above.

### **The Positive Need for Normative Sociology**

Some say that we do not need to rationally defend norms because democracy will save us. However, the lost Sztybels were partly doomed by that factor. On March 5, 1933, 17 million Germans gave the Nazis—and in effect the Holocaust—fully 43.9% of the popular vote (Goldhagen, 1987, p. 87). Ethical relativism is a mainstay of much sociology, but it cannot truly support liberation, for on such a framework, Nazi norms are on a par with those of Nelson Mandela. My murdered relatives likely would have regarded such an evaluation as obscene. To secure liberation, we need to defend it such that rational individuals would have a hard time disputing its aptness—especially since so many people are tempted to repudiate liberation, either in theory and/or in practice.

We have an obligation to ensure that the Holocaust never happens again—although it already has in Rwanda among other places—and it is now encompassing animals (Sztybel, 2006b; Patterson, 2002). Modern sociology cannot optimally do its part to meet this obligation while using ethical relativism. We cannot simply *assert* ethical absolutes—the Nazis can vouch for their own. However, the need to block future

Holocausts frankly does figure into my motivation for this study, which is dedicated to those long-lost Szybels. These people, whoever they were, were also animals.

I understand those who greet with skepticism the idea of morality as scientific. However, I do not accept moral skepticism as justifiable in the final analysis. Still, one might well doubt moral theory as it is currently based on *intuitions* or fundamental beliefs that, intuitionists say, cannot and need not be justified (Williams, 1985, pp. 93-94; Mackie, 1977, p. 38). If all we have are competing intuitions then perhaps the skeptics are right. Yet intuitions are unscientific, and trying to reheat Kant or utilitarianism as food for thought will not do, as I will show in Part 2. In that segment I will also demonstrate that there are *reasoned* absolute values which are anomalous for both intuitionists and skeptics alike. Liberation is not a central term in social science, and is not even listed in the *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology* (Turner, 2006a) However, I will go about the urgent task of defending *liberation sociology*.

Sociologist Ira Cohen tells us that ethical philosophy was evident in most classical sociology (Cohen in Turner, 2006a, p. 596), but after about 1930 the search for ethical meaning was generally abandoned (*Ibid.*). The present study shows that many never quit this quest. Nevertheless, Cohen, reflecting the Weberian hegemony, proclaims that: “Social scientific theories are not in the business of making or defending value judgments” (Cohen, in Turner, 2006a, p. 648). Ironically though, I suggest above (and will in effect argue in Part 2) that positive normative sociology is perfectly consistent with Cohen’s own definition of “sociological theory.”

Most sociology has judged in favor of ethical relativism but I seek to appeal that judgment on the basis of freshly interpreted evidence found through not only *effective cognition* (which I term awareness of cause-and-effect, a classical preoccupation of the sciences), but also two forms of *affective cognition* not previously granted to exist: *emotional cognition* and *desiring cognition*. Without a positive vision for society, sociology is in danger of reducing to piles of allegedly “neutral” facts without any passion for social change. There are plenty of sightings of society, but there is precious

little vision. The alleged neutrality would really give oppression the leg up by putting aggression on a level playing field of legitimacy and choiceworthiness right alongside securing liberty. That is not “neutral” but both valorizes oppression and devalues liberation—even if unintentionally.

I propose that normative sociology be done in *sociological terms*, including:

- (1) Focusing largely on sociologists rather than, say, philosophers;
- (2) Upholding sociological values: science as a privileged way of knowing; being skeptical by default; not getting lost in abstractions; doing pragmatic studies to determine which practices are most effective; anti-oppression; recognizing that there is no single best way to live; finding ethics to be fully intelligible only in cultural contexts; honoring diverse voices; being suspicious of the “transcendental”; anti-ethnocentrism; and anti-authoritarianism (see Part 2).
- (3) Showing how sociological questions lead to normative sociology, e.g., what is the nature and scope of social norms?
- (4) Using the scientific method to engage in normative sociology.

Aside from positive and negative normative sociology, we can also say a normative sociologist can be indeterminate (if they have not decided) or conflicted (e.g., we will see Talcott Parsons calls value-judgments relative to social contexts, but then he himself also makes cross-cultural value judgments). Contradiction is not a fine resting place for theory though. The truth is unitary. Sanity is coherent. A great generality either is the case or not—the world does not have room for both. Do we need “metanormative sociology” in the way that philosophy distinguishes between normative ethics and meta-ethics? That distinction would be redundant since we use a critical “meta” perspective anyway in evaluating claims for positive and negative normative sociology.

The anomalies of affective cognition relate indelibly to animals who share in such cognition. Just as we have a digestive system like other animals, so we can ask:

is it universal for all sentient beings that pain feels bad? Sentience is shared across so many species. Still, most do not reason much about animals. As Marjorie Spiegel laments: “For those so predisposed, a hazily understood version of evolutionary theory is all they need to avoid giving the lives of their victims another thought” (Spiegel, 1996, p. 85).

Ethical relativism is far more devastating for animals than humans. Such a world view costs humanity since relativists would be far less likely for example to intervene in genocides committed in other nations (Turner, 2006b, p. 12). However, most ethical relativists believe in strong human rights (except, say, Benito Mussolini, as documented in Lukes, 2008, pp. 39-40). So whereas a relativistic democracy might likely favor substantial human rights, the same would not be true of animal rights, which is socially “deviant” in terms of contemporary demographics.

Animals are little discussed by sociologists except for cursory or dismissive remarks. Carol J. Adams’ innovation of “the absent referent” (Adams, 1990, p. 14) applies here. Most positive normative sociologists never breathe the names of animals yet they invoke locutions such as compassion, justice and rights which logically refer to nonhuman quite as well as to human animals. We can “read” animals as relevant in many texts and contexts even if others do not. I would add to Adams’ valuable account that animals can be absent referents in various ways and degrees. If animals are swept aside as “stupid” for example, then their conscious cores are absent in large degrees.

I do not propose to settle any disputes about interpretations of sociologists but only to offer defensible and well-documented readings. I was expecting most books in my sociology monograph survey to reflect Weber’s value-neutral stance. Although I am equally motivated to read “positive” and “negative” accounts, I was surprised to find that the overwhelming number of thinkers surveyed happen to be positive normative sociologists. This hints at a nascent field which urgently needs to be developed.

Signs that normative sociology is presently in its infancy include:

- (1) Positive normative sociology has not yet been developed scientifically, which is not surprising because ethics has not been effectively articulated in such a manner by philosophers or anyone else;
- (2) Many sociologists *altogether* reject normative sociology even though positive or negative normative sociology needs to be defended at minimum;
- (3) Skeptics of positive normative sociology rely on the same old arguments as Hume's separation of is and ought and the "nonempirical" nature of ethics, although such arguments may be readily refutable as I illuminate in Part 2;
- (4) Animal ethics is hardly discussed in sociology;
- (5) There are no articles or books that comprehensively review normative sociology, that I am aware of, although several books defend positive forms;
- (6) There are no journals or conferences known to me that are specifically devoted to normative sociology; and
- (7) Many sociologists are positive normative sociologists, but inconsistently embrace beliefs that seem to entail negative normative sociology (e.g., the views of Horkheimer and Adorno—see below).

Perhaps normative sociology is still embryonic because most sociologists do not have a background in normative ethics, as I do. It would be like trying to repair a car without the relevant expertise. However, even professional philosophers typically rely on intuitionism which is problematic because:

- (1) Intuitions lack evidence or reasons given for hypotheses and are therefore unscientific, prejudicial and lacking in accountability;
- (2) Diverse intuitions lead to indeterminacy so intuitionism logically entails any number of theories;
- (3) Intuitionists cannot resolve conflicts of intuitions without recourse to more intuitions, which is logically circular or question-begging.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A fuller critique of intuitionism will be articulated in Part 2.

If ethics just boils down to conflicting intuitions, then I suppose the skeptics are right and ethics is merely relative to (inter)subjective frames of reference. Note that for the following analysis I will interpret any judgment to be an intuition that is either given without justification or fails to express a need for rational defence.

### **Early Positive Normative Sociologists**

Auguste Comte first invented the term *sociology*. He appointed himself “the Priest of Humanity” (Comte, 1875a, p. xxv) in his secular religion that worships society (Comte, 1957, p. 372). I will not explore Comte’s bizarre eccentricities here. Indeed, a monograph on animals and normative sociology is called for and is largely in draft. Comte integrated ethics with sociology, declaring that: “...Morals will take their place at the head of the encyclopaedic hierarchy” since ethics regulates all nations and individuals (Comte, 1877, p. 4). “Morals” is supreme even over “Sociology” (*Ibid.*, p. 2). The key to Comte’s ethics is making “sympathetic instincts” dominant over “selfish instincts” or to cultivate social values and feelings over personal values and feelings (Comte, 1957, pp. 101, 108). He also spoke of an ethic of “social sympathies” (Comte, 1877, p. 111), a “principle of universal love” (*Ibid.*, p. 104) and a system of rights (Comte, 1875b, p. 91). Here we can interpret an *intuitionist* affirmation of sympathy and other ethical concerns, for it is never rationally defended “from the ground up” as I shall attempt with best caring sociology in Part 2.

Emile Durkheim proclaimed that ethics is the primary unit for understanding and explaining society: “the social question...is not a question of money or force; it is a question of moral agents. What dominates is not the state of our economy, but, much more, the state of our morality” (Durkheim, 1958, p. 247). Durkheim held that if we were to discover a general moral law, we would have to investigate it using the conventional scientific method (Durkheim, 1972, p. 90). He believed that moral education can become rational (Durkheim, 1973, p. 11), that we can arrive at reasoned evaluations using science (Durkheim, 1974, p. 62) and that “science can help us determine the ways in which we

ought to orient our conduct” (Durkheim, 1973, p. x). He holds that duties, e.g., promise-keeping, are self-evident truths known specifically by intuition (Durkheim, 1974, p. 65); that is, we can know ethics by learning rules of society as social fact (Durkheim, 1973, pp. 23, 55; 1974, p. 61). He naively professed that: “There is only one particular morality that a society can have, given the way that it is constituted” (Durkheim, 1979, p. 32).

This is falsifiable by the many different ethical theories in our own society. He is an ethical relativist who declares that there are no objective values and that valuation is rather the product of opinion (Durkheim, 1974, p. 57). However, he holds that respect for life and property are “...independent of any local or ethnic conditions [and]...are considered by all civilized peoples as the primary and most compelling of all.” (Durkheim, 1957, p. 110) It is noteworthy that he is at first declaring these principles cross-culturally in general, but in the next breath qualifies these as being most important among “*civilized* peoples” (my italics). He also dogmatically declares that ethics is quite generally opposed to egoism (Durkheim, 1973, p. 65), although in fact Hobbesian ethical egoism is a prominent ethical theory. Reminiscent of Comte’s worship of society, Durkheim suggests that ultimately we should act for society (*Ibid.*, p. 59). Durkheim denounces “the arrogance of systems of thought” (*Ibid.*, p. 51) given that ethics is constantly evolving (although we will see that my own ethic of best caring is open to continuing evolution for its part). He claims that philosophers’ ideas are mere approximations of society’s ethics (*Ibid.*, pp. 25-26), although that hardly accounts for animal rights ethics. Durkheim’s intuitionism and lack of (animal) liberation sociology are evident across his works.

Adam Smith is an economist and so a kind of social scientist. He bases his positive normative outlook, like Comte, on sympathy (Smith, 1969, pp. 5, 161) also speaking of “universal benevolence” (*Ibid.*, p. 345) which is reminiscent of Comte’s “universal love.” Smith wrote: “Pleasure and pain are the greatest objects of desire and aversion; but these are distinguished not by reason but by immediate sense and feeling” (*Ibid.*, p. 471). This sounds close to my own idea of emotional cognition (Szybel, 2006b, p. 18) although it does alienate “feeling-sense” from the process of reasoning.

Jane Addams is sometimes considered an early sociologist (often cited in the context of critical theory) who documented social conditions, especially those related to poverty, prostitution and the devastation of wars. She ran Hull House in Chicago to help poor people including by lending dignity to their lives. Similar to Comte and Smith, she writes: “Sympathetic knowledge is the only way of approach to any human problem...” (Addams, 1912, p. 11; see also 1902, p. 26). She holds that “...the teachings of moral theorems...” is not what promotes virtue so much as “...the direct expression of social sentiments and by the cultivation of practical habits...” (Addams, 2007, p. 8). She also writes of the importance of justice (Addams, 1960, p. 4) and calls for “a moral rational social order” (Addams, 1932, p. 42). Such thoughts indicate, not surprisingly, that her approach is not purely emotional. She also vaguely refers to “conscience” and “sensibilities” (*Ibid.*, p. 76). There is a religious dimension to Addams’ thought and she identifies with Christian humanitarianism (Addams, 1970, p. 20). That said, religion is not essential to her form of idealism which is intuitionist and of course not animal liberationist. Another early normative sociologist, Max Weber, will be considered under negative normative sociology. Also, Karl Marx and his followers will soon be considered separately.

### **Positive Normative Sociology in Recent History**

George Herbert Mead, although avidly studied by sociologists, was a pragmatist philosopher who was nevertheless one of the great inspirations for sociologist Herbert Blumer, innovator of symbolic interactionism. Mead concedes that if we had a fixed set of values, assessing good and bad “...would be fairly scientific...” (Mead, 1938, p. 460), however he denies that such a situation exists, given the changing nature of values (*Ibid.*). Like the symbolic interactionists who are his intellectual descendents, Mead was a subjectivist who held that “...significant objects can exist only as objects for a subject” (Mead, 1964, p. 17). Also, there can be no subject without an object and vice versa (*Ibid.*). He plausibly speaks of social institutions as *habits* (*Ibid.*, p. 25). He refers to “the

generalized other” as a mental construct encompassing what others in society share by way of belief or practice (Mead, 1964, p. 219). Mead, a true pragmatist, envisions thinking primarily in terms of problem-solving (*Ibid.*, p. 25). Mead’s views on ethics include the idea that we should seek behavior that is conducive to the well-being of society (*Ibid.*, p. 275), an idea reminiscent of Comte and Durkheim. In a way that presages Jurgen Habermas’ discourse ethics (discussed below), Mead sees the human social goal as attaining a “universal human society” in which the meaning of all gestures is understood by everybody, a kind of communicative ideal (*Ibid.*, pp. 270-271), although I emphasize that communities can have shared understandings but still experience severe social problems.

Mead tentatively endorses Immanuel Kant’s principle—roughly, do in relation to others as you would have them do to in relation to you—thus seeking universal laws of conduct (Mead, 1934, p. 380). Elsewhere though Mead states that all one can say of ethics is that one needs to take account of all interests (*Ibid.*, p. 387) or all values (*Ibid.*, p. 388 Mead, 1938, p. 462). Yet I would hasten to point out that sadistic interests and values also exist, and why and how should moral agents take *these* into account? Although Mead introduces ethical theory into his social thought, he remains an intuitionist, and it is unclear how much he would qualify as a liberation sociologist (liberation sociology is discussed further in Part 2). Certainly his subjectivism—which was inherited by Blumer’s symbolic interactionism—is no bulwark against anti-liberation forces such as, say, Nazism or poverty-promoting *laissez-faire* social policies.

Herbert Marcuse, in his *One-Dimensional Man*, seems to waffle between being skeptical about universals (Marcuse, 1964, p. 148) and affirming their existence (*Ibid.*, pp. 129, 210-211). He goes so far as to say that “...formerly metaphysical ideas of liberation may become the proper object of science” (*Ibid.*, p. 233). Like Mead, though, Marcuse’s value theory is impoverished, stating in a rather Marxian fashion that justice and freedom, as well as truth and goodness, have their meaning in terms of “...the satisfaction of man’s material needs, the rational organization of the realm of necessity” (*Ibid.*, pp. 234-235). Best caring finds that mental experiences are part of what people find to be of value, and

one can experience happiness with many kinds and degrees of material belongings (Szybel, 2006b, p. 19). Elsewhere Marcuse writes, quite differently, that liberation "...involves the reduction of misery, violence, and cruelty" (*Ibid.*, p. 236). He ends his zigzagging book on a note of despair: "The critical theory of society...holding no promise and no success,...remains negative" (*Ibid.*, p. 257). He is stating here that critical theory has not achieved anything in the past and holds no promise for the future. It is hard to be more negative than that. It is almost as though he is writing about positive normative sociology through a period of wild mood swings from negative to positive and then back to utter negativity again.

### **Talcott Parsons' Structural-Functionalism**

Structural-functionalism analyzes units of society and the purposes that they serve. An account of Parsons here serves as a kind of interlude, as it is hard to classify in terms of normative sociology, although Parsons' theory seems "Americanocentric" in a normative fashion in the end, as I will document. I discuss Parsons nonchronologically before Marx(ists) and then critical theory, since the latter group leads to a progression up to the themes of liberation in contemporary normative sociology. But now back to Parsons. Social systems ultimately serve needs, according to Parsons, be they genetically given (Parsons, 1991, p. 9) or other. He is an ethical relativist, stating that values have content relative to social systems of reference (Parsons, 1960, p. 174; see also relativist thoughts emerging in Parsons, 1991, pp. 12, 42; 1971, p. 15; 1969, p. 448; 1967, p. 147). Parsons warns against philosophical justifications of values as "nonempirical" (Parsons, 1991, p. 331), a Weberian move as we will see. Parsons also cautions against philosophers' occasional "intrusions" into science (*Ibid.*, p. 365). If ethics were nothing more than unscientific intuitionism, I would see the need for such gatekeeping, but we will query if one can present positive normative sociology in scientific terms in Part 2. Parsons calls advocates of absolutist norms as "intellectuals" only in quotation marks, thus indicating both skepticism and derision (*Ibid.*, p. 356). He explains that "radical" intellectuals being

antithetical to science "...is too patent to need elaboration" (*Ibid.*). Repeatedly we find that it is prejudicially *assumed* by Parsons that science excludes ethics.

Although Parsons is skeptical about ethics, he does make values key to his analysis and explanation of society, even defining sociological theory as studying institutionalized patterns of value-orientation (*Ibid.*, p. 552; see also *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 14, 36, 38, 326). As well, he portrays peace activism and socialism as movements "...which *exploit* the generalities and ambiguities of dominant value-systems" (*Ibid.*, p. 293; my italics). This implies that socialist visions are not fully legitimate in North American societies. From the point of view of elites at least, that is often the case, but socialists themselves merely *use* a sense of, say, "liberation," rather than *exploiting* ambiguities of meaning. Otherwise, the same could be said, in fairness, of conservative approaches to "liberty," that the term is "exploited" to make *laissez-faire* policies seem "enlightened." Yet Parsons is only dismissive of "utopian deviants" such as socialists (*Ibid.*, p. 297).

Referring at times to "primitive societies" (Parsons, 1960, p. 304), Parsons calls the United States the most advanced or modern society since it shows "greater generalized adaptive capacity" (Parsons, 1977, p. 231). This might only mean that a society *survives*, not that it is "advanced" in any other terms. He praises the U.S. as "...the leader of the modern system..." (Parsons, 1971, p. 122) and as having institutionalized freedoms more than other societies (Parsons, 1977, pp. 207-208). That may be so, but is all "freedom" worthwhile, such as being free of universal health care? His notion of the evolution of human societies seems to be normatively driven by ideals such as freedom, although his ethical relativism in a sense disqualifies him from ranking societies in this manner. For all his social scientific verbal attire, he is seemingly *intuiting* that liberty matters most, for all that he rigorously argues to be the case.

### **Marxists: Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, and Theodor Adorno**

Marx, even in his early philosophical manuscripts, believes that morality is part of an economic mode of production, or an extension of the material basis of society (Marx, 1961, p. 103). He speaks of workers reduced to their bodily needs (*Ibid.*, p. 30), referring to the unhappiness of capitalist society (*Ibid.*, p. 26) due to the fact of "...the complete domination of dead matter over men" (*Ibid.*, p. 63). By the last quote he means that maximizing capital becomes the dominant force, whatever the social cost. Under communism, by contrast, "...*man himself* becomes the object," rather than just accumulating property" (*Ibid.*, p. 108). However, it is vague for Marx (*Ibid.*, p. 104) to reject individualism (which I read as egoism) in favor of the social (which I read as altruism). Also, it is no refutation of egoism to call it "not human," as if humans could never be self-centered. Yet Marx speaks of "the human essence" and "human need" (*Ibid.*, p. 101) involving "the social" which is unhelpful because totally ambiguous. To be candid, Marx is merely masking and decorating his intuitionism with humanistic language. He speaks favorably of being oriented towards the world using the senses (*Ibid.*, p. 106), but again, that is totally inconclusive. He also makes indeterminate references to human natural powers, tendencies, and impulses (*Ibid.*, p. 156). Yet humans are capable of *anything* they can do. He refers to communism as fully-developed "naturalism" and "humanism" (*Ibid.*, p. 102), never really clarifying his meaning. Ironically, his early philosophy amounts to empty abstraction, since for example *human "needs" can be interpreted using rights views, utilitarianism, ethical egoism, the ethics of care, virtue theory, etc.* The irony lies in the fact that, as we shall see, Marx railed against "abstract" or idealistic theories. Marx considers himself "scientific" for basing his ideas on sense-perception (Marx, 1961, p. 111), but why not also emotional cognition (Szybel, 2006b, p. 18) and logic? And how is altruism as an ideal something that is even *known* to standard sense perception? Marx does not say—but then, how could he?

Marx is on firmer ground when he discusses the alienation of workers from their needs, wants, and the fruits of their labors, being driven ever on by the need to make a "living."

I cannot elaborate on this valuable part of his work, but will add that best caring also justifies anti-exploitation with greater rigor (as we shall see in Part 2) than Marx's anti-idealist intuitionism. He is particularly poignant in his portrayal of child workers (Marx, 1976, pp. 355, 371, 591, 593). Marx endorses violent revolution since he believes that the ruling class, the capitalists, cannot be overthrown by the worker-class (the proletariat) in any other way (Marx, 1964, p. 65). However, the need for violent revolution is not so obvious as Marx thinks. There is a growing body of research, which I will not broach here, that human life-satisfaction does not vary with income apart from poverty that causes suffering, and if that is true, *material* equality may lose its overriding Marxian import, and certainly may not be worth killing for. Perhaps wealthy investors have a positive role to play in society. Also, peaceful levers of power against the bourgeoisie (wealthy capitalists) are conceivable: legislation, unionizing, consumer boycotts and internet education about enlightened purchasing choices. However, I do not have space here to develop and defend a best caring theory of political economy.

Marx analyzes all of history as involving class conflict (Marx and Engels, 1992, p. 3). He claims that capitalism will inevitably lead to its own demise because it impoverishes the working class (*Ibid.*, p. 15) creates commercial crises, e.g., overproduction (*Ibid.*, p. 8) that leads to flooded markets, bankrupt companies unemployment, etc. Yet industrial capital also draws people into "civilization" with advanced communication such as, quaintly enough, the telegraph (*Ibid.*), and promotes worker discipline and unity (Marx, 1964, p. 141). In fairness however, worker unity is undermined by (a) un(der)employed people competing for jobs and (b) employed workers functioning as parts of competing companies. Capitalism *undermines* unity and promotes competition more than most modes of production. As for capitalism's "discipline" for workers, it is mostly one of conditioned subservience. Yet on such unsteady grounds, Marx projects both the downfall of capitalism and the sway of communism as historically inevitable (Marx, 1961, p. 114).

Although Marx asks the workers of the world to unite and has provided a very sketchy normative framework rejecting capitalist alienation, he opposes idealistic forms of

socialism, dismissing “utopians” who do not see the revolutionary and subversive side of poverty (Marx, 1956, p. 140). Poverty does not always have revolutionary potential though under conditions of severe repression and working class powerlessness. While *utopians*—or those who are unrealistic or perfectionist—may well be greeted skeptically by any rational critic, Marx has not provided any solid reason for failing to try to inspire people to realize what is *best*. He has not provided a sufficient “anti-inspiration” as it were. He and Engels dismiss Proudhon for positing justice as an absolute (Marx and Engels, 1956, p. 48), but why is justice *not* always worth aiming for in relevant contexts? Marx never really tells us why not. Marx opposes abstraction and praises its opposite, nature (Marx, 2002, p. 90), but abstractions can be *drawn* from nature, including emotional lives, and Marx himself favors abstractions such as *communism*. Moreover, (post)industrial communism is hardly “natural” in any distinctive sense. He speaks of abstractions as detached from reality (Marx, 1956, p. 118) but everything I say about pain feeling bad (Szybel, 2006b, p. 18), for example, is based on reality.

Marx rejects abstractions as “speculative” (Marx and Engels, 1947, p. 15) but I do not *speculate* as to whether pleasure feels good or whether the best is the ultimate ideal. I provide convincing logical evidence in favor of such relevant hypotheses (Szybel, 2006b, p. 18). He rejects “[e]mpty talk about consciousness” (Marx and Engels, 1947, p. 15), but emotional cognition is hardly that, but substantive and important for all that Marx’s and Engels’ dismissals show. He derides “eternal” ideas, but best caring, as we will see, uses ideas relevant to sentient life, and that is not necessarily assumed to be “eternal.” Marx refers to consciousness as a “social product” (*Ibid.*, p. 19) without elaborating, but although, of course, society helps to form minds, it does not make pain feel bad—such forms of sensation precede society and extend to all sentient beings, no matter how asocial (e.g., animals of asocial species and severely autistic humans). Rhetoric—such as referring to ideas as “phantoms of the brain,” “chimeras” (*Ibid.*, p. 1) and the like—does not substantively assist his case either. We do not merely *imagine* the results of emotional cognition. He also refers to ideas as “mystical” (Marx, 2002, p. 90) but although intuitionism may be mysterious as to how it could be justified, an anti-intuitionist liberation sociology need not be thus. Marx dismisses philosophy as “religion brought

into thought” (*Ibid.*, p. 76) but none of the presuppositions of best caring are necessarily spiritual in the least bit. Marx’s slanted characterizations of ideals simply do not apply to best caring. Then of course there are Marx and Engels’ outright insults, such as dismissing philosophers as “blockheads” (Marx and Engels, 1947, p. 182). Really, it is on the basis of these flimsy, quasi-anti-intellectual opinions that Marx and Engels contemptuously pronounce in *The Communist Manifesto* that objections from philosophical standpoints are not deserving of serious examination (Marx and Engels, 1992, p. 24). Yet sober evaluation evidently eludes them in the first place.

Marx is not only an anti-idealist, but a materialist (not the same thing: moral skeptics might be anti-idealist but not materialist for example). He allegedly bases his views in the five senses, as noted earlier, although communism as an idea is *not* something that we can sense thus. He claims without thorough analysis that idea systems are the “superstructure” or an outgrowth of the economic “structure” of society. Yet in the capitalist mode of production, *any number* of normative frameworks (listed above in italics) compete, many of which are similar to ancient doctrines, so it is refutable to state that specific economies “dictate” philosophy. One single ethic is not *caused*, let alone *logically entailed*, by any particular form of economy. He also insists that the ruling ideas are those of the ruling class (Marx, 1964, p. 78) but equal rights for *all* is the dominant theme in the West, and that ideal may not square with the *laissez-faire* principles of many wealthy capitalists. Egalitarianism competes with capitalism and indeed the former is often invoked in doing ideological battle with classism. Marx and Engels claim that “ideas of dominance” prevail (Marx and Engels, 1947, p. 39), but is, say Nietzschean inequality dominant—or rather egalitarian thought? Obviously the latter. Reality refutes this last claim. They also state that philosophy can contradict existing relations only if “...existing social relations have come into contradiction with the existing forces of production...” (Marx and Engels, 1947, p. 20). In other words, philosophy only goes against social reality if that state of affairs is caused economically. Yet animal liberation contradicts existing “relations” of capitalism but is decidedly not a result of being caused by “forces of production.” Rich and poor alike may support animal rights, and animal

liberation was not “caused” by economic factors—animal exploitation is big business while animal activism is largely unpaid—but rather by reason and/or compassion.

Marx’s anti-idealism and historical materialism (that everything, including ideas, emerge from material and economic factors as they evolve through history) leaves his readers with a lack of vision for the future. He famously states: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in different ways; the point is to *change* it” (Marx, 1964, p. 69). Yet this is a false dilemma. Violently overthrowing capitalists alone, a great change indeed, does not provide a plan beyond the injuring and killing. Marx, speaking of the coming communist revolution, is vague beyond: the abolition of bourgeois property (Marx and Engels, 1992, p. 18) by public ownership of the means of production (e.g., factories, natural resources); a heavy tax; abolishing the right of inheritance; forming a national bank; providing free education; and abolishing child labor (*Ibid.*, pp. 25-26). He hints at new freedoms for workers, such as “...higher, even cultural satisfactions...newspaper subscriptions, attending lectures, educating his children, developing his taste, etc.” (Marx, 1973, p. 287). These concrete purposes suggest (male) workers’ freedom to become educated and to enjoy art, but does not tell us much about how to organize society. Perhaps he would say he cannot give us a formula because forms of society will spontaneously emerge from material conditions, but again, we can possibly do better in seeking the best of plans by aiming for what is best altogether. “*Materialism,*” *straightforwardly understood, permits any way of life whatsoever.*

If one is not moved by the theories of Marx, then neo-Marxist Antonio Gramsci will not have much to offer that is new. Like Marx, Gramsci upholds violent revolution (Gramsci, 1994b, pp. 124, 133), that capitalism is self-defeating (*Ibid.*, p. 164) and opposes utopian or wishful thinking (Gramsci, 1994b, vol. 1, pp. 316-317; 1971, pp. 175, 263). Gramsci praises the role of political intuition (Gramsci, 1971, p. 252). He emphasizes the practical and the concrete (Gramsci, 1994a, vol. 1, p. 317), rejecting any ideology in the form of “...a dogmatic system of eternal and absolute truths” (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 406-407). Like Marx, Gramsci views ideology as a tool of the ruling class (*Ibid.*, p. 258). Gramsci wrote

more perhaps about historical materialism than anything else and praised the Soviet Union as “immortal” (Gramsci, 1994b, p. 94).

One thing that Gramsci adds to Marx is that the proletarian takeover must be a “moral revolution” (*Ibid.*, p. 31) and the need for socialism is due to “class slavery” of the proletariat (*Ibid.*, p. 26) and the “...immorality of fortune...” (*Ibid.*, p. 16) that rules workers’ lives. Like G. H. Mead, Gramsci backs Kant’s maxim that we should act only by principles that can become the norm for others under similar conditions (Gramsci, 1971, p. 373). Ultimately, Gramsci wrote that society should be “governed by love and compassion” (Gramsci, 1994b, p. 89). That is different from morality being *economically* determined, although Gramsci’s echoing of Marx’s historical materialism occasionally puts him seemingly at odds with this more idealistic thinking. Perhaps not so much, on reflection though, since Gramsci might say that his ideals are historically and materially emergent as we supposedly approach an end to capitalist tyranny. Love and compassion though are hardly new ideals, and capitalism rumbles onward.

Theodor Adorno is another well-known Marxist who is also the co-founder of critical theory along with Max Horkheimer. I will first discuss Adorno as a Marxian before considering his collaboration with Horkheimer. Adorno’s books do not contain many detailed Marxist arguments or ideas as do Gramsci’s. Rather, Adorno offers many off-hand gestures towards the “bourgeois,” or the ruling capitalist class. Indeed, he attributes both absolutism to the bourgeois (Adorno, 1973a, p. 20; 1973b, pp. 21, 54) but also, relativism is said to stem from “bourgeois individualism” (Adorno, 1973b, p. 36). It is not clear however what other options there are: relativism is really the denial of absolutes, so if one denies absolutes it seems odd, on the surface, to deny relativism too.

Adorno refers to disenchantment with concepts (*Ibid.*, p. 13) in a way that is very reminiscent of Marx’s anti-idealism. Adorno denounces logic of consistency as being an “organ of unfreedom” (pp. 285-286) and instead prefers physical fear and a sense of solidarity with what Brecht called “tormentable bodies” (*Ibid.*). Here Adorno seems to be pointing to a kind of sympathy, but it is a false dilemma to have to choose between

conceptual guidance and sympathy. He denounces the “impossibility” of philosophical systems (*Ibid.*, p. 21) as “closed” (*Ibid.*, p. 27), although that need not be the case. Best caring is open, e.g., to context and also technological/conceptual changes. Furthermore, why is it a bad thing to be “closed” as to whether harming is generally part of the best? Like Marx, Adorno tries to stigmatize systems with colorful language as predatory (*Ibid.*, p. 23), involving “rationalized rage” (*Ibid.*) and presupposing “...supremacist, oppressive thinking” (*Ibid.*, p. 24). Instead, he advocates abiding with the concrete (*Ibid.*, p. 33). Adorno advocates *dialectics* as critical reflection on concrete contexts (*Ibid.*, p. 56). He is wary of content “predetermined by skeleton” (*Ibid.*), i.e., concepts, referring to the concrete as “the undisfigured” (*Ibid.*). He refers to wanting “substance in cognition” as utopian, and mythological (*Ibid.*), although a substantive affirmation of the best, for example, would be merely sneered at by such comments rather than refuted.

Adorno rejects skepticism (*Ibid.*, p. 14), similar to his rejection of relativism. He claims that he rejects absolutism, while also charging the relativists with “bottomless thinking” (*Ibid.*, p. 35). Yet without moral absolutes, we have no firm foundations on which to base our ethical thoughts. Adorno writes in another place, reminiscent of his earlier implicit valuing of sympathy with tormentable bodies: “The need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth. For suffering is objectivity that weighs upon the subject; its most subjective experience its expression...” (*Ibid.*, pp. 17-18). Yet perhaps he is not setting up the negation of suffering as an absolute, but simply being sympathetic. For he rejects torture and concentration camps (*Ibid.*, p. 285) but he claims he cannot be caught out as other than a critic of morality since he describes his opposition to these atrocities as “an impulse” reacting to torture occurring that must not be rationalized or made into an abstract principle (*Ibid.*). However, merely affirming impulses and being unprincipled is compatible with *anything*, and not everybody has such sympathetic impulses. Perhaps his anti-skepticism is compatible with his anti-absolutism after all in a way that he never clearly spells out. Absolutism is often associated with moral principles, and he may reject *ethical* absolutism while perhaps not doubting that material or concrete things exist. Going by “impulses” is indeed immediate and concrete, but logically speaking is devastatingly insufficient for liberation.

## Critical Theory

Horkheimer claims to have originated “a comprehensive philosophical theory” that he shares with Adorno to the extent that “our philosophy is one” (Horkheimer, 1947, p. vi). Here Horkheimer refers to the critical theory. Horkheimer offers much praise for Marx’s theory as “...among the greatest achievements of civilization” (Horkheimer, 1974, p. 45). Horkheimer also expresses much debt, as a thinker, to Marx (*Ibid.*, p. ix). Many sociologists rallied behind critical theory possibly just because it takes a stand against injustice: “...the critical theory has no specific influence on its side, except concern for the abolition of social injustice” (Horkheimer, 1972, p. 242). Horkheimer also writes that the “...issue...is not simply the theory of emancipation; it is the practice of it as well” (*Ibid.*, p. 233). He declares:

In the critical view of man...an essential role belongs to the idea of a moral order and the conception of a world in which human merit and happiness are not simply juxtaposed but necessarily connected and in which injustice has disappeared (Horkheimer, 1974, p. 3).

Are merit and happiness “necessarily connected” in the case of the severely disabled? In any event, the above quotations seem to suggest that there is something real called “social injustice” that needs to be abolished and replaced with “emancipation,” and that there is a “moral order” in which there are “necessary connections” between ethical ideas. He writes that “...the thinker’s activity...turns...towards a changing of history and the establishment of justice among men...” since thinking totally determines for itself what it will accomplish and serve (Horkheimer, 1972, pp. 242-243). Although high-sounding, his last thought is logically questionable. From the fact that people think for themselves it by no means follows that they will become committed to justice.

Horkheimer refers to a crisis of the negation of *objective reason*—which is about determining, through reason, what ends we should choose (Horkheimer, 1947, p. 7). This implies that we might rationally decide which *means* to ends are most effective, but not

reason about which *ends* are appropriate. He writes pessimistically: “The statement that justice and freedom are better in themselves than injustice and oppression is scientifically unverifiable and useless...[or] meaningless” (*Ibid.*, p. 24). He seems to mourn that Bertrand Russell “...puts ethics in a different category than science...” (*Ibid.*, p. 8) and that ends are decided by “...conflicting interests...” (*Ibid.*, p. 9) and democracy (*Ibid.*, p. 26) which can lead to a dictatorship by “...powerful economic groups” (*Ibid.*, p. 28). He claims that “...at this very moment everything depends on the right use of man’s autonomy...” (*Ibid.*, p. 163) perhaps as though there is an absolute right or wrong, and that we must “defend culture against...debasement...or annihilation” (*Ibid.*). Here we have what is really being defended: “culture” in some sense. This exposes the relativist strain in Horkheimer’s thought, although he proclaims that “...[t]he future of humanity depends on the existence today of the critical attitude...” (Horkheimer, 1972, p. 242).

Horkheimer is indeed an ethical relativist, declaring that “...man’s...inmost meaning...is relative to the social forms of life and culture to which it belongs” (Horkheimer, 1974, pp. 14-15). All values emanate from historical context (Horkheimer, 1947, p. 182) and we cannot reverse the loss of objective reason (*Ibid.*, p. 62) which has triggered the crisis. Finding a good society using theoretical criticism of existing society is an illusion (*Ibid.*, p. 90; see also pp. 180, 182). Indeed, Horkheimer identifies systems of thought as “authoritarian” (*Ibid.*, p. 61; see also *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 69, 127) and an exercise in domination, which he denounces (Horkheimer, 1947, p. 176; Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, p. xvi). Horkheimer and Adorno call the Enlightenment’s universal order of reasoning “totalitarian” (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, p. 6), overlooking the compensations of say, rights to liberty. They also denounce “conformism” (Horkheimer, 1947, pp. 87, 115; Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, p. 12) as betraying the essence of thinking (Horkheimer, 1972, p. 243), and as leading to “automatism” (Horkheimer, 1947, p. 91). Best caring, for its part, rejects conforming for its own sake and models thoughtful reflection and justification. Moreover, best caring’s respect for preferences (defended in Part 2) and reasoning is also systematically protective against domination and authoritarianism. Ethical relativism, by contrast, must praise various domineering ways as *appropriate* to certain cultures or epochs.

Both authors in question claim that abstraction somehow “liquidates” its objects (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, p. 13) and that finding peace “...in any kind of truth whatsoever, has...nothing to do with the critical theory” (Horkheimer, 1972, p. 252). So we cannot “rest content” that milk exists? Their relativism is self-defeating. They “...attempt to salvage relative truths from the wreckage of false ultimates” (Horkheimer, 1947, p. 183). However, relativism does not allow the privileging of any old absolutes. Ironically, simply *imposing* any old absolute would be an exercise in domination, although that would not be the case if ethical absolutism can be impartially reasoned, as these thinkers fail to accomplish. Horkheimer asserts that the “the task of philosophy” is to “foster a mutual critique” of objective reasoning (which reasons about what we should aim for) and subjective reasoning (which merely reasons about means to ends—*any* ends) (*Ibid.*, p. 174). However, he has *rejected* objective reasoning, above, so he is only left with the subjective reasoning that he states has caused a “crisis.” Horkheimer and Adorno wish to discover “...why mankind...is sinking into a new kind of barbarism” (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, p. xi), but they are not entitled to make such cross-cultural judgments as ethical relativists, or those who deny moral absolutes (as Adorno does in his own writings—see above). Horkheimer declares that denouncing “...what is currently called reason is the greatest service reason can render” (Horkheimer, 1947, p. 187), but such a negative function leaves us with very little indeed. He denounces nihilism and subjectivism (*Ibid.*, p. 93) but that is all that we are left with in effect.

Although earlier remarks sounded unreservedly committed to social justice and anti-domination, Horkheimer explicitly “...is not trying to suggest a program of action” (*Ibid.*, p. vi). He holds that “[t]his age needs no additional stimulus to action,” and that any call to action would be “propaganda” (*Ibid.*, p. 184). Best caring calls people to liberatory action, but whether that is irrational “propaganda” must be *justified* to be the case. He warns there “is no fixed method” of drawing conclusions for political action from critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972, p. v) citing Adorno’s agreement on this point. So critical theory inconsistently advocates ideals at some points, but denounces practical reasoning from “the critical theory” at other points. Critical theory is positive normative sociology

at some junctures while negative normative sociology at others. The conclusion that is most justified by the critical theory itself seems negative though, since all *basis* for ethical norms are undermined. Ironically, such moves strip us of the capacity to effectively *criticize* our own or others' ethical beliefs in that none would be of any more or less real value than any other. We need to be critical of critical theory.

I argue that cultural relativism reduces to individual subjectivism, in which case everyone can *uncritically* go by their own lights. After all, the essence of cultural relativism is conformity to cultural leaders' opinions. But why should the opinion of cultural luminaries count for more than anyone else's if there is no absolute basis for any moral views whatsoever? The answer is that, as a logical implication at least, there should be no such privileging. Many value conformity (i.e., with leaders), but not *everyone* does, and there is no absolute bearing upon individuals to engage in conformist practices. Indeed, the original critical theorists pummel conformity as we have seen. Thus critical theory unwittingly ends up in an essentially *uncritical*, indiscriminate and nihilistic morass.

### **Jurgen Habermas**

For many reasons, sociologists are often attracted to philosopher Jurgen Habermas' *discourse ethics* as a basis for critical theory. He wrote *On the logic of the social sciences* (1988) and many sociologists agree with him that no "transcendental justification" for philosophy is possible (Habermas, 1990, p. 116). Also, Habermas tells us that we acquire our moral intuitions from socialization (Habermas, 1993, p. 132). Discourse ethics can involve cross-cultural dialogues about what we ought to do, but Habermas astutely warns that wants and needs are interpreted in light of cultural values (Habermas, 1990, p. 67).

Discourse ethics holds that ethics emerges from ideal conditions of conversation, in which: "All human beings become brothers and sisters" (Habermas, 2003, p. 104). Habermas treats "...fundamental norms of rational speech...[as] an ultimate 'fact of reason'" (Habermas, 1973, p. 120). He holds that discourse involves affirming consensus,

generalizable interests (*Ibid.*, p. 110), public discussion, inclusivity, nonviolence and affirming others as equals in argument (Habermas, 2003, p. 42). As well there must be freedom of access and truthfulness on the part of participants (Habermas, 1993, p. 31; see also Habermas 1990, 163). He also affirms impartiality as part of argumentation itself (Habermas, 1990, p. 175). Each participant must adopt the perspective of others in argumentation (Habermas, 1993, p. 48), and be willing "...to consider one's own tradition with the eyes of a stranger" (Habermas, 2002, p. 212). All proposed norms need to be approved through dialogue (Habermas, 1990, p. 67). He tells us: "Discourse ethics is supposed to remain neutral over and against the plurality of belief systems..." (Habermas, 1993, p. 50). Yet his norms of nonviolence, egalitarianism, etc. are *not* neutral in relation to, say, Nietzscheanism. Habermas refers explicitly to *intuitive* moral knowledge that emerges through conditions of ideal discourse (*Ibid.*, pp. 1, 20). He dogmatically declares that moral intuitions of everyday life do not need to be clarified by philosophers (Habermas, 1990, p. 98). His intuitionism is not scientific, but then he worries that "...we would destroy our ethical knowledge by submitting it to scientific examination, because theoretical objectification would dislodge it [ethical reflection—DS] from its proper place in our life" (*Ibid.*, p. 22). However, my arguments in Part 2 may well show otherwise, that science might ground ethics more *firmly* in the world.

Habermas, as do I, envisions a reconciliation between the social sciences and the humanities (Habermas, 1998, p. vii). Like Durkheim, Marx, Adorno and Horkheimer, there is a skeptical streak in Habermas, who asserts at one point that justice is excluded from the sphere of the rational (Habermas, 1992, p. 50), although he provides a framework for reasoning about justice in the form of discourse ethics. He is highly dismissive of other philosophies, merely dogmatically declaring at one point that they cannot serve as a basis for ethics (Habermas, 1973, p. 100). One senses that he wants to straddle both sides of the river: skepticism and normativity. This is a common and self-undermining theme we have witnessed with several sociologists including Durkheim, Marx and the Marxists, and the critical theory founders.

Habermas is also dismissive of skeptics, calling them self-contradictory (Habermas, 2001, pp. 33; 134; 1990, p. 99), although moral skeptics can absolutely deny positive normative sociology while absolutely affirming negative normative sociology without any real inconsistency. Habermas also—rather melodramatically—thinks that anyone who refuses to engage in discourse on his terms is opting for suicide or madness (Habermas, 1990, pp. 100, 102). Surely one need be neither dead nor mad to disagree with Habermas, as I myself exemplify.

Other problems with Habermas' view include his intuitionism, documented above. Also, *one can engage in discourse that successfully communicates (a true **discourse**) without being nonviolent, inclusive, egalitarian and consensus-building.* If one refers to “ideal discourse” as what is most agreeable to every *person* involved, then the ideal is no longer based in *discourse* itself but rather in *what people happen to be interested in*. Best caring aims for the satisfaction of certain interests (see Part 2), and indeed it is odd that Habermas would mainly have us act out norms in favor of health, etc., *just so that we can argue or communicate*. We cannot do anything to benefit anything such as “discourse,” but only sentient beings in the end. Discourse ethics, though, is oddly impersonal and indirect in its concern even for humans. At other very isolated junctures he points out that moral intuitions counteract vulnerability in life (Habermas, 1990, pp. 199, 200) which is an idea more directly concerned with people. However, discourse will result in a deadlock between intuitions, not “consensus,” since Habermas provides no means of going beyond intuitionism—including his stipulated conditions of “discourse.” People can talk *endlessly* without agreeing on any intuited norms whatsoever. But even if they did simply agree, it would not mean that they were right—just as most everyone once believed that the sun revolves around our small planet.

### **Positive Normative Sociology: Contemporaries**

There have been other, much lesser known critical theorists than Horkheimer, Adorno and Habermas (who is often counted as a critical theorist). Steven Buechler in *Critical*

*Sociology* (2008) claims that critical sociology is value-based in such ideals as freedom, equality and justice, (Buechler, 2008, p. ix) seemingly unaware of how the founders, Horkheimer and Adorno, inconsistently denied that critical theory involves any practical program (see above). Buechler though offers no justification for his ideals, thus rendering them purely intuitive. He merely evades Hume's is-ought problem (*Ibid.*, p. 14). Buechler indicates that mainstream sociology is concerned with Enlightenment values relating to *science*, and critical sociology is concerned with the Enlightenment values of *freedom and equality* (*Ibid.*). He explains that in social science, critical theorists emphasize the "social" and others the "science." This bifurcation makes it seem as if one cannot be concerned with both, as I will show best caring sociology permits in Part 2. He affirms social constructionism, but that would seem to have highly relativistic implications; indeed he outright endorses relativism (*Ibid.*, p. 92). However, as we have seen, neither intuitionism nor relativism equals effective opposition to oppression. Robert Bellah and his colleagues are also sociologists who adopt a form of positive normative sociology in their books, *Habits of the Heart* and *The Good Society*. They ask how we ought to live (Bellah et al., 1991, p. 4) focusing on developing a "moral ecology" of "healthy institutions" (*Ibid.*). They construe institutions as embedded normative patterns, but they are intuitionists as well, basing their norms vaguely on self-knowledge (*Ibid.*, p. 42) and "practical reason" viewed as something apart from science that is equally important as science (*Ibid.*, p. 177). Much "practical reason" can be gleaned from tradition (*Ibid.*), as well as expectations of response within a continuing community of agents (*Ibid.*, p. 283). Such vagaries though are enough to dignify Nazism.

Raymond Boudon opposes ethical relativism with various arguments. He writes that a good society, respecting the dignity of all, is a principle that cannot be demonstrated (Boudon, 2004, p. 38), but he is untroubled by this fact since ideas of *science* too cannot be demonstrated (*Ibid.*, pp. 37, 51; 2001, p. 112). However, science depends on hypotheses for which evidence can be provided; if ethics cannot do the same, then ethicists face the intrinsic intuitionist problem of *lack of rational support*. He declares that moral sentiments have an objective basis (*Ibid.*, p. 49), although how that may be is never clearly spelled out. He uses a fallacious argument that rationality is a feature of

humans, therefore an idea "...which is positive from a rational viewpoint, has an intrinsic force" (Boudon, 2001, p. 54). This is a poor argument, since no scientific hypothesis is given credence just because a "rational" being favors it. True, feelings related to justice are experienced as "strong reasons" by social actors (Boudon, 2004, p. 127), but that could just be an accident; he has not shown that moral principles have an "objective basis" as he states. He refers to the "functional" role of ethical beliefs (Boudon, 2001, pp. 104-106) too, but such a view is compatible with ethical relativism such as we saw characterizes the theory of the most well-known structural-functionalist: Talcott Parsons.

Boudon refers to his program as "neo-rationalist," but without supplying a clear account of reasons and "cognitive," vaguely basing his ideas in "good sense" (Boudon, 2004, p. 188). He sidesteps the problem of drawing an *ought* from an *is* by pointing out that social actors reject relativism (*Ibid.*, p. 70), but that is not true of everybody, and is just a subjective stance and therefore inconclusive. He pleads that ethical reasons "without ground" would not be understandable (*Ibid.*, p. 105), but we can readily understand such principles in terms of intuitions. He calls some things such as rejecting *Apartheid* "irreversibilities" in our society, however, there is no reason why racism cannot resurge in parts of the world as it occasionally does. He calls democracy an "irreversibility" too (*Ibid.*, p. 58) but that is empirically false (dictators depose democrats, and American democracy is steadily being eroded by corporate elites). Also, there is no justification for a practice just because it has become "permanent" in *some* quarters. Lasting conformity by some is no *argument* at all in the eyes of nonconformists. Overall, although Boudon is well-respected, his arguments are unreliable.

Maeve Cooke also tells us that critical sociology needs to stand for certain norms as guiding:

...without some, more or less determinate, guiding idea of the good society, critical social thinking would be inconceivable: it would lack an ethical basis for its critical diagnoses and its endeavor to stimulate social and cognitive transformation would have no ethical point (Cooke, 2006, p. 3).

In the end, though, she explicitly relies on intuitions both of the equal worth of human beings (*Ibid.*, p. 132) and the key value of “ethical autonomy” (*Ibid.*, p. 134). Reminiscent of Habermas, she notes that to debate about the good life, people need food, clothing, accommodation, etc. (*Ibid.*, p. 135) although it is very odd to subordinate these concerns to having “debate.” She claims her intuitions are “context-transcending” (*Ibid.*, p. 189), but all intuitions—which we know are wildly varying—are formed in quite divergent social contexts.

Kyung-Man Kim recommends that we avoid seeking ideals, and like the Marxists, emphasizes concrete practice (Kim, 2005, p. 3). He claims, like Adorno and Horkheimer, that we need to liberate people from power and domination without claiming power and authority (*Ibid.*, p. 13). Philip Walsh claims that there is no way to resolve disputes over the good for critical theory (Walsh, 2005, p. 114). Critical sociologists such as W. E. B. DuBois might differ. Sometimes DuBois refers to such things as: “...[the] struggle to live and love which is, after all, the end of being” (DuBois, 1924, p. 340). However, he offers nothing beyond the usual intuitionism at the apex of his normative thinking.

Bryan S. Turner, editor of *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, defies ethical relativism and value-neutrality in sociology and his aim is “...to construct a normative sociology” (Turner, 2006b, p. 6). He notes that most sociologists do not take a stand concerning justice directly, but rather indirectly by studying inequality (*Ibid.*, p. 5). He warns that relativism entails a lack of humanitarian intervention in crimes against humanity such as genocide, war rapes, and other atrocities (*Ibid.*, p. 12). Turner bases rights for humans in their vulnerability (*Ibid.*, pp. 1, 13, 113), noting that “...human happiness is diverse, but misery is common and uniform” (*Ibid.*, p. 9). He bases his approach to vulnerability—which is indeed a universal in my view—in sympathy (*Ibid.*, p. 26) a common value as we have seen for older positive normative sociologists (Comte, Smith, Addams, Gramsci, Adorno in effect, etc.), and also virtue (*Ibid.*, p. 1). He dismisses epistemic concerns that inspire skepticism and relativism since we still have to deal with practical issues such as hungry infants, disorderly teenagers or disoriented elders (*Ibid.*, p. 102). However, those who adhere to relativistic moral intuitions are also

prepared to take action, so we do not need moral absolutism just to be active. Turner should not thus simply dismiss epistemic factors, which are entirely relevant to the prospect of either *justifying* positive normative sociology—or else failing to do so.

Another sociologist, Steven Lukes, like Turner and others, also supports universal human rights, but his skepticism about ethics seems to undermine his professed resistance to ethical relativism. Lukes notes that ethical relativism is based on the diversity of morals (Lukes, 2008, p. 28). He declares that rationalism must be skeptical, and he holds suspect all forms of foundationalism and absolutes (Lukes, 2003, p. 7). He writes that our moral views are “without foundations” in a post-metaphysical age (Lukes, 2008, p. 132). At another point he favorably cites Isaiah Berlin’s dismissal of absolute values as craving the certainties of childhood or the absolutes of our primitive past (*Ibid.*, p. 99). Lukes also holds that rationalistic reactions to moral diversity such as Kantian or utilitarian systems are “hard to accept today” (Lukes, 2003, p. 6).

Lukes rejects ethical nihilism, the idea that “anything goes” in ethics, noting that moral relativity is hard to defend in the face of Nazism (Lukes, 2008, p. 41). He points out that moral diversity does not logically entail moral relativism (*Ibid.*, pp. 130, 157). However, negating moral absolutes—which we have seen Lukes is committed to—*does* logically entail moral relativism, since that is primarily what moral relativity *means*: denying ethical absolutes. He claims that moral criticism is part of our *tradition* (Lukes, 2003, p. 7), but how can we fairly or usefully criticize other cultures’ moral beliefs if all moral intuitions are effectively on a par? No normative beliefs would be above or below any others. Why not favor the “tradition” of many who are *not* morally critical? He claims we can take a normative view of morality, which is practically engaged in seeking to be ethical (Lukes, 2008, p. 20), but would it not, again, be *biased* to favor one moral vision over another? He holds that we cannot return to ancient or modern philosophical systems, but only take moral conflict seriously and make sense of it (Lukes, 1991, p. 20). Nihilists take moral conflict seriously, though, by equally valuing - or refusing to value - **all** moral intuitions. Intuitions can “make sense” of moral conflict as well.

Yet, in spite of all this, Lukes defends universal human rights (Lukes, 2008, p. 156). He does so by citing Isaiah Berlin (in a decidedly different mood than what I cited from Lukes concerning Berlin above) as maintaining that we need to hold certain values or we “cease to be human” (Lukes, 2008, p. 151). However, similarly to a point I made above regarding Marx’s humanism, the human species includes *all* modes of human being and action—including those of Hitler. Lukes also favorably cites Thomas Scanlon’s view that for a moral norm to be valid, it must be justifiable such that “...no one could reasonably reject it” (Lukes, 2008, p. 136). Scanlon’s theory is remarkably hollow since he does not tell us *grounds* for justifying norms or their rejection, and conflicting intuitions will absolutely interfere with any *reasoned* acceptance or rejection. Lukes also cites Martha Nussbaum’s *capabilities approach* which intuitively understands the importance of functions such as life, health, thought, etc. (*Ibid.*, p. 147). You cannot transcend ethical relativism by using moral intuitionism though, and Nussbaum openly declares her allegiance with the latter methodology (Nussbaum, 2006, pp. 70, 74, 82, 155). Evidently in a dark mood, near the end of his reflections in *Moral Relativism* (2008), Lukes openly doubts that many relativists would be persuaded by his arguments (*Ibid.*, p. 157).

### **Negative Normative Sociology**

A Weberian hegemony quietly prevails in sociology, presuming that, to use Weber’s own words: “The problems posed in the empirical disciplines are, of course, to be answered in a ‘value-free’ way” (Weber, 1978, p. 87). C. Wright Mills echoed, in *The Sociological Imagination*, that sociology should use as many value-neutral terms as possible (Mills, 1959, p. 78). Rather than do an extensive excursus on Weber, I will instead note various formidable *arguments* allegedly in favor of negative normative sociology. They are really objections to positive normative sociology which I will have to meet in Part 2 of this project, or else my own positive normative sociology fails.

The Weberian objections include the lack of empirical basis for ethics (Weber, 1962, p. 48); there is a fact-value gap, or an is-ought gap as philosopher David Hume maintained

(Weber, 1978, p. 74; Mills, 1959, p. 77); emotions are simply an “irrational factor” (Weber, 1962, p. 32); there is no “scientific procedure” to decide ethical cases (Weber, 1978, p. 85); and ethics is alleged to be based on religion (Weber, 1958, pp. 27) or faith (Weber, 1978, p. 72), among other concerns. Again, I was surprised that by far, most of the literature that touches on normative sociology is by positive normative sociologists. Other sociology writers seem to—usually silently—look to Weber and his disciples. However, quantity does not matter if Weber’s and others’ skeptical objections cannot be refuted. Thus, positive normative sociology is in a state of crisis, which I will attempt to resolve using the framework of best caring in Part 2.

### **Animals: Absent Referents in Traditional Normative Sociology**

Auguste Comte derided Cartesianism (Comte, 1875a, p. 487) and affirms that positivism will respect animal life (*Ibid.*, p. 488). Marx, by contrast, had a Cartesian view of animals as being identical with their life-activity, lacking consciousness (Marx, 1961, p. 75) and having no will (Marx, 1973, p. 500). Marx refers to *the social* being humans’ mode of existence (Marx, 1961, p. 103) as if—contrary to widely evidenced fact—other animals such as dogs are not also social. He speaks of worker alienation in terms of being reduced to animal needs (Marx, 1961, pp. 30, 73) as if other animals cannot enjoy higher fulfillments, e.g., love, friendship, knowledge-seeking or the enjoyment of beauty. Part of our alienation, I would suggest, is our estrangement from our affective cognition, often due to speciesism as I have argued (Szybel, 2006b, pp. 18-19).

Horkheimer critiques the domination of nature as “...the rule of the stronger or of the smarter” (Horkheimer, 1947, p. 112), and although he has passages cited in a book of excerpts entitled *Animal Rights*, (Linzey and Clarke, 2004, pp. 92-95), he is no animal liberationist. Horkheimer is concerned that elephants in Africa are “...considered simply as obstructors of traffic” (Horkheimer, 1947, p. 104) but he also dismisses animal life as devoid of reason (*Ibid.*, p. 127), and together with Adorno perceives animals’ lives as “dreary and harsh” (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, p. 246). Contrast such negativity

with Jonathan Balcombe's *Pleasurable Kingdom* (2006). Horkheimer and Adorno marvel that any appeal for radical vegetarianism "still falls on friendly ears" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972, p. 237) and superficially dismiss anti-vivisection with the thought that "another breath...is likely to cost the life of one bacillus" (*Ibid.*, pp. 239-240). One of Horkheimer's most insightful points about animals and nature is the following:

Domination of nature involves domination of man. Each subject not only has to take part in the subjugation of external nature, human and nonhuman, but in order to do so must subjugate nature in himself. Domination becomes 'internalized' for domination's sake (Horkheimer, 1947, p. 93).

Self-domination is perhaps not such a great problem for oppressors as the above passage suggests. Horkheimer also does not see that it is our domination of animals which interferes with our perceiving "animal absolutes," such as that pain feels bad, and that objects of desire are of *real value* to desiring beings. Emotional and desiring forms of cognition are not acknowledged not because they do not exist, but presumably because their realization would be highly obstructive for a deeply speciesist society.

George Herbert Mead does not discuss animals much, positing that they have no self (although they feel pleasure and pain) since a self, he supposes, is predicated on communication and participation in a social life (Mead, 1964, p. 42). Elsewhere he writes that chicks respond to the meaning of clucks from the mother (*Ibid.*, p. 164), implying that even immature chickens *can* both communicate and socialize.

Habermas holds that intuitively we have the unmistakable sense that we should avoid cruelty to animals capable of suffering (Habermas, 1993, p. 106). However, he proclaims that we have no obligations to abstain from killing animals in experiments or for food (Habermas, 1993, p. 108). Animals, he explains, do not belong to the contractual reciprocity that underlies human morality (*Ibid.*), although he does not seem to notice that the same exclusion applies to mentally disabled humans. He views animals as lacking linguistic autonomy and as dependent on instinct (Habermas, 1988, p. 101) and as not "historically variable" (*Ibid.*), as if animals do not need to adapt to the atrocious history of human habitat incursions for example.

Turner states repeatedly that rights are based in the fact that we are human (Turner, 2006b, pp. 3, 49, 67) which is obviously a species-based conception of rights. At other times he bases rights in vulnerability, as we have seen, although other animals are often *more* vulnerable. He considers animal rights as a kind of objection to his account. He claims that working animals may have rights since they are valuable to humans (*Ibid.*, p. 38) and is prepared to concede the possibility of “ecological rights” (*Ibid.*). That again, would dignify animals only as workers *for humans* and as part of a vibrant environment *for humans*. He notes that animals cannot represent themselves without help (*Ibid.*), although again, the same is true of many mentally disabled humans.

Assessing the above, traditional sociology presents denigrations of animals’ abilities and dismissals of claims in favor of animal liberation. As for other sociologists, whose remarks pertaining to normative sociology were examined in the works cited above, there is a deafening silence on the topic of animals: Emile Durkheim, Adam Smith, Jane Addams, Herbert Marcuse, Talcott Parsons, Antonio Gramsci, Theodor Adorno (in his writing apart from Horkheimer), Steven Buechler, Robert Bellah, Raymond Boudon, Maeve Cooke, Kyung-Man Kim, W. E. B. DuBois, and Steven Lukes—let alone the negative normative sociologists Max Weber and C. Wright Mills (along with Karl Mannheim and Herbert Blumer—considered in Part 2). We will see in Part 2 that the authors of *Liberation Sociology*, Joe Feagin and Hernan Vera (2001), ironically also do not even mention animals—let alone *animal liberation*.

Whether they had anything to say about animals or not, the traditional positive normative sociologists were willing to assert positive norms favoring humans, but not other animals beyond anti-cruelty in the few cases noted above. Animals are wholly absent referents in most “traditionalist” cases then. In the minds of most thinkers, animals only appear as ghosts of who they really are—absent referents by *degrees*. Animals are far more psychologically rich than appears in the world views of most people (Dunayer, 2004; Griffin, 1992, 1984, 1981; Masson and McCarthy, 1995; Pluhar, 1995; Rollin, 1989; Balcombe, 2006). My ancestors died hoping for a general liberation whose real

possibility would not be blown away by the bitter winds of moral relativity. In Part 2, I will argue that such a hope depends on *animal absolutes* that we share in common with other sentient beings. Animals are only too absent from our typical sociological frames of reference. I will argue that this is dangerous not only to animals but no less to the prospects for staking out absolute rights for humans.

### **Normative Sociology and Animal Liberation**

Sociologist John Sorenson is one of the few to attempt positive normative sociology that is animal liberationist (see below). Jasper and Nelkin (1992) abstain from overt normative judgments, although their social study of the animal rights movement carries a snide tone at times. Birke, Arluke and Michael (2007) study vivisection sociologically but announce that they are "...not concerned...with issues of ethics..." (Birke et al., 2007, p. 4) although they may each take such stands privately.

David Nibert is one of the few animal sociologists besides Sorenson to take a systematic positive stand. Nibert uses a materialistic angle, like Marx, and claims it is naïve to attack speciesism using ideas. Nibert asserts that oppression is motivated by economic interests, not innate prejudices (Nibert, 2002, p. 3). Nibert's materialism is heir to all of the critiques applied to Marx's vision. Vested interests do interfere with animal thriving and need to be confronted, but speciesism is a *bad idea*, much like racism. Challenging poor thinking is key and *changes minds*. Those who consider animals as *equals* in most senses do not traffic in them. It is odd that Nibert refers to prejudices as "innate," whereas they are taught and so can be "unlearned" too. True, people often seek material possessions but that is for *psychological* gratifications such as pleasure, power or the enjoyment of freedom. He argues that Indians were degraded by racists because that facilitated economic exploitation (*Ibid.*, pp. 16-17) but Indians could *still* be enslaved by the more powerful: a change of heart and mind was crucial in that case.

More sweepingly illustrative for present purposes is the “animal sociology” textbook, *Between the Species* (2009) edited by Arluke and Sanders. Chiefly drawn from the journal literature, this collection contains normative statements. Technically this text is a departure from my monograph survey, but there is a paucity of such monographs, so this collection promises to be indicative of future directions for research. Interestingly, Arluke and Sanders note that they both have “strong feelings and commitments” regarding animals, but their choice of terminology “...do[es] not intend to make any particular political or ethical point” (Arluke and Sanders, 2009, p. xiii).

Consider examples from the textbook:

- (1) Glen Elder speaks of stopping “...violence directed at animals on the basis of their nonhuman status...” (*Ibid.*, p. 31);
- (2) Sanders critiques anthropocentric views of human-animal relationships (p. 51);
- (3) Robert Agnew cites rationalizations of animal abuse using dominionistic orientations (p. 80), animals considered as objects rather than subjects (p. 123), and he encourages “an ethic of respect and mutuality, caring and friendship” (p. 124);
- (4) Harold Herzog expresses moral qualms about vivisection (pp. 160-161), a critique of speciesism (p. 162), and claims without elaboration that animal liberation is “rooted in cold, rigorous logic” (p. 168);
- (5) David Nibert refers to “animal oppression” in agriculture (p. 183);
- (6) Adams answers the question, “Should feminists be vegetarians?” in the affirmative (p. 190—see my critical analysis of the feminist ethics of care, which she subscribes to, in Sztybel 2006b, pp. 10-12);
- (7) Joanna Swabe discusses veterinary dilemmas (Arluke and Sanders, 2009, p. 248);  
and
- (8) Bonnie Berry links human and animal oppression (pp. 370, 374) and denounces speciesism as a form of bigotry (p. 371).

Based on arguments that he supplies, Sorenson urges that the basic immorality of anthropocentrism should be apparent (Sorenson, 2003a, p. 268). First, meat-eating

subordinates animals' vital interests to humans' trivial desires (Sorenson 2003b, p. 276). True, but we need to refute superiorism, according to which view such an outcome is *just*. According to superiorism—a devil's advocate view—animals embody less good for themselves and others, and so are *worth* less (Szybel, 2000). Moral skepticism also threatens Sorenson's first argument. Second, Sorenson points out that humans have rights even if they lack language, reason, social organization or tools (Sorenson, 2003b, pp. 273, 274). Unfortunately, R. G. Frey is prepared to medically vivisect both animals *and* mentally disabled humans (Frey, 1987, p. 89). Superiorism also remains a threat here. Sorenson's arguments so far also rely on assumptions that people deserve rights, but skeptics make no such assumptions, and if morality is essentially arbitrary, then why cannot our treatment of animals be so? Third, Sorenson compares speciesism to racism and sexism (Sorenson, 2003b, p. 274). Yet superiorism does not discriminate in a racist or sexist way, and moral skepticism denies any absolute reality to animal oppression.

Sorenson additionally critiques anthropocentrism as a prejudice (2003a, p. 267) based on a presumption of human superiority (*Ibid.*). Yet superiorism claims not to be prejudicial, to be promotive of the greatest good, and also that humans evidently have superior language, autonomy, etc. (Szybel, 2000). Moral skeptics also claim to be the *least* prejudicial of all theorists. Finally, Sorenson states that anthropocentrism ignores the interdependence of all life forms (Sorenson 2003a, p. 267). I am dependent on trees, but do they deserve rights? Oppressors do not “depend” on the thriving of the oppressed. We need more rigorously to justify a positive normative sociology that is animal-inclusive, as I strive to do in Part 2.

## **Conclusion**

Democracy and ethical relativism provide no bulwark against oppression. Animals are more damaged by the implications of ethical relativism than humans who are commonly granted rights. There is a widespread presumption in favor of negative normative sociology, but I will try to show in Part 2 how powerful Weberian objections might be

vanquished. I will also show that best caring sociology is more consistent with sociological values (listed above) than the dominant paradigm of ethical relativism.

Animals have been absent referents by degrees in previous sociology but neither the norms of sympathy nor Kantianism will be enough to rescue animals from the vagaries of intuitionism. Marx's anti-idealism looms large in the world but is ultimately self-defeating since he offers little vision for the future and mischaracterizes ideals as necessarily speculative, faith-based, etc. Also, "materialism" does not really tell us how to proceed. The view that violent revolution is somehow necessary is not self-evident, nor is the inevitability of a proletarian revolution carefully reasoned.

Adorno, Horkheimer, Habermas and Buechler have a background of acid skepticism that undermines any practical, pro-liberationist program. Buechler, Bellah, Boudon, Cooke, Turner, Lukes and Sorenson lack a rational basis for their positive normative sociologies. Many books on sociology were consulted for this study that had nothing to say about normative sociology and so were not cited, but the extensive list of actual citations shows that normative sociology (sometimes as it pertains to animals) is an important theme in the sociological literature. Indeed, some books studied had many relevant statements or implications that I did not have room to cite. Will best caring sociology be able to go beyond the rampant ethical relativism and intuitionism cited above? Can it withstand the Weberians' objections? Can we use the scientific method to vindicate ethics? Answers to these questions await the reader in Part 2.

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