

Chapter 2

The Psychological Social Imaginary

In the introductory Chapter, I argued that psychological modes of understanding are pervasive in today's Western culture. Roger Smith concludes that modern society is a Psychological Society. In the twentieth century, "everyone learned to be a psychologist, everyone became her or his own psychologist, able and willing to describe life in psychological terms" (Smith, 1997:577). In this chapter we turn our attention to the roots of Psychological Society with a special focus on the effects of psychologization on our moral lives. How have we learned to think about morality in an age dominated by psychological modes of understanding? How is it even possible to think about morality from the perspective of a psychological worldview? In order to answer these questions, we need to know what "the psychological worldview" is, how it arose historically, and how this worldview relates to our conceptions of morality and normativity.

The twentieth century was not only a psychological age, but, according to leading moral philosophers (MacIntyre, 1985a; Taylor, 1989), also an age when morality became subjectivized.¹ Moral subjectivism is the view that something is morally good if and only if the moral agent has a positive preference towards it. In philosophy this is an old view, but propounded with particular force by David Hume in the eighteenth century. In the twentieth century, moral subjectivism was heralded in academia under the name of emotivism, which, according to Alasdair MacIntyre (1985a), became embodied in the Western culture, its sciences, institutions and discourses. In the twentieth century, the West simultaneously witnessed a psychologization of society and a subjectivization of morality. This chapter investigates the relations between these two processes.

¹I distinguish between "subjectivization" as the process where something becomes internalized, finding its source in the "inner world" rather than the outer, and "subjectification" as the process where humans are made subjects in specific ways. The latter term owes much to Michel Foucault and his analyses of "the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (Foucault, 1994b:326), which will be discussed in later chapters. My claim is that psychology has been equally involved in the subjectivization of morality and the subjectification of human beings.

I approach the modern processes of psychologization and subjectivization in terms of what has been called the “social imaginary.” In his book on *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Charles Taylor defines social imaginary as

the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations (Taylor, 2004:23).

Taylor wants to stress the fact that the social imaginary is not simply the cluster of intellectual ideas we employ when we think about social relations. It is not an explicit social theory, but rather what determines how we formulate such theories. It determines which questions we can meaningfully ask about our social existence (and which we cannot ask), and it affects the ideas we form. Taylor uses the term “imaginary” because his focus “is on the way ordinary people ‘imagine’ their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms, but carried in images, stories, and legends.” (Taylor, 2004:23). Taylor draws in three social forms that play a significant part in the modern social imaginary: the market economy, the public sphere, and the self-governing people (p. 2). In addition to these, I shall argue that psychology, as an array of practical modes of understanding and acting, should be seen as having penetrated our social imaginary to the extent that we have problems seeing that social life can be imagined in non-psychological terms, and indeed was historically imagined in other terms prior to the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries (and perhaps is still imagined so today in certain non-Western societies). When I address “psychology” in what follows, I do not merely refer to the academic discipline, but to a whole cultural form; a culturally specific way of understanding and ordering actions. This was also Foucault’s understanding of psychology:

I don’t think we should try to define psychology as a science but perhaps as a cultural form. It fits into a whole series of phenomena with which Western culture has been familiar for a long time, and in which there emerged such things as confession, casuistry, dialogues, discourses and argumentations that could be articulated in certain milieus of the Middle Ages, love courtships or whatnot in the mannered circles of the seventeenth century. (Foucault, 1998b:249).

In later chapters I present a view of social practices as the background that enables things and situations to appear as meaningful. The social imaginary, however, should be understood as even more basic than specific practices. The social imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible shared practices in the first place (Taylor, 2004:23). Our practical background understandings, our implicit knowledge of what to do in different situations, would not be possible without “a wider grasp of our whole predicament: how we stand to each other, how we got to where we are, how to relate to other groups, and so on” (p. 25). The notion of the social imaginary is intended to capture this “wider grasp of our whole predicament” that grounds even our background understandings of practices. Social practices are not isolated islands, unconnected ways of doing things, for most practices only make sense in their relations to other practices, and there is often a common

cultural form to how people comport themselves in different social practices. Practices are held together by a common understanding and this common understanding is what the notion of the social imaginary is supposed to capture.² In short, the social imaginary is our “implicit grasp of social space” (p. 26), and my argument is that this implicit grasp of social space has increasingly been psychologized since the eighteenth century.

In relation to morality, there are at least two interesting features of the concept of social imaginary. First, an important part of the social imaginary is “a sense of moral order” (Taylor, 2004:28). The social imaginary incorporates some sense of how we all fit together in shared social practices, and such understanding is simultaneously factual and normative (p. 24). The social imaginary concerns the *oughtness* of practical life. Second, although it is impossible to make the social imaginary fully explicit in theoretical propositions, it is nonetheless susceptible to being influenced by otherwise explicitly formulated theories and ideas (p. 28). This makes the concept useful for an investigation of how psychological ideas have affected our social and moral lives.

The Two Faces of Psychology

It is easy to claim that psychology has infiltrated our social imaginary, but it is hard to pinpoint what psychology really is. Although it is clearly not a simple and unitary thing, but an amalgam of different theories and practices, we may, however, discern a unity in the otherwise “fragmented and contradictory field of psychology” (Kvale, 2003:596). The diverse languages of psychology can be seen as united in its *Janus head*, talking with two tongues: One face of the Janus head presents exciting therapeutic narratives and vivid accounts of personal change and development, “legitimizing a psychology of human concerns” (p. 596). The other face of the head speaks the language of statistics and quantitative experiments and questionnaires, “legitimizing psychology as a natural science” (p. 596). The two faces rarely talk to or confront one another, for each is dependent on the other in spite of their incommensurable natures. One face gives the discipline its scientific legitimacy, funding and academic prestige and positions, while the other gives practical relevance and entertains the public in Psychological Society. What the two faces share is a common conception of the individual as the basic unit of psychology.

In this chapter, I will argue that both faces of psychology’s Janus head have shaped our social imaginary. I try to trace the roots of the faces to two strands of eighteenth

²The concept of social imaginary resembles Foucault’s (2001) notion of *episteme*, which notably figured in the early parts of his work. But while Foucault understood the *episteme* as something like an unconscious cultural code to be made explicit by structural analysis, Taylor rejects the idea that the social imaginary can be fully expressed in explicit doctrines. It is *lived* rather than *thought*, based on habitual, bodily practices rather than underlying social rules.

century thought: modernism and romanticism. Psychology may have been born in 1879 when Wilhelm Wundt founded his laboratory in Leipzig, but it was already conceived in the first half of the eighteenth century. Kurt Danziger (1997a) has described the eighteenth century as the Great Transformation, the century when psychology found its language.³ According to Danziger, psychology then not only found a *language* suitable for representing a pre-existing realm of psychological phenomena. He argues more controversially that it also created its *phenomena*: “Before the eighteenth century there was no sense of a distinct and identifiable domain of natural phenomena that could be systematically known and characterized as ‘psychological’” (p. 37). There were theological, philosophical, moral, medical and political phenomena, but no psychological phenomena. The relations of humans to their world, the deity, their bodies, and their fellow human beings were not yet imagined in psychological terms. This is not to deny that people reflected on their experiences before the advent of psychology, but rather to insist that such reflection took on a new meaning and was structured differently after the introduction of psychology.⁴

Instead of talking about modernism and romanticism in abstract and general terms, I turn to David Hume (1711–1776) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) as two contemporaneous thinkers, who exemplify these strands of thought, and whose ideas have been formative in relation to the two faces of the Janus head of contemporary psychology.⁵ From Hume’s modernism came the idea that the world, and human behavior within it, could be understood in total as a mechanical system with the help of scientific methods. Hume thus wanted to “introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects,” as the subtitle of his first book from 1739 proclaims (Hume, 1978). Hume’s early psychology is an attempt to instigate a science of the mind on Newtonian premises, and Hume can thus be presented as the grandfather of modernist psychology, as a precursor to the scientific face of

³It was also the century when the term “psychology” gained a usage. According to Raymond Williams’s *Keywords* (Williams, 1983), the word “psychology” entered the English language in the seventeenth century in the sense of “a doctrine of souls,” but in the scientific sense of “empiric psychology,” the word was first used by Hartley as late as 1748, where he took up Wolff’s German definition from 1732. Williams adds that the word was not much used before the nineteenth century.

⁴In his archeology of the human sciences, Michel Foucault was even led to claim that: “Before the end of the eighteenth century, *man* did not exist” (Foucault, 2001:336). This does not mean that human beings did not exist, but that “man,” as a privileged object of research, did not exist. Foucault also touches upon the advent of psychology, and argues that “the new norms imposed by industrial society upon individuals were certainly necessary before psychology [...] could constitute itself as a science” (p. 376). In *The Order of Things*, Foucault introduces another of the themes of this book in his declaration that “Modern thought has never, in fact, been able to propose a morality” (p. 357). The reason for the inability of modern thought (psychology included) to propose a morality is that for modern thinkers, “any imperative is lodged within thought” (p. 357), i.e., within the thinking subject rather than in “the order of the world.”

⁵Hume and Rousseau were in fact personal friends, and when Rousseau had to flee from France – where his book *Émile* was burned in public immediately after its publication in 1762 – Hume arranged for him to come to England.

psychology's Janus head. From Rousseau's romanticism came the idea that humans possess a deep interior to be unleashed through a process of self-realization.⁶ This idea has been important to twentieth century humanistic psychology, and more generally to the public face of psychology's Janus head. Rousseau provided later psychologists with a subjectivist language of human concerns that enabled psychology to become a secular technology of self-realization.

Hume and Rousseau, in spite of their many differences, agreed on some fundamental points: Notably concerning (1) a shared focus on the world of private experiences, (2) a shared moral subjectivism, and (3) a shared atomistic view of society as something established through individuals' contractual consent. These three elements incarnate what I will call the psychological social imaginary. As we shall see, Hume's focus on *method* as the key to a science of the mind, became formative in psychology, and the primacy of method penetrated into the social imaginary and human self-understanding through a process that I shall call "ontologizing" (see also Taylor, 1993): "Method" was read into the very constitution of the mind itself, thereby contributing to shaping humans in light of a method-based scientific psychology (more on this below). Rousseau's romantic ideas of the inner self and its realization have run in tandem with the modernist focus on method, and, together, they have enabled psychology to become an active participant in turning humans into specific kinds of psychological subjects in a value-free and disenchanted world.

The Worldly Nature of Psychologization

Initially, however, I should subject the approach of the present chapter to self-criticism. There are at least two complementary limitations of my approach that are worth mentioning: First, why begin an investigation of the history of psychologization in the eighteenth century and why choose Hume and Rousseau (none of whom were psychologists in a modern sense of the term)? Second, isn't the approach blatantly idealistic? Why recount the history of psychologization in terms of thinkers and their thoughts? Why not in terms of the development of concrete historical practices, where psychology has been connected with social management and a political interest in controlling individuals and populations? Should I not instead do a social history of psychology (Jansz, 2004) or what Foucault (1998a), referring to Nietzsche, called *wirkliche Historie*?

As regards the first point, I concede that it is unorthodox to argue that much of what is interesting about psychology's history and its current Janus-head situation can be traced to ideas from the eighteenth century, and to such authors as Hume and Rousseau. Conventional histories of psychology typically begin with Descartes, or

⁶I do not think Rousseau himself used this word, but there is agreement among interpreters that his philosophy amounts to (and indeed inaugurated) a form of self-realization thinking (Wokler, 2001).

even with the ancient Greeks. But such histories ignore the fact that, as Danziger says, “the very notion of ‘psychology’ in the modern sense, forming a distinct field of study, can hardly be said to have existed before the eighteenth century” (Danziger, 1997a:21). They uncritically assume that Aristotle’s *psyche* corresponds to the Latin *anima*, to the Christian *soul* of the middle Ages, and to the *mind* of modernity. In my view, this cannot be taken for granted, since a number of historical, philosophical and ethnographic accounts have demonstrated that the modern idea of “the psychological,” as an inner realm of thoughts and feelings, is “a function of a historically limited mode of self-interpretation, one which has become dominant in the modern West and which may indeed spread thence to other parts of the globe, but which had a beginning in time and space and may have an end” (Taylor, 1989:111). From an anthropological viewpoint, Clifford Geertz likewise observed that:

The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background, is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world’s cultures (Geertz, 1983:59).

Around the time of Hume and Rousseau, we find perhaps for the first time a way of talking about psychological phenomena that seems compatible with how we imagine the psychological domain today. Also the very term “psychology” was then introduced into English, and about 100 years later, the philosophical ideas of Hume and Rousseau were supplemented with the experimental practices of German physiologists, thus assembling the modern scientific discipline of psychology. Especially, the ideas of Hume made it intelligible to investigate the mind experimentally and methodologically in the manner of Wundt and Ebbinghaus. The mind had to be “imagined” as something susceptible to methodological investigation in order for experimental psychology to make sense, and it was Hume who most clearly articulated the necessary kind of imagination. Rousseau’s focus on the inner voice and the development of the self likewise made it reasonable to imagine therapy, counseling, pedagogy, and business consultancy in the manner of Carl Rogers, for example, and most of today’s psychological practitioners who put premium importance on the subjective “inner voices” of clients (Illouz, 2008).

I admit that this way of putting things could strike one as idealistic, which takes us to the second line of criticism. Critical psycho-historians argue that the discourse of psychology became necessary because of changed social and economical circumstances, particularly in eighteenth century industrialized Britain (Danziger, 1997a:181). “The psychological,” argued cultural theorist Raymond Williams, emerged as a “great modern ideological system” that, with the beginning of industrial capitalism, began to make available new forms for structuring subjectivity (Williams, 1978:128–129). Roger Smith has also pointed to the practical and worldly nature of psychologization:

subjects like psychology and sociology did not originate in the academic setting as much as in the administrative and institutional means developed to manage human beings [...] it was the schools, prisons, asylums, hospitals, workhouses, families, government reports, charities, church groups, youth movements, friendly societies and factories – the local day-to-day management of human activity – which turned man into a systematic object of study (Smith, 1997:374).

Furthermore, a number of commentators have observed that the social sciences – psychology among them – and the liberal nation state, including its mass national school system, emerged and overlapped historically (Christians, 2000:134). There is a historical co-emergence of the institutions of the modern nation states and the knowledge about individuals and populations produced by the social sciences, notably psychology. This in itself should alert us to the idea that the psychological way of thinking about humans cannot be morally and politically neutral. As Foucault argued, the historical emergence of social science cannot “be isolated from the rise of this new political rationality and from this new political technology” (Foucault, 1988b:162). Social science was needed in the new nation states to administer and govern. In Foucault’s perspective: “the emergence of the human/social sciences is contemporaneous with, and indivisible from, the development of disciplinary power” (Hook, 2003:609).

I agree that it was in these practical contexts that the psychologization of the world occurred. But I also think that there is more to the story than “governmentality” and “disciplinary power” (I expand on the Foucauldian perspective in Chap. 4, where I also subject it to some criticism). I am particularly inspired by John Dewey, who was interested in the conditions that must exist in order for psychology to emerge and make sense. Dewey found that “if any individual is taken as a member of a limited social group, we cannot have and historically did not have any psychology as psychology. [...] as a science could not come to birth because the individual as a possible universal had not come to existence” (Dewey, 1976:4). Not until a certain freedom is granted in societies – with new constitutional state formations – does the individual come into existence and “becomes the object of a science – psychology” (p. 4).⁷

So although my story of the psychologization of the world largely works on the level of the development of *ideas*, these ideas should be thought of as embedded in *practices* and inevitably connected to cultural and societal realities. Here I use the word “practice” inspired by Taylor (1989), to denote “something extremely vague and general”: “any stable configuration of shared activity, whose shape is defined by a certain pattern of dos and don’ts, can be a practice” (p. 204). The basic assumption is that “ideas articulate practices as patterns of dos and don’ts. That is, the ideas frequently arise from attempts to formulate and bring to some conscious expressions the underlying rationale of the patterns” (p. 204). Nikolas Rose says that ideas “are bound into ways of seeing and acting: into technologies. They are enmeshed in definite practices of experimentation, investigation, and interrogation arising not only in the laboratory or the academic’s study but in an array of social locales” (Rose, 1996a:83). I share this perspective that regards ideas and theories as practical tools or technologies that operate in the world, and which do not stand apart from the world and passively represent it. As Dewey put it: “The so-called separation of theory and practice means in fact the separation of two kinds of

⁷Dewey’s account owed much to Hegel’s argument (1821) that individual subjects do not emerge in the course of history before complex social formations governed by a legal system come into existence (see Brinkmann, 2004a).

practice” (Dewey, 1922:69). Inspired by Taylor, I will insist on the need for rethinking the relations between ideas and material factors:

what we see in human history is ranges of human practices that are both at once, that is, material practices carried out by human beings in space and time, and very often coercively maintained, and at the same time, self-conceptions, modes of understanding (Taylor, 2004:31).

When we trace how psychology has infiltrated our social imaginary, we should therefore equally notice how psychological ideas have formed our self-understandings on the one hand, and also how new psychological ideas have been responses to changing material practices on the other. We should abstain from deciding the direction of the causal arrow beforehand: “The only general rule in history is that there is no general rule identifying one order of motivation as always the driving force. Ideas always come into history wrapped up in certain practices, even if these are only discursive practices” (Taylor, 2004:33).

In what follows I give an outline of the “psychologies” of Hume and Rousseau (who were, of course, parts of broader intellectual traditions). I am aware that both thinkers were much more sophisticated than the following brief remarks might indicate. My analyses should be seen as sketchy ideal types; ways of thinking about humans that emerged with the transformation of the feudal order and the Church’s authority, the disenchantment of the world, the rise of natural science, and the emergence of new nation states in Europe. All these worldly events form the background to the psychologization of the world that culminated in the twentieth century with the Psychological Society (Smith, 1997). In this context it is impossible to give a full historical reconstruction of psychology and psychologization. My presentation of modernism and romanticism – Hume and Rousseau – is intended as a second best option; as selective steps backwards in history to rediscover certain sources, which will hopefully illuminate how the two faces of psychology have shaped and in some ways distorted our conceptions of morality.

Hume: The Newton of the Mind

David Hume’s philosophy was the culmination of a movement in Western thought that had been on its way for centuries, referred to, by Kessen and Cahan (1986:640), as “The great Western transcendental slide from God to Nature to Mind to Method.” Hume’s approach, and the later psychology influenced by it, was based, not on assumptions about God, Nature, or even Mind, but rather on Method, for Hume wanted “to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects” (Hume, 1978:xi). In the case of Hume, the “basic science of human nature may properly be designated by the term ‘psychology’” (Miller, 1971:155), although, as I remarked above, the term “psychology” was not introduced into English until 9 years after the publication of Hume’s Treatise, namely in 1748 by Hume’s contemporary, and fellow empiricist-associationist, David Hartley.

Hume was greatly impressed by Newton's mechanical physics, which had made it possible to comprehend the physical world in terms of universal laws of nature, rendering it calculable and, to some extent, controllable. It was in a mechanical, disenchanting world that Hume found himself, and it was here he set out to develop a Newtonian science of the mind. By introducing the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects, Hume wanted to reform the science of man. He believed that all sciences, including mathematics and natural philosophy, depend on the science of man "since they lie under the cognizance of men, and are judged of by their powers and faculties" (Hume, 1978:xv). Hume would "in effect propose a complete system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security" (p. xvi). Psychology is seen as the basic science, a first philosophy.

Like his empiricist predecessors, Hume carried forth Descartes' representational epistemology (the "spectator theory of knowledge" as Dewey later called it) according to which the mind, envisioned as a kind of container, is in direct contact with its given contents ("impressions" and "ideas" in Hume's words). Hume continued the Cartesian project of making epistemology the prime philosophical discipline, taking the lead from the question: How can I, as a discrete, thinking being, know anything about the external world? In many ways, this epistemological question has been psychology's main question as well, as Yanchar and Hill (2003) argue in their critique of the dominance of epistemology in psychology; a dominance that has largely excluded concerns with the very purpose and subject matter of the discipline. A discipline dominated by epistemological questions quite naturally concentrates on its methods rather than basic ontological questions, and this tendency, which Sigmund Koch once referred to as *epistemopathic* (Koch, 1981), can be traced to Hume.

For the purpose of the present investigation, the most important part of Hume's psychology is his understanding of morality. He clearly understood morality as a pure psychological phenomenon, grounded in nothing but natural sympathetic dispositions and reactions (Robinson, 2002:18). Hume is still unrivaled in his sophisticated version of moral subjectivism, and, according to Thomas Nagel, it is still the case that "The point of view to defeat, in a defense of the reality of practical and moral reason, is in essence the Humean one" (Nagel, 1997:106). In Hume's eyes, what we call morality is the result of a strengthening of relations between certain actions that are value-neutral in themselves and our subjective reactions in terms of pleasure and pain. To simplify: Those actions that I like are morally good, and those actions that I dislike are morally bad. There are no moral qualities and no values in the world. Moral qualities are subjective projections unto a value-neutral, mechanical world, and a description of the world in toto, given in value-neutral terms, is a complete description. Fortunately, Hume thought, there are common human tendencies to react to events such as murder in emotionally similar ways, which means that, as a matter of fact, our subjective projections of values unto situations tend to be similar. But this is a contingent psychological fact that could change. Hume's psychologization of morality implies treating moral values as psychological facts from a detached scientific viewpoint. And most of the later psychology, according to Leslie Smith's useful discussion, has in fact inherited what he calls Hume's

“non-normative interpretation of norms,” which, alas, completely bypasses what is essential to normativity, as we shall see (Smith, 2006).

The main Humean points that came to shape the later science of psychology can be summarized as follows:

Methodolatry

First, his call for a science of man to be based on the experimental method of reasoning echoed in much later psychology. The notion of methodology became important to unite the otherwise fragmented discipline of psychology, but the stress on method also served to exclude morality and values from most psychological inquiry: How could methods that were designed to investigate *facts* teach us anything about *values*? They could not, and have not, except when psychologists have treated values as unproblematic facts in accordance with Hume’s subjectivist projection-theory of value. In Hume’s psychology, only passions can motivate; reason can merely calculate the optimal means to reach the ends dictated by passion (Danziger, 1997a:44). Reason, as Hume famously said, “is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them” (Hume, 1978:415). The modern instrumental and method-based view of rationality was clearly articulated in Hume’s philosophy.

Subjectivism

Second, Hume referred all that is existentially important in people’s lives – meanings, values, morals – to the subjective realm of the mind, albeit in Hume’s version this was a realm without a sovereign self.⁸ The outer world seemed to Hume to be explicable in Newtonian terms as a mechanical universe, and so he needed a corresponding mechanics of the mind – a psychology – to explain such things as meaning and morality. In this regard, Costall (2004a:184) has described psychology as a mistake waiting to happen: “When physical science has promoted its methodology (of atomism, mechanism, and quantification) to an exclusive ontology, psychology (so conceived) was a pretty obvious mistake just waiting to happen – an essentially derivative science modeled on physics, yet having as its subject the very realm that physics rendered utterly obscure.” Hume’s mechanics of the mind was formulated in experiential terms, viz. with the notions of impressions (corresponding to the positivists’ notion of “sense data”), ideas (thoughts) and the relations between them.

⁸We do not experience a self, Hume argued, and therefore there is no such thing: “For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat and cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception. When my perceptions are remov’d for any time, as by sound sleep; so long am I insensible of *myself*, and may truly be said not to exist” (Hume, 1978:252).

Atomism

Finally, Hume's psychologization of meanings and morals was connected to an atomistic view of society, positing individuals as primary societal atoms, creating communities through social contracts.

Hume's moral subjectivism, his focus on subjective experiences, and his social atomism together served as a theoretical backdrop to our psychological social imaginary, i.e., to the contemporary manner of conceiving social life in psychological terms. I shall argue that this way of thinking about social life is wrong. This assertion, however, presupposes that we can meaningfully talk about social imaginaries being "wrong." How so? Although social imaginaries are constitutive of practices and thereby of social life, I believe along with Taylor that they can sometimes distort and cover over certain realities (Taylor, 2004:183). The atomistic view of society, for example, clearly distorts and misrepresents social life by depicting individuals as primordially socially disembedded. In reality, we are always socially embedded, for we can only learn who we are by being inducted into a language, a set of practices and a form of life, all of which are irreducibly social. What we may learn in the process, however, is to *be* an individual.⁹

Rousseau: The Deep Interior

Rousseau's *Confessions*, written in 1770, but published only after his death, begin with the following declaration:

I am commencing an undertaking, hitherto without precedent, and which will never find an imitator. I desire to set before my fellows the likeness of a man in all the truth of nature, and that man myself. Myself alone! I know the feelings of my heart, and I know men. I am not made like any of those I have seen; I venture to believe that I am not made like any of those who are in existence. If I am not better, at least I am different (Rousseau, 1996:3).

Rousseau's *Confessions* puts premium importance on the unique individual and mark a new era in the history of literature. The narrative genres of earlier medieval and renaissance literature typically employed canonical models and archetypes. No particular persons were portrayed in these stories. But with Rousseau emerged the modern autobiography; a genre that not only depicts a single person and his experiences, but does so from the person's own point of view. This has been called the quintessentially modern mode of life-narration (Taylor, 1989:289). It stands out from previous forms of literature in its representation of a particular life in great and intimate detail, which reflects a changed view of the person. The human being is no longer an element in the cosmic order, but a psychological *self* that can narrate

⁹Taylor (2004) distinguishes between a *formal* mode of social embedding (a level on which we are always socially embedded) and a *material* mode of social embedding (a level of content, where we may indeed learn to be individuals) (p. 65).

its own story. What comes into existence is the “disengaged, particular self, whose identity is constituted in memory” (p. 288).

It is obvious that Rousseau, with his *Confessions*, alluded to a book with an identical title written by the Christian monk St. Augustine circa 400 AD (Hartle, 1983). The differences between Augustine’s and Rousseau’s *Confessions* are remarkable and instructive: Augustine’s autobiography tells the story of a man’s journey towards God, whereas Rousseau’s book is about a man’s journey towards himself, towards his own psychological life, so to speak. While Rousseau began his *Confessions* with a praise of his own uniqueness and singularity, Augustine began his corresponding book with a praise of God, belittling himself:

‘Great art thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is thy power, and infinite is thy wisdom.’ And man desires to praise thee, for he is a part of thy creation; he bears his mortality about with him and carries the evidence of his sin and the proof that thou dost resist the proud. Still he desires to praise thee, this man who is only a small part of thy creation. Thou hast prompted him, that he should delight to praise thee, for thou hast made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee.¹⁰

The *theocentric* worldview of Augustine is in stark contrast to the modern *anthropo-centric* worldview of Rousseau. Augustine is an important figure in the history of psychologization, because he represents the transition from the *ontic logos* of the Greeks and their concept of the world as a meaningful, ordered whole, to the meaningless universe depicted and explored by Newton and Hume. In the mechanical, meaningless universe, Rousseau had to turn inwards to the newly discovered inner self to find meaning and value. Already Augustine had initiated the modern preoccupation with the inner self, and he crystallized the will “as an independent discursive component of understanding,” which is necessary “for being a self in the modern sense” (Bertelsen, 2002:749). However, Augustine merely saw the inner self as the *road* to God and salvation. The inner self was never conceived by him as representing God or salvation in itself, and the cosmos was still depicted as a meaningfully ordered external structure. With Augustine, we are still far from the modern psychological worldview of Hume and Rousseau, where the world became reduced to the perceptions of the mind – as in Hume – and where the inner self should consequently be protected from the corrupting influences of that which is outside – society – as in Rousseau.

In *Emile*, Rousseau gave a psychological solution to the problem of how to form the self so that the unfortunate influences of sociality could be avoided, and in *The Social Contract* he gave a corresponding political solution to this problem, pointing to the establishment of the right democratic order (Reath, 2001). Rousseau here presented his version of social contract theory that (just as in Hume’s case) portrayed isolated individuals as only derivatively coming together to form a society. Like in Hume’s case, Rousseau’s (social and political) philosophy is built on his basic psychology. Psychology takes precedence over the normative questions.

Rousseau’s *dictum* “back to nature” advocates a return to what he perceived as the self-sufficiency of the inner, private self in childhood (Hartle, 1983:6). The first

¹⁰ Quoted from the internet edition of *The Confessions* at: http://www.ccel.org/a/augustine/confessions/confessions_enchiridion.txt.

sentence in *Emile* is: “God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil” (Rousseau, 1762:5). The impulses of nature, hardwired in our original childhood self, are always good. In Rousseau’s moral psychology, evil enters the world only with human societies. There is no original sin, and only culture and sociality deprave us:

Let us lay down as an incontrovertible rule that the first impulses of nature are always right; there is no original sin in the human heart, the how and why of the entrance of every sin can be traced. The only natural passion is self-love or selfishness taken in a wider sense. This selfishness is good in itself and in relation to ourselves; and as the child has no necessary relations to other people he is naturally indifferent to them (Rousseau, 1762:56).

The goal of life – what would be called *self-realization* by twentieth century humanists – is to return to the natural and original self, and the means is to turn inwards. We should learn to listen to the inner voice that speaks in us, and this demands independence from the pressures of society (Hartle, 1983:156; Taylor, 1989:359).

The inner voice of nature speaks with moral authority, according to Rousseau. It does not merely *point* to what is good and worthwhile, but *defines* it (Taylor, 1989:357). Rousseau here gives modern moral subjectivism its language, although he did not take the subjectivist turn fully, for, as Taylor says: “He ran his inner voice in tandem with the traditional way of understanding and recognizing universal good” (p. 362). However, in spite of their differences, the accord with Hume is striking: Both introduced moral subjectivism by arguing that what is good is good because human beings *de facto* like it. And both thought that humans are naturally endowed with quite similar preferences: Rousseau stressed the capacity of the original self to determine the good, and Hume stressed humans’ natural sympathy towards one another.

Rousseau’s heirs are the modern self-realization psychologies, especially the humanistic *third force* psychologists, but also more broadly those numerous psychologists who work in therapy, education, and organizations to enhance human autonomy and self-development: Rousseau “is the starting point of a transformation in modern culture towards a deeper inwardness and a radical autonomy” (Taylor, 1989:363). Many everyday practices today are organized in accordance with an ethic of the self-realizing, autonomous self (Rose, 1996a:17). According to Rose, the ideal of autonomy creates “an intense and continuous self-scrutiny, self-dissatisfaction and self-striving to live our autonomous lives, to discover who we really are, to realize our potentials and shape our lifestyles,” by which we become “tied to the project of our own identity and bound in new ways into the pedagogies of expertise” (Rose, 1999b:193). This is one consequence of imagining social life in psychological terms that will be further discussed in later chapters.

Ontologizing Methods: Hume in Modern Psychology

In what follows, I describe how Hume’s modernist methodological imperative to introduce the experimental method into moral subjects has influenced scientific psychology. I shall focus on the technical apparatus of psychology – “the experimental methods of reasoning” in Hume’s words – and how these have shaped

our psychological social imaginary. I concentrate on three kinds of experimental methods of reasoning: the experiment, the mental test, and statistics, which I will describe very briefly. Then we shall see how the methods employed by psychologists have become ontologized, read into the constitution of mind itself, with the effect of excluding *bona fide* moral normativity in our theories about the mind.

The Psychological Experiment

The psychological experiment as first practiced in Germany from the middle of the nineteenth century was an institution quite specific in time and place. It was founded on a combination of certain philosophical ideas and physiological investigative practices. If one takes an ethnographic stance towards the psychological experiment, it comes to look like a quite curious social institution. Today, the institutional arrangement of a psychological experiment has become well known. Experiments are known to such an extent that we often forget the numerous things that must be taken for granted in order for the practices of the experimental institution to proceed smoothly. All participants must be willing to abide by the rules and conventions of the experiment (Danziger, 1990:9–10). It is no use if subjects begin to fumble with the technical equipment, if they begin questioning the experimental set-up, if they address the experimenter in too friendly a way and try to engage in chitchat or something like that. Today, the psychological experiment has become a common social institution in the West, not just in its strict scientific form, but also in derived forms and through popularization in the mass media.

This was not so before people began to imagine social life in psychological terms. Even Wundt's early experiments followed other rules than today's psychological experiments. In Wundt's experiments, there was a relatively symmetrical relationship between experimenter and subject, often with the subject having the leading role. Experimenter and subject also frequently changed roles, which would be unthinkable today.

Wundt appeared regularly as a subject or data source in the experiments published by his students, although he also contributed much of the theory underlying these experiments. [...] The participants in these experiments clearly saw themselves as engaged in a common enterprise, in which all the participants were regarded as collaborators, including the person who happened to be functioning as the experimental subject at any particular time (Danziger, 1990:51).

In the years after Wundt, however, "experimenter and subject roles are less and less frequently exchanged and research subjects are less and less frequently identified by name" (Danziger, 1990:73). After Wundt, the subject gradually became de-personalized, the subject became everyone, and in many ways, everyone literally became a subject as experimental practices spread.

The Psychological Test

While the rise of the psychological experiment was largely a German affair, the rise of the psychological test largely took place in Great Britain. Experimentation and testing are in many ways opposed, yet complementary practices: experimentation seeks to “maximize the demonstration of manipulative effects” whereas mental testing seeks to “minimize such effects” (Danziger, 1996:25). Francis Galton was the main figure behind the institution of testing in Britain. In 1884 he charged every person who came to be tested (“measured”) in his laboratory the sum of three pence, and more than 9,000 people showed up. But, as Danziger remarks, Galton’s interest in devising his “antropometric measurement” was not financial, but how the data could be useful in his eugenics program (Danziger, 1990:56). Galton was one of the leading architects in the “scientific racism” of the nineteenth century (Richards, 1996:164), and he was very much interested in practical social planning. The Galtonian mental test gradually replaced the collaboratory Wundtian style of experimentation as dominant in psychology, and a probable reason is that testing was more readily applicable in a range of different societal practices (Danziger, 1990:118). And testing methods *were* applied on a large scale. They became part of school life in the form of scientifically based examinations (p. 109), and they entered clinics, factories, and the military (Rose, 1999a:Chap. 4).

A main point emerging from Danziger’s history of the subject in psychology is that from the very beginning of the twentieth century, psychology became an applied science, and an extremely successful one, which became involved in the constitution of the subjects that it studied. It was thus primarily the applied aspects that led to the psychologization of society. Psychological practices did not spread because of a theoretical insight into what the mind is like. Rather, it was specific investigative methods – “experimental methods of reasoning” in Hume’s words – that made everyone see her- or himself in psychology’s image. It was the very methods in psychology – experiments and tests – which led psychologists to devise new models of human beings, which again became part of the self-understanding of these human beings (this is an example of “the looping effect” to be discussed in Chap. 4). The subjects came to see themselves in terms of psychologists’ research methods. Psychology’s methods were ontologized.

Such ontologization often happens when psychology identifies its measures with the objects investigated. The categories of stimulus and response represent an instructive example (Danziger, 1996:21). Stimulus and response are intelligible and common, as units of measurement in psychology, but a lot of work has to be done by psychologists in order to crystallize such units in experimental practices. Neither our phenomenological experiences nor our stream of behavior come neatly and automatically arranged into these units. They are not given to pick up in nature. Imagining and arranging human lives in terms of stimuli and responses demands a highly constricted experimental environment. But, Danziger remarks, “stimuli and responses were always discussed as though they were features of the objective world and not artifacts of psychological procedure” (p. 21). These units, produced

and employed by psychologists, were then identified with the “ultimate building blocks of reality” (p. 21). And when human beings begin to interpret their own and others’ behavior in light of what psychology tells them are the ultimate building blocks of psychological reality, then we have come full circle in the process whereby methods are ontologized.

Psychological Statistics

Modern psychology began its life with an object of investigation inherited from a certain cultural and philosophical tradition (Danziger, 1996) – Hume’s worldview of the eighteenth century – and from there, psychology went on

to apply certain procedures of experimentation and quantification to the study of the pre-existing object. But once the disciplinary apparatus of investigation had been institutionalized, the possibility emerged of allowing this apparatus, rather than tradition, to define the objects of psychological science (Danziger, 1996:22).

Often the procedures came to dictate the theoretical formulations rather than the other way around (Danziger, 1996). The clearest example of psychology having identified its methods with its objects – what I call ontologizing methods – is found in statistics. Statistics originally emerged, as testifies its name, as a “science of state” (Rose, 1996b:111), as a technology intended to gather information about the states’ populations in order to govern them. Hacking (1990) has argued that in the nineteenth century, with the development of statistical tools (largely due to psychologists such as Galton and Spearman), the belief spread that statistical laws expressed real laws inherent in social life. Statistical laws were no longer understood as simply expressing underlying deterministic events, for “statistical regularity underlay the apparently disorderly variability of phenomena” (Rose, 1996b:112). Statistics were ontologized – the world itself was seen as ordered statistically.

This has also been analyzed by Gerd Gigerenzer (1996) in an investigation of how psychological discoveries are dependent on psychologists’ methods of justification for their knowledge claims. Gigerenzer’s analysis demonstrates that “Scientists’ tools for justification provide the metaphors and concepts for their theories” (p. 36). “Discovery is therefore, inspired by justification” (p. 46).¹¹ In psychology, the role of statistical tools was very important in this regard: “After the institutionalization of inferential statistics, a broad range of cognitive processes, conscious and unconscious, elementary and complex, was reinterpreted as involving ‘intuitive statistics’” (p. 39). Psychological theories of the mind were formulated with clear inspiration from the new methods and tools for data *analysis*, rather than from new data (p. 38). With the advent of statistics, the mind of the human being itself was being framed as a statistician.

¹¹ Sometimes the natural sciences also work like this: In astronomy, once the mechanical clock was invented, the universe itself quickly came to be understood as one such mechanical clock (Gigerenzer, 1996:37).

Already in the 1940s had Egon Brunswik claimed that people are intuitive statisticians (Smith, 1997:838). Later on, also the computer became an extremely important tool that inspired cognitive theories about the mind. Thereby, the algorithms and operations of the computer became ontologized. Also the view of humans as probabilistic rational choice machines – the *homo oeconomicus* – owed much to the invention of statistics. Seen in this light, psychologists' methodological tools are not neutral, because the mind is continually recreated in their image (Gigerenzer, 1996:55). And the statistical view in psychology has at times gained something like scientific hegemony. Danziger sums this up:

The more rigidly the demands of a particular statistical methodology were enforced, the more effectively were ideas that did not fit the underlying model, removed from serious consideration. Such ideas had first to be translated into a theoretical language that conformed to the reigning model before they could be seriously considered. In other words, they had to be eviscerated to the point where they no longer constituted a threat to the dominant system of preconceptions guiding investigative practices. *The final stage of this process was reached, when the statistical models on which psychologists had based their own practice were duplicated in their theories about human cognition in general* (Danziger, 1990; my emphases, SB).

When it had become evident that the object of psychological research – the mind itself – works statistically, there was all the reason in the world to concentrate on this method when doing psychological science. Methods and theories then confirmed each other circularly. Already in 1955, more than 80% of published experimental articles in scientific journals used inferential statistics as a means of justification (Smith, 1997:838). The experimental method of reasoning had, in the form of statistics, been introduced deeply into moral subjects, who themselves were now portrayed as statisticians. My question is, however, how algorithmic, rational-choice machines, which operate statistically in order to reach their desired goals, can act as moral beings? The answer seems to be that they cannot; they can calculate the optimal way of reaching their goals, but they seem incapable of judging whether their goals are *worth* striving for. A mind described as a machine works *mechanically* and *causally*, but never *normatively* and *morally*.

Macro Ontologization

Charles Taylor's (1988; 1989) analyses of the Western history of the self also demonstrate, on a historical macro level, how methods and procedures became ontologized. With the breakdown of the Greek and medieval teleological worldview caused by such figures as Galileo,¹² Descartes was famously prompted to formulate a philosophy of the disengaged mind (see also Toulmin, 1990). The new natural sciences worked very successfully by disengaging humans from the natural world

¹²Galileo died in 1642 after having created the first consistent mathematical theory of motion, and having claimed that the book of Nature is written in the language of mathematics.

through scientific procedures, and this newly developed capacity for disengagement was exported to other fields of inquiry, and influenced the images of mind articulated by Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant, and later the science of psychology. The disengaged perspective was thus ontologized (Taylor, 1995b:66). The West witnessed “a kind of ontologizing of rational procedure [...], what were seen as the proper procedures of the rational thought were read into the very constitution of the mind” (Taylor, 1993:317–318). The mind was identified with a rational procedure. It was thus ignored that “Psychological reflectivity is a historical and societal product” (Poulsen, 1995:5), a product instantiated in many respects by “The advent of psychology, helping people to acquire an increasingly mediated relation to their daily activities” (p. 17).

There is nothing universal about being a procedural, disengaged mind or an intuitive statistician. Subjects that function like this, as many of us have come to do today, are historical products. Furthermore, if the points of Danziger and Gigerenzer are valid, it appears that the very methods developed in psychology are at least partly responsible for the fact that we have become such disengaged subjects. This has happened because psychology has worked by identifying its measures with its objects investigated, and in turn because these objects – human beings – easily identify themselves with how they are represented in psychological theories.¹³ In short, we have witnessed the realization of Hume’s program of introducing the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects. The result has been that the human capacity for moral action has been ignored at best, or reduced away at worst, for a mind that is recreated in the light of value-neutral methods can hardly see itself in moral terms. As Husserl argued in his critique of scientism: Pure factual sciences make pure factual men (Husserl, 1954:4).

Free to be One’s Self: Rousseau in Modern Psychology

So far I have approached the modern psychological social imaginary in terms of the rise of the disciplinary apparatus of psychology. This is the Humean, modernist, and scientific story about the introduction of the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects. There is an equally significant story about the rise of a psychotherapeutic ethos (Illouz, 2008). Concerning clinical psychology and psychotherapy, much of this is recounted in Philip Cushman’s works (1990; 1995). Cushman explores how the psychological healing professions have used different technologies to create, shape, and maintain a historically specific human subject. He is deeply critical of psychotherapy as practiced in the US, and argues that social, moral, and political problems are persistently psychologized and individualized by

¹³ Of course, this is rarely a conscious and voluntary process. Often, as Foucault has taught us, we identify with specific representations of ourselves only through processes of subjugation and domination. Much more on this in the following chapters.

the therapeutic profession. He depicts psychology as “one of the guilds most responsible for determining the proper way of being human [...], especially in our current era, in which the moral authority of most religious and philosophical institutions has been called into question” (Cushman, 1995:336). Cushman points to the practical and applied aspects of psychology as responsible for the psychologization of the world: “Through the activities of what was called ‘applied psychology’, psychology would be the social science perhaps most responsible for the continued dominance of self-contained individualism and the resurgence of capitalism” (p. 160). If we bring together Cushman with the analyses recounted above, a picture emerges of a psychological discipline that has been deeply involved in the constitution of its object – human subjects – particularly because of the consequences of its methodological and therapeutic technologies having penetrated our social imaginary and social practices. The focus on methodological technologies is in direct continuation of Hume’s modernist project, while the focus on therapeutic technologies for self-exploration and self-development are in continuation of Rousseau’s romanticism, as we shall now see.

The most important heirs of Rousseau’s ideas about the inner self and its realization are the humanistic psychologists. Humanistic psychology was developed in the US in the years following World War II, and was in its own eyes an alternative to psychoanalysis, where the individual was understood as controlled by unconscious forces rooted in childhood experiences, and behaviorism, where the individual was seen as governed by its reinforcement history. In opposition to these theories, humanistic psychology claimed that the healthy individual was not controlled by anything other than his or her own self. Its goal was to teach people to be free, as Carl Rogers said (1967a). To be free means to become what one really is: “It is the experience of becoming a more autonomous, more spontaneous, more confident person. It is the experience of freedom to be one’s self” (p. 47). The goal is to become an “architect of the self” (p. 47).

According to Rogers, freedom means discovering that meaning is created from the inside; from one’s own self and one’s own experiences. It is the discovery that we ought not to be tied to anything but our authentic self. Rogers saw not just meaning, but also morality, as coming from the inside. The child has a healthy and clear approach to values based on immediate organismic evaluation. What is valuable is what the organism likes (Rogers, 1967b:19). This is strikingly similar to Hume’s subjectivism. When the child grows up, however, it will try to obtain love and acceptance from its surroundings, and hereby the child easily gives up the idea that the source of values is inner, and instead places the source in other people. What is valuable becomes what the parents like. The child then acquires “a basic *distrust* for his own experiencing as a guide to his behavior” (p. 17). The natural and original self is replaced by a false self.

The techniques developed by humanistic psychologists, and particularly through Rogers’ work as a therapist, are designed to offer a way back to the authentic childhood self and the basic trust in one’s own evaluations: “The locus of evaluation is again established firmly within the person” (Rogers, 1967b:22). In the mature, self-realizing person, evaluation again becomes a process, which is “fluid, flexible, based

on this particular moment, and the degree to which this moment is experienced as enhancing and actualizing. Values are not held rigidly, but are continually changing” (p. 21). Something is valuable only if it contributes to the self-realization of the individual: “the criterion of the valuing process is the degree to which the object of the experience actualizes the individual himself” (p. 23). The self-realizing person acknowledges this and trusts his or her own natural self, rather than the experience of others: “*evaluation by others is not a guide for me. [...] Experience is, for me, the highest authority.* The touchstone of validity is my own experience” (Rogers, 1961:23). Both Rousseau and humanistic psychologists thus describe the development of the individual from a natural and wholesome condition in childhood, where the inner self dictates what is good and bad, towards the development of a false self, which arises because of the corrupting influence of culture and sociality. In order to become who we *really* are, we ought therefore to learn to listen to the inner voice of our organismic evaluation. This is the process of self-realization, which has since become dispersed across Western societies (see Chap. 3).

Subjectivization of Morality

Like Rousseau, Rogers clearly conferred moral values to the inner self: “I am the one who determines the value of an experience for me” (1961:122). It is only the individual’s own subjective evaluation, based on the inner experiences, that can give value to something: “the individual cannot borrow value, truth, and meaning from without, but must create them from within,” as it was put in a review article of humanistic psychology (Urban, 1983:161). Any external source of value is considered a threat to the individual’s autonomy. This form of humanism reduces morality to psychology. The value of anything is determined by its psychological function. An example can clearly demonstrate the subjectivism and atomism in Rogers’s thinking: According to him, the healthy family is no duty-bound, supra-individual whole, but consists of free individuals, who let each other become what they essentially are: “the family circle tends in the direction of becoming a number of separate and unique persons with individual goals and values, but bound together by real feelings” (Rogers, 1961:327). Family ties are, just as other “interpersonal relations,” instrumental for individual self-realization. People should only maintain a relationship as long as “it is an enhancing, growing experience for each person” (Rogers, 1970:10).

The view of morality found in self-realization psychology is not just a subjectivized view, which confers the source of values to the subjective self, but also an emotivization, since it is the individual’s emotions that determine the moral quality of actions and events. As Rogers said: “doing what ‘feels right’ proves to be a competent and trustworthy guide to behavior which is truly satisfying” (quoted in Vitz, 1994:54). Only with my feelings can I know if something contributes to my self-realization, and thus is good and valuable. The goal of therapy, therefore, is to create a relation in which “I am my real feelings” (Rogers, 1961:37).

Conclusion: Modernity and Psychology

In this chapter I have tried to trace the origins of some of the ideas that have been influential in shaping modernity's psychological social imaginary. These ideas are articulated in similar ways by the two faces of psychology's Janus head, which, however, are conventionally seen as incompatible. In reality, they are only incompatible on a superficial level, and they have both contributed to the creation of a psychological social imaginary. This psychological social imaginary involves:

1. A focus on private experiences as subject matter. A crucial point is that "experience" in this sense as it meets the individual is conceived as value-neutral. It is the individual who subjectively adds values unto the world (this view will be criticized in the second half of the book).
2. The psychological social imaginary involves a psychologizing of morality that presents it as a subjective phenomenon. This was evident in both Hume's 'modernism' and Rousseau's 'romanticism,' and the consequence has been that psychology has seen normative morality as something purely subjective, unavailable for serious consideration: "the exclusion of ethics and esthetics from access by scientific reasoning led over time to the denial that ethical statements could contain meaningful content other than an emotive expression of personal preference" (Polkinghorne, 1989:30). The latest psychological theory to endorse this view is perhaps evolutionary psychology.
3. The psychological social imaginary also revolves around a form of social atomism that I have only addressed in passing. Both Hume and Rousseau psychologized not just morality but also politics, and understood society as instrumental for individual needs. Interestingly, both of them backed their social theories with psychological assumptions about human experience. Psychology takes precedence over social theory, something we also see today with the (academic and public) success of evolutionary psychology, which is rapidly becoming a preferred source of explanation of almost any human phenomenon.

In modernity a new vision of moral order evolved that differed significantly from pre-modern notions. Humans were no longer parts of larger wholes (a community, a society, a cosmos) that defined the normative direction of their lives, for meaning and value came to be seen as inner, psychological phenomena. The scientific disenchantment of the world necessitated an enchantment of the mind with the birth of psychology as a result. If we think of "modernity" in broad terms,¹⁴ then we can think of psychology as a central array of practices and techniques that evolve *with* and contribute *to* processes of modernization. What was invented in modernity's new social settings was the individual (Dewey, 1976; MacIntyre, 1985a:61); an

¹⁴Taylor defines modernity as "that historically unprecedented amalgam of new practices and institutional forms (science, technology, industrial production, urbanization), of new ways of living (individualism, secularization, instrumental rationality), and of new forms of malaise (alienation, meaninglessness, a sense of impending social dissolution)" (Taylor, 2002:91).

individual whom the new psychological social imaginary portrayed as ontologically prior to any social embeddedness.

My opening questions in this chapter were: In what ways is it possible to think about morality from the perspective of a psychological worldview? How have we learned to think about morality in an age dominated by psychological modes of understanding? The answer has been that imagining social life in psychological terms tends in the direction of an understanding of individuals, each with his or her private experiential realm that serves as the ultimate moral authority. This makes it difficult to think of normative issues as dependent on what the world is like. Morality then becomes a psychological phenomenon, and its normativity fades away. The psychological social imaginary presents moral goals as emanating from subjective minds, either in terms of passions (Hume) or the inner voice (Rousseau).



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