

## **The Theory of Social Action: Proposal of a Method**

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In 1908 George Simmel challenged German Academic Sociology when he proposed that the distinction between form and content was a fundamental prerequisite in order to set up Sociology as a Science. However, the difficulty in delving into and elaborating these concepts (in which Simmel himself failed) has caused many later authors to abandon that distinction, minimizing its importance. On the other hand, studying Military Drill, as if it were a laboratory case, we have found a way to respond to that sociological challenge. We have succeeded in producing a rigorous formal theory that implies a generally valid statistical principle, that can be applied to all other social contents.

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The theory of social action is that part of Sociology that examines collective human action independent of its content. It attempts to discover how individuals of our Species are able to coordinate their physical actions in order to achieve some common end, any end, without reference to any specific time or place. The eleven players on a soccer

team who coordinate their movements on the field until they succeed in getting the ball into the opposite goal, or who prevent, also among all of them, the ball from entering their own goal. The bureaucrats in one of the offices of a Revenue Service handle the same paperwork on a daily basis, either they send it through a normal channel, or they decide that some particular form needs to be sent to management in order to be dealt with appropriately. City traffic lights are arranged on the streets in order to achieve the simplest and most efficient motor vehicle circulation, etc. etc.

The action theory is not concerned about the things that human beings do, rather it looks at the way in which they do them. It is not interested in soccer, traffic or in the assembly line of a television factory, which is studied by other branches of Sociology. It only attempts to understand one thing: how is it that human beings are capable of playing soccer, creating kinship systems, organizing traffic... to do all the things that they do. The theory of social action isn't concerned with the content of any given actions in common; rather in the underlying general form of those actions (if such a general form exists).

Our Species isn't the only one that survives through collective action. Much lower on the evolutionary scale of living creatures (organized on the basis of organic differentiation and specialization), some types of insects also deserve the term of social. Actually they are far more social than we will ever be. For more than 50 million years, there have been bee colonies (wasps on the other hand are loners), termites also create colonies of, literally, millions of individuals. Entomologists admire the perfect organization of ants, each individual has a different job including, among others, gatherers, shepherds, or warriors whose function is to take prisoners and enslave them for life inside the colony.

But on the top of the scale of biological complexity, not to mention the ninety something species of primates that crown the scale, only our Species can properly be

called social or collective, we are the only social primate (a singular example). Any species can be considered social if each of its members survives by converting some part of its physical actions in the means or instrument of the activity of the rest of its members. In a rudimentary way this can be seen, of course, in colonies of chimpanzees, pap ions or gibbons. However, these species don't come close the perfection and sophistication of the common actions that we undertake and complete. This was never so obvious as in the present capitalist society.

It is also clear that the way in which we create our society, our manner of combining individual actions, is not the same method practiced by insect species. Bees have their way of being social; each variety of ants has its way, which is ours? Is there only *one* method or way in which humans have always coordinate and will always do so while they exist? Even in the case that for the human animal, the behavior of collective action is in some way biologically determined (for example because we have a *linguistic* brain), Sociology is not free from the obligation of explaining of what this behavior consists. This is the task of the Theory of Social Action, and this is where any course of General Sociology in any university of world ought to begin.

For what is at stake is the scientific (and academic) statute of Sociology. All of us who have dedicated ourselves to the study of social action (and all sociologists have, at one time or another) know the following to be true: the fundamental paradigm of our science lies in a *general explanation* of collective human action, and today, two hundred years after Comte, we still do not have that explanation. We certainly have very valuable fragmentary contributions for the construction of such a theory. Further on we will discuss some of these more solid and recognized theories, but there is no *complete* theoretical model that clearly identifies the object of its study (wherever and whenever it is applied) and predicts its empirical behavior (this last point is always the touch-stone of science).<sup>1</sup>

The actual situation of Sociology, if you will allow me, appears to be pre-newtonian, a little bit like Physics before Newton applied mathematics to the laws of Kepler. Today, 250 years later and almost 100 years after the discovery of the theory of relativity, Newton's principles of Classical Mechanics are the required starting point for Physics Courses in all universities, whether they are in Shanghai, Los Angeles, Santiago de Chile or Milan. Nothing similar occurs in Sociology, whose multi-paradigmatic situation appears to be advantageous to many, making a virtue of necessity.

No, Sociology, if it is to be respected as a science, cannot be the mere juxtaposition of particular sociologies. No one doubts, given the nature of the object of its study, that these sociologies will always be necessary. However there must be a general theoretical and empirical foundational principle for all of them (something similar to the principles of Physics) and this foundation is, perforce, to be found in what is known as the Theory of Action.

## **Simmel**

The first person who *explicitly* proposed that the study of social relations must be based on the difference between form and content in order to be considered a science was George Simmel in 1908. He conceived of Sociology as the study of social forms that could be abstracted from the particular content in which they were manifested, just as Geometry is the study of spatial forms abstracted from the possible material occurrences, or that Grammar studies verb tense or types of phrases completely independent of the particular meaning of the same. Similarly, Sociology examines

getting together to take a walk, temporarily sharing life in a hotel, the life cycle of a family or the consolidation of an industrial or government organization... Simmel would tell us that in all of these social relationships aside from their particular end or content, there is domination, labeling, fashion, there are conflicts, secrets, etc. etc; Sociology consists, or ought to consist, in isolating the common denominator of these activities, in abstracting the forms or general manners of human interaction... these are, or ought to be, the true, the distinct objects of the study of Sociology.

As a consequence he launched upon a titanic conceptual work, in which he covered the accumulated social science knowledge of his era, in an intent to abstract *those variety of forms that were to be found in the varied contents*. The comparative empirical scope of this work constituted its principal weakness, as it was quickly recognized by his critics, among who was Durkheim, who asked –as cited by Bourdieu (1976: 321):

But how is this abstraction to be performed? If it is true that all human associations are formed with a particular end in mind, how will it be possible to isolate the general association from the multiple ends that it serves, for the purpose of determining laws? <sup>2</sup>

Other authors, while recognizing the intellectual stature of Simmel, complained of his complicated muddy style and to top it off his unproductive essays. Weber always stuck up for Simmel. He appreciated the latter's Sociology whose achievements he put above those of Simmel's critics. Weber, while acknowledging the difficulties of Simmel's style, saw it as a by-product of his comparative and empirical method.<sup>3</sup>

As we understand it, Simmel, as some times happens in science, asked the correct question but came up with the wrong answer. If, instead of looking for the abstraction in the “various forms” based on his comparative analysis of the “various contents,” he had limited himself to simply stating that Sociology needed to reason independently of *all*

content, he would have saved himself a lot of work and all the harsh criticism he received as a result of that work. Paradoxically such reasoning existed in the sociological tradition of his time, and it has continued to be explored since then (with better or worse luck). Isn't the Durkheim's definition of "social fact" independent of all content? Or does Weber's concept of "social action" make reference to some particular situation? Both concepts, classics in Sociology, are universally respected; after all, don't they define *structural* aspects of *any* human interaction? One captures its coercive condition, and the other its necessary subjective moment... If some day we sociologists are able to define *completely* the general way or form of human cooperation, if some day we are able to elaborate a true *theory of form*, with its corresponding empirical corollaries, we will find without a doubt that the contributions of Durkheim and Weber occupy a place in that theory (even if they are to be adapted, re-utilized, and re-dimensioned by such a theory).

Actually we are saying the same thing as Parsons, and that is that Durkheim and Weber and other European authors were looking for the same goal, i.e. define the structure of social action, without paying attention to the end that that structure might *serve* in a given time or place.

Without taking anything away from the contributions of Parsons or the phenomenological school of Berger and Luckman, it seems to us that the work of George Herbert Mead (1972) is a more direct way to build that social action theory that we need. His concrete theoretical achievements are important, but more important is the method by which he was able to arrive at them, "social behaviorism" or "symbolic interactionism", which is nothing less than an effort at understanding how verbal gestures serve the collective action in which they take place, and how they become a key piece in that action. Only when this verbal conversation has been internalized by

the individual, can the individual predict the reaction his (or her) action will cause in others, and behave accordingly.

Contemporary debates about finding a theoretical model that integrates the concepts of action and structure, or about producing a method that is capable of relating the levels of analysis of (as they say now) macro- and micro Sociology, more than anything else appear to be precisely the symptoms that reveal we *are still unable* to find a simple and operative theory of action with which to resolve these problems. In reality, it appears that we are going in circles, putting new names (to be sure: always more sophisticated and obscure) on the old consolidated methodological and theoretical concerns of Simmel, Durkheim, Weber, and Mead. In what is referred to as the Theory of Action it is as if sociologists were playing “*a las cuatro esquinas*” with those four giants, because when we succeed in occupying one of the 4 corners of which they are the owners, the remaining sociologists *and time* rapidly force us to return the corner to its legitimate owner.<sup>4</sup>

Again, this generally applicable social theory that we all seek, cannot be a mere juxtaposition or squeezing together of the intelligent contribution of the classics, rather it must come from finding a method of analytical *attack* completely different from those that have been tried to date, a radically original and unsuspected look at joint human action. Science has always worked this way. This doesn't avoid the fact that, one of the first effects of the theory, will be to *naturally* reorganize those parts of the object of study that the classics have already highlighted... One must assume the correctness of their work, for some reason time has made them classics.

## Need to fill out the theory of action

If, today as always, sociologists need a general sociological theory, a General Sociology, similar to that which Carlos Moya (1965: 38) posits as

capable of being the horizon of all empirical social investigation; a system of rigorous analytic categories, perfectly communicated, an axiomatic concept with aspirations of universal validity and scientific objectivity.

And we are not disappointed with the limitations set by Carlos Moya on the ambitions of such a theory, for we have always worked under his understanding epistemological scrutiny.

Now it is our turn to contribute something toward the construction of such a theory. We are going to do it, first pointing out (as it seems to us) *what we are missing*, in two parts:

1º) with respect to the *strictly theoretical* point of view, we most need to understand once and for all what role the language plays in the construction of collective human action. We have to interrogate Language Theories so that they answer *our* questions (once again sociologists must make use of other human sciences for *Sociology's own ends*).

Using just the theoretical contributions of Grammar, we can truly and with complete rigor understand how the individual accesses –from the subjective moment that Weber captured– understanding of normative behavior. This, in the end, is the basic conclusion to which Herbert Mead's theory of social behaviorism had arrived: *words* have no purpose and never have been used for anything other than demonstrating to the

adult human animal what the group (that is undertaking the common action in which he or she is participating) expects of him (or her). For this reason, *to the degree in which they are used unconsciously*, they automatically signal the things that are collectively *imposed* by the group (and not others).

In order to understand human interaction sociologists need a grammatical explanation of the word, we need to know how words are made, how words *make* to *say* things. Further on we will make a suggestion about where to find this sociologically useful theory.

2°) In addition to this strictly theoretical end that we demand from a theory of action, we also seek (because it too is necessary) *an empirical enunciation of general validity*, that is: that the theory must be able to isolate some aspect of its objective (collective human behavior) that can be measured, and that be able to predict what is going to be (in whatever circumstance) the result of this measurement.

The theory ought to define a specific *dimension* of social action (Moya 1965), deduce its statistical behavior, and effectively verify it.

This, (more than any other thing) would permit Sociology to be a positive Science, with its *proper* object of study, cleanly separated from the objects studied by the other Human Sciences.

And since we are talking here about the theory of action, such an empirical prediction, in order to be coherent with its ends, would have to serve for *any* collective activity, independent of its particular content – the same as these general principles of Classical Mechanics (for example, the law of action and reaction, or the law of conservation of energy, and others), that can later be applied to the condition of particular physical systems (always when the conditions are within the limitations imposed by the theory on its application).

Second, we are going to propose a remedy for or relief from the problems cited above and thus contributes to the construction of such a contemporary theory of action:

With respect to the first point -the language theory that will best help sociologists get through this difficult spot-, we believe that the Grammar theory of Professor Agustín García Calvo (1979, 1983, 1999) is, in fact, *another* of the pieces that we need in order to be able to put together our action theory puzzle. This is so precisely because his entire concept of language is *social*, indeed it leads him to recognize that the final explanation of phrasal structure lies not within the phrase, it isn't purely grammatical, but lies *outside* the phrase in its *function* (in the human interaction in which it is used).

We call special attention to his seminal study on the prohibition of the hyperbaton (García Calvo 1973), which states that the prohibition on changing conventional word order stems not just from the linguistic construction of the *phrasing*, which would easily adapt, but rather *from both* the linguistic *and* the political construction of human interaction, which do not allow it.

In reality (to repeat what has already been said) this linguistic conclusion permits us to advance one step further in the direction already staked out by Herbert Mead's Social Psychology -namely: that *from* linguistic ideation (in all the individuals of a group) *springs* political coercion (of the group on each of its members). But now this point can be reached *from the other side*, from the side of Grammar, with advantage that this supposes for the methodological and empirical rigor of the study.

With respect to the second point -with regard to the enunciation of an empirical principle of general validity-, for our part we risk this *disturbing* prediction: that in any

collective human action there will *always* be political coercion, led by the group, on each of its members, *and* this political coercion is *always* produced with statistical regularity. This occurs, independently of the particular content or finality of each activity.

We believe that the confirmation, calculation and explanation of *this dimension* of collective action, wherever and however it is present, should be the principal task of Sociology, which would thus obtain a distinct, genuine and separate object of study of its own.

Thus

in order to scientifically study a group of facts, it is not enough to observe them carefully, describe them, classify them: rather it is necessary, in the words of Descartes, *to find the angle from which they are scientific*, that is to say, discover in the facts some objective element that implies an exact determination, and if it is possible the measure. (Durkheim 1973: 37) [Italics added]

To end we have to do two things: provide a brief explanation of where we got this daring empirical principle and next answer as best we can the multiple questions that also occur to us as a result of such a problematic proposal.

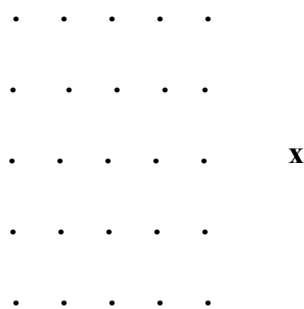
### **Empirical principle of general validity**

In our own way, we are also picking up the gauntlet that, as we saw above, Durkheim threw at Simmel:

But, how is this abstraction to be performed? If it is true that all human associations are formed with a particular end in mind, how will it be possible to isolate the general association from the multiple ends that it serves for the purpose of determining laws?<sup>2</sup>

However, far from continuing with his laborious comparative method, chance led us to *stumble* upon a particular social situation; a situation that immediately captured our sociological imagination, because it could throw new light on the distinction between form and content, but from a completely different angle.

By common agreement, we accept the statement of Durkheim, “it is true that all human associations are formed with a particular end in mind”, *but* there is *one* situation in real life, in which, for its own disciplinary ends, *does prohibit* any activity not strictly necessary for its fulfillment: this situation is the Military Drill:



Moreover, in its study *we were led* to admit that *the type of* activities of the individuals involved in this particular collective action are also, the only ones necessary and sufficient to achieve every other collective action. The Military Drill is like a laboratory case: in it, conveniently *isolated* for their study, appear the only activities that the individuals have to realize in their joint interaction: that is: the general form or procedure of collective action that Simmel sought.

Again, studying this specific interaction, and observing its different parts or aspects in action, allows us to recognize *these same* parts or aspects in every other human

interaction. In other words: it makes possible the construction of a rigorous formal method of analysis, applicable to the study of any and all collective action, wherever and whenever it takes place.<sup>6</sup>

The empirical principle that we propose, that **political coercion tends to achieve statistical uniformity**, appears to be the principal theoretical result (with practical effects) that *can be deduced* from that study.

### **Some questions, some answers**

Before going any further we have to define what we understand to be political coercion. The group is able to direct a given common action if it succeeds in converting the activity of each individual in a part, in a means, in an instrument at the service of the end activity of the other members. In order to do so the group has to pay a price, it has to commit to *another* collective action: that of pointing the finger and punishing any individual whose behavior is outside of the group's expectations.

Humans universally use collective punishment of individual crimes in order to achieve common action, and by this action distinguish themselves as a group. What each collective action defines as a crime for which it imposes a punishment varies in accord with its own ends; it is a *function of the content* of the action and *can be anything*, but without *this* general form inter-human coordination isn't possible.

The punishment can be: the case opened to investigate a bureaucrat who obstructs justice; the priest who denies communion to a single mother; the player who is booed every time he touches the ball; a televised execution in China or Texas etc. The penalty is applied through general condemnation or by a group of persons acting in a representative capacity (as Weber liked to distinguish); whether the punishment is social harm or simple restitution (as Durkheim reasoned); it is the same: we always see human society exercising symbolic and political, when not physical violence against the individual that makes society uncomfortable.

It is senseless to dwell further on this point, we all know, through experience, how the human group behaves. More *unsettling* is what we pointed out earlier: this political coercion that accompanies all collective action tends always to be produced with statistical regularity.

Political coercion accompanies all human interaction, but it only achieves statistical regularity *in the totality* of common actions that *are* individual incarnations of a specific social fact (all this as Durkheim lay out). But these are precisely the activities that are most important for Sociology as such.

For example, illegitimacy (the crime was to be born out of wedlock, the punishment was exclusion from the line of inheritance) presents statistical regularity not in a particular family but rather over all the families that composed the rural parish. To the extent that it is possible to interpret traffic accidents as violations of the code of motor vehicles these are statistically regular not on any give stretch of road, but rather over the whole national system. The sanctions that the Soccer Federation imposes weekly are regular not in any given game but rather in the totality of the games that are played in the 4 national leagues. Expulsion from the labor market (the crime is that the price for buying labor is higher than the price obtained through the sale of labor's production) is

statistically regular not in a single company, but rather in the group of companies that make up the national market. The sanctions imposed by a code of military justice on soldiers during military drill are not statistically regular for a particular squad, but are over the whole of all recruits in the army, etc.

Depending on the content of the activity this political coercion can present *cyclical* or *progressive* statistical regularity. The regularity in the application of the prohibition of incest in a kinship system is cyclical, traditional, it is the same generation after generation. The regularity in the application of the laws of buying and selling of the labor-power in capitalism is progressive, modern, and even exponential. These are two ways of achieving regularity with different statistical characteristics.

However, social facts do not just appear in social life like a bolt from the blue, rather they are consolidated over time during a process of imposition (from an initial position of absence). And since all social facts are perforce accompanied by political coercion which is part and parcel of the same, observation of its statistical behavior offers us a direct and objective view of the *degree of institutionalization* of a particular social fact. Effectively, one can observe the historical experience of the imposition of collective practices that constitute such a social fact, in the evolution of the crimes most frequently committed and their corresponding fitting punishments (fitting as likely to obtain the goals of these practices). Only to the extent in which the relationship between the crime and punishment of a determined social fact *moves toward achieving* mathematical statistical regularity in its application (in the whole of all of the individual incarnations that make it up), can we truly speak of that fact as a consolidated social fact.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, Durkheim himself has already explained that *proportionality* between crime and punishment is established, in a manner of speaking, automatically, with hardly any need for calculation; the penalty is nothing more than a spontaneous reaction of the collective conscience when confronted with the offending crime:

On the other hand we understand that the penal reaction is not uniform in all cases because the emotions that lead to its imposition are not always the same. They are, effectively, more or less alive depending on the sensitivity of the injured feeling and also depend upon the gravity of the offense suffered. A strong state will react more than a weak state, and two states of the same character will react differently depending upon the level of violence used against them. These variations are both necessary and useful, it is desirable that the use of force bears a relationship to the danger: too weak a reaction is not enough: too strong a reaction causes unnecessary loss. Given that the gravity of a criminal act varies in function of the same factors, *the proportionality that we see everywhere between the crime and its punishment is established then with mechanical spontaneity*, without having to resort to sophisticated formula in making the calculation. That which determines the gradation between crimes is the same that determines the penalties; the two scales must therefore correspond and this correspondence, since it is necessary, is at the same time useful. Durkheim (1973: 90) [italics and translation provided by the author]

Thus, whether or not it is necessary *to commit to paper* the consolidated historical relationship between *such* crimes and *such* penalties depends entirely on *the content* of the social facts:

<u>Crime</u>	<u>Punishment</u>
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This is the origin of criminal and civil codes of law, regulations and rules of all types, and in particular it makes possible the existence of bureaucratic organizations which are characterized by such written rules. For sociologists, laws are no more than and *can be no more than* the elevation to jurisprudence of that which is a mere statistic. In any other case they would be pronounced dead on arrival.

The process which we describe (to be sure: the generic process through which any social fact is imposed over time from its absence, and the application of the concomitant political coercion, achieving statistical regularity, and leading (or not) to its written form as a law or regulation); this process, is not clouded by the reflection of those who perform it, on the contrary, it is this reflection, precisely when *collective*, that permits that regularization to advance (i.e. that permits its imposition). This phenomenon, common to all social facts, is seen clearly in bureaucracies, where informal groups center their fight for power on the imposition of regulatory 'reforms' that favor their position.<sup>8</sup>

The Friday night news anchor could read the number of traffic accidents and deaths predicted by the Traffic Authority for that weekend. The population, alarmed by the statistics could stay at home or completely ignore such a macabre prediction. We are only saying that, whatever they do, when such an announcement becomes habitual (like the winning lottery ticket numbers), the possible reduction in the number of accidents would become statistically regular (although it is unlikely that it would be *zero*).<sup>9</sup>

Without a doubt, understanding what happens when two collective actions fight for the imposition of *their* respective behavioral norms in the same population is more problematic. This case is different from what we have been analyzing: the *endogenous*

development over time of one social fact (and the accompanying relationship of crime/penalty) which succeeds in imposing and consolidating itself. Now one must attempt to find out what happens when two political coercions of conflicting content, one of them consolidated and the other emerging, are repeatedly applied to the same population of which they are a part. It would seem logical to expect that the application of the emerging coercion would *instrumentally subordinate* the application of the decadent coercion, and the latter would become erratic, losing the statistical clarity it had achieved. But the very nature of this problem does not admit affirmations of such a general character.

In our book, above cited, we describe the investigation that we are attempting to undertake, to obtain a mathematical formula *capable of measuring* what happens to the patriarchal prohibition on incest (in upbringing) at the same time that the buying and selling of labor is introduced (in production) –*capable of measuring this*, not in a specific population, but rather in any population! And all of the difficulties that we have had along the way...

This, in the end, is what it is all about. At this late date we are only seeking a Sociology that, when studying any collective activity, can measure the *coercion of the group on the individual* [Durkheim] to the point of being able to represent in a mathematical formula, the statistical behavior of such coercion. But this is not enough: this exterior fact, so defined mathematically, is for us, the sociologists, *just one means* in order to obtain access to the internal fact, to the understanding of collective conscience (which is expressed this way). And in turn, only if we understand the *connections of meaning* [Weber] most common in the interaction that we study, will we be able to conceive of the analytical elements that allow us to advance in successive iterations of refinements

and improvements of that accounting formula. Proving or disproving ones own statistical predictions guarantees that we can delve into the feelings that make up the common conscience... And so on and on...

We repeat: we don't want any other Sociology except this: one that can *take account* of the physical facts of political coercion, and *includes* the strong states and definitions of linguistic ideation which make the coercion possible and regular.

In this Sociology, the statistical laws governing the relationship of crime/punishment would have a mathematically defined nature; they would be objectively verifiable on their own terms, and not just empirical as with present statistical applications, which do not transcend subjective confection.

This is the challenge, the challenge issued by the times, failure is not important in the attempt.

## NOTES

1. “When you cannot measure your knowledge is meagre and unsatisfactory” (Lord Kelvin)

2. Èmile Durkheim, as cited by Bourdieu et al. (1976: 321).

3. Cfr. Simmel (1965: 9-37). For critical comment: Weber (1972); Ray et. al. (1991); Abel (1959); Nisbet (1959); and the monograph dedicated to Simmel in the sociological journal *Papers*, by Several Authors (2000).

On the other hand, professors Juan Luis Pintos (USC) and Julio Cabrera (USC), have individually called to my attention the importance of stating explicitly here that the concept we are interested in is “Form” exactly as it was put forth by Simmel, and thus avoid any confusion or mixture with other concepts of “Form”, that have been put forth (with other ends) by other sociologists, for example Luhmann (1998) or Pareto (1987).

4. I owe the image of this child’s game “las cuatro esquinas” to Professor Luis Arribas (USC)

5. Through the method of “Social Imaginaries” Professor J. L. Pintos (1995: 105) is investigating this social function of the word:

If there is an analogy that would help us understand the concept of Imaginaries, it is of glasses or spectacles. The Imaginaries have a similar function, in that they permit us to perceive things as long as they –like glasses– are not perceived in the realization of the act of seeing.

6. In the Military Drill the physical activity of each soldier is *completely* intertwined with the physical activity of all the others. This intertwining is precisely what in Military Drill is being practiced, permitting us to see how it is perfected. Of course, we are interested not just in this intertwining but rather in *any* intertwining, independent of the particular content of the activity.

Because in *all other* common actions there is also a blending of individual physical activities (that is their nature), although it is *never* as complete as in the Military Drill, there is always some margin for individual freedom; for example: the soldier has such freedom in the barracks the rest of the day; the musician in the orchestra makes him/herself comfortable in the seat; the soccer player during the game improvises his play; the driver in a car can talk with the other passengers; the bureaucrat in the office calls his/her child, etc. For this reason, our method of sociological analysis, brought to fruition in the study of the Military Drill, when it is applied to study any *particular* collective activity, isn't concerned about the liberties that are permitted, but rather restricts its application to the study of the physical activities of individuals as long as they are intertwined, that is, to the extent that they are mutually related (Weber). But precisely, these activities, so limited, are the only activities that interest a sociologist when studies *this* specific collective action.

For this sociological analysis of the Military Drill see my book Allones (1999; 2019), where we first present this method of analysis, and then we apply it to the study of the two central Western institutions.

7. The 'Football Association' was founded on October 26, 1863 in an act celebrated in London's Freemason's Tavern. At the time it was prohibited to touch the ball with ones hands, push or shove another player with hands or arms, and kick other players. In 1866

the off-side rules was modified to its present form, the vertical goal posts were joined by a cord and the fair-catch rule (that permitted catching a pass with the hands) was eliminated. In 1871 the goalie was allowed to use his/her hands. In 1873 the corner-kick was permitted. Two years later the cord joining the goal posts was replaced by a third post. In 1891 the penalty kick was instituted and the penalty point was set at 10.06 meters along an imaginary line equidistant from the vertical posts and perpendicular to the goal...” Diccionario Espasa-Calpe (entry: Fútbol)

8. Some sociologists have studied situations of power equilibrium as generators of unpredictability in collective behavior, for example in the designing of sports the objective is to find and build such an equilibrium, in order to enhance the emotion and the spectacle which are the reasons for sports. However, this does nothing to alter the fact, rather just the opposite, that in social facts that are *fundamental for all* human society, (because of their content: production, upbringing, or administration) *the cards are marked*, inequality is guaranteed: f.i. the privileges given to first born adult son and not to women and younger sons in terms of lineage; in capitalism, the buyers of labor always win out over the sellers; bureaucrats maintain their power precisely because of the replication of these inequalities. These social facts achieve very predictable collective behavior over historical time. And due to their core nature, they ought to be the most immediate focus of study for any General Sociology.

9. Sociologists often complain about the unpredictable nature of collective behavior, as a result of the fact that humans, as linguistic beings, are capable of collectively changing the content of their interaction. It is true that the content can be anything, and whatever sociological description is given will be valid as long as that content exists. But what we are propounding here has nothing to do with the content, but rather with a

*generic way* in which any new collective practice is imposed, and this generic form was (and is) imposed in our phylogenesis not in spite of language, but rather thanks to it. As Levy-Strauss once intuited (1993: 35-59), our Species, through the collective invention of language, has succeeded in re-establishing to a certain extent (at another level) the regulated behavior that instinct had lost in the big monkeys. Language is a creature of instinct, the primates that invented it to become a social animal created a whole new biological niche which enables them to impose themselves as a Species.

Eh! Sociologists need to shake themselves loose from their inferiority complex with respect to sciences that are a-linguistic (Physics, Zoology) since it is precisely the human animal's linguistic condition that makes their object of study, *collective* behavior, predictable, and which enables us to make a science of it! Sociology *must be a Science in its specificity* (Weber), but in its specificity, it can be a science.

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