

## Introduction: Societal Realms as Fundamental Parts of Social Reality

The main division of social reality is not class, as Karl Marx thought, but societal realms. They are six in number: science, art, economy, religion, polity, and morality. They are the homes of knowledge, beauty, wealth, sacredness, order, and virtue, all being cardinal values of mankind.

Class is important enough as a division within the economy that separates rich and poor, and all that this implies. However,

*Proposition 10:4 recalled. Monopolization of Cardinal Values:* In any society, people who possess or control a large amount of a cardinal value (knowledge, wealth, power, beauty, sacredness, virtue) tend to act to preserve this situation. (Volume 2, p. 179.)

not only class, but other distinctions with roots outside the economy are important independent stratifications. Consider, for example, scientific competence, levels of artistic taste, high or low offices of political power, or measures of religious sanctities, and, not to forget, distinctions in moral rectitude. These stratifications are as real as that

of economic class. Did Marx consider them? Not explicitly in his writings, as far as I can tell. Robert K Merton (1972, 25) notes that Friedrich Engels claims in a letter to Josef Block that Marx was fully aware of such distinctions – who isn't? -- and that he included them in his notion of class. If so, I would argue that they need to be separated according to the societal realm to which they belong.

We will live in a 'many-splendored society' if and when all stratifications – competence, taste, class, sacredness, power, and rectitude – are given about equal attention, sway, and honor. In such a setting, we would hear the voice of money, not as a soloist, but in a chorus of other voices. The counterpart

to the class struggle in the latter type of society is stated in our Proposition 10:4 on Monopolization of Cardinal Values (2: 179), recalled here in the margin of on page 1. This Proposition pinpoints a universal struggle to monopolize any and all cardinal values of mankind, not just wealth.

The different societal realms — science, art, economy, religion, polity, and morality — have become both units of analysis in social science and co-authors of history. Max Weber noted already in 1919 in a lecture on politics as a vocation: “We are placed into various life-spheres, each of which are governed by different laws” (Weber 1946, 123).

Societal realms are usually given two initial attributes: they are separate and autonomous. Their autonomy is not absolute but relative. However, autonomy is a crucial attribute, the *sine qua non* of a societal realm. In a chapter on “The Spell of Augustus” (1: 8-31) that opened our work *The Many-Splendored Society*, we emphasized that the societal realms of Western Europe have emerged with a striking independence.

[BIO] Also for other parts of the globe than Europe, there is a place for the societal realms both in the texts of social science and in the history books. Since the roots of societal realms are found in the language brain, it is our assumption that these realms are present in all other civilizations, not just in a specific culture. Human beings everywhere are born with a language brain. It is a universal fact; we are mistaken to believe that everything about human life is relative.

[ANIM] Let’s say it again: The societal realms of science, art, economy, religion, polity, and morality are products of mankind’s language brain. Animals without language brains do not have societal realms.

Science, dominated by a language of executive descriptions, creates knowledge. The economy, overshadowed by a language of executive evaluations of goods and services, brings us riches. Polity, dominated by a language of executive prescrip-

tions, provides law and order. Art, full of symbolism of emotive descriptions, gives us beauty and its contemporary non-figurative extensions, all worthy of our contemplation. Religion, loaded with symbols of emotive evaluations, provides our lives with meaning and sacredness. Morality, with its language loaded with emotively engaging prescriptions, arranges for mankind's virtues. The underpinnings in social theory of

Proposition 5:2 recalled. *Tri- and Bisections of Language Usages and The Understanding Principle*: a) Any symbolic environment tends to become differentiated by the language brain into a trisection of descriptive, evaluative, and prescriptive usages, each of which contains a bisection of executive and emotive components, i.e. totally six types of usages. (b) The language brain of persons in this symbolic environment has the capacity to differentiate these six usages regardless of their syntax. (Volume 1, p. 149)

Proposition 10:1 recalled. *Grand Structuration*: In the history of living symbolic environments, there is a tendency to develop separate and considerably independent realms of morality, religion, art, polity, economy, and science. (Volume 2, p. 167)

general social theory. Each one illustrates exciting developments and discoveries in social science. Each one tells about committed people who shape their realms and write history. Their commitment means that they have invested their egos in the success of the realms (3: 118). With this follows great motivation.

these societal realms are found in Propositions 5:2 and 10:1, the full text of which is seen here on page 3.

Our multi-volume work, *The Many-Splendored Society*, includes three tomes providing portraits of the six grand societal realms:

Volume 4: *Knowledge and Beauty* (the present book) about science and art;

Volume 5: *Wealth and Sacredness* about economy and religion;

Volume 6: *Order and Virtue* about the body politic and morality.

Each of these three volumes can be read on its own. Each is also a part of a larger story, a

We may say, with Max Weber, that these people have been caught by “the spirit” of their realm. We see a spirit of discovery’ in science, a spirit of *Erscheinung* (4: 174) in the arts, a spirit of capitalism in the economy, a spirit of worship in religion, a spirit of law and order in the body politic, and a spirit of justice in the realm of morality. We shall argue that a societal realm is not likely to emerge and to grow without a passionate spirit.

## Rehearsing

Here is a brief rehearsal of key elements in our theory presented in previous volumes of *The Many-Splendored Society*.

Knowledge, riches, order, beauty, sacredness, and virtue produced in the societal realms are called ‘cardinal values.’ The built-in division of human language delineated in Proposition 5:2, clause a), (shown in the margin here on page 3) produce a differentiation into societal realms as indicated in Proposition 10:1 (also shown on page 3), each with a cardinal value’ of its own (Proposition 10.2 on page 20).

The first order in the study of realms is to view them one by one: science, art, economy, religion, polity, and morality. They should be seen as parallel to one another, not in any hierarchy in which one is seen as “higher” than another, or more important than another.

In the internal organization of any one societal realm we must also count what we have called its ‘sideshows’ from other realms. Rightly applied, sideshows enhance the cardinal value of the realm in which they intrude. It is normal that ‘the main show’ of any societal realm incorporates small elements of other realms to facilitate its operations. We have called this phenomenon ‘realm embedding.’ Most activities in our society cannot work really well without some of the funds from the economy, some regulations from the polity, certain commandments of morality, and some of the knowledge from science. Likewise, enhancements offered by art, as well as mean-

ingfulness offered by religion, are also helpful for a smooth pursuit of the major mission of a realm. These parts of the social drama have their special actors, the Procurers and the Providers. All told, the organizations, networks, media, stratification, and spontaneous orders in any of the realms of morality, religion, art, polity, economy, and science tend to embed smaller elements from the other realms. More on this important reality, that no societal realm is an island unto itself, is found on pages 2: 370-381.

Societal realms that are dominated by emotive symbolism — art, religion, and morality — are often bundled together in elementary textbooks or in newspaper sections under the label “culture.” Sometimes science, with its more rational executive symbolism, is also included under this label. In principle, such bundling of “culture” is more confusing than illuminating. However, this particular usage of notion of “culture” has been useful as a common banner of the underdogs among the societal realms in modern Western societies, dwarfed as they are by body politics and business.

Proposition 10:2 recalled. Six Cardinal Values: In a living symbolic environment, six cardinal values develop out of the six constituent forms of communication. (a) The executive pristine descriptions cumulate into the cardinal value of knowledge. (b) The executive pristine evaluations cumulate into the cardinal value of wealth. (c) The executive pristine prescriptions cumulate into the cardinal value of order. (d) The emotive pristine descriptions cumulate into the cardinal value of beauty (in a broad new sense, not in the sense of pretty). (e) The emotive pristine evaluations cumulate into the cardinal value of sacredness. (f) The emotive pristine prescriptions cumulate into the cardinal value of virtue. (Volume 2, p. 354)

To drop an old-fashioned curtsy for culture, or to tip your hat for culture, is not a meaningless gesture, but signals an “awareness of what is missing” (3: 33-34) in today’s society.

## What is New?

Historians, philosophers, and social scientists have already presented the societal realms of science, art, economy, religion, polity, and morality. In particular, modern political scientists and economists have given us very advanced expositions of their realms. So why, shall we make still another exposition of them?

We know we cannot improve on existing presentations by finding new facts. Historians of art or science, economists or political scientists, and theologians or moral philosophers will always know more than a single author from outside the fields can know about their particular specialties. Furthermore, for pedagogical reasons, this work will make an effort to refer to parts of science, art and literature that may already be familiar to many readers. We will also refer to economic and political events and processes that readers may have heard of, or, in some instances lived through in their lifetime. We will cite religious and ethical notions that may already have crossed their minds. So what is the purpose?

The answer is that we yearn to illustrate how the most essential parts of societies work, that is to say, to tell a theory of social reality. In the first three volumes of *The Many-Splendored Society* we have presented some basic definitions and propositions of this theory. Now we must prove that this theory can account for the “inside story” of events and processes in the main realms of social reality: science, art, economy, religion, polity, and morality, and also account for their “outside story” describing how the realms have made history by their joint development and interacting.

A study of societal realms begins with the cartography of each of the realms. We describe each realm using one and the same checklist. The list has the same category for all realms. This does not mean that all different realms can be reduced to a single one. “Freedom” is one item in the list. However, this

does not allow us to reduce the many-splendored freedoms – academic freedom, artistic license, religious freedom, civic rights, and freedom of conscience – to the freedom to make money. This is an illusion of our days, as appalling as it is common.

Here is the selection of categories in each realm to which we shall pay attention when we tell the “inside story” of a societal realm, regardless which one we are addressing.

Critical symbols	Networks
Lifestyles	Mass media
Cardinal values	Netorgs
Stratification	
Reward system	Makers
	Keepers
Rationality	
Freedom	Brokers
	Takers
Spontaneous order	
	Providers
Organizations	Procurers

These categories are rows in “The Periodic Table of Social Reality” found in Chapter 10 of *The Many-Splendored Society: An Edifice of Symbols* (2: 222-223 reproduced also on page 168 below). These categories summon the bases that I believe that players of social science should touch in order to successfully account for the internal organization of any societal realm. This statement should not, of course, be accepted at face value. It must be demonstrated. We will begin an empirical search for evidence in this and the following two books.

The possibilities and restrictions in ways societal realms relate to one another were analyzed, with a summary, in the “The Table of Valances of Societal Realms,” also found in Chapter 10 of *The Many-Splendored Society: An Edifice of Symbols*

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(2: 230-231). It tells about 15 possibilities for realms to pair up with and interact with other realms.

Science-Economy

Science-Polity

Science-Art

Science-Religion

Science-Morality

Economy-Polity

Economy-Art

Economy-Religion

Economy-Morality

Polity-Art

Polity-Religion

Polity-Morality

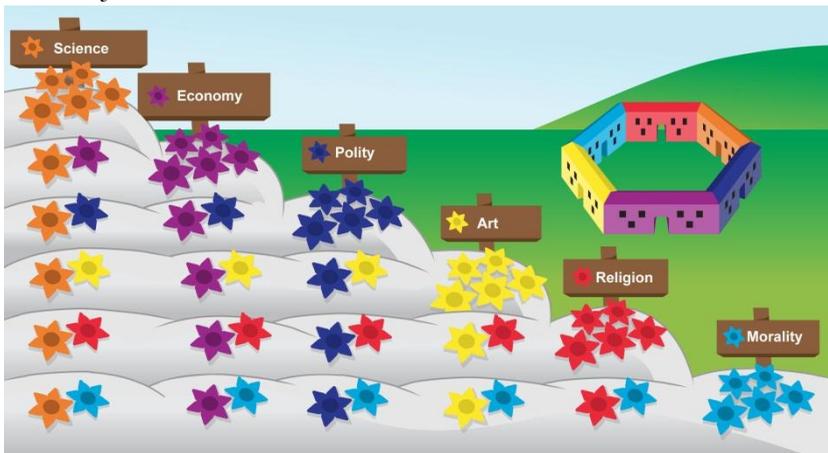
Art-Religion

Art-Morality

Religion-Morality

The possible combinations will be represented by the flowers in a rock garden, as in Figure 18.0. Each societal realm has its color.

*Figure 18.0. First Order Interactions Between Societal Realms Represented by a Flower Garden.*



We can mention but not deal in full detail with all these 15 combinations. In each of the three volumes on societal realms we shall present cases of normal organic collaboration. We will also take up in each volume at least one showcase of a full-fledged attempt to merge societal realms. A history of the at-

tempt to merge the societal realms of science and religion is included in this Volume in Chapter 18 that begins on page 12 below. The medieval synthesis, an ideal Catholic society in the spirit of Thomas Aquino and his followers, joined religion and classical science. This merger became unhinged as the realm of modern science grew.

Another brief account is included in Volume 5 of *The Many-Splendored Society: Wealth and Sacredness* of attempts to merge the societal realms of economy and polity in creating a socialist society in the spirit of Karl Marx and his followers. This merger, once so full of hopes for its first generations of communists, proved inefficient and unstable. This is a lesson from the twentieth century, the last signal being the fall of the Soviet Empire in 1991.

A case history of the contemporary attempt to merge the societal realms of polity and morality in creating a modern welfare state is included in Volume 6 of *The Many-Splendored Society: Order and Virtue*. Here we sense that this merger is unstable, at least in its Nordic version to put the responsibility for welfare on the government, excluding both the market and civil society as serious welfare agents.

A preview of our recurrent conclusions is found in Proposition 10:14 on Merged Societal Realms (page 2: 242 also reproduced on page 4: 20 below). Among other things, it can be seen that any total merger of societal realms is inherently wobbly.

## The Text Ahead

Science is the most recent of the six societal realms that presently is making up social reality. We shall take advantage of the fact that we have better historical records of the emergence of science than we have of the rise of independent realms of art, economy, religion, and polity, all of which have older roots than organized science. What we learn will be useful when we

deal, in Volume 6, with the still emerging independence of morality as a full-fledged societal realm.

In Chapter 18 – we number chapters from the beginning of the first volume of the *Many-Splendored Society* -- we present highlights of the early history of science, not just as a body of knowledge, but as living arrangements in the form of an emerging societal realm. The natural philosophers, schoolmen, and scientists involved share a cardinal passion, a ‘spirit of discovery’. Societal realms will not flourish without such passions. We tell the European part of this story; well aware that other parts of the world have other versions of ways to fit their knowledge into a social fabric. Chapter 19 continues the exploration of science, now as a full grown societal realm with all the formal attributes of such a phenomenon.

In Chapter 20 we explore the realm of art in a similar vein as we have done with science, but with a cardinal passion for the spirit of music, dance, painting, writing, et cetera. It becomes clear that the importance of art increases as our lives more and more are affected by science and technology. Art is not only developing its independence as a societal realm; it stands to consolidate its place in education and to open a place in public health.

At the end, we come directly to a great predicament of our time. A hundred or two hundred years ago, progressive thought held that mankind could use reason and art to change or transcend its unsatisfactory circumstances. Two World Wars and one Great Depression in the twentieth century undermined such hopes. The promising development of science and technology was met by public suspicion of the institution that created atomic bombs and the technologies that brought global climate change.

At the same time, not surprisingly, art has turned away from a focus on harmony and balance to a focus on the more chaotic depths of life. The steps taken toward an order with the relatively independent societal realms of economy, polity, and sci-

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ence seem to tear man and society apart. This is reflected in the paintings of the Cubist movement in which artists, such as Picasso and Braque, dissected the subject they painted into a number of facets, simultaneously depicting several aspects of one object. This vision can be seen in many European paintings after 1910. It is also a sign of the ability of the arts to reveal social change.

Next section (chapter 18 with 53 pages) is found at

[http://www.zetterberg.org/InProgrs/The\\_Many-Splendored\\_Society/PDF\\_filer/MSS4\\_20120325Ch18hist.pdf](http://www.zetterberg.org/InProgrs/The_Many-Splendored_Society/PDF_filer/MSS4_20120325Ch18hist.pdf)