Session: Economy and Social Theory

Marx, Durkheim and Weber on Market Society

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Abstract

The paper argues that the idea of ‘market society’, and the impact of the penetration of market forces, on social life have been neglected within sociology compared to other theories of recent social change. The works of Marx, Durkheim and Weber, in relation to market societies, are outlined in order to demonstrate how a critical analysis of market societies was a key feature of their work. Key critical perspectives, within classical sociological theory are identified such as the nature of commodification & the reification of the market, anomie and the irrationality of rationality. Some studies, which focus on market relations and the social impact of marketization are identified within a broader argument which refers to a general neglect of market society as a central feature of contemporary social life.

Introduction

Over the last 20 years sociologists have been acutely aware that Western societies have been undergoing profound social change. Many theories have been developed to represent these changes including those of the transition to post-industrial society (Kumar, 1995) post-Fordism (Harvey, 1989), disorganised capitalism (Lash & Urry, 1987) the surveillance society (Lyon 2001), globalization (Albrow, 1996) postmodern society (Jameson1984). All these terms refer to important elements of social change, but they do not represent one of the most obviously far-reaching changes that has occurred, which is the emergence of a neo-liberal, market society. Markets involve the bringing together of suppliers of commodities with those who wish to buy them. The price of commodities is ultimately determined by supply and demand where there is competition between the suppliers and consumers of goods and services. Finally, those who wish to sell try to obtain the maximum price and those who wish to buy try to give the lowest price. Markets, thus, involve rational calculation amongst participants, who are pursuing their own self-interest (Lazar, 1990:54-55). Markets exist in capitalist societies which have an economic system in which commodities are produced and exchanged in order to make profits, rather than to satisfy needs. Capitalist markets provide opportunities for people to enter into contracts to satisfy their needs and to make profits. However, they also have a structural, constraining dimension when people are forced to accept the rules of the market. In addition, markets may be seen as having a cultural dimension. The criminologist Elliott Curry described market societies as follows:

‘By market society I mean a society – or if you will a “civilization” – in which the pursuit of private gain increasingly becomes the organising principle for all areas of social life - not simply a mechanism that can be used to accomplish certain circumscribed economic ends. In a market society all other principles of social or institutional organisation become eroded or subordinated to the overarching one of private gain’. (Currie, 1998 p 134)

The rise of an increasingly de-regulated market society, led by President Reagan and Prime Minister Mrs. Thatcher, in the 1980’s, quickly influenced governments in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. (Taylor, 1990). Since the fall of Soviet bloc, in 1989, the ex-communist states have been undergoing the project of creating market societies. There has been a greater reluctance to accept the neo-liberal concept of a free market in Scandinavian
and European states, such as France and Germany, where there is a tradition of state economic involvement and high welfare provision. However, there have been strong pressures in those societies to privatise parts of their economies (Milner & Henley, 2004).

Although most societies are now capitalist, Carruthers and Babb (2000) argue that not all capitalist societies have identical degrees of market organization, as markets are embedded in different cultural value systems. One forthright critic of contemporary global capitalism (Hertz, 2001:10) bases her critique not on capitalism as a system, but on the way in which, under a neo-liberal, laissez-faire market capitalism, governments have become too weak, allowing the unfettered pursuit of profits to undermine democracy and social justice. Whilst a distinction might be made between the market and capitalism, capitalist societies are intimately linked to market systems. In Britain, and other countries, the extension of the free market has also been linked with the expansion of capitalism. Social capital has been privatised, financial institutions have been de-mutualised and schemes such as public/private initiatives have brought private companies into the health and educational systems. Marketization and commodification, it is argued here, have become more entrenched within major economic institutions and cultural systems and are the focus of this paper (2).

As Sociology developed in the context of the first period of a free market, capitalist economy (Nisbet, 1967; Farganis, 1996) the aim of this paper is to revisit the works of Marx, Weber and Durkheim on market capitalism in order to explore the possibilities of the contemporary use of their perspectives in sociological analysis.

**Marx: commodification and market society**

For Marx a central process of capitalist modernization is commodification in which the products of human labour are given a monetary value. Thus, within capitalism what people make can be separated from them and sold as commodities. Human labour power is itself a commodity so that the fate of humans as well as their products can be determined by the working of market forces. The beginning of Marx’s ‘Capital’, volume I, contains a complex discussion of the nature of the commodity form, from which can be derived, much of Marx’s analysis of forms of value, exploitation within the capitalist work relationship, the way in which producers come to be dominated by the products of their own creation and their consciousness of this process as natural and inevitable.

The goods produced in capitalist societies are commodities. The employer invests in the production of goods by purchasing raw materials, machinery and by employing labour, so that products can be made and sold on the market to produce a profit rather than for the direct use of the employer or the employees. Marx argues that commodities produced in the capitalist, market economy have two properties. First of all they have a use value which is realised in their consumption and this is the basis of their exchange value for a product which has no use cannot posses an exchange value. As Marx points out, exchange value ‘presents itself as a quantitative relation, as the proportion in which values in use of one sort are exchanged for those of another sort’ (Marx, 1965:36). The exchange value of a commodity can be expressed as a proportion of any other commodities e.g. ‘a quarter of wheat is exchanged for x blacking, y silk, or z gold, &c.- in short for other commodities in the most different proportions’ (Marx, 1965:37). The multiplicities of ‘exchange-values, of commodities must be capable of being expressed in terms of something common to them all, of which they represent a greater or less quantity’ (Marx, 1965:37). Marx identified this common property as the ‘labour-time socially necessary…to produce an article under normal conditions of production, and with the average
degree of skill and intensity prevalent at the time’ (Marx, 1965:39). Eventually this common property became expressed in money form (Marx, 1965:70).

The distinction between use value and exchange value enabled Marx to explain the source of profit as part of surplus value. In the capitalist labour market, the free labourer possess labour power (the ability to create commodities with a use value) which can be exchanged for a wage, which is usually paid on completion of a period of labour. The exchange value of ‘labour power is determined, as in the case of every other commodity, by the labour-time necessary for the production, and consequently also reproduction, of this special article’ (Marx, 1965:170). The capitalist purchases the use value of labour power and employs it during a period in which it creates commodities with, use values, which can be exchanged for a greater sum of money than the capitalist's outlay in wages. Thus, Marx divided the working day up into two sections, the first being necessary labour-time in which the worker produced enough commodities to cover his or her wages and a second period of surplus labour-time, during which surplus value is produced. The innermost secret, then, of the labour process is the way surplus value is extracted.

The nature of the use value of a commodity is straightforward as something which can satisfy a human want. However, Marx describes how commodities as exchange values are ‘enigmatic’ and ‘mysterious’ things that obscure the nature of exploitation and the social relations between producers.

‘A commodity is a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men’s labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour: because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour’ (Marx, 1965:72).

In Marx’s view this is the ‘fetishism of commodities’ which is analagous to the way in which deities created in religious thought, by the human mind, take on an independent life (Marx, 1965:72).

Marx argues that in feudal society, there is no necessity for labour and its products to assume a fantastic form different from its reality. There are chains of dependency and obligation between the different social strata, or estates, which determine the giving of services or payments in kind. The serf knows exactly how many days of free labour he must expend in his lord’s service and how much of his produce must be given as tithe to the priest. This fetishism of commodities, Marx believed, will remain until ‘production is by freely associated men, and is consciously regulated by them in accordance with a settled plan’ (Marx 1965:80).

The process of fetishism is further discussed as ‘reification’ in volume three of ‘Capital’. Marx believed that individuals create society by their labour. In his discussion of economic categories and processes he discusses how they come to be seen in a ‘bewitched, distorted and upside-down world’ as taking on personal powers whilst the actual producers come to be seen as determined by capital, machinery and market forces (Marx, 1992:969).

**Weber: rationalization and the market**

For Weber, it is rationalization which 'lies at the root of the modern world order'. (Sayer, 1991:134) Weber thought that we can only describe parts of reality, at any given time, and that concepts only give insights into aspects of the complexity of society and history. So, although it
is difficult to portray Weber as a theorist who had a simple explanation to which everything could be reduced, Freund argues that, 'a predominant concept in his personal vision is what he called "rationalisation"' (Freund, 1966:17). This is a theme which can be found in many of his writings on modern capitalism, religion, law, bureaucracy, economics, art and science. Weber argues that Western culture has contained a high degree of intellectualisation, coherence and mastery over the world. As Weber puts it 'there are no mysterious forces that come into play, but rather one can, in principle, master all things by calculation'. This means that the world is disenchanted. 'One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed' (Weber, 1948:139).

Weber regarded two types of social action as rational. The first is substantive rationality (wertrational) in which the means designed to achieve some chosen end are rationally assessed but not the ends which are based in some fundamental values. The second type of rationality, which he called formal rationality (zweckrational), exists when both the means and the ends are subject to calculation (Weber, 1964: 115-117). According to Weber, formally rational action exists where there is:

'...rational consideration of alternative means to the end, of the relations of the end to other prospective results of the employment of any given means, and ...of the relative importance of different possible ends' (Weber, quoted in Sayer, 1991: 97).

In Weber's view there is nothing capitalistic in the pursuit of profit, which has always been pursued in many different ways. What defines modern, Western capitalism is the 'pursuit of profit, and forever renewed profit, by means of continuous, rational capitalistic enterprise' (Weber, 1970: 17). In a capitalistic order an enterprise has to take advantage of its opportunities for making profit in the market or face extinction and decisions are made according to the calculation of profit, with modern book-keeping methods as a device to ascertain the balance of profit that has been made (Weber, 1970: 18).

Weber's characterization of modern capitalism, and the market society, is one of formally rational economic action 'that is rationally oriented by deliberate planning, to economic ends' (Weber, 1964: 158). Economic action is formally rational when the 'provision for needs.....is capable of being expressed in numerical, calculable terms' (Weber, 1964: 185). This does not mean that the production of a certain amount of profit or the production of certain utilities as cheaply as possible is ethically good or bad. Any such evaluation would consider the substantive rationality of economic action in terms of its ultimate ends or values which may be political, ethical or religious. Socialistic standards would involve considerations of social justice and equality, but whatever ultimate ends are considered, such a criteria of rationality goes beyond formal calculability, however rational the means which may be applied to the chosen ends. Weber accepted that the pursuit of calculability within modern capitalism may produce results which are objectionable when assessed by some ethical standard. He identified 'substantively irrational' consequences of modern capitalist production such as the growth of authoritarian domination in the workplace and growing inequalities of income due to the bargaining superiority given to property ownership in the market (Weber, 1964: 248).

For Weber capitalist production required certain 'substantive conditions' (Kronman, 1983:134). The first such condition is the possibility of calculating the value of goods in monetary terms. Only if goods have a price can the relative efficiency of different processes of production or patterns of consumption be determined exactly. Weber believed that a
genuine price system could only exist in an exchange economy, so a centralised system of socialist planning would represent a departure from formal rationality. Other conditions for rational economic action include a legal system which gives people in the market ownership rights or what he calls a 'mode of appropriation' (Kronman, 1983:135). Slavery involves the appropriation of workers by employers, but although this gives greater control over them than over free labour, he stated that slavery is not as rational or efficient as formally free labour. Weber refers to various costs and difficulties in using unfree labour such as the costs of purchase, care, recruitment, and disposal when slaves are no longer required due to fluctuations in the business cycle or when their personal efficiency has declined. On the other hand, when workers are employed for wages there are advantages to profitability and efficiency due to a) capital risk and investment are smaller, b) the costs of bringing up children fall on the worker and c) it is possible to select employees according to ability and willingness to work.

Just as it is more rational that employers do not totally own their workers, Weber argues, that formal rational calculation demands that workers do not own their jobs as this restricts the free selection of workers by employers. Workers should be 'expropriated' from their jobs in the sense that they own their own labour power but do not own any aspect of the means of production. Where workers have been expropriated from the means of production management can have more control over the combination of different factors of production. It is in a better position to borrow money (since the assets over which it has control are not encumbered by the claims of workers) and it can more easily enforce the labour discipline required by complex industrial processes. (Kronman, 1983:137).

Kronman discusses how the idea of free labour, which Weber saw as essential to rational, calculative capitalism has both negative and positive senses (Kronman 1983:138). In its negative sense, it refers to the way in which workers have been 'freed' or expropriated from their ownership of their jobs. In its positive sense, free labour refers to how the labour power of the individual worker can only be owned by him or her, though he or she may hire it out for a limited period of time. The worker is only formally free, Weber argued, because those without property have to sell their capacity to labour in order to derive a living. However, this condition of free labour is a feature of modern capitalism. For Weber, the freedom of the worker from the means of production in both senses is essential for formal rationality to occur. Employers who hire labour for a wage have greater calculability in terms of costs and can hire or fire people as the market dictates with much greater flexibility than they can take on, or dispense with, slave labour.

Managerial decision making in terms of the calculation of profit would also be restricted if workers had ownership of their jobs as they would demand that economic decisions were taken which were rational from their point of view, such as the protection of
their jobs. Socialist forms of ownership would entail a loss of formal rationality, in Weber's view. As Kronman points out, (1983:146) socialists and capitalists alike agree with the positive aspect of the freedom of labour and both embrace the idea that individuals' ownership of their capacity to labour is the basis for their formal equality as legal actors. What they disagree upon is the negative aspect of the freedom of labour - its expropriation from the means of production. Weber accepted that the price of formal rationality and calculability was growing authoritarian management and labour discipline.

Weber is not usually seen as a critic of capitalism, and, as already stated, he saw socialism as less rational, and more bureaucratic than capitalism. Socialism, to him, represented not the dictatorship of the proletariat, but the dictatorship of the official (Weber, 1918: 209). Weber saw modern capitalism, and its orientation to the market, as more rational than any other system, but his ambivalence towards modern, market capitalism can also be seen in his awareness that rationality can lead to irrationality. His analysis of bureaucracy emphasised its administrative superiority in terms of the objectivity and consistency in the application of precise rules which are derived from its rational principles of organisation (Weber, 1948:214). He was also aware that bureaucracy subordinates creativity and innovation amongst officials who have to obey the rules that govern their official positions. In the industrial enterprise, he was conscious that in exercising their rational control, management set up forms of shop floor discipline which remove any personal autonomy due to the lack of control that workers experience over the work process. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Weber traces the influence of Protestant asceticism on the development of a rational, modern capitalism. At the end of the study Weber shows his scepticism concerning what had been achieved, once the original motivation had declined. He describes a cultural and economic system in which people continue to work is a disciplined way. However, instead of work having a religious and moral meaning he believed that a 'modern economic order' had been created which had become 'an iron cage' in which peoples’ lives were determined by the ‘technical and economic conditions of machine production’. Once stripped of its religious meaning, he argued, the pursuit of wealth had ‘become associated with purely mundane passions, which often actually give it he character of sport’ (Weber, 1970: 182).

**Durkheim on market society: the critique of de-regulation**

In his first book, ‘The Division of Labour in Society,’ Durkheim discusses the emergence of industrial society and the nature of social solidarity that he believed it instituted. It is a very polemical work which contains an attack on utilitarian and 'laissez-faire' individualism as well as Comte's stress on the importance of a strongly defined moral consensus for the perpetuation of social order. Durkheim's hypothesis is that social solidarity in industrial society derives from the division of labour and that the decline in moral beliefs in modern societies will not necessarily lead to moral disintegration.

As social solidarity is a moral phenomenon which cannot be directly observed, Durkheim refers to law as an index of forms of social solidarity. He identified two kinds of legal sanction. The first essentially imposed suffering such as a loss of life, liberty honour or fortune. This he calls repressive law. The second type, which he calls restitutive law, ‘returns things as they were in the re-establishment of troubled relations to their normal state’ (1933: 69) and is represented by civil, commercial or administrative law. Repressive law is associated with mechanical solidarity which is found in societies with little division of labour and a strong ‘collective conscience’. In mechanical solidarity, social order is based upon socialisation. The likeness of consciences and the lack of individuality produces one social type, and individuality is nil.
(Durkheim, 1933:130). Durkheim states that the social solidarity which is produced by the extensive division of labour, is based upon the inter-dependence of peoples’ specialities and is ‘organic’ in the sense that it depends upon the functional interdependence of individuals parts of society. There is more opportunity for individuality and the collective conscience is weaker. There is still a role for moral rules and a sense of justice (for instance within a profession), in Durkheim’s view, in order to force individuals when entering into commercial relationships to consider the interests of others, to make compromises and to consider ends beyond their own. Also outside the economic sphere in domestic and social situations people have to consider their obligations, and here, the state is increasingly entrusted with ‘the duty of reminding us of the sentiment of common solidarity’ (Durkheim, 1933: 227).

This stress on the moral nature of organic society shows how Durkheim rejects the idea that social order in advanced societies is based upon individuals pursuing their own interests through contractual relationships. He thus distances himself from utilitarian and laissez-faire nostrums. Durkheim argued that contracts cannot exist unless there is some socially derived moral force to ensure their regulation. He denied that a moral society could be replaced by one based upon the pursuit of individual economic interests. Whilst co-operation has its moral basis, Durkheim sees the co-operative, interdependent society as one in which individual personality can be stronger. People can choose their professions and features of their personal life and whilst those rules and morals which are necessary to support organic solidarity limit individual initiative, they do not do so in the rigid way associated with morality in mechanical solidarity.

This review of Durkheim’s theory of social evolution has been necessary in order to discuss his analysis of the abnormal forms of the division of labour. The generally optimistic tone of the possibility of social cohesion within organic solidarity began to change during his discussion of the moral nature of organic society, and especially, when he admitted that:

There is, however, reason to believe, as we shall see later, that in contemporary societies this morality has not reached the high development which would now seem necessary to it.' (Durkheim, 1933 p228)

This theme occurs during the discussion of the origins of the division of labour when he states that ‘The division of labour can only be produced in the midst of a pre-existing society...it is still necessary that there be moral links between them (individuals)' (1933,276).

Durkheim's discussion of organic solidarity in the first two parts of "The Division of Labour" is a discussion of a type of society that has never in fact existed, despite his reference to it as a "normal" form of social solidarity. In Book 3 of "The Division of Labour" he discusses the abnormal forms of the division of labour which he portrayed as "pathological" states of the division of labour. The first one, which is the most critical of the social effects of unregulated market forces, is the "anomic" division of labour which is manifest by industrial and commercial crises, failures of firms and by conflict between labour and capital. Durkheim observed that as markets extend over greater distances they became harder to regulate. Also, as factories became larger.and specialisation increased within them class conflict became more intense. These are symptoms of the breakdown of social solidarity. He does not see them as undermining his theory of organic solidarity, rather he accepts that within organised societies the collective conscience will become more feeble, but these aspects of breakdown show that all the conditions for the existence of organic solidarity had not been realised.
In a society with a division of labour people come into contact with each other to exchange personal services, but by itself, Durkheim argues, this is not enough to ensure solidarity. 'It is also necessary that the way in which they come together, if not in every kind of meeting, at least in circumstances which most frequently occur, be predetermined' (1933: 365). When people carry out their various functions in the division of labour some degree of 'fixity and regularity' develops which, through repetition, become habits and eventually rules of conduct. In this way:

The past determines the future….there is a certain sorting of rights and duties which is established by usage and becomes obligatory. The rule does not then, create the state of mutual dependence in which solitary organs find themselves, but only expresses in clear cut- fashion, the result of a given situation' (1933: 366).

Here is Durkheim's explanation, then, of the breakdown of social solidarity revealed in commercial failures, crises of production and industrial unrest. He refers to the lack of rules governing the number of economic enterprises and the absence of mechanisms to regulate production and the level of consumption. The lack of regulation '...does not permit a regular harmony of functions' (1933: 367). Whilst the economists predict that the price mechanism can be used to re-establish equilibrium in the market, Durkheim points out, this is not achieved without prolonged and frequent disturbances. Similarly, Durkheim comments upon the lack of legal regulation relating to the hiring of services by capital. The lack of solidarity within production and commerce is a product of a lack of regulation. This is the state of anomie.

The origins of the state of anomie follows from what was said about the gradual development of habits and rules which come from the regular working of the division of labour over time. In small-scale societies production tends to be for that society only, but in organic society the market becomes extensive as the boundaries between peoples breaks down. Contact between producers and their markets breaks down leading to a lack of regulation and the failure to match production and demand. The extension of markets stimulates the development of industry, but this involves new technologies, new relationships between employers and employees and the regimentation of workers. As these changes had been introduced with great rapidity disequilibrium ensued.

The second abnormal form of the division of labour, identified by Durkheim, is the forced division of labour. He was concerned with the ways in which inequalities which exist in market societies may affect the allocation of people to jobs and the implications of social inequalities for social solidarity. Although each person, in organic society, has a specific task or specialism it is necessary, Durkheim believed, that this task should be fitting for them or there will be suffering and conflict. We are not predestined to fill a particular position and people have hereditary dispositions, tastes and aptitudes which will influence individuals' abilities to perform tasks and their choice of desired employment. Social classes and castes hinder social solidarity, because customs or laws define their role and bar them from some functions. Consequently, they adversely affect the distribution of natural talents within the division of labour and prevent the spontaneous allocation of talents to labour. In class societies:
...constraint alone, more or less violent and more or less direct, links them to their functions. Consequently, only an indirect and troubled solidarity is possible.' (Durkheim, 1933 p.376)

In a situation of the forced division of labour Durkheim feared that class conflict could develop:

'The lower classes not being, or no longer being, satisfied with the role which has devolved upon them from custom or by law aspire to functions which are closed to them and seek to dispossess those who are exercising those functions. Thus civil wars arise which are due to the manner in which labour is distributed.' (Durkheim, 1933 p.374)

In a spontaneous division of labour social inequalities would match natural inequalities. For this situation to exist there would have to be 'absolute equality in the external conditions of the conflict'. (Durkheim, 1933 p.377) The transition from a society where people live in small segments with little division of labour to large societies with complex specialisation implies that the range of tasks broadens greatly and the potential economic inequalities become greater. The matching of specialisation to talent becomes necessary, according to Durkheim, to ensure the happiness of individuals who need to realise their nature. The 'equalisation of the conditions of struggle', as Durkheim puts it, becomes necessary also for social efficiency. Classes are seen as providing obstacles which inhibit the allocation of labour such as recruitment according to family ties or through privilege due to wealth. In this context the hereditary transmission of wealth may:

'...make the external conditions under which the conflict takes place very unequal, for it gives advantages to some which may not necessarily be in keeping with their personal worth'. (Durkheim, 1933 p.379)

The importance of social inequalities is not so great, Durkheim argued, in mechanical societies because work is only part of a more inclusive system of social life and where the collective conscience is strong enough to legitimate those inequalities. In organic society it is more important that the division of labour be spontaneous as the collective conscience is weak and social injustice cannot be neutralised by a strong collective conscience. The different social functions that people perform are linked by relations based upon contracts which have to be free of coercion; they have to be freely entered into. Moreover, they have to be just in the sense that they are a fair exchange of equivalent values in terms of the effort necessary to produce the object being exchanged, the needs which it satisfies and the satisfaction it brings. Those inequalities that exist should represent the different natural abilities of people. If there is any element of coercion, a lack of equivalence in the exchange or inequality between the parties then the contract will not be perceived in the common conscience as just. Social class inequalities seriously affect the moral or spontaneous nature of exchange so that:

'If one class of society is obliged, in order to live, to take any price for its services, while another can abstain from such actions thanks to resources at its disposal which, however, are not necessarily due to any social superiority, the second has an unjust advantage over the first at law. In other words, there cannot be rich and poor at birth without there being unjust contracts.' (Durkheim, 1933 p.384)
External conditions of existence, then, should 'become level' in order that functions should be harmonious. The implication is that class based inequalities in access to education, training and work should be abolished.

D urkheim considered that mechanical solidarity produced a particular type of morality in which the individual was submitted to the demands of the social segment in which they lived, which was based upon similarity. He believed that a new morality was possible in organic solidarity in which the division of labour required a much greater degree of personal autonomy, where the collective conscience would be much less and where 'the division of labour gives rise to rules which assure pacific and regular concourse of divided functions'" (1933: 406) He was opposed to any attempt to return to traditional forms of society. His diagnosis of the problems facing industrial society was that the morality which was produced by mechanical solidarity had regressed without another developing quickly enough to fill the vacancy left. Part of the new collective conscience is the demand for personality, individual dignity and justice but the sudden transformations of society have not enabled social organisation to develop which will satisfy those needs. What Durkheim advocated to relieve the state of anomie was to discover the means for more social harmony based on the regeneration of social rules and regulation of economic life.

D urkheim identified the goal - the removal of anomie and the creation of a new moral code, which he argued could not be devised in the study, but would have to emerge piecemeal as a response to the causes which made it necessary. These issues were taken up again by Durkheim in the Preface to the Second Edition of 'The Division of Labour'. He portrayed economic life as unregulated, chaotic, anarchic where no-one knows what are their roles and obligations and where there is great conflict and disorder. Market Society is defended by its supporters by the idea of individual liberty but, he argues, that true liberty can only be realised when there is a regulation by a superior moral force to prevent the abuse of physical or economic power. For anomie to cease in economic life there must be a group which can generate the rules which are needed.

The state is not sufficiently involved in economic activities to create sufficient regulation, so Durkheim believed, that this should be carried out by the corporation or occupational group which would be made up of all agents in the same industry organised into a single body. In general terms, such bodies would have to be capable of morally regulating national and international markets, so they would have to include all members of an occupation distributed over large territories. The corporations should be headed nationally by assemblies comprised of elected representatives of employers and employees. As the interests of these groups are often in conflict they should organise separately at national, regional and local levels. Both groups have to contribute to economic regulation but their different class interests are recognised in the expression, 'To be able to go about their ways freely, they must go about their ways separately.' (1933: 25) The corporations would have to be in contact with the state which may have to intervene because their decisions may have wider repercussions.
However, there should be a division of function between the state and the corporations. The former should be responsible for general principles of industrial regulation and the corporations should be concerned with the regulation of their own industry. The corporations would fix levels of production, wages and salaries, the duties of agencies within the industry to each other, and to the public, and be a source of employment law within each industry. Durkheim thought that such corporations would go beyond providing economic and moral regulation of economic life to fulfil other needs such as educational, welfare and cultural needs of their members. They would provide a political organ between the individual and the state.

Conclusion

The summaries of Marx, Durkheim and Weber reveal how they were each concerned with the social implications of market societies and how each was critical, in their own way, of market societies. Marx’s analysis emphasises class relations of control and exploitation; the consciousness of workers and consumers and the ideology of the market. In particular, it suggests that the market has replaced God in peoples’ reified consciousness. Durkheim’s sociology generates an interest in social regulation and the way in which the dynamic of markets leads to rapid and unregulated social change. The de-regulated, market economies fostered by the New Right (and supported later by New Labour) can be seen in Durkheimian analysis as amoral and as damaging to social solidarity. Mestrovic (1991) and Eldridge et al (1991:214) discuss the unleashing of greed leading to financial disaster and business scandals as symptoms of contemporary anomie. The growing social divide between the rich and poor has also led to concerns with the impact of unregulated economic activity on social solidarity, as the poor become increasingly excluded from society (Hutton, 1996:175 & 194). Even, Weber, who was critical of socialist or communist societies for their potential for extending bureaucracy was aware that rational market calculation brings its own social costs. He was aware that the rationality of markets can produce irrationalities and this perspective can be used to considerable critical effect when applied to companies such as McDonalds (Ritzer, 1993). Ritzer has also incorporated insights from Marx and (particularly) Weber into his analysis of the globalization of ‘nothing’ (2003). He has constructed a grand-narrative, in relation to consumption, in which he argues that a social form that is generally indigenously conceived, locally controlled and rich in distinctive content is being replaced by a social form that is generally centrally conceived, controlled and comparatively devoid of distinctive substantive content (Ritzer, 2002).

The nature of the expansion of the free market into ever more spheres of life has not been a central concern amongst sociologists compared with other features of social change. However, some sociologists have focussed on the idea of the market, as outlined in the following selected (but not exhaustive) examples. Marketization has been discussed within the sociology of labour markets (Fevre, 2003). Taylor’s (1990) edited collection of essays represents an early response to free market economics and details the consequences of free market economic policies across a range of countries and social institutions including education, law and order, income inequality and poverty. Curry (1998) and Taylor (1999) have highlighted the connection between crime and market society. The introduction of market policies into the English education system included the broadening of parents’ choice of schools for their children. As a result, popular schools have been able to effectively reverse the parental exercise of choice. These schools are able to interview parents and choose which children to accept (Trowler, 2003:41). Philo and Miller’s (2001) edited collection of essays focuses on the impact of markets in the media.
The theories outlined in the paper provide a range of critical perspectives on the recent trends to increasingly marketize society. It is surprising that the classical approach to markets and the social relations that they create has not been a more central feature of recent sociology. The experience of living and working in market societies, the pervasiveness of pro-market ideologies and the social consequences of market economics have been neglected in much recent sociology. The explanation of this absence moves us into the sociology of the discipline of sociology (Lazar, 1990:140) and beyond the remit of this paper.

Notes
1. I would like to thank Dr. William Pawlett for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
2. It should be noted that Williams (2002) has warned against accepting these trends as inevitably uni-directional. He has pointed out that there are still areas where alternative economic relations and motivations thrive. These include domestic work, ‘cultures of resistance’ to marketization and the expanded provision of charitable and voluntary services.

References

Hutton, W., (1996), The State We’re In. London: Jonathan Cape.


