



Haidt’s Durkheimian Utilitarianism—a Charitable Interpretation

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Abstract

In the paper, I aim to reconstruct a charitable interpretation of Durkheimian utilitarianism, a normative theory of public morality proposed by well-recognised American moral psychologist – Jonathan Haidt, which might provide reasons to justify particular legal regulations and public policies. The reconstruction contains a coherent theory that includes elements of rule-utilitarianism, value pluralism, objective list theory and perfectionism, as well as references to Emile’s Durkheim views on human nature. I also compare Durkheimian utilitarianism with two similar theories – Brad Hooker’s rule consequentialism and Krzysztof Saja’s institutional function consequentialism.

Keywords Durkheimian utilitarianism · Jonathan Haidt · perfectionism · value pluralism · utilitarianism · Durkheim

1 Introduction

‘Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion’—is the subtitle of a book written by one of the most cited contemporary moral psychologists – Haidt (2013). To answer this question, Haidt describes his most important theories in the field of moral psychology: ‘social intuitionist model’ (SIM) and ‘moral foundations theory’ (MFT). Notably, he claims that both of these theories are purely descriptive, which means that they relate to how people make moral decisions and what morality, understood as a particular social fact with its evolutionary origins, really is. For instance, the majority of people morally condemn consensual incest between adults. SIM tells us that such a judgment is usually caused by moral intuition, i.e. *the sudden appear-*

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ance in consciousness of a moral judgment, including an affective valence (good-bad, like-dislike), without any conscious awareness of having gone through steps of searching (Haidt 2001, 818), which occurs in people's mind immediately after hearing the question or imagining the situation. According to Haidt (2001, 819), the reasons underlying our judgment on consensual incest being such a moral taboo are developed later as a *post hoc* rationalisation protecting us from being morally dumbfounded (Björklund et al., 2000). MFT, which will be elaborated on later, explains the social origins of moral intuitions. It unfolds that our repugnance towards incest results from a moral foundation of sanctity, shared by many cultures and societies, which probably evolved as a deterrent against risky sexual behaviour. Moreover, it is often connected to the emotion of disgust, which many people feel while thinking about any example of incest (Royzman et al., 2008).

Neither SIM nor MFT, however, refer to the normative sphere, dealing not with what is morally right or wrong according to people and why they think like that but with what is *really* morally right or what people should do. Even more so, they do not refer to what the laws and public policies should be like. Therefore, Haidt's psychological theories will not tell us whether consensual incest between adults should be morally forbidden or legally prohibited. But perhaps they can be a solid basis upon which we can build a normative moral theory. This normative theory's elements can already be found in *The Righteous Mind*. Although the book primarily focuses on descriptive claims, even Haidt admits in his correspondence with Gibbs (2019, 266) to his transition *from descriptively relativistic to normative or prescriptive considerations* at the end of his book. These normative considerations are encapsulated under the term 'Durkheimian utilitarianism' or 'Durkheimian version of utilitarianism', which Haidt (2013, 359) defines as *utilitarianism done by somebody who understands human groupishness*.

Given how vital Haidt's works are, both inside and outside the academy, it is surprising how little attention Durkheimian utilitarianism has drawn from moral, legal and political philosophers¹. Moreover, such a normative theory, if it tells us something important about human nature, may *prima facie* have significant importance not only to researchers, but also to lawyers and politicians, as it might provide reasons to justify particular legal regulations, public policies, or political postulates.

Here, however, the problem begins. Haidt does not elaborate much on his normative ideas, apart from a few statements scattered around the book. As a result, it makes it difficult to grasp what Durkheimian utilitarianism really is, treat it as a coherent moral theory and eventually accept or criticise it. I assume that we should discuss the theories at their best; therefore, the main aim of this paper is to follow the principle of charity and reconstruct the best possible interpretation of Durkheimian utilitarianism based on the material under consideration. To do that, I will define, interpret, qualify and buttress Haidt's normative claims so that, in the end, the refined product will be what it must be to have its strongest claim to plausibility. The final result will probably not be the same as what Haidt had in mind, but it will be a plausible clarification

¹ While (on August 1st 2022) *The Righteous Mind* is quoted almost 7500 times according to Google Scholar, the term "Durkheimian utilitarianism" only appears in 6 papers not being Haidt's papers or reviews of his book, while the term "Durkheimian version of utilitarianism" only in 4.

that separates the argument from the author. Eventually, I do not assume that Durkheimian utilitarianism is correct. It might be right, or it might be completely wrong. But to determine that, we need to understand what it means entirely.

An assumption necessary for understanding Haidt's claims is accepting that he treats famous philosophers and thinkers more as inspirations than as subjects of thorough and deep research. It is not his goal to capture the true essence of Bentham's utilitarianism and Durkheim's social theory, even though the names of both occur in *The Righteous Mind* many times. Haidt often selects the elements of the theories that aged well and may complement his own theory. For instance, Haidt does not analyse in detail various utilitarian theories, refer to recent findings on this subject or make significant conceptual distinctions. Instead, he goes back to the roots, to Bentham, and extracts the most important points by which utilitarianism can be characterised as one of the two most important approaches in ethics (together with deontology).

By doing that, Haidt shows that some of his claims have already been noticed in the past, perhaps in a different form, by other thinkers, which would indicate that they are more universal truths. From the perspective of assessing Haidt's theory, it does not matter whether Haidt's interpretation of Bentham, Durkheim, or any other historical figure and their claims is correct (from a historical point of view). On the contrary, he can completely diverge from what the thinker meant. What matters is what Haidt wants to say by himself, using this character here and some ideas associated with it.

2 Haidt's Descriptive Claims

One should first look at Haidt's psychological claims to understand Durkheimian utilitarianism. He called his research program merging social and natural sciences to create a new theory of morality, the New Synthesis (using E.O. Wilson's (2000) term). It can be characterised by three slogans: (1) 'Intuitions Come First, Strategic Reasoning Second'; (2) 'There's More to Morality than Harm and Fairness', and (3) 'Morality Binds and Blinds'.

The first slogan concerns the social intuitionist model, which is supposed to respond to Lawrence Kohlberg's rationalist theory of moral development. It assumes that our moral judgments are primarily based on emotional, moral intuitions, the results of automatic and unconscious processes in our brain (the intuitionist component). In contrast, rational moral reasoning, created by conscious and controllable processes, usually provides post-factum rationalisation. When one cannot give adequate reasons for their moral judgment but is still steadfastly committed to the initial judgment, it is the phenomenon of moral dumbfounding. According to Haidt, even if the reasoning rarely changes the intuitions of its holder, it can influence other people's intuitions and judgments (the social component). Therefore, convincing someone's conscience is easier than your own.

The second slogan of Haidt's New Synthesis describes the moral foundations theory. Moral foundations are *cognitive modules upon which cultures construct moral matrices* (Haidt, 2013, 146). On top of them, each society overbuilds narratives, institutions and moral systems. Moral foundations originated as a response

to adaptive challenges (such as care for children). Initially, they reacted to original triggers (such as crying babies) by activating characteristic emotions (such as compassion). Still, nowadays, they react with the same emotions to current triggers (such as meowing hungry kittens). They are also related to moral virtues (such as care, kindness and gentleness). All these examples constitute a foundation of care/harm. The other moral foundations are fairness/cheating (corresponding to the ideas of justice, equality, rights, or autonomy), loyalty/betrayal (corresponding to the virtues of loyalty, patriotism or self-sacrifice), authority/subversion (corresponding to the virtues of obedience, leadership, deference to legitimate authority or respect for traditions), sanctity/degradation (corresponding to the ideas of chastity, temperance or cleanliness) and a new one liberty/oppression (corresponding to the ideas of anti-domination or anti-oppression).

Among the moral foundations, Haidt (2013, 316) distinguishes between care/harm and fairness/cheating on the one hand (let me call them ‘the individualistic foundations’) and loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, sanctity/degradation on the other side (let me call them ‘the binding foundations’). What is essential, different groups emphasise different foundations, which leads to moral differentiation. For instance, according to Haidt, Western culture values care/harm more, while sanctity/degradation is the most important, e.g. in Indian culture.

The third slogan of the New Synthesis, the most important from the perspective of Durkheimian utilitarianism, refers to the catchy motto that *we are 90% chimp and 10% bee* (Haidt, 2013, 312). It means that from the point of view of evolution, we are subject to individual selection, which makes us behave selfishly but also to group selection, which nudges us to work with others within the community, competing with other groups. Although morality, religion, institutions and rituals help us do things together and identify with members of our group, community or culture, they also make understanding representatives of others difficult. As Haidt (2013, 366) points out, *morality binds us into ideological teams that fight each other as though the fate of the world depended on our side winning each battle. It blinds us to the fact that each team is composed of good people who have something important to say*. This idea will come back again when considering the Durkheimian element of Haidt’s normative theory. Now, however, let me focus on the utilitarian part.

3 Utilitarianism

Haidt accepts the view that we have two different types of ethics directed at two different categories of entities: private morality, which concerns the private sphere and decisions taken by individuals in it, and public morality, which relates to the public sphere and decisions taken by representatives of a state or a society (e.g. law-makers, policy-makers, public officials, judges or regulators)². As Haidt (2013, 316) points out,

² Similar assumption is held e.g. by Robert Goodin (1995) but is contested by e.g. Eyal Zamir and Barak Medina (2010).

I don't know what the best normative ethical theory is for individuals in their private lives. But when we talk about making laws and implementing public policies in Western democracies that contain some degree of ethnic and moral diversity, then I think there is no compelling alternative to utilitarianism. The important part I think Jeremy Bentham was right that laws and public policies should aim, as a first approximation, to produce the greatest total good.

Therefore, it is clear then that Durkheimian utilitarianism is a normative theory of public morality, which I will understand as directed at the actions of the state and its representatives (e.g. law-making, law-enforcing and policy-making) in contrast to normative ethics for individuals.

What kind of utilitarianism does Haidt have in mind? We know that Haidt (2013, 316) endorses a classic, Benthamian version of utilitarianism (or at least treats Bentham as a representant of the classic approach to utilitarianism). Therefore, I assume here that Haidt accepts the fundamental theses of classic utilitarianism, which are: focus on human well-being, consequentialism (the consequences determine the rightness or the wrongness of an act) and the aggregative maximising approach (the best action is that which produces the most significant amount of well-being) (Sinnot-Armstrong, 2019). As Haidt & Graham (2009, 374) claim, *our normative position is a kind of consequentialism—we think moral systems should be judged by the quality of the worlds they lead to.*

To get a more detailed account of Haidt's utilitarianism, I will refer to the term introduced by Kagan (2000), namely, evaluative focal points. Any normative theory is built on some focal points. They are relevant properties that constitute moral judgment's central features, such as acts, rules, and the good. For example, in act consequentialism, the primary focal points are acts evaluated in terms of the good. In contrast, the other focal points, such as rules, are indirectly evaluated in terms of acts. In rule-utilitarianism, on the other hand, the primary focal points are rules that are directly evaluated in terms of the good and acts directly evaluated in terms of rules.

What are the focal points of Durkheimian utilitarianism? We can find a clue in one of the footnotes to *The Righteous Mind*, in which Haidt (2013, 441) admits that he endorses *a version of utilitarianism known as 'rule utilitarianism', which says that we should aim to create the system and rules that will, in the long run, produce the greatest total good.* That means that the primary focal points of Haidt's theory are rules which are evaluated in terms of the good and which serve to evaluate laws and public policies³.

Or maybe the rules should be evaluated not in terms of the good but of the goods? This question is connected to the problem with interpreting another of Haidt's (2013, 441) declarations placed in a footnote, where he admits that he is a value pluralist as he follows Shweder and Berlin *in believing that there are multiple and sometimes conflicting goods and values.* That clearly suggests that the other focal point of his theory is not a single value, which would be characteristic of the majority of utilitar-

³ The relation between rule-utilitarianism and Durkheimian utilitarianism will be elaborated later when we will grasp the latter theory at large.

ian theories, but rather the plurality of goods, which directs us toward a philosophical position of value pluralism.

4 Value Pluralism

Haidt (2013, 368) explicitly admits to being a pluralist and criticises monism about values (just before referring to Berlin's and Shweder's approaches):

(...) I suggest that it be a suspicion of moral monists. Beware of anyone who insists that there is one true morality for all people, times, and places - particularly if that morality is founded upon a single moral foundation. Human societies are complex; their needs and challenges are variable. Our minds contain a toolbox of psychological systems, including the six moral foundations, which can be used to meet those challenges and construct effective moral communities. You don't need to use all six, and there may be certain organisations or subcultures that can thrive with just one. But anyone who tells you that all societies, in all eras, should be using one particular moral matrix, resting on one particular configuration of moral foundations, is fundamentalist of one sort or another.

However, most utilitarian theories are monist; they hold that there is only one intrinsic value, such as pleasure, happiness or utility. All other values, such as love, knowledge or beauty, are just instrumental and can be reduced to one intrinsic value. On the other hand, value pluralism assumes that there are more intrinsic values than only one. How, then, does Durkheimian utilitarianism reconcile these two positions?

To answer this question, it is essential to remember that value pluralism is a meta-ethical position, independent from any particular theory of normative ethics, especially the 'Big Three': deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics. One can be a deontologist and either monist or pluralist about values. The same is with being a utilitarian. Although the majority of them are virtue monists, it is not a necessary connection (see e.g. Sen (1980) with his vector view of utility or Moore (1993) with his ideal utilitarianism (see also Klocksiesm 2011)). It seems that Durkheimian utilitarianism is also one of these theories that combine both utilitarianism and pluralism of values. Later, I will suggest the most plausible explanation for this combination of ideas.

To understand what Haidt's values of public morality are, we should focus on his metaphysical views concerning the nature of moral truths. In his criticism of Sam Harris' theory, Haidt (2014) claims that *there are facts, but they are very different from the facts of chemistry and physics. We might call such facts "emergent culture-specific anthropocentric truths."* (...) *I believe that moral truths are of this sort.* As we can see, Haidt believes that moral truths are not universal truths that exist independent of human beings. He rather seems to be an adherent of weak mind independence of morality, i.e. *the type of objectivity on which these theorists insist when they ascribe a dispositive fact-constituting role to collectivities while denying any such role to separate individuals* (Kramer 2007, 4). That means that moral truths

are neither subjective (strong mind-dependent) nor exist independently from other human beings (strong mind independence. What are then these moral truths?

According to the MFT, our moral domain is limited to values that can eventually be reduced to moral foundations. In other words, human beings morally value certain things (e.g., freedom or equality) and do not value others (e.g., typing speed or having green eyes) because they have evolved in that direction. If we, as a species, had evolved in a different direction, our moral foundations, and consequently the values that implement them, could have been entirely different. Moral foundations evolved under certain environmental conditions associated with specific moral emotions. Even if the morality of individual groups changes, these changes still fall within the original categories. For example, we can assume that in the past, gender equality was irrelevant in Western societies. Now, it is an integral part of morality, not only for an individual but also public. But did this lead to the extension of our moral domain with new foundations, with new moral emotions? The answer is negative. These issues have just become the new triggers of care/harm, fairness/cheating or liberty/oppression foundations and evoke familiar moral emotions, such as compassion, anger or resistance, only in other contexts (see Harcourt 1999 for discussion). And although different societies indeed value particular foundations more than others, it is difficult for us as humans to go beyond their global catalogue, beyond our human domain of morality. Such a way out would have to be associated, if we accept the basic assumptions of evolutionary psychology, with a change in human hardware, which is impossible in such a short time. To paraphrase Wittgenstein, we might say that the limits of our evolution mean the limits of our morality. Therefore, the moral truths Haidt was talking about are the truths about moral foundations or the values that can be reduced to Moral Foundations⁴.

Regarding the relations between the values, Haidt (2011, 410) claims that *there is no simple arithmetical way of ranking societies along a single dimension*. This lack of a common denominator suggests that Haidt adopts some version of incommensurability of values, which is often defined as a “*lack of a common measure*” (Chang, 2013, 2591). Some authors, e.g. Raz (1986), equal incommensurability with incomparability; others make a clear distinction between these two concepts. For instance, as Chang (2013, 2597) argues [*t*]two values or instances of value can lack a common unit of measure; nevertheless, one might be better than the other in one of two ways. Haidt (2013, 398) seems to favour the latter view as he does not believe that *all moral visions and ideologies are equally good, or equally effective at creating humane and morally ordered societies*, which means that there can be better and worse sets of values (Moral Foundations) for particular societies. Moreover, his remark that [*t*] *here is no way to eliminate the need for philosophical reflection about what makes a good society* (Haidt, 2013, 441) implies that there is a way to make rational choices between plural values. Haidt, therefore (2013, 398), is not a moral relativist, as he directly admits.

⁴ Later in the paper I will use the term ‘moral foundations’ as psychological evolutionary human traits in contrast to ‘Moral Foundations’ (capitalized) as normative values. According to this terminology, moral foundations theory concerns moral foundations and Durkheimian utilitarianism Moral Foundations.

5 Objective List Theory and Perfectionism

Let's return to the question of how to reconcile utilitarianism and value pluralism in Haidt's theory. As Mason (2018) notes, *even utilitarians who claim that the value to be maximised is well-being can be pluralist*. Such positions usually refer to the concept of an objective list, and their prominent examples are views held by Griffin (1986), Fletcher (2013) and Christopher M. Rice. (2013).

Crisp (2006, 102–103) distinguishes between enumerative and explanatory theories of well-being. The former merely points out what is good without giving reasons for this particular catalogue. In other words, the good is on the list; one can count the good things out there and create a list of these things without explaining why they are on the list. The latter explains why certain things, and not others, benefit people. Things that match this explanation would be added to the list of goods. It may seem that Durkheimian utilitarianism is an enumerative theory presenting a list of six Moral Foundations based on Haidt's empirical, cross-cultural research⁵. However, Haidt's theory is an explanatory theory of well-being. It not only enumerates Moral Foundations as good things but also gives a more profound explanation of why they are on the list. Moral Foundations are all constitutive of the person's well-being in virtue of a particular vision of human nature⁶. And this claim makes Durkheimian utilitarianism not only the theory of objective goods but also an example of perfectionism (in Thomas Hurka's terms).

Hurka (1993, 1) defines perfectionism as *a moral theory according to which certain states or activities of human beings [...] are good apart from any pleasure or happiness they bring, and what is morally right is what most promotes these human 'excellences' or 'perfections'*. He (1993, 4) also distinguishes two main types of perfectionism: 'broad perfectionism' based on the idea that well-being is doing objec-

⁵ We can trace here the influence of Shweder (1991; 1993) and his cultural and ethical pluralism. He claims that we can enumerate various moral goods valued to some degree in almost all cultural groups in the world (however, they are emphasised, manifested or institutionalised in different ways). Shweder classified these values into three groups: ethics of autonomy (including harm, rights and justice equality), ethics of community (including duty, hierarchy, and loyalty) and ethics of divinity (including sanctity, purity and cleanliness). Although Haidt (2013, 402) classified his moral foundations differently, he refers to Shweder as one of his main academic inspirations.

⁶ The word *constitutive* is crucial here. We could either say that the goods on the objective list are instrumental, i.e. they are the only means to achieve the ultimate, non-instrumental good or that they are non-instrumental, i.e. their achievement is good in itself. In the former, the instrumental goods can be attained over time, similarly to pleasure according to hedonism, and build up one's well-being. The more of them, the higher their well-being is. However, if we have e.g. three instrumental goods A, B and C, then one can gain well-being just by attaining A in a big volume ignoring B and C. In the latter, the non-instrumental goods constitute, not increase one's well-being. So one's well-being is ensured by maintaining all three goods A, B and C. Thus, according to this view, well-being is not a different, higher value achieved as a result of calculating instrumental goods but rather it is a state in which the non-instrumental goods are ensured. I believe this is the view underlying Durkheimian utilitarianism. Moral Foundations are therefore non-instrumental goods which together constitute well-being. The question is whether there is only one, the best possible combination of non-instrumental goods which constitutes well-being (monistic view), or there are many possible combinations that all constitute similar well-being (pluralistic view). Taking into account Haidt's claims that the moral system of a particular society should be grounded in the conditions this society lives in and that different moral systems based on various puzzles of Moral Foundations are equally good, Durkheimian utilitarianism should probably support the pluralistic view.

tively good things and ‘narrow perfectionism’ based on objective goods of a specific kind related to the development of human nature⁷. Therefore, according to broad perfectionism, knowledge is an objectively good thing that should be pursued. However, narrow perfectionism says that knowledge is objectively good because it realises human nature. However, narrow perfectionism needs to provide a precise theory of human nature, which explains why the given goods are worth developing. As Hurka (1998) claims,

many contemporary philosophers doubt whether, especially given the findings of evolutionary biology, any true theory of human nature can ground plausible claims about the value [...]. If they are right, narrow perfectionism is no longer a viable option.

Haidt (2013, 344), although he accepts utilitarianism, adopts a view of humankind as being *Homo duplex* [...], which means that we humans need access to healthy hives to flourish (that’s the Durkheimian part). That is an important statement because Haidt does not believe that law- and policy-makers cannot ignore the knowledge of human nature—otherwise, their actions will be ineffective, or society will disintegrate. Instead, he claims they need to acknowledge it because it will help people achieve a positive, utilitarian goal, making people flourish and ultimately maximise their well-being. That is why, when Haidt presents his view on the normative theory of public morality, he adds: *I just want Bentham to read Durkheim and recognise that we are Homo duplex before he tells any of us, or our legislators, how to go about maximising that total good* (Haidt, 2013, 316).

6 Durkheim and ‘Homo Duplex’

Haidt believes that utilitarianism (in its classical interpretation) on its own does not lead to the best possible results. It treats humans one-dimensionally and overlooks their social aspect, represented by the binding Moral Foundations. As we have already seen, Haidt (2013, 261) refers here to Durkheim’s concept of a *homo duplex*. This German sociologist claimed that human beings at the same time exist at two levels because they are driven by two kinds of impulses or sentiments: egoistic and social. The former is our individuality, which comes from inside us, while the latter is the result of the influence of society, which is external to the individual. For Haidt, this view fits really well with the multilevel selection theory. Therefore, if the egoistic sentiments, such as honour, respect, affection or fear can be explained by natural selection operating at the level of the individual, the social sentiments can be elucidated by natural selection operating at the level of a group. Haidt (2013, 261–262) claims that *these second-level sentiments flip the hive switch, shut down the self, activate the groupish overlay, and allow the person to become simply a part of a whole*. This pluralistic account of human nature corresponds to the pluralism

⁷ This also corresponds to Wall’s (2019) distinction between ‘human nature perfectionism’ and ‘objective goods perfectionism’.

of functions morality should serve and the pluralism of Moral Foundations serving these functions. Particularly important here are the binding foundations that stimulate the collective, second-level sentiments and allow an individual to be not only a chimpanzee but also a bee.

Haidt (2013, 340) points out that social conservatives *believe that people need external structures or constraints to behave well, cooperate, and thrive. These external constraints include laws, institutions, customs, traditions, nations, and religions.* This fact probably explains why Durkheimian utilitarianism is a theory of public morality. Being a homo duplex, man needs the stimulation of group sentiments from culture, society or the state. A situation in which these structures withdraw from the moral sphere, leaving the individual only their moral compass and relations with the closest environment, family or friends, may disturb this fragile balance occurring in human nature. A chimpanzee, not limited by a bee, begins to win. What happens then? Answering this question, Haidt again turns towards Durkheim.

According to Durkheim, a malfunction in the process of the evolution of Western societies from mechanical solidarity (based on the similarities between individuals and the norms they follow in which individual consciousness is almost identical to the collective one) to organic solidarity (based on the diversity of individuals and the social division of labour in which collective consciousness plays a minor role, leaving more room for individual reflection) may lead to ‘anomie’. Anomie is a state in which there is an uncertainty that social rules should be followed because the old ones do not fit the new social reality, and the new ones either have not formed yet or an individual has not internalised them yet (Ross, 2017, 18–26). Haidt (2013, 313) claims that anomie is *what happens to a society that no longer has a shared moral order.* People who experience the state of anomie feel disconnected from society and cannot see the norms and values they believe are essential. As a result, they feel useless and without any vital role in society, which may make them vulnerable to deviations and psychological dysfunctions (which may lead, for example, to suicide).

The reaction to anomie can be the reinforcement of laws and regulations in society, which will strengthen the identity of individuals. That is precisely what Durkheimian utilitarianism suggests—reinforcing rules that will pursue binding Moral Foundations. Moreover, they will stimulate the collective sentiments important for the societal aspects of a homo duplex and, consequently, *increase the social capital [...] of communities, which includes the dense networks of obligation and trust, social information channels, and effective norms and sanctions for deviance; [...] increase the symbolic capital, too—the culturally evolved network of shared symbols and meanings from which people construct their identities and make sense of their world.* (Haidt & Graham, 2009, 396–397).

7 Comparisons

Knowing the central claims and assumptions of Durkheimian utilitarianism, it is worth comparing the interpretation of Haidt’s idea to two similar theories to emphasise their similarities and differences and indicate potential ways to develop it. One is rule consequentialism, and the other is institutional function consequentialism.

Rule-consequentialism (developed i.a. by Brad Hooker (2002)) is a moral theory created to react to act-utilitarianism. As it was already mentioned, if the focal points of the latter are acts evaluated in terms of the good, the focal points of the former are rules evaluated in terms of the good and the acts are evaluated in terms of rules. To be more accurate, the agent shouldn't do what creates the best consequences but according to the ideal moral code, which contains the rules whose internalisation would have the best consequences. A good illustration would be the situation in which one drives a car under the influence of alcohol (above some minimal level). The act-utilitarian would argue that although it is dangerous and wrong in most cases, there may be situations (great weather, straight road, no other cars or people) when driving would lead to better consequences than not driving. However, rule-consequentialists consider how bad people are at judging risks, the circumstances and possible consequences of their behaviour. Therefore, we may assume that the ideal moral code contains a rule prohibiting drinking (once again: more than a minimal amount of alcohol) and driving. Following such a rule leads to generally better consequences, even if its application in a specific case would be officious (see Nathanson 2014).

One of the big questions in the discussion on rule-utilitarianism considers the problem of how many ideal moral codes there are. Leonard Kahn (2012, 632) distinguishes between two positions: absolute rule-consequentialism (ARC), claiming that *there is a single ideal moral code, and all agents are required to act in accordance with it*; and relative rule-consequentialism (RRC), which says that *there is more than one ideal moral code, and some agents are required to act in accordance with one, some with another*. Therefore, under some interpretations of RRC, various groups may have different ideal moral codes which they should follow to achieve the best consequences globally.

As noticed before, Haidt explicitly declares that he is a rule-utilitarianist. However, it does not contradict Durkheimian utilitarianism; on the contrary, one theory may compliment the other. Durkheimian utilitarianism, understood as rule-utilitarianism, provides us with the ideal code of rules constituting laws and public policies but, at the same time, elaborates on the constitution of well-being that justifies these rules. What is more, Durkheimian utilitarianism is clearly a version of RRC. Based on different configurations of Moral Foundations, various societies can have different ideal moral codes to follow. What is essential, it does not equal moral relativism because it does not say that every society's public morality is equally correct. They still need to harmonise individual and binding Moral Foundations in such a way that allows homo duplex to flourish. However, there does need to be (and probably is not) only one ideal code suitable for all societies and cultures evolving and living in various environments. This normative claim is very coherent with Haidt's descriptive pluralism, taken from Shweder.

The second theory compared to Durkheimian utilitarianism is institutional function consequentialism (IFC). Polish philosopher Krzysztof Saja (2019, 7) defines it in the following way:

We should always act according to some rules, virtues, motives and intentions that constitute optimal harmony of normative institutions, whose internalisation by the overwhelming majority of everyone in each new generation has

maximum expected value in terms of the best realisation of the equilibrium of the most important practical functions of normative domains.

That means that the focal points of IFC are not acts or rules but normative functions which should be maximally realised. According to Saja (2019, 12–15), what is essential is that the pluralism of normative functions stays in contrast to the significant monofunctional traditions in normative ethics. These functions are, e.g. maximisation of happiness, individual perfection, salvation, or minimising conflict.

To realise all or at least most of the normative functions, we should look for an optimal harmony of normative institutions, which are i.a. law, common morality, religion, etiquette or individual moral conscience. The institutions' harmony should avoid situations where one institution promotes a particular activity while the other prohibits this activity. Also, the norms of particular institutions should complement each other. The crucial thing is that various institutions realise the functions to varying degrees, which all balance together. For example, the function of individual perfection will be realised most effectively by, let us say, private morality. Then the law can focus on avoiding conflict and religion on salvation etc.

There are many similarities between IFC and Durkheimian utilitarianism. Although Haidt as a psychologist, is interested mainly in morality, his philosophical ideas consider other normative institutions, similarly to Saja's theory. Saja extracts his catalogue of normative functions from the analysis of the history of philosophy (see Saja 2020). Still, he also mentions Haidt as an author of another psychological and evolutionary taxonomy of normative functions (Saja, 2020, 73). It is true not only from the point of view of MFT, in which all moral foundations have particular evolutionary functions, but also from the perspective of normative Durkheimian utilitarianism, according to which Moral Foundations are responsible for the flourishing of a homo duplex. For example, the normative function of salvation may underlie the Moral Foundation of Sanctity/Degradation. This all makes an impression that not only IFC and Durkheimian utilitarianism do not contradict each other, but even they be united at some point. I believe this is an exciting and promising direction for future research.

8 Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to reconstruct and interpret what Durkheimian utilitarianism really is based on the pieces of evidence provided by Haidt. The result is a charitable, plausible interpretation of Durkheimian utilitarianism, according to which it is a coherent theory, ready for further investigation and criticism.

According to this interpretation, Durkheimian utilitarianism is a normative theory of public morality (i.e. directed at the actions of the state and society, instead of individuals), combining the classical claims of (a) rule utilitarianism, (b) pluralism of incommensurable values, and (c) objective list theory. It is grounded in (d) narrow perfectionist theory based on d) Durkheimian view of human nature, according to which we are homo duplex. Moral Foundations on the objective list (six identified for the moment) are equally valuable but fulfil various functions and help realise dif-

ferent aspects of our nature: the individualistic ones stimulate the selfish sentiments of ‘a chimpanzee’, and the binding ones prompt the collective sentiments of ‘a bee’. Taken together, Moral Foundations not only protect individuals from anomie but also allow human beings to flourish in their dual nature. As Haidt (2013, 316) emphasises

*‘[...] a Durkheimian version of utilitarianism would recognise that human flourishing requires social order and embeddedness. It would begin with the premise that social order is extraordinarily precious and difficult to achieve. A Durkheimian utilitarianism would be open to the possibility that the binding foundations—Loyalty, Authority, and Sanctity—have a crucial role to play in a good society.’*⁶

Therefore, Durkheimian utilitarianism in practice means that the enactment of laws and introduction of public policies should be based not only on individualistic Moral Foundations, such as Fairness or Care (even if they aim to maximise the welfare of individuals) but also on binding Foundations. The latter justify the Durkheimian policies that strengthen social cohesion and allow people to realise the collective part of their nature.

Although Durkheimian utilitarianism may face many objections and be critically evaluated (which can be found in Juzaszek, 2022), one is particularly fundamental. It is the issue of the normativity of the moral foundations, or rather the lack of it. Even if MFT is an accurate description of human morality from the psychological or evolutionary perspective, what are the reasons for following them in the future? This manifests the more general problems of Hume’s guillotine and the evolutionary debunking arguments. According to the latter, the moral foundations evolved as a response to specific environmental conditions to ensure the survival of a species, or as in the case of group selection, specific communities competing with others. Their function, therefore, is not to track moral truths, which can often contradict what is evolutionarily advantageous (Juzaszek, 2016).

Haidt’s theory can defend itself by arguing that there are no such things as moral truths external to humans. The only Moral Foundations are moral foundations which evolved together with us. Therefore, such an approach makes the distinction between descriptive and normative accounts of morality only apparent. From a descriptive point of view, the function of morality is, as Haidt (2013, 289) argues, *to suppress or regulate self-interest and make cooperative societies possible*. From a normative point of view, morality is also defined by its function, which is the realisation of homo duplex nature by activating not only the individualistic ‘chimpanzee’ but also the collectivistic ‘bee’. This is a fascinating example of a functional approach to ethics that aims to replace traditional moral theories but still requires elaboration.

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Declarations

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