THE PROCESSUALITY OF
THE SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS FORMATION

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Abstract
A major drawback of the contemporary sociology is the conceptual incoherence. There is not even one single concept that it is used with the same meaning by all the sociologists. This critical situation depends on various subjective circumstances (the vanities, the aspirations, the motivations, the personal capacities of the researchers of the social), but also on the process, aparently objective, of the sociological concepts formation and defining . The stages of this process are the interpersonal communication of the experience, the formation of the similarities, the social types construction and represent the subject of this study. The final conclusion is that sociology builds/ rebuilds its own conceptual instruments, but the categories it proposes are and will remain restrictive.

Key words: sociological concepts, social learning, restrictive assignment

1. Sociocultural Change and Reproduction

The usual individual pursues for himself reaching the state of comfortability. Through trials, probings, imitations, loans, material, spiritual and time consumption, through strategic or contingent modalities, he delimits himself real constants of the "ontological safety"[1], of the good and of the personal succes respectively. These can be also called *recipes of comfortability* or prescriptions of the behavioural habit.

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[1] The concept of ontological safety is introduced by A. Giddens and refers to "the confidence which the majority of the people have in the continuity of their own identity and in the constant character of the social and material environments of action which surround them". See the paper *The Consequences of Modernity*, Polity Press: Cambridge, 1990, p. 92

The habit is believed to be the second nature, which it is a scheme of life which reproduces itself for a long time and that it can be changed only if it admits the attachment of new cultural elements, compatible with those already existing. As a social being, the man is exposed to the presurre of the offers of the environment he is a part of. Simultaneously, he gets into a relation of communication or exchange with the group, transactioning the contents of their own habits.

A consequence of the training of the individual in the interpersonal communication of the experience is the assimilation of some norms, values, knowledges offered by the others. Normally, the moments of assimilation, either they engage only one individual – or it mobilizes groups of large size, either they occur intentionally – or they occur accidentally, they are the development of some learning acts. When the contents which are learned are available, formally and/or informally, to all the individuals, and the effects they generate are approximately the same, we deal with a process which can be defined as *social learning*.

Among the most remarkable results induced by this process it is, of course, also those refering to the *behavioral similarity* of the persons who opted for the same formative resources. Exaggerating a little, we could assert that the individual is what it is because this is how he was taught to be and if the offers concerning the learned contents were similar to those appropriated already by the others, then he and those "others" must form *groups of similarity*. We say about those who form them that they represent approximately the same lifestyle, that is they live in residential environments of the same type, they have relatively the same age, they have ways of thinking, behaviours, endeavours almost identical, they release very similar intra- and extragroupal expectations, they achieve sensible equal performances etc.

This kind of omogenity is controversial/ disputable. On the one hand we can not deny it, but, in the same time, we don't have to forget that each instance of our species has the native and natural freedom to manifest itself in particular variants, which surpass the limits/ the restrictions imposed ti him by the social learning. In this respect, A. Giddens affirms: "the fact that…we are implied in the process of interaction with the others conditions, for certain, the formation of our personalities, values that we stand up for and the behaviour we assume.

However, socialization is also at the origin of the individuality itselfand of our freedom. In the course of the socialization, each one of us develops a feeling of identity and an independent capacity of thinking and acting"(Giddens 2000:52).

To this convincing mention we can add another one, not less suggestive: any case of unsocialization represents an anomaly, because the individual does not accede enough to the attributes of the human sociality, also the same verdict of anormality occurs when the individual mixes up totally with the socio-human group from which he is a part of and he does not manifest in any way personal options.

There are well known the cases in which members of the human species lived exclusively in the company of animals, they didn't have from where to learn the natural codes of the humanity and they achieved the behaviours of the prehuman species which they joined. It is said about all those who had this kind of experience that they had learned what it is prehuman and that they couldn't be entirely recovered or restored to the space of the socio-cultural. In exchange, even in what concerns the most conformist/indoctrinated/manipulated people, respectively those who on concrete actional situations seem to express nothing else but the offer and the will of the others (because they developed in very rigid or "total" socio-cultural environments), we have no guarantee that they won't refuse, at one moment, to be exactly as they were constrained/"programmed" to manifest. Therefore, if we can say even about the most docile and obedient people that they are liable of insubordination, then from those who socialized in normal conditions we can expect for surprises, inconsistencies, spectacular upsettings of situation, critical attitudes, discontinuities frequently risky and expensive.

If we add to these socio-cultural tendencies predominantly centrifugal the escapes specific to the rebel/nonconformist/revolutionary individuals, we can ascertain that human environments are more predisposed to the process of change than to that of conservation.In reality, the report is reverse and only the psychological impact whichthe change produces leads to subjective representations connected to this phenomenon. *The major inclination of the society is that of preserving the biggest part of its capitals* (religion, education,morality, politics, tehnology etc) because, through them, it reproduces its stability; even the

facts that appear in certain circumstances like innovations enter in a stream of initiatives of fastening and preservation, especially when they bring comfort, safety, efficiency, pleasure.

On the whole, it isn't wrong to affirm that the society wants to hold the control – on those things which reproduce/preserve themselves, but also in what concerns those things that can change/transform – using the social learning.

2. The Similarities Formation Through Social Learning

The moving off from the unpleasant or really exasperating hypostasis, induced by change or preservation, obliged the societies to select carefully the learning contents, to apply the most efficient methods of social learning , to give gratifications to those which corespond to the exicengies of the formation, to aplly punitive measures for those who turn away from what it is socially desirable etc. all these aspects request, actionally speaking, the processive cross of two moments: *the production of the behavioral similarities and the typification of the similar experiences.*

The concrete manifestation of the first moment requests the disposal of the individuals in contact situations, dialogue, cultural transfer, because they "form they behaviour one after the other through repeted reccurences, developed in the course of the social interactions" (Lestel 2004: 140).

The main consequence of this first step is the *similarities formation*, that is including in the same social circles those who interacted and sent each other contents of learning, making, in this way, the differences between them; even when some of the diferences between the individuals that form this kind of circles are mentaned, they do not cancel or dilute the social, but they prove the fact that they exert *similar roles*, but also *complementary roles*. This explains why people make common cause without being identical, they get married prefering parteners only from a certain marital/conjugal or social class, they establish their residence in a way that they be compatible with the neighbours, they feel good only in groups towards they don't live a cognitive, axiologic, pecuniar etc handicap. Essentialy, the interindividual complementarities

and solidarizations are built much easier on the basis of the similarities between people and less shallow/easy on the basis of the differences between them.

At least from the theoretical point of view, opting for something unknown is attractive, to a certain point. Actually, it would be a new experience from which we could obtain an important benefit. In the same time, however, it would be to risky to neglect the warning according to which a new experience, uncensored enough by safety frames, can finish with an unpleasant state of insecurity. The fears and the uncertainties concerning the new make people arrange their elective approaches especially through the viewpoint of some similar experiences of social learning; the tentation of the new can't be, however, totally rejected or canceled, but the instinct of the combinations bursts out every time the conservative attitude is not rewarding enough.

A. Bandura, the contemporary specialist recognised as the most performant in the problem of the social learning, made an experiment (Bandura 1977). On subjects at the age of childhood, to show how *the similar options are forming*. He divided the children into three groups and he put an adult to express in front of each one of them an extremely aggressive behaviour over a toy, more precisely over a doll. Before telling the children that they can play with the doll, the experimenter criticised the violence of the adult in front of the first group, he praised it in the front of the second group, and treated indifferently the whole situation when he addressed to the children from the third group. After this explanatory interventions, there were registered the behaviours of the children, reaching to the following conclusions: the subjects that assisted at the rejection of the aggressive behaviour by the experimenter manifestated a very reduced agressivness; in exchange, those who received messages of encouraging or admiration were stimulated to practice it in their relation with the toy; even the children from the third group opted, predominantly, for agressivness, although they were not directed explicitly to it, but they have not been told either that this kind of action is blameable.

Beginning from these details, we can conclude that the similarity groups form depending on what we socially learn through imitation, reason, exercise etc. Usually, all those who enter in the componence of

such a group have similar characteristics. It would be wrong to understand similarity in their case as a perfect equality or as an absolute identification of the individual with those of his kind. The learning offer to which the individuals expose themselves is very big, and no one can apropriate everything that it is proposed to him and, so, he can be characterised only through a relatively reduced number of features of similarity. For example, a middle-aged man belongs through similarity to the group of parents of his age, to the group of specialists who have the same profession, to the group of residents from his environment, to the group of those who admire the same cultural values etc. Many characteristics he has in common with people he does not know, with whom he doesn't interact directly, aspects that don't hinder him to be classified togheter with them in the same structures of groupal affiliation; at the same time he differs through other features from the persons towards he should accomplish *the clause of similarity*: if he isn't traditionalist, if he doesn't resort to the systems of assurance, if he doesn't hesitate to change his workplace in order to increase his incomes, he doesen't treat the health problems with the attention specific to those of his age etc., then he isn't a part of the similarity group to which all the aspects from the enumeration recommend him.

Those who want to delimit the class to which an individual belongs to are in a aberrant situation. The subject can be fixed with rebate not only in many other groups, but also in classes which seem to exclude each other: the unemployed can be also rich, the successful man can be also uneducated, the believer can also have imoral manifestations, the sportsman can achieve performances using doping substances as an ordinary trickster, the highly specialised science man can be an ignorant concerning the knowledge of some minor information from other scientific areas etc.

3. The Construction of the Social Types Through Restrictive Assignment

From the sociological point of view, the confusion mentioned can be surmounted through the explanation of the way in which *the typification of the similarities* can be reached – a step of very deep significance in the explanation of a science social entelechies

sedimentation process and of the specific concepts formation of its area. Definitely, for a sociologist, as for the ordinary man, the middle-age subject around which we developed a previous example will remain in the men's type/ group of this age because its most evident and important notes are derived from the similarities supposed by this group. The same thing happens in all the cases in which, randomly, appear some new similar characteristics, which can't beverified to a wholeclass of individuals, but which, through the tipically "halo effect" contagiousness, essentially orientates the classification criterion and facilitates *the assignment of the qualities of the parts to the whole to which they subordonate*.

This way of assignment is practised very often by every actor of the social life, and the result generated immediately is *the typification*, respectively "the inclusion of the individual man in a social type, of the peculiarity/special feature into a general category" (Poledna 1999: 113).

Obtaining such an effect represents an objective necessity for an individual; when he relates with his own kind, he proceeds as he would relate with different human types, and the social learning was that which prepared him to have efficient reports with a considerable number of such types[1].

Even if the typification is an objective fact, many attributes from those delimited in its approaches are subjective. For instance, a sport like

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[1] In principle, a socialized individual is capable to interact boundlessly with the other individuals with whom he resembles through the contents of the socialization. In fact, he proceeds restrictedly, he restricts his relational sphere from his own status, through which he stands in a social type, and he locates/selects those with whom he interacts. This is why, the interhuman reports aren't simple connections between individuals, but reports between human types. If, for example, someone has a father status, then he will adress to his child like any other ordinary father, claiming that the child answer him properly, and not as to a X person who dialogizes with some Y person. In the same way will go the relationships between doctor and patient, professor and student, merchant and customer etc. Everybody appeals to somebody's services leaving from the social type he belongs to (son, patient, stundent, customer) and demands from the collocutor reactions specific to the social type through which they legitimate themselves (father, doctor, professor, merchant). In the end, the contacts between the parts are relationships between human types , which reproduce some contents socially assigned and not relationships between persons without statutory identity.

football is (according to the correct typification, sustained by statistic weights) specific to the young persons. Sometimes, it is practised, as entertainment, by elder persons, but this doesn't mean nor that elders who play football become young people, neither that this sport becomes something usual among the elders. The subjectivity leads the individuals, this time, to a erroneous typification, in that the mentioned sport is attributed to persons of any age.

The same subjectivity directes falsely the typification in many other circumstances: unlike what is happening in Romania, the eighteen American young men earns his living, doesn't live with his parents or if he does he pays them a rent. However, all this details don't have to prove that they don't belong anymore through typification to the category of the young men, but the fact that in USA, the young human type has also other features beside those recorded/registered at the generic Romanian youngman; we can also mistake in the typification of a religious affiliation/allegiance (the Chinese catholicism seems to be something else than Rome's catholicism, but he remains catholicism in its essence), professional affiliation (if someone doesn't know an issue from his own profession arsenal, it doesn't mean that he doesn't belong to this category, as the individual that is not part of the group, but he knows the issue, he doesn't become automatically member of the group of professionals who identify themselves with it), educational affiliation (some persons' option for nationalism – but not for ethnocentrism, xenofobism, rasism, anti-Semitism – leads to their labeling as antimodernists and antiliberalists, although this thing shouldn't happen) etc.

4. Dubitable objectivity of the sociological categories

The total cancellation of the subjective substrate in the construction of classifications is impossible. In return, some might hope at an attenuation of subjectivismes, especially when the classification is made by sociologists. They usually resort to simple classifications, established on criteria supported by evidence. According to their typicalisations, people are divided in statistical categories with very high values because diversities are avoided. Eventually, the sociologist uses criteria which qualify reality in a dichotomic manner, appreciating that in this way *categorial subjectivity is being reduced*.

     Some classification criteria and simple human types derived from it:
- according to persons` gender: men, women;
- according to the rezidential environmemt: rural, urban;
- according to the civil statute: married, single;
- according to the age level: young, old;
- according to the extend of proprieties and incomes: rich, poor;
- according to the political position: liberals, conservatives;
- according to the degree of assuming economic risks: speculators, fund holders;
- according to the profoundness of interhuman relations: based on community and society;
- according to the degree of fidelity towards the social offer: conformists, nonconformists;
- according to the level of fulfilling social desire: normal, subnormal.

    Through the clear-cut opossition which they express these types leave the impression of objectivity. If we interpret the social space from their exclusivist point of view, we get to the conclusion that people have nothing else to do than to join one of the two solutions, non-existing another liberty of decision. Or, starting even from the human typeswith which we recently exemplified, we realise that the typological network could be not only extended, but it is quite necessary to be completed. Randomly taking a few cases among the classified ones, to demonstrate the incompleteness of dichotomic classification: according the civil statute, individuals are divided in married and unmarried, but they can also be divorced, separated without being divorced, living in concubinage, participants in groups which practice relations in the shape of sexual comunism etc; accordind to the age level it is convenient to establish only two classes: young and old, but each of them is divided in more than one internal types (Rădulescu 1994; Comenius 1977; Gîrleanu-Şoitu, 2006: 17-20), not to mention the subjective types of age (felt, shown, demonstrated, supported by interests); (Maddox 1986) according to the level of fulfilling social desire it would be comfortable to have only the two already mentioned types, but rough reality recommends the differentiation of subnormals in easily recoverable, hardly recoverable,

irrecoverable – as well as addinga new human type: supernormals. (Neamțu, Stan (coord.), 2005: 68-73).

We could proceed in the same manner with all the other typifying situations and, implicitly, we would be straying from the dichotomic classification. By its simplicity and by excluding other typological possibilities, the latter acquires the objectivity aura. This is why a lot of people prefer and consider it comfortable. However, dichotomy is more the result of casuistic eliminations than of logical derivations and a more forced construction than an obvious consequence. It distributes casts human actors into two classes of equals, which differentiates them, they don`t equally participate at the action of interpersonal communication of experiences, don`t socialize in the same way, not at least in identical existential conditions and even refuses to socialize completely in report with the social formative offer.

In other words, absolute equality among individuals is impossible and must be understood like a statistical prevalence in the typifying documents. ”Even there where democratic or comunist tendencies plan or partially realize equality, this actually means persons` equivalence, their social positions, their performances etc. Equality among individuals represents a fundamental impossibility dictated by the differences between their constitution, biography fate etc.” (Polenda 1999: 114)

The classification groups delimited in society are results of confirmations or of approximating the equality of the situations of those who set them up, some kind of *rounding reduction*, so that it cam match with the same affiliation class. Finally, these are sociological constructions, that is typologies or categories inferred from the evidence of the social ressemblaces.

The absence of absolute equality forces thinking to produce the *first logical classification structure*, the one that separates inividuals in owners of a quality, on one hand, and not-owners of this one, onon the other hand. The result of performing this classsifying operation can be only *dichotomic, categoric, rapidly specified* and, through these features, *objective*. In the same time, only because the exchequer of human manifestations, states, attitudes involves notes, features, characteristics that cannot be equalized or are hardly equalized, and when one performs such synthetizings one remains with the impression that he/she is

exaggerating, there is nothing left to do than to give up at the dichotomy exclusivism and typify more largely or more relaxed, in other words, where one is forced to identify only two human types, one will get to delimit three - four or even more such types.

If one abadons the dichotomic procedure of typification, one will get to transform, for example, the dual social structure "master-servant" in a trichotomic structure: "producers-merchants-rulers" or "peasants-workers-intellectuals" and even into a series of social types from the first class (most favoured) to the fifth class (most disfavoured). (Aluaş, Drăgan, 1971: 436-438)

One will also get to the same effect - typological expansion – when the structure of population will be reconsidered according to the size of the estates of material nature and individuals` incomes; the dichotomic distribution "poor-rich" is no longer available and the trichotomy "masses – middle – middle class – elite" is remarked in its place.

Even more, each one of these three types is permissive at divisions and classifications: masses are regularly poor and the ones in this situation are typologically staggered into categories like *extreme poverty, under the limit of poverty, immediately above the limit of poverty* (Teşliuc, Pop, Teşliuc 2001),middle – class is localized in three human types: *low middle – class, properly speaking middle – class, upper middle – class* (*Feţele schimbării. Românii şi provocările tranziţiei.* 1999: 243), and the elites had been classified so many times that it is hard to stop over one classification. Still we mention a few types delimited by D. Sandu within the framework of the totalitarian society: the nomenclaturist, the activist, the contestant (in the political area), the specialist (in the professional area), the racketeer (in the socio-economical area) (Sandu 1996: 17-19).

The typological diversification could be pursuited like an usual consequence in relation with any other dichotomic classification criterion. Not even the most restrictive typification, descended from the gender affiliation and the rezidential affiliation do not remain exclusively dual; it is a well known fact with some phisical characteristics typical of both sexes and acoording to the rezidence criterion, reality demonstrates that

there are people who live currently and relatively equal in time in the urban environment and in the rural one.

The numerical development of social types is a finding at which every person who progresses with the intention of overtake human life similarities or who feels the need of commanding and arranging the objects, processes, phenomenons present in the space in which he lives in reaches at. Still, the most important observation about this aspect is that one at which the socialist might likely reach at: according as classificators are *moving off from the dichotomic typification, the impression of subjectivity of the human types specification approaches equally increases*. Many of the extended typologies which we reminded confirm the truthfulness of this statement. To remove any doubt, we appeal again to examples:

- some psychologically subnormals (like schizophrenics) can be supernormals in fields like science or arts;

- some mass members can become, in special conditions, elite components (as we know, in Romania, there werw Union liders who became members of the Government, and, at a certain point, one such leader ever became Prime-Minister);

- some old nomenclaturists, although repudiated after they had fallen in the disgrace of the new power, can remain in the society elite because they have qualities which recommend them as great specialists in professional areas for which they had been formed;

- some liberals can change themselves into a more conservative species than the one of the conservatories themselves, in the moment in which they are delighted with the manner in which they use power .

În all these situations, the typifications subjectivism – about which we claim that it cannot be removed, but only diminished –finds itself in the incompletness and/or incorrectness of the sociological categories or the identified social types, as in the mistrust towards them. This kind of deficiencies, even though they cannot be completely surpassed they can be at least attenuated in a higher measure, when each of the delimited types is supported and argued with a series of norms, rules, theories.

Being symbolical constructions, the concepts and the typifications of socoilogy are subjective by nature. This is why, the social science does not have any concept whose significance can be unaimously accepted.

This finding does not stop sociologists to hope that will realize as soon as possible the conceptual unification and increase the objective fond of the used categories. To get nearer to these results, they have to respect two methodological exigencies:

- to originate the typification which they perform in a remarkeble number of similar experiences;

- to justify and confirm conceptualizations which they realize not only through experiencial antecedents, but also through normalizations, definings suitable to typifications.

As a result, the immediate experiences (lived almost in the same way by many individuals who agree to the specific acts of social learning process), but also the congruent reflexion over these experiences legitimates the objective substratum of any typology or sociological category.

The processuality of passing from concrete to abstract and, implicitely, of the sociological concepts formation includes into a dynamic variable from case to case, passings from the direct, individual experience to the interpersonal communication of the experience, to the detaching of similarities and finally, to the synthetizing of mutual aspects in social categories or types. One such process is very necessarybecause it defines, in a very economic way, persons, objects, phenomenons, situations etc. And because it directs the explanations and the sociological researches[1] (Liedemit 1971: 127-133).

Yet, we do not have to forget that, at the ending of this process, we obtain social abstractions or types, while reality is concrete and atypical. Therefore, any concept is restrictive, partially and approximately overtaking the features of reality. This is the reason why the sociological concepts remain imperfect, always letting the possibility of being completed, marked by the insufficience of the objectivity and with the quality of probabilistic knowledge.

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[1] See also Liedemit, F. 1971. Aspecte gnoseologice ale metodei tipologice de cercetare. in the volume "Metode şi tehnici în ştiinţele sociale şi politice". CIDSP. Bucureşti. pp. 127-133.

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