

Social Deviance (5000 words)

Social deviance is a concept used in the social sciences to represent all social actions – or in some cases words and images – that transgress socially accepted behavioural norms and ethical standards. Social deviance is a far broader term than crime. The latter is restricted to actions or signs that exist beyond boundaries set by law, whilst the former incorporates crime but also includes any legal action, word or image deemed unacceptable. The disciplines of sociology and criminology share a long history of dealing with the concept of social deviance, a history that, roughly speaking, moved through the layered phases of classicism, positivism/integrationism, pluralism and radicalism.

Before these disciplines became established, the concept was the preserve of theologians, philosophers and legal theorists. The classical phase came into being when Protestant and Enlightenment thinking distinguished crime from the broader religious concept of sin. As it developed from these historical watersheds, classical liberal thought, with its growing faith in the rationalized legal system as the product of the new ‘like minds’ of universal reason, tended to conflate deviance with the legal category of crime. The social context in which deviance takes place was largely absent from these early debates and policies on law and punishment. Deviance was seen as the product of the individual’s failure to exercise innate powers of will, reason and morality. For Kant’s (1998) intrinsicalist philosophy the deviant individual had failed to abide by the injunction of the categorical imperative. This refusal to become acquainted with and conform to the demands of universal reason as institutionalised in law was a wilful and punishable rejection of God’s gift of reason. For the British utilitarians and their consequentialist philosophy, the act of deviance was a product of the innately hedonistic individual’s failure to act according to rational calculations of the harmful consequences of intended actions. Punishment was necessary as a deterrent to the

self and third-party observers alike. Although the volume of punishment in Europe and the USA proliferated during the nineteenth century, the physical brutality that characterized the worst pre-modern punishments was gradually replaced by more humane techniques. Punishment and the classification and understanding of deviance were brought under the control of rationalised systems of knowledge and law (see 'social control').

However, despite the emergence of rationalized institutions of science and law, in late eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe all individuals lived during a time of great socioeconomic disruption. In Britain, the first fully-blown industrial capitalist nation, the countryside was emptying and the new industrial urban areas were rapidly expanding. Since Rousseau, deviance and crime had been associated with the pathologies of an urban life that for him was inevitably decadent, corrupt and unnatural. In some urban locales the disruption of traditional sociocultural institutions such as the family and the community was at its height and poverty was endemic. Between 1780 and 1830 London experienced a 540 per cent rise in recorded crime. Other major cities in Europe were also beginning to experience rapid expansion and increasing crime rates. The first sociologists of crime and deviance were positivists, such as Adolphe Quetelet (1984), an astronomer and mathematician interested in using his expertise to analyse the social world. At the time a new orthodox way of thinking about deviance developed, and it became the norm to regard it as a social pathology, a metaphor derived from comparisons made between the social and physical bodies. This important development drove social science away from classical liberal individualism to the search for social, temporal and spatial patterns of crime. Where patterns could be discerned it became acceptable to hypothesize social causes, such as inadequate parenting and socialisation, anomie, social disorganisation, egoism, demoralisation, lack of social bonding and so on. These hypotheses and their endless testing and elaboration formed the backbone of

positivist research programmes in the social sciences, and indeed still survive today in many of the West's government departments and prestigious policy-oriented research universities. Deviant actions were judged by the categories of law and harm, and they were the products of deeper tensions and strains that disrupt the harmonious workings of society and culture. At the same time, however, some thinkers, such as Herbert Spencer (1851), made connections between social determinism and biological determinism, fueling the subsequent eugenics movement, which supplied scientific justification to the 'breeding out' of sections of the population whose deviance was attributed to their genetic inferiority. It could certainly be argued that determinism's progressive dimension was often overshadowed by its dark side.

Most of the sociology of deviance's development took place in the USA and Europe. Perhaps the most prominent positivist school was Emile Durkheim's functionalism. He conceptualized society as an organism, with each institution functioning to reproduce the social order. Following his work on the sacred and the profane in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (2001), he argued that the reproduction of societies depends on the maintenance of a consensual morality. He was one of the first sociologists to follow the anthropological model and place the public ritual of naming and punishing deviance at the heart of social cohesion and reproduction. A low level of deviance is normal, he argued, as is the ritualized punishment of deviance that functions to signify what lies beyond the limits of the moral norm in a spectacular way that impresses itself on the minds of the population. Thus a 'normal' level of deviance maintains society's boundaries, but a surfeit indicates that the pathologies of excessive individualism, egoism and anomie are being thrown up in times of rapid economic disruption. Durkheim's theory was taken up by Robert Merton. In his 'strain theory' Merton (1938) argued that the inability of individuals to fulfil ambitions and desires incited by the American Dream would create social strain and a subsequent sense of

anomie, or 'normlessness'. In a society where the structure of opportunities is unequal, frustration and the abandonment of norms, and a subsequent increase in crime and deviance, are more likely.

In the USA the early Chicago School of Sociology followed the positivist and Durkheimian lines, arguing that in chaotic zones of transition in rapidly industrialising American cities with a large influx of immigrants, traditional cultural systems tend to break down. The pathological and anomic result of this disruption is social disorganization, indicated by a multitude of observable indicators of various deviant acts such as prostitution, theft, violence and so on. However, the later Chicago School shifted its position and began to use symbolic interactionist theories, drawn from Wilhelm Dilthey's (2002) notion of *Verstehen* and the pragmatist social psychology of Cooley (1902), Mead (1934) and others. This marked a shift from social pathologization to cultural appreciation. Deviance was not the observable indicator of an underlying pathology created by social disruption but a culturally creative and innovative way of coping with extremely difficult circumstances. Deviance was the product of the human ability to constantly renegotiate meaning in the construction of identity and moral norms.

In his theory of differential association, the Chicago School sociologist Edwin Sutherland (1937) further challenged the Durkheimian theory of social disorganisation by arguing that all societies were differentially organised, a view that began to shift the balance from integrationism to pluralism. The tendency to deviate from the mainstream norm and indulge in crime was a matter of the complex machinations of meaning-generation, power and influence within different cultural and sub-cultural groups; thus deviance was not a universal category, and neither was it a defining feature or permanent fixture of any social group.

In the nineteen-fifties attempts were made to synthesise strain and sub-cultural theories of deviance, based on the idea of deviant sub-cultures as ‘splinters’ created as alienated young people rejected the mainstream norms of an unequal society that excluded them. This attempt to marry integrationism with pluralism was only partially successful, and in the nineteen-sixties the sociology of deviance took a strong pluralist and social constructionist turn, in which the main cause of crime was identified as social reaction. Symbolic interactionist theorists argued that we are all deviant, and initial minor acts of social deviance provoke the reactions of disapproval, ostracism and criminalisation. ‘Deviant’ was a label stuck on individuals from plural backgrounds by a reactionary power elite. As already-alienated individuals identified with the label, minor deviance was amplified and intensified in a spiral of social rejection and increasing crime.

British variants of symbolic interactionism combined with conflict theory and structural Marxism to produce the *New Criminology* (Taylor et al. 1973), which was more sensitive to the unequal structure of power in capitalist societies and the corresponding structural imbalance in the ability to define, criminalise and punish deviance. The structural power imbalance across the axes of gender and race was also added to the mix throughout the nineteen-seventies and nineteen-eighties as the sociology of deviance took a distinctly radical turn. The claim that the governmental, corporate and white-collar crimes of rich, powerful and white males were overlooked whilst poor black men were disproportionately arrested and punished is now a long standing motif in critical criminology. Feminists argued that female offenders, again largely from the ranks of the poor, were regarded as ‘doubly deviant’ as their initial criminalisation was compounded by the social stigma attached to their refusal to

conform to the submissive and domesticated social roles forced upon them in a patriarchal society.

Critical sociology did not have everything its own way. As arguments became more complex in the volatile and disruptive period of political and economic history of the 1980s, sociological and criminological schools proliferated. Labelling theory became less fashionable as crime rates rose in the post-war age of affluence and permissiveness, an unforeseen development that sent sociology and criminology into what Jock Young (1987) called an 'aetiological crisis', a loss of faith in its ability to identify and explain the causes of crime with existing theories. Classical and positivist schools remained dominant in government circles whilst radical criminology developed through post-structuralist and postmodernist schools to the complex diversity that exists today.

It's difficult to pin down such a proliferation of theories, but if one discernable fault line can be said to run through the whole history of the sociology of deviance it's that which demarcates integrationism and pluralism, with structural conflict theories straddling the two. The integrationist definition of deviance, based on the assumption that a society is an integrated whole, is the appearance in everyday social life of actions or signs from beyond the boundaries of society that can disrupt our sense of normality, stability and predictability. The pluralist definition, by contrast, is any action or sign that transgresses the behavioural norms or ethical standards of any one of a huge diversity of legitimate cultural groups that constitute the broader society. Structural conflict theories argue that these plural groups are the product of – or at least defined by – their location in a fundamentally unequal social structure. The integration of plural groups is not organic but possible only by pursuing political demands for democracy, tolerance and equality.

If we follow the pluralist line, the main problem is that although societies contain many different cultures there is usually only one governmental and legal system, which must cater for all. In other words, there are inevitable clashes between plural cultures and integrationist law, especially where the governmental and legal system disproportionately represents the interests of the powerful structural elite. For instance, drawing satirical cartoons of deities or prophets is not illegal, a ruling that all citizens must accept, but the meaning of disrespect and profanity behind this communicative act can be considered deviant by those with a strong sense of the holiness of their religious figures, especially if they also see themselves as a submerged and oppressed socioeconomic class. On the other hand, secularist liberal and libertarian groups are likely to argue that the principle of freedom of expression is paramount.

The legal system is in the unenviable position of arbitrating between these two conflicting interest-groups. In a purportedly democratic pluralist order, transposing an act felt to be deviant by one group into an integrationist law that everyone must obey – in this case a law redefining blasphemy as potential ‘hate speech’ – is not easy. A society’s lawmakers face extreme difficulty in reconciling cultural clashes and satisfying everyone. Ideally, in liberal democracies, the unstable and sometimes rather fractious relationship between cultural notions of deviance and legal definitions of crime should be under constant scrutiny, debate and change, with relatively powerless groups fully included in the democratic process. However, to what extent liberal democratic governments recognise socioeconomic inequality and the relatively elite status of some groups that make up the plurality is of great interest to social scientists and philosophers alike. Fundamental to this interest is the issue of whether some cultural and political groups have more power than others to define and criminalise

deviance, and, if so, how dominant positions are structured into a particular society and reproduced over time.

To most of today's social scientists, who regard integrationism as rather outdated and assume either a genuine pluralist democracy or a set of unequal structured power relations to be the bedrock of society, social deviance is regarded as a 'contested category'. In other words, it is constantly thrown into question because there is rarely full agreement on its validity across the variety of individuals and cultural groups that make up a society. In fact we might see it as the most contested category of all, because how it is defined has serious consequences for individuals in terms of how much liberty they enjoy, how much authority they must obey and how they might defend themselves as potential victims of actions or signs that offend them. If a society allows too much harmful deviance to build up in everyday life, the stability of the social order and the quality of life the majority enjoy on an everyday basis might be threatened. However, if the same society's set of authoritative institutions represses citizens and threatens civil liberties as it attempts to reduce what it has the power to define as harmful deviance, then the quality of life could also be threatened in the name of preserving the social order as it stands. As the conservative philosopher Michael Oakeshott (1996) has argued, all societies are permanently caught on the horns of a political dilemma, forced to compromise between the equally deleterious consequences of the 'barbarism of disorder' and the 'barbarism of order'. How various individuals or social groups define deviance will depend quite significantly on the relative weight they give to either of these sets of consequences.

Oakeshott perhaps glosses over the problem of structurally imbalanced power that concerns sociologists. It is usually the case that the institutions of authority that preserve order have more influence over cultural definitions of deviance because they tend to act on behalf of the

corporate elite and their rather supine mass media, which have an ideological advantage over less wealthy and powerful civil institutions such as education and religion. They also have the exclusive legislative rights to define concepts of deviance as ‘crime’ and punish offenders. Everyday people have relatively less cultural and legal power, and empowering them very much depends on the degree of true democracy that prevails in society, and whether or not the society is truly plural or unduly influenced by a hegemonic ideology that operates on behalf of the powerful.

If we drill down further beneath social theories and politics to the philosophical roots of the problem, we can see that the category of social deviance is rendered problematic by the perennial tension between universalism and relativism. The universalist argument claims that a consensus can be reached on the ethical and normative quality of most deviant actions. In contrast, from a relativist standpoint, the ethical and epistemological constitution of all societies is naturally and unalterably plural right down to the bedrock, and therefore all categories are contested and no such consensus can ever be established. Complicating matters further is the problem of situational relativism, where an act such as murder, even if it is consensually agreed to be criminal under normal circumstances, might be excused or even viewed as beneficial and necessary under other circumstances, such as war or a criminal attack where both person and property need to be defended.

Giorgio Agamben (2005) has argued, however, that in all hierarchical societies there is an unassailable socio-political power imbalance because the dominant group can declare a ‘state of exception’ and redefine marginal members of society as *homo sacer*, the ‘sacred man’ who can – both metaphorically and in reality – be murdered at will without incurring disapproval or punishment. This apparently rather contradictory notion has its roots in the western

anthropological tradition of sacrifice, under which the *pharmakos*, for instance, a group of lower-class scapegoats in Ancient Greece, were seen as dispensable but also sacred insofar as their ritualised sacrifice could save society from the wrath of the Gods, a metaphor for the forces that lead to the breakdown of the social order. When societies are seen to be threatened and in need of salvation, deviance, crime and heroism can be all rolled into one. It's certainly possible to argue that because it lacks consensus and a broad sense of stability, a pluralist society is more susceptible to the suggestion that it is close to breakdown. Sociologists are aware that the 'politics of fear' can be used by a dominant group to impart the suggestion of social breakdown in the minds of the population, thus legitimising its use of violence and intimidation to divert the society from the path to disorder. Yet, such violence and intimidation in the hands of everyday people is classified as deviant and criminal, or in extreme cases terroristic.

However, 'affirmative postmodernists', according to Henry and Milovanovic (1996), take a less rigid position by arguing that there are degrees of relativism according to the seriousness of the deviant acts. For instance, peripheral crimes such as drug use could be decriminalised without causing any more harm. Harm could even be reduced by in turn reducing the likelihood of instrumental violence committed by members of the criminal gangs which distribute illegal drugs, and allowing more drug users who become addicted to disclose their drug use and receive appropriate medical help rather than turn to crime and violence to acquire their personal supplies. In this way some actions that were formerly deviant could become normalised. On the other hand, serious 'core crimes' such as murder or rape would be retained with appropriate punishments or rehabilitation strategies for the offenders. This weak version of relativism is problematic insofar as it introduces a consensual viewpoint at the centre of the relativist milieu, from which serious 'core crimes' can be distinguished from

minor peripheral acts of deviance. Therefore it could be argued that affirmative postmodernism is really neither relativist nor pluralist because it places a universalist, integrationist hub at the centre of society's moral order.

The strong version of universalism claims that all individuals, cultural groups and societies can and should agree to regard specific acts as deviant, and that all legal systems should regard the most serious harmful acts as criminal. Weaker variants allow for some differences and disputes over the more minor peripheral actions that do not seriously threaten the principles of universal reason and morality. Murder, for instance, should be universally regarded as deviant and strictly forbidden by law in the vast majority of circumstances. Universalists, however, do not discount exceptional circumstances such as self-defence or loss of sanity. In that case it would appear that Agamben's 'state of exception' can also be declared in a universalist, integrationist society; in fact one could argue that it is easier for such a society to do so because its governmental apparatus and cultural codes carry more authority and legitimacy amongst the whole population. Agamben's concept is powerful because we can see it operating ideologically and politically in both pluralist and integrationist societies. In the former the unease caused by less stability and consensus makes it easier for a dominant group to come into being by claiming to have the means of avoiding potential breakdown. In the latter the dominant group already has the integrated political and ideological authority to make the suggestion more believable throughout the population.

The weak version of relativism simply claims that we should recognise variety and difference in all societies and cultures, but allow for some universal categories; this version is common amongst orthodox liberal sociologists in the West. The strong version of sociological

relativism is based on the philosophy of moral relativism, which claims that what is regarded as right and wrong is the business of nobody but the members of the huge variety of local cultures situated at various points in historical time and geographical space. As sociology goes global and comparative studies between a wider variety of cultures become the norm, it could be argued that the stronger version of relativism might need to be given more consideration. Where older structural sociologists looked at universal social structures such as class, gender and race as the bedrock of all societies, constantly emphasising the hierarchies and power imbalances across these axes, post-structural sociology took what has become known as the 'cultural turn' in the later twentieth century. Ethnomethodologists claim that meaning is purely a local achievement, and some postmodernists, including Foucauldians, would argue that the social world has always been composed of many different discourses, or methods of classifying the world and producing truth and knowledge, and it is inappropriate to privilege one 'regime of truth' over another. Therefore the human subjects of discourses that are locally and culturally specific – or which structure specific taste-communities that converge around issues such as sexual preference or drug use – have the right to live alongside their discursive definitions (often called 'discursive objects') of deviance along with their corresponding legal categories and punishments.

However, it could be argued that extreme relativism is simply the road to existentialism and situationalism; it has nowhere else to go. In the absence of a universal authority – proclaimed by Nietzsche (1974) as the 'death of God' and recently by postmodernists as the 'death of the subject' and the 'death of the social' – we could insist that the buck must stop somewhere, and the individual is all that is left standing. Thus existentialism enjoins each individual to be responsible for his or her own morality and behaviour in each situation as it is encountered. In this way of thinking there are as many unique and fleeting forms of normality and

deviance as there are individuals and situations. Even here, at the door of the individual so hallowed in liberal culture, we still find possible problems as the existential individual runs the risk of stumbling into the extreme condition of solipsism, which permits the individual subject to see itself as the almost deified centre of the universe, in command of all moral categories and actions. The formerly social category of deviance is now subject to the whim of each individual, with potentially chaotic consequences. Partly in response to some of the excesses of postmodernist sociology, contemporary forms of culturalism, proposed by philosophers and sociologists from the European social democratic mainstream, such as Jurgen Habermas (2001), have promoted the idea of 'cosmopolitanism', which claims that disparate cultures are now integrating as they share social spaces in the new multicultural urban milieus. Consensus and progress, and therefore the possibility of working towards universal notions of deviance and crime, are now back on the sociological agenda.

In both universalist and relativist schools of thought problems immediately arise over the definition of harm and its victims. Beck's solution to the problem of harm was the concept of risk, with which the potential deleterious effects of human desires and actions can be foreseen and possibly avoided or minimised. This has been taken on board quite seriously by contemporary criminologists and sociologists of deviance. For instance, individuals should be aware that their desire to pursue leisure activities at night might result in encounters with the well-known relationship between alcohol and violence. Similarly, the desire to drive an attractive open-top car might increase the risk of theft. This has led to theories of risk management, which could be seen as a rather defeatist position that accepts crime and deviance as inevitable risks to be managed rather than problems to be solved.

However, the concept of risk is underpinned by the accompanying concept of harm, which is far more grounded than deviance, but still a broad and rather nebulous term that could cover any consequence from a minor individual inconvenience to a massive environmental catastrophe with the potential to jeopardise the lives of millions. Liberal cultures tend to regard the individual as the principal victim, and argue that harm should be first and foremost defined as that which inflicts some sort of physical, psychological or social injury on the individual. Collectivist cultures can often see the preservation of the social order as more important, and label as harmful the actions of any individual or group that threaten its authority and stability. Authoritarian regimes can often transpose the concept of harm from the act to the individual. This practice suggests that harm is not an act committed by an individual who has temporarily erred, but an expression of a predictable trait that characterises an individual who has a durable deviant/harmful personality, which should be criminalised and subjected to punishment or indeterminate treatment regimes. We have arrived full circle back to the core philosophical tension between liberty and authority, which underpins the argument between pluralism and integrationism. Pluralist sociological theories tend to define deviance and harm in ways that suits their cause celebre of emancipation and diversity, and to propose narrower definitions alongside the merits of decriminalizing peripheral acts. Integrationist sociological positions that prioritise stability and social cohesion over personal liberty tend to propose broader definitions of deviance and harm, and far more caution over the issue of decriminalisation.

Despite the popularity of concepts such as risk there are no easy solutions to these enduring problems, and the fundamental ethical problem of prioritising personal liberty or social stability remains. Now that sociology is global, it is even more difficult to construct an Archimedean point that transcends the preferences shown by different cultures to different

sociological schools and theories. According to Downes and Rock, in their seminal student text *Understanding Deviance* (2007), we confront the Tower of Babel whenever we approach the term, a dizzying array of contradictory and competing visions of individuals and the social order, with correspondingly varied definitions of deviance. If this sort of pluralism is indeed the bedrock of society, with no 'eternal truths and verities' underneath it, there is little we can do other than take the advice of Habermas and maintain an ongoing debate with honest and open forms of communication in the effort to achieve some consensus wherever it can be found, and to encourage tolerance where it cannot. Transposing into social science a phrase coined by the philosopher John Locke, the criminologists Ian Loader and Richard Sparks (2010) have recently argued that the true role social scientists is one of under-labourer to these plural debates, supplying research data and concepts to maintain what, because of the emotive nature of the terms deviance and crime, is an unavoidably public debate at the required level of sophistication. In liberal societies tolerance has become a shibboleth, but difficulties arise over where the line between tolerance and intolerance should be drawn, which pushes us straight back into the debate between universalism and relativism.

Because it cannot really be defined clearly in the first place and remains hotly contested, deviance is probably the most difficult of all concepts for sociologists or criminologists to operationalize and test in their research, and to integrate into theories of the social world. For instance, for some feminists, prostitution is the product of structural oppression and exploitation and, whilst sex workers should be treated with tolerance and sympathy, the largely male clients should be regarded as the oppressors and exploiters and duly criminalised. However, for other feminists and non-feminists alike, who adopt a more libertarian position, prostitution is so old and common across the world's cultures, and our current societies are so dominated by market transactions in which everything is treated as a

commodity, that neither the sex-worker nor the client should be described as deviant or criminal. Here we confront yet another philosophical problem in the tension between idealism and pragmatism, either of which can be regarded as a valid viewpoint from which we judge human actions and their consequences.

Are there ways for sociologists to prise themselves out of these multiple impasses? It could be argued that some long-standing core deviant behaviours (or 'taboos') such as incest and murder, are, where there are no mitigating circumstances, still universally regarded as unacceptable. However, even incest was actively affirmed and encouraged amongst some social elites, such as the Ancient Egyptian Royalty. As we have seen, what some describe as the core crime of killing has been allowed during wartime, in self-defence and in defence of honour and property. Almost any act of deviance or crime can be justified in special circumstances, and we have seen in Agamben's concept of the 'state of exception', an authoritarian state and its ruling elite can grant itself the power to define special circumstances and act within them according to its own collective will. However, Slavoj Žižek (2008) has recently reminded us that such runaway collective power acting beyond normal boundaries also provides a space in which the powerful individual can grant him or herself the permission to commit acts of deviance or crime in the name of the collective good. Individual freedom and authoritarian collectivism are not mutually exclusive, and there are circumstances in which they are not even in opposition. Thus the standard liberal notion that too much collective power can crush the rights and freedoms of individuals is rather simplistic; in the state of exception the rights and liberties of elite individuals are actually extended, and social norms can be violated at will. In *Theorizing Crime and Deviance* (2012), it is argued that these elite individuals, having achieved a position of 'special liberty', might support authoritarian collectivism as the only form of social order in which their freedom to

deviate remains unchallenged. In his notion of ‘criminal sovereignty’, Robert Cribb (2009) argues that authoritarianism can legitimise itself with more ease in chaotic situations that provoke fear and a sense of danger amongst the population. Here, in a territory where the state has failed – perhaps because of a natural disaster or neoliberal economic restructuring programmes imposed on territories on behalf of corporations that prefer weak and compliant states to reduce taxes and labour costs – a deviant elite characterised by criminality and corruption is more likely to appear.

In order to transcend these multiple sociological and philosophical problems, contemporary analyses try to explain the forms of ‘deviance’ we see today as incorporated deviance, created and reproduced because, when controlled and harnessed, it has a ‘function’ in the consumer-capitalist economy. In *The Exclusive Society* (1999), for instance, Jock Young argues that contemporary capitalism is bulimic, incorporating young people into consumer culture’s structure of desires whilst at the same time ejecting them from the economy, thus increasing the likelihood of deviance and crime. This is a cautious and partial revival of strain theory, which views the ‘malady of infinite aspirations’ as culturally constructed rather than natural. Alternatively, In *Criminal Identities and Consumer Culture* (2008), the research team conceptualise today’s forms of deviance as the ‘spillage’ that occurs as the contemporary capitalist system invokes and intensifies solipsistic, narcissistic and anti-social human drives, which in a more ethical society would be classified as deviant. The system is conceptualised as a ‘pseudo-pacification process’, which subsequently attempts to contain and harness these drives as dynamic forces that fuel the continuous expansion of human desires for symbolic objects, which create an imaginary social world in the place of the real one that has disappeared. These desires are translated into demand in the vital consumer dimension of the economy. The dynamic tension operates at such a pitch that spillage is inevitable throughout

the social order. Controlled deviance overheats and breaks through the control system at its weakest points to appear as plural forms of uncontrolled deviance. Even these new theories are open to criticisms such as universalism and essentialism, and it remains to be seen how successful new theories might be as they develop in their efforts to solve the multiple philosophical problems that characterize the sociological investigation into social deviance.

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