6.) AN ANALYSIS OF THREE:

Theoretical Concepts -- Deviant Behavior, Mental Illness and Collective Behavior.

The theoretical framework I have tried to construct in this paper is now substantially complete. The analysis of that structure is only at its inception, but the main theoretical concepts have been presented. This chapter attempts to use as much of the theory as has been written to analyze three major sociological concepts: deviant behavior, mental illness and collective behavior. The purpose is simply illustrative; I want to show what tools for analysis this theory presents. At the same time a new dimension of analysis should emerge; rather than static, existing self-conceptions, we will now observe the dynamic process whereby self-conceptions change.

The three concepts have been chosen for three reasons: 1. they are at least apparently widely diverse, 2. they have not been explained satisfactorily in the current literature, and 3. they can be accounted for by the same small list of concepts drawn from the present theory. I don't intend to provide a substantial analysis of current thinking on these matters, but I do want to show very briefly how they would be handled from this theoretical perspective.

1. Deviant Behavior: Introductory sociology courses concerned with deviance are usually called one of three names (officially) at different universities and colleges: Social Problems, Social Disorganization or Deviant Behavior. All involve problems. The first is (or tends to be) heavily value-laden; it assumes that the phenomena under study are bad or considered bad by someone. The second must define "organization" before it can begin, and discuss the causes of disorganization intelligently in the context of a field which has not satisfactorily resolved the parameters within which a system may be said to be organized. These problems become much more severe when one is faced with the imminent task of teaching a course so named. "Deviant Behavior" has similar

problems, since one must specify that from which the behaviors in question deviate. And it makes it hard to talk about issues like overpopulation, which seems to have very little indeed to do with deviance --- either that or some small segment of society is phenomenally overproductive.

We can perhaps sidestep some of these issues with the following set of definitions:[1]

1. Norm - The statistically most probable behavior for members of a segment of society under given conditions.

2. Value - The desire that a given state of affairs should come about or be maintained.

3. It becomes possible, now, to talk of valued and non-valued behaviors.

When the behaviors valued are also statistically the most probable, we speak of a valued norm. Norms then may be valued or non-valued. Any behavior other than the statistical norm is deviant. Any behavior counter to a valued norm is a problem. If the deviance is great enough, and if the value is widely shared, the problem is a social problem. (Note that, logically, all major deviations ARE PROBLEMS, BUT NOT ALL PROBLEMS ARE DEVIATIONS FROM HIGHLY VALUED NORMS, from highly valued norms. Some things which are valued are not norms.)

If all behavior is caused by the self-conception, then all statistically deviant behavior results from statistically deviant self-conceptions. But if all self-conceptions are crossed by information, then all deviant behavior results from the ingestion of deviant information by individuals or groups. Deviant behavior may be accounted for by differential information transfer through the social system. Much of this deviant information is the result of distortion of information which was originally non-deviant, and can be accounted for in

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1. The definitions in this section are not central to the theory, but are introduced only to provide a clear way to handle the problem.

the same manner. But much of it is the result of another process.[2]

The behaviors any man emits over the course of his lifetime do not all fall precisely on norms. They can better be seen as points distributed around a mean. These individuals distributions are themselves distributed about a mean, which is, by definition, the norm. Thus everyone performs some deviant behaviors, and some perform more than others. Since the behavior of others is oriented to behaviors which have been categorized (the filter categories from Ch. 6) and since deviant behavior is categorized differently from non-deviant, reaction to deviant behavior is itself different from normal. Society reacts to deviant behavior. In so doing, it labels the deviant as deviant. Reactions to deviation to valued norms tends to be institutionalized into sanctions, (either positive or negative, depending on the direction of the deviance) and are hence non-random. The message provided for two individuals deviating from the same valued norm will be the same, and the self-conceptions of the two deviants will be similarly affected in regard to that valued norm. Deviance from valued norms would then tend to be non-random in character, and organized into fairly well-defined roles, e.g., criminal, traitor, sex fiend, homo sexual, alcoholic, sinner, etc.

Admittedly, this is an extremely broad and even vague exposition of a problem as major as deviant behavior, but a full exposition of the question is contingent on fuller development of the theoretical tools sketched in the last chapter. The broad outline of an explanation of deviant behavior, however, is simple: deviant behavior is a statistical concept, explainable in terms of statistically deviant self-conceptions. But since self-conceptions are wholly informational in character, they are deviant as a result of the reception of deviant information.

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2. I am indebted to Edwin Lemert, whose theory of deviance provided substantial reinforcement for much of this theory when its basic concepts were still very fragile in my mind. See Social Pathology, op. cit.

Techniques for the analysis of this distortion of information were sketched in the preceding chapter.

2. Mental Illness:[3] If mental illness is itself a form of deviant behavior, it is a special form. Attempts at rigid classifications of mental illnesses have been largely failures. Diagnoses by different practitioners vary greatly. Mental illness resists crystallization with great vigor. It differs from crime, juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, alcoholism and other forms of deviant behavior in two fundamental fashions: 1. There is a much greater variance within the category "mental Illness" and its sub-categories than there is within the categories "crime", "juvenile delinquency", "alcoholism", etc., and 2. The phenomena encompassed by the rubric "mental illness" are less comprehensible to the general public than are other forms of deviance. "Rationalizations" are harder to make; "folk theory", which is largely a means-ends scheme, cannot easily explain the phenomena, since the ends sought (if there are such) are so alien to the general public. The deviance of the mentally ill is seen as less systematic.

This can perhaps be better illustrated graphically. If we represent a norm as a line (in the same way that a regression line represents a distribution of points), we can visualize different patterns of deviance:

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3. At the outset it is important to distinguish mental illness from physical malfunction of the brain. This section deals with only those phenomena termed mental illness whose etiology is not rooted in failure or malfunction of some organic structure.

Line AB represents the norm (arbritrarily, honest behavior -- in this case, a valued norm, although it need not be so). Line AC represents a fairly systematic deviation from that norm (crime). If one deviates at all, the most probable deviation will fall on line AC. It is, so to speak, expected deviance. If a man is not honest, there are ways in which we expect him to be dishonest. These behaviors occur fairly commonly; they are expected, and explanations (filter categories) develop for them. Societal reaction crystallizes around this expected deviation and the folk theory which has arizen to "account" for it. There may even be other fairly probable deviations, such as juvenile delinquency, etc. But they occur fairly frequently and are therefore common and unsurprizing. One knows how to react to them; reaction is systematic.

But after all these systematic deviations have been accounted for, there is still some deviance left. It is not systematic; it occurs (in its individual manifestations) so seldom that folk theorys have not arizen to explain it. It is a residual category. These phenomena, since they cannot be explained by ordinary motivational theory, come to be considered extra-theoretical. Since normal theory purports to explain the behavior of all people, yet manifestly does not explain these behaviors, then these people must be considered outside the range of normal theory ---- they are defective; they are mentally ill. I am suggesting that mental illness is a residual category made up of all those behaviors left unexplained after all the more common and systematic forms of deviance have been accounted for. They are unexplained because, although their total numbers may be large, each individual deviation occurs so rarely that no rationalization for its occurrence has time to arize. Mental illness is a term used to name a fairly mixed bag of behaviors sharing only one thing in common --- they are statistically "odd". They occur at the tails of the distributions of behaviors around norms. The assumption underlying a medically-oriented psychiatry, of course,

is that behaviors so far from the norm cannot be the product of a normally functioning mind. The purpose of this section is to show that they can.

If all behavior is caused by the self-conception, then "odd" behaviors must result from "odd" self-conceptions. Self-conceptions can be odd in two ways: 1. through the presence of odd attitudes, or 2. through the absence of statistically normal attitudes.

A. The Presence of Odd Attitudes: Attitude has been defined here as a person's conception of his relationship to an object or set of objects. An odd attitude is one in which the individual conceives of his relationship to an object or set of objects in a manner very different from the way in which others conceive their relationships to that same object or set of objects. If that object is relatively specific, (say "mice") then his behavior will be odd only toward mice, AND otherwise normal. But if that object is highly diffuse (in my terminology, if it serves as a filter category for a large number of other objects) then the behaviors will be odd toward all the objects included in that filter. (Such an object would be, for example, "people", or "words" or some such general category)

These odd attitudes are formed in the same way as any attitude --- through the absorption of information. In this case, however, this information is statistically odd. Odd relationships to objects (which should occur for some people simply by chance) should result in odd Self-Reflexive acts, and consequently odd attitudes. Since the reactions to those behaviors which occur rarely tend to be largely random (since the person reacting to them has likely never been confronted by them before), odd <u>labels</u> occur, and deviant information is sent to the person. Similarly, distortions of normal information passing through communication networks occurs, and some of the distortions will be very rare. (This is an argument, of course, for the kind of analysis of semantic distortion I proposed in the preceding chapter.) These are the basic mechanisms through which odd

attitudes are inculated into the individual.

B. The Absence of Statistically Normal Attitudes: The attitudes which are absent in the form of mental illness can, of course, vary along the same specificity --- diffuseness dimension as those in the section preceding, so there is no reason to recapitulate that point here. There are, however, two basic ways by which the lack of an attitude can come about: either 1. the attitude never formed in the first place, or 2. the attitude originally was present but was destroyed.

1. Failure of Socialization: As was pointed out in my earlier discussion of the self-reflexive act, there are some common objects in a society to which most or many people are related in the same way. These people form similar attitudes toward these objects. In the event of physical isolation from one or more of these common objects or faulty conceptual equipment, some individuals may fail to form this attitude. The shopworn theoretical example of this is the young boy raised in the absence of girl peers who does not know how to act when first faced with them. Lacking any basic conception of the common relationship of boy to girl, the isolated boy's actions toward the girl appear random to the outside observer. This is the kind of process I mean. This is too common of a situation to be classed as mental illness by the general public, but in rarer instances it would certainly be so termed. The individual raised in the absence of people, for example, would have no conception of his relationship to people, and initially would not act at all when in their presence. Later his behaviors would be based on the few (misrepresentative, due to the odd reactions of people toward his odd behavior) inferences he would have made from initial encounters. He would almost certainly be termed disordered. Yet this is the normal operation of a normal mind under these conditions.

2. The Self-Reflexive Arc: Any attitude, or conception of a relationship

of self to object, is an inference based on evidence from prior self-reflexive acts or labelling, as I suggested in Chapter Five. It would follow that an attitude so based could be destroyed by the ingestion of sufficient evidence contrary to the original inference so that that inference could no longer be supported.

For minor attitudes, these changes could easily be brought about by a reversal of prior labelling. But for major attitudes toward major objects, over the period of a lifetime so many bits of supportive evidence tend to accumulate that a reversal of labelling of enormous magnitude would be required. Such a large change involving so many labelling agents is greatly improbable -- much less probable, I would guess, than the rate of occurrence of large scale disruptions of self-conceptions. Probably that overwhelming majority of these breakdowns occur as the result of a process best called the Self-Reflexive Arc.

In the ordinary self-reflexive act, an individual forms an inference about his relationship to an object by observing both himself and the object as part of one conceptual act. If he should make the observation again at a later date, the earlier inference is bolstered, but not changed. The individual simply has more evidence in support of his originally inferred attitude. But if a new encounter with the same object is substantially different from earlier encounters, the new evidence does not support earlier inferences; it tends to be disruptive of the earlier attitude. These inductive inferences are (roughly) cumulative; the more of them that occur, the weaker the evidence fostering the original attitude, and the greater the ambivalence of the individual's conception of his relationship to that object. This increasing ambivalence provides fertile grounds for the acceptance of fresh evidence counter to the originally inferred attitude. The result is a circular process whereby the first evidence counter to the original attitude causes increased ambivalence, which in turn is a condition for more ready acceptance of further evidence counter to the original attitude. Hence

the appellation "self-reflexive arc".

All self-reflexive acts are prone to arcing, since the original evidence fosters more ready acceptance of additional evidence supporting the original inference. (This is because the original inference constructs a filter category for the object in question; it is easier to place objects into extant categories than to construct new ones; it is easier to deduce than induce.) The major condition for this arcing process is the continual recurrence of the stimulus which engendered the original inference. Over the course of a lifetime, such stimuli do recur. If a student gets an "A" on a test, this provides evidence for his characterization of himself as a good student. Over the course of a scholastic career, this experience can recur very many times.

But here I'm speaking of relatively rapid breakdowns of attitudes which have accumulated evidence throughout life via this process. Somehow the process must be accelerated. This acceleration is a result of conceptual linkages of objects. In order to understand this process we must recall that it is a persons definition of an object which is the objective term of an attitude --- not the object itself. Thus one need not encounter the object itself to perform a self-reflexive act, but can be cued to think of that object by something conceptually linked to it. Encountering the linked object is tantamount to encountering the object itself. If the linkages of the object in question to other objects in the self-conception are pervasive, then arcing is virtually inescapable.

This is a large piece of abstract reasoning to swallow in one bite, so the following example should be helpful: (For the sake of simplicity, the example is chosen to be familiar and to represent an attitude of simple affect, though it need not be so.)

Suppose that a man has built, over a long period, a secure body of evidence that he loves a woman. (This attitude is represented as M $\overset{+}{\rightarrow}$ W.) Whenever he sees

the woman or objects conceptually linked with that woman (combs, clothes, secret places, favorite songs, etc.) he experiences Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome;[4] which, on the basis of other external evidence (society prescribes the meaning of G.A.S. in different situational contexts) he construes to be a feeling of positive affect. If, as a result of some circumstance, this woman becomes linked to another object toward which the man already feels strong negative affect (say infidelity, represented here as M $\overset{-}{\rightarrow}$ I), then whenever he sees the woman, G.A.S. will bear a different interpretation. Each such occurrence will be a bit of evidence against the attitude M $\overset{+}{\rightarrow}$ W. At first, the sheer number of times when G.A.S. has been interpreted as positive affect will constitute evidence in favor of the attitude M $\overset{+}{\rightarrow}$ W which far outweighs that single instance fostering M $\overset{-}{\rightarrow}$ W.[5]

But if the woman occupies a significant position in the man's self-conception, she will be linked to many other objects for the man. All the places he took her, the games he played with her, the things he shared with her serve as cues to bring her to mind. When he plays tennis, he remembers her; when he goes to a tavern he took her he thinks of her; when he hears songs they heard together he thinks of her. And when he thinks of her, he thinks of I, which brings about G.A.S. which he now interprets as negative affect.

Now two significant results of this process can be seen: 1. Virtually everything in the person's experience cues him to think of the woman, and every-time he does so, he accumulates evidence <u>against</u> M $\overset{+}{\rightarrow}$ W. Eventually this evidence

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4. Hans Selye, op. cit.
5. Since I and W are now associated, the attitude toward I can be transferred to W. It could also go the other way; the attitude toward W could be transferred to I. Which will happen depends on the evidence supporting each. Addnittedly, on the face of it this looks like a case of simple balance or consistency theory, but as we move on, it should become clear what a gross oversimplification such theories tend to be.

WHICH RESULTS IN THE DESTRUCTION OF M ⇄ W,

against M ⇄ W reaches approximate parity with earlier evidence for M ⇄ W -- not the creation of M ⇏ W. Behaviorally, we would expect the individual to become more and more ambivalent toward the woman until he stopped acting toward her at all. 2. Recall now the other objects which had been conceptually linked with W. Suppose for simplicity they had all been characterized by positive affect. Whenever he confronted these objects, the individual, as a result of the negative affect toward W, now felt a negatively evaluated G.A.S. When he goes to play tennis, he feels negative affect; when he goes to favored taverns he feels negative affect; when he hears favored songs he feels negative affect. All self-reflexive acts performed under these circumstances yield evidence contrary to the inferences which yielded the original attitudes. These attitudes, too, will TEND TO be destroyed. In this fashion, a large segment of the self-conception can be wiped out fairly quickly. Depending on the pervasiveness of the original object (in this case, W) more or less of the self-conception will be disrupted. Without a self-conception, no behavior can occur; complete destruction of the self-conception (a rare but possible event) would result in catatonia, collective activity. Stopping a self-reflexive arc in the case of a highly pervasive act is theoretically simple but practically very difficult. Theoretically, the only requirement is that one stop thinking about the original object. But practically, any diversion the individual plans toward this end (recreation, seeing a psychiatrist, etc.) is intrinsically linked to the object since it is for that end. It consequently acts as a cue to the original object. If you drink and forget a woman, you know very well why you're drinking.

3. Collective Behavior: The two phenomena already discussed in this chapter share at least one important characteristic -- they are unordinary behavior. Collective behavior is also unordinary, and perhaps on a larger scale than the first two. It is deviant behavior, perhaps somewhat "odd" in the sense that

Books, 1961.

6. Ibid, Chapter 1. This chapter is interesting to read for the quality of

affected.

The fifth criterion -- representation by a non-descript symbol -- Durkheim accounts for in this fashion: If the force under consideration is none other than the social force generated by the tribe itself, then the symbol of the tribe will also symbolize the force. In an attempt to identify the tribe, some feature characteristic of that tribe must be selected. Most frequently, this is a distinguishing characteristic of the locale of the tribe; e.g., where the crows gather, near the lizards, by the fig trees, etc. Following this rationale, it would seem unlikely that any awe-inspiring totem would emerge -- men do not live where tigers or elephants congregate.

At this point, Durkheim, of course, having shown that the exaggerated behavior characteristic of collective activity fits the description of what ever is needed to engender belief in Wakan, must explain why behavior in collectivities is exaggerated.. His solution carries all the elements necessary to such an explanation, but they are poorly assembled.

The totem, says Durkheim, focuses attention on those beliefs which members of the tribe commonly hold. These "collective representations" are more than additive, he argues; their cumulation creates a real force which does indeed impel human activity. Durkheim is adamant; the force is real, not figurative. He takes Comte to task for calling force a construct only.[9]

I greatly admire Durkheim, and it is with some regret that I must take Comte's side in this debate. It is not at all necessary to posit any existential force to account for the behavior of people in collectivities.

In the last section on mental illness, I described a process called the self-reflexive arc. Analytically, the Self-Reflexive Arc is simple: If an individual has an orientation toward an object, he will behave in accordance

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9. Ibid, p. 234, also.

with that orientation toward that object. The resulting self-reflexive act strengthens the old orientation. If the stimulus (or other linked stimuli) recurs, the act recurs, further strengthening the orientation, and so on. The important condition for arcing is that the individual sees himself relating toward the object again and again. The result is rapidly accelerated growth of the attitude. (If, as in the case of mental illness, the attitude is counter to an old attitude or constellation of attitudes, the result is the destruction of the old attitude.)

THE EVIDENCE SUPPORTING

The Self-Reflexive Arc is based on the Self-Reflexive act. But there are other variants as well. As I suggested in Chapter 6, an individual may infer his own relationship to an object by observing the relationship to that object of another with whom he has identified with regard to that object. All the behaviors of that other toward the relevant object are assumed appropriate to ego.

This is the case here. Durkheim's analysis yields all the components we need: 1. an object -- the totem -- which represents a large body of collective representation which, by definition, are orientations to objects held to be common to all, and 2. a mechanically solidary collectivity. Individuals are defined in terms of their relationship to the collective conscience, and all are defined as in similar relations toward it. That's what mechanical solidarity means. Given these conditions, we can see the following: All the individuals in Durkheim's primitive tribes are identified with one another toward a common object; thus any behavior any individual performs toward the totem serves as a model for the behavior of all. Whenever the tribe is physically assembled with attention focused on the totem, collective behavior will occur. People will perform behaviors they do not ordinarily perform. With a large enough group, and with sufficient cues to evoke continual attention to the object on which the iden-

tification is based, behaviors should move toward extremes. If one person alone, through a series of personal self-reflexive arcs, can end up behaving pathologically, the same process coupled to large scale identifications should be virtually explosive.

This meets all Durkheim's criteria. People will behave oddly; the cause is compelling yet intrapsychic, and yet extends only to participants in the identification. Recall that, no matter how excited a lynch mob may become, there is always at least one person who doesn't enter into the spirit of the affair. The lynchers do not share a common orientation toward the event (they do not identify) with the lynchee.

Collective behavior may be explained, it would seem, by the simple linking of two of our basic concepts -- identification and the self-reflexive arc. For those who will hold that affect motivates behavior, one might well ask what attribute of collectivities increases affect -- and why it increases it only along lines of identifications -- and why it increases it only toward certain objects?