

# THE BIRTH OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL INTERACTION\*

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## INTRODUCTION

All theoretical thoughts and scientific endeavors, even in their most abstract forms, are not only the product of intellectual reflection, but also the expression of a given society, of a specific historical period. Since human beings live in society and all societies have a temporal dimension, cultural currents always have a precise historical and social context.

In this brief outline, we have tried to highlight the fact that “social relationships” have been at the basis of sociological study ever since it was established as a science of human behaviour. At the same time, the concept of social relationships created a boundary which distinguished it from philosophy, law, psychology, biology, economics, history and politics, all of which had to do with the interpretation of social phenomena.

We are therefore proposing as a subject for analysis, those theories and those authors who for the first time in the story of human thought have come to be defined as sociologists. The “discovery of society” presented by sociologists, coincides with the individualization of new practices and new social relationships in the emerging modern society: therefore at a theoretical level one “invents” the category of social relation.

In making this cultural distinction, we used a method developed by that sector of sociology which looks at the development of knowledge. It considers the interdependence between theoretical models and the historical contexts in which they matured. Thus the concept of interdependence prevents us from giving a single cause explanation to the relationship between social structure and social phenomena.

Having stated this sociological premise, I will begin to develop the theme on social interactions and their role in the birth of sociological reflection.

In proposing the discovery of social interactions as a focal point of sociological thought, certainly we run the risk of structuring it excessively and oversimplifying it. This is due to lack of time to fully present this subject in all its facets.

## 1. ACKNOWLEDGING THE TIMING AND LOCATION OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology is perhaps the only science where we precisely know the year it was officially started: it was 1838 when in the 47<sup>th</sup> *Course of positive philosophy* Auguste Comte (1798-1857) coined the term Sociology (Comte, 1908, p. 132).<sup>1</sup> The writings of Comte however had already constituted a point of reference for sociology in 1820. Since the first of these texts was written in collaboration with his teacher, Henry Saint-Simon (1760-1825), credit for the birth of this discipline must be given also to this writer.

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\* The following is a list of the literature used as reference in preparing this paper: P. Baert, *La teoria sociale contemporanea*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2002; L.Coser, *I maestri del pensiero sociologico*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1983; F. Crespi, P. Jedlowskj, R. Rauty, *La sociologia. Contesti storici e modelli culturali*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2001; S>G Therborn, *Scienza, classi e società. Uno studio sui classici della sociologia e sul pensiero di Marx*, Einaudi, Torino 1982; R.A.Wallace e A.Wolf, *La teoria sociologica contemporanea*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1994.

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Another pioneer was undoubtedly Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), a sociologist who lived in England during the Victorian era, during the mid-eighteen hundreds. Spencer had considerable influence on the history of social theory since the first sociologists in the United States often referred to his writings. The United States was in fact the region where sociology had its first strong foothold in the academic world.

Another important element in sociology is its historical development, that is, the period in which it reached its own cultural maturity. This occurred in the years that the “founding fathers” of this discipline were publishing their works, that is, between 1880 and 1920: Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) in France; Georg Simmel (1858-1918), Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936) and Max Weber (1864-1929) in Germany; the Italian Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) who taught at Lausanne; and the American “founders”, from Lester Ward (1841-1913) to Charles Cooley (1864-1929).<sup>2</sup>

Sociology began to be taught at university level in France and in the United States; in Germany it aroused interest in the academic world which led to the writing of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie*.<sup>3</sup>

The latter part of the eighteen hundreds saw the birth of some important sociological reviews: the *Revue Internationale de Sociologie* (1893), the *American Journal of Sociology* (1895), the *Rivista Italiana di Sociologia* (1897), the *Année Sociologique* which Durkheim began to publish in 1898. In France the *Institute International de Sociologie* was founded, connected to their *Revue*, to which the most important sociologists of various nations belonged, with the exception of the followers of Durkheim.

The birth of sociology is therefore a phenomenon that came about in the western hemisphere, particularly in Western Europe in the course of the nineteenth century and in the United States during the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. I think it is important to underline the fact that the birth of this science is linked to a specific context, namely its Euro-Atlantic roots. A second element to remember in this brief geo-historical map is the fact that sociology is historically positioned in a post-revolutionary era.

We already mentioned that in France sociology was introduced by Comte and Saint-Simon in the years of the Bourbon restoration.

In England, the studies of Spencer took place not only after the revolution of 1688, but also after the parliamentary reform of 1832 and the abolishment of laws governing wheat production.

In Germany, Italy and the United States,<sup>4</sup> sociology was formalized long after the decisive events of the bourgeois revolution.

It is unlikely, therefore, that the emergence of a new science of society and the social unrest can be attributed only to mere chance. Sociology moreover was not the first application of scientific methodology to societal life: political economics had already reached a state of maturity a century before its birth and, even earlier, Hobbes (1588-1679) and Montesquieu (1689-1755) had already tried to analyze society with the methods of natural sciences.<sup>5</sup> The precursors of sociologists had to deal with two types of already-existing reflections on society: political economics and political theory, or rather, philosophy.

### *1.1 The distinction from political economics*

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Political economics did not arouse much interest in eighteenth century France; it occupied only marginal space in the writings of the first generation of sociologists. Comte and Saint-Simon were acquainted with and appreciated the work of Adam Smith (1723-1790). They were influenced by the French economist Jean-Baptiste Say who endeavoured to exalt the importance of industrial entrepreneurs with respect to agrarian capitalists, who were in turn defended by the physiocrats. This is why Saint-Simon attempted to relate political forms to real social forces. His objective was therefore to place power into the hands of industrialists.<sup>6</sup> Comte, on the other hand was contrary to an economic vision of society. He acknowledged the role of political economics in drawing attention to the new class of industrialists, yet he remained hostile to the narrow vision of social organization from the point of view of free trade.<sup>7</sup> Even Spencer, while defending the laws of political economics from its adversaries, did not attribute any special importance to it in “A System of Synthetic Philosophy.” He used concepts and arguments like the division of labour and trade developed by economists, but stated that his interest in this area came from physiology and that his point of reference was thus the science of biology.<sup>8</sup>

Hence the relationship between political economics and sociology does not seem to be a useful starting point to analyse the historical development of this new discipline. Its pioneers did not consider this new intellectual undertaking to be either a critique or a continuation of political economics.

### *1.2 The distinction from philosophy*

The relationship with political philosophy is different. The first sociologists spent a lot of energy to consider the development of a political science and of a political system that would correspond to the needs of the new world. Saint-Simon, as we have already seen, based his entire reflection on the elaboration of a new political science capable of developing a political system consistent with the needs of the new world, which he interpreted as the building of an industrial order. Comte sought to express a positive science of politics, illustrated in a systematic manner in his *Plan des travaux scientifiques nécessaires pour reorganizer la société*. In fact, one of his most important works is entitled *Système de politique positive*.

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), his contemporary and author of *De la démocratie en Amérique*, also arrived at a conclusion from his own studies that “a new political science is necessary for a world that is now completely new”.<sup>9</sup> Spencer’s intellectual efforts were not aimed at defining the development of a new political system inasmuch as his reflection was an integral part of his philosophy of universal evolution. Certainly, political institutions were one of the main subjects of research because it was through these that the basic distinction was made between “military societies” and “industrial societies.”

Political theory thus appears to be the intellectual background upon which we need to consider sociology’s quest to establish a new science of society, or rather, the context within which the first attempts were made to develop the scientific subject matter on politics in the wake of the upheaval of the French Revolution.

### *1.3 A new subject: the social question*

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These were the beginnings of the era of sociology, but we must specify that its focal interest was the problem of the “social question” (the conditions of the lower classes) which had enormous importance in the process of formalizing sociology as an officially recognized discipline in the course of its historical development. Sociology addressed the conditions of these lower classes of society: poverty, unemployment, lack of housing and health care, criminality, ethnic diversities. We need only recall the tradition of the English *social survey* with the well-known surveys on poverty by Henry Mayhew (1812 – 1887), Charles Booth (1840 – 1916) and Seebow Rowntree (1871 – 1954).

Nevertheless, it was especially in the United States that *social work* research on the poverty of immigrant workers was a forerunner to this discipline which would soon be studied in the American universities, starting from Chicago.

The classic period of sociology coincided with the development of a critique of political economics and the attempt to face the problems posed by the social question.

Therefore, sociology was born as a movement renewing political theory under the impetus of the French revolution, and it was consolidated as a critique of the unrest caused by the industrial revolution. Reacting against the utilitarian-individualistic nature of free enterprise based on its principles of *laissez-faire*, the new social theories that developed in the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century were inductive, socio-ethical and interventionist. Sociology was part of this movement together with other new related disciplines, like historical economics in Germany and formal economics in the United States.

We can therefore identify three critiques with regard to political economics, each one of which is of special importance in the development of the sociological project. One was centered on the politics of free enterprise. The second, represented by the work of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, highlighted the importance of the community founded on shared norms and values. The third laid the foundations for a critical analysis of the epistemological foundations of economics and the establishment of the scientific method of sociology.

## 2. THE DISCOVERY OF SOCIETY AS A SET OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The birth of sociology can be considered to be the discovery of a new society founded on new social practices and relationships. The discovery of the existence and role of “civil society” emerged as a result. This “civil society” was the driving force of the upheaval resulting from the French Revolution. Sociology took form precisely in France as a new theory that considered politics as a manifestation of broader and more general social processes.

Saint-Simon, Comte and Tocqueville emphasized that the frequency of political changes and the greater number of constitutions, solemnly proclaimed but short-lived, highlighted only superficially the legalistic value of political ideas. There was something new present in the social order and this something new had to be discovered in the new social relationships and practices. In fact, not everything was negative, chaotic, imposing terror and destruction. With the beginning of industrialization a new social force was born: the middle-class.

The newly emerging sociology highlighted the contradictions between new social relationships and political forms, but it also sought to resolve the contradictions between the new industrial-democratic society and the anachronistic political set-up of the Restoration period. For Saint-Simon, Comte and Spencer the new society was an “industrial society”. For Saint-Simon the term had an anti-feudal connotation and

intended to express a distinction between productive and unproductive labour: “The crisis that has gripped the political system in the last thirty years can be traced essentially to the complete transformation of the social system. All the modifications that the old political arrangement has gradually undergone up to our day in the majority of civil nations stems from this transformation”.<sup>10</sup>

Comte’s point of view was that the new society was characterized by a new economic activity organized in entrepreneurial form: “To clearly demonstrate the continual effect of industrial development on the general organization of the modern movement, I will first examine the influence of entrepreneurs and then of workers”.<sup>11</sup> In the writings of the Englishman Spencer, we find an evolutionary outline based on a distinction between internal and external processes of a system. In the case of social systems, Spencer indicates a contrast between economic activity and war. The two types of activity give origin to two different forms of social organization. Economic activity is voluntary and consists of the reciprocal interdependence of individuals who exchange services in a system of division of labor; war is a coercive organization structured hierarchically and centralized.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, in England of Spencer’s times as in France of Comte and Saint-Simon’s times, new economic activities shaped a society in which people did something very different from the past, a society in which productive activities replaced war as the dominant activity of citizens.

In addition to “dominant activities”, another interpretation of the new society stressed that there were new forms of “social relationships” among people. This was the idea of Tocqueville when in his main work “*Democracy in America*” he introduced the key concept of social democracy, referring to the conditions of equality and inequality existing in society.

The process of transformation that the French aristocrat focused on was the egalitarian and democratic revaluation of the decline of the aristocracy and the rise of the middle class: “The gradual development of equal conditions is therefore a providential fact; and it has its own essential characteristics: it is universal, lasting and irreversible”.<sup>13</sup>

In the German experience, the fall of the old political order, after the French invasion, had highlighted another determining social factor in political institutions. This factor was not considered as something new but as the rediscovery and reaffirmation of something old, such as the *volkgeist*: the “national culture”. It was expressed in the language, ways, values, customs and traditions of a nation.

German idealism then branched out into two currents: the Romantic current, represented especially by von Savigny’s *historical school of law* and the Hegelian current. Although we do not find a conscious sociological tendency in German Romanticism nonetheless, the sociological theory developed by Simmel, Töennis and Weber indicated that the origins of German sociology had its root in Romanticism.

### 3. SOCIETY AS RELATIONSHIP: TÖENNIS, DURKHEIM, WEBER, MARX, SIMMEL

Thus the subject-matter for classical sociological analyses is the discovery of new social relationships and behaviours that come with modernity.

In developing their scientific discovery, classical period sociologists are working to respond to the problems posed by the social question. They do so from the cultural

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viewpoint criticizing political economics in its liberal viewpoint and juris-naturalistic philosophy.

In Germany this critique and concern materialized in 1873 with the birth of *Verein Für Sozialpolitik*, which gathered all the major German sociologists and economists who advocated for “ethical economics.” One of these was Gustav Schmoller (1838-1917) who supported the idea of inductive and historic-based economics: economies and capital did not exist and could not, therefore, be considered as distinct phenomena, in isolation from the contexts in which they were operative.

The *Verein* had considerable influence on American sociologists, especially those who belonged to the *American Sociological Society*. One of these, Albion Small, one of its ardent admirers, dedicated special attention to it in his work on the origins of sociology in America.<sup>14</sup> But the sociologist who from overseas adopted the cultural heritage of *Verein* was a young professor who had studied Sombart and Weber while in Germany. His name was Talcott Parsons (1902-1979). His studies of the German economic tradition led him to writing a critique on classical political economics and on socialism, both of which were imbued with utilitarianism. He did so in order to attribute a decisive role to the norms and values shared in social relationships. His conclusions constitute the true subject-matter of his work *The Structure of Social Action*.<sup>15</sup>

The first great classical work dealing with social relationships is that of Ferdinand Töennis (1855-1936) in his *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887) *Community and Society*. The warmth and harmony of the family community and of the village were exalted and set against the calculating and pragmatic egotism of society. More generally, Töennis intended to present a theory of “human wills” based on reciprocity and on the rapport between the unity and plurality of human associations. He wrote: “The present theory will exclusively assume the relationship of reciprocal affirmation as the subject-matter of their own surveys,. Each one of these rapports represents a unity in plurality or a plurality in unity.... The group formed by this positive rapport, conceived of as being or subject acting in a unitary manner internally and externally, can be called association. The relationship in itself and therefore, the *association*, is conceived either as real and organic life – and this is the essence of the *community* – or as ideal and mechanical formation – and this is the concept of *society*”.<sup>16</sup>

Töennis described the embryonic forms of community distinguishing three kinds of relationships: 1) the relationship between mother and child; 2) the relationship between husband and wife; 3) the relationship among those who recognize themselves as brothers and sisters. Töennis emphasized that brotherhood is the most human relationship that can exist and the most authentically communitarian. Furthermore, that this relationship is based on love and reciprocal will. He said: “Brotherly love can be considered as the most human relationship among human beings, even though still completely based on blood relations.

We see this in effect where instinct is weakened by all the causes of hostility which could negatively affect this relationship. Memory seems to cooperate to maintain and strengthen the bonds of the heart by recalling all the pleasing impressions and experiences associated with the person and his or her actions”.<sup>17</sup>

In social life, instead, Töennis identifies only thirst for power and money in individuals who build merely instrumental relationships. With regard to relationships in society, he

said: “Personal interests and vanity are the motives of sociability; vanity needs other people as mirrors, personal interests need them as instruments”.<sup>18</sup>

What emerges from his analysis is that social relationships are the foundation of collective living. If on one hand they have a classifying importance, from the empirical viewpoint they seem to be rather limited. Nonetheless, in accord with the analyses of the previous authors, Töennis emphasized a process of radical change such as the move to modernity in which different relationships characterize different types of society.

The main sociological work of Durkheim on *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893) in many respects also constitutes a work on social relationships and their transformation in the modern era. Durkheim wrote many texts of a sociological nature. We recall among others: *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), *Suicide* (1897) *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912). To him we owe the development of sociology, and he probably gave the greatest contribution ever to make it a subject of study, besides developing sociological theory.

Durkheim began with an observation: “A totality is not identical to the sum of its parts. Rather, it forms something else, whose properties differ from those present in its composing parts.” From this supposition ensues the identification of the specific subject-matter of sociology: “Association... constitutes the source of all novelties.... In virtue of this principle, society is not simply a sum of individuals... but a specific reality endowed with its own characteristics”.<sup>19</sup> In discovering the existence of society Durkheim defined one of the basic theoretical problems of sociology still prevalent today: that of the relationship between two given entities: the individual and society. This was the moral, sociological and political question of Durkheim’s entire work. The moral question consisted in how to harmonize individual freedom and social order. The sociological question consisted in demonstrating the existence of society in so far as it is a distinct reality from its individual components. The political question was how to ensure both individual freedom and collective solidarity.

Durkheim was one of those sociologists who focused on social relationships. This, in fact, is what gives life to social events and to social integration, two of the most important sociological concepts developed by Durkheim. Durkheim holds that interaction between individuals constitutes a reality which cannot be explained by biological or psychological factors. Consequently, he is showing that relationships between individuals give life to “social events.”

Durkheim is remembered for being the founding father of a theoretical paradigm which is called Functionalism. Among his followers are some of the major contemporary sociologists, like Parsons, Merton (1910-2003), Luhmann (1927-1998).

Another outstanding sociologist was Max Weber. His vision was distant from that of the founding fathers, namely of a natural science of the evolution of humanity and society guided by the rise of the middle-class. At the same time, however, he opposed both the Hegelian and Romantic idealistic schools of thought.

The principal category in Weber’s analysis and in the methodological program of the new science was social action characterized by meaningful relationships between two or more subjects. In his writings we read: “By ‘social’ action, we must intend an action that is directed towards other individuals and which is consequently conditioned by them.”<sup>20</sup> Society is born from two or more subjects who have a mutual and meaningful exchange. This meaningful dimension in a social interaction is the foundation of a new

sociological methodology based on the understanding of the meaning in this exchange, constituting a social relation.

Therefore, Weber is the first sociologist to define social relations as being based on reciprocity of action and meaning: “By social relations we must intend a behaviour of reciprocity between several individuals that is meaningful and consistent. Consequently, the interaction must be characterized by reciprocal actions on the part of both”.<sup>21</sup>

Another characteristic of society is the reciprocity of people’s actions and their openness to others. Of course, nothing is said about the nature of this relationship which can vary from one of gratuitous giving towards a neighbour, to open hostility, to conflict and the exclusion of others.

For Weber, paramount to the concept of social relationships is the meaning that the subject attributes to his or her action. Thus we have societies where a meaningful subject interacts with the behaviour of other individuals and is consequently conditioned by it. In this perspective also for the so-called “social institutions” – like the State, the Church, marriage, and so forth – social relationships consist exclusively and simply in the possibility that an action reciprocally established took place, is taking place or will take place in a given way, according to its meaning”.<sup>22</sup>

Thus Weber introduced for the first time in Western thought interaction between subjects as the starting point for great historical events and macro social formation. The topics on which this very great intellectual reflected – the State, modernity, capitalism, bureaucracy, power, cities, religion – indicate some of the categories which are comprised of meaningful actions between interacting subjects.

Weber is remembered for his methodological writings and for having developed an analytical tool which is ideal in an investigative methodology that analyzes, understands and interprets actions.

Perhaps neither Durkheim nor Weber would be who they are for us today had they not known the intellectual work of Karl Marx (1818-1883).

Marx, as we know, was a political theorist, an economist, a philosopher, a political ideologist and leader and also a sociologist.

It was Marx, in fact, who defined modern society as “capitalistic,” upon which the reflection of Durkheim and Weber were engrafted. We owe to Marx the empirical intuition of the relationship between social structures and ideas, as well as the concept of social classes. He was the one who developed the complex theoretical model of conflict. We are not interested here in giving a systematic presentation of Marxist theory, but we are interested in it from the viewpoint of social relationships.

In a capitalistic society, social relations are in constant flux and it is through these conflicting tensions that social change is generated. In the first place, we must say that Marx saw historical subjects in a collective manner. In fact, he had a holistic approach to society. From an analytical viewpoint, there are only “productive forces”, that is, people establish relationships with one another in the incessant struggle to snatch from nature their means of a livelihood. This is the driving force of history: “The first historic action is... the production of material livelihood”.<sup>23</sup>

“Productive forces” enter into “relationships of production.” With this concept Marx intended to underline all those social relationships which people establish through their participation in economic life. Therefore, the relationships of production are not only

machines which produce, but also the production processes and the organizational aspects of production.

These “relationships of production” create collective subjects which are the social classes. In the preface to *Capital*, Marx states his methodological premise defining the subject and type of his analysis: “We are dealing with people here only inasmuch as they personify economic categories, they represent certain relationships and class interests”.<sup>24</sup>

In fact, Marx did not objectify society or classes; he recognized a degree of autonomy in the subject. Nevertheless, his thought is negatively influenced by naturalistic and mechanistic epistemology which always compels him to indicate one factor that, in the final analysis, determines the others.

However, from our viewpoint of “social interaction” Marx also introduced the concept of “alienation” to the analysis of the relationships that are established in a capitalistic society, a topic particularly important to the German cultural tradition. Marx held that all social institutions tended to alienate inasmuch as individuals lose the awareness that they themselves are the authors and builders of those very institutions. They don’t see their actions connected with those institutions.

Such a process is characteristic of the working world and is expressed in four aspects of alienation: a) from the objects they produce, b) from the process of production, c) from oneself, d) from one’s community: “the estrangement of one person from another... to say that a person’s very essence is estranged from another means that one person is estranged from another, as each one of them is estranged from their human essence”.<sup>25</sup>

Relationships of exploitation, alienation and conflict are a patrimony of sociological thought, thanks to the Marxist analysis.

Another great contribution to sociological thought was given by a German sociologist: Georg Simmel. Simmel can be defined as the sociologist of interaction. In fact he is the thinker that people refer to when considering symbolic interaction.

In his writings we find a definition of society based on the reciprocity of individuals’ actions: “Society exists wherever several individuals enter into reciprocal actions. Such actions are the result of specific impulses or in view of specific goals.”

For Simmel, the reciprocal action of separate individuals does not build a society unless unity emerges between the parts: “These reciprocal actions mean that a unity arises between the individual bearers of those occasional impulses and goals, that is, a ‘society.’ In fact, unity in the empirical sense is the result of the reciprocal action of elements.”

Later on Simmel stated that society is comprised of the unity of reciprocal actions, referring to the actions of daily life, those infinitely numerous and infinitely small actions: “That unity or association can be present in very different degrees, depending on the mode and proximity of the reciprocal action – from short-lived gatherings such as a family gathering, or all valid connections, even retracting one’s citizenship, to the passing encounters between acquaintances in a hotel, to the close connections in a medieval guild”.<sup>26</sup>

The social order founded on daily interactions is the subject of Simmel’s analysis: “Only what takes place in the domain of physical and spiritual contacts, of mutual actions which give rise to pleasure and suffering, of conversation and silence, of

common and antagonistic interests – this alone constitutes the wonderful indissolubility of society”.<sup>27</sup>

But Simmel is also the sociologist who devoted himself to developing a “sociology of interiority.” In 1907 he wrote an essay entitled “Gratitude.”<sup>28</sup> This sentiment became for Simmel one of the strongest cohesive forces of society and if it were lacking, society would disintegrate, at least as we know it. Gratitude is the link that keeps us united, a link that is inadequate in expressing our thank you for a gift received from someone who “acted first” in total freedom and gratuitously gave to us.

## Conclusions

The discovery of society and new sociological reflection begin precisely with the observation of new practices and social interactions among individuals. Social interaction is the element which distinguishes the sociological realm from the reflection on the social sphere that preceded it. We feel that we must be creative and continue in this adventure, to explore new spheres of social order and change in our day. This will allow us to find a greater balance between the principles that guided the revolution of 1789<sup>29</sup> in France<sup>30</sup>, finally giving proper attention to “fraternal relationships”. In fact, current sociological reflection attributes a fundamental role to inequality, above all, to analyzing the unequal access to scarce social goods. Likewise, attention is given to the principle of liberty and its usefulness in the analysis of democratic regimes. However, the concept of fraternity still needs to find its theoretical place in empirical analysis.

According to Ulrich Beck, sociology must renew its terminology because at this point it is burdened by dead categories.<sup>31</sup> A theoretical paradigm is needed. The social phenomena (that these categories are no longer able to interpret adequately) is calling for this new terminology, as always happens in sociological traditions.

In short, our times seem to be ripe for a new social theory.

## NOTES

1. A. Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*, IV, Paris, 1908, p.132; trad. It. *Corso di filosofia positiva*, vol.2, Utet, Turin 1967.

2. The initiators of American sociology are considered to be: Lester Ward (1841-1913), William Graham Sumner (1840-1910), Franklyn Giddins, Albion Small (1854-1926), Edward Ross (1866-1922), William I. Thomas (1863-1947), Robert E. Park (1864-1944) and Ernest Burgess (1886-1966).

3. Only with the beginning of the Weimar Republic would sociology be accepted by German universities. See F Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass 1969, pp. 228 onwards.

4. In Eastern Europe there are Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838-1909 of Austrian-Polish descent), Tomàs Masaryk (1850-1937 from the Czech Republic), and from Russia Maksim Kovalevskij (1851-1916), J. Novikov (1901-1975), Evgenij De Roberty (1853-1915), Edward Westermack (1862-1939) and K. N. Michajlovskij (1852-1906). From a bit farther away there are the first Japanese scholars, among whom we recall Nagao Aruga (1860-1921) and Tongo Takebe (1871-1945).

5. R. Nisbet, *Storia e cambiamento sociale. Il concetto di sviluppo nella tradizione occidentale*, Isedi, Milano 1977.

6. H. Saint-Simon, *Opere*, Einaudi, Torino 1975.

7. A. Comte, *op. cit.*, p.138-146.

8. H. Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, 10° ed. London 1882, pp.334 onwards

9. A. Tocqueville, *La democrazia in America*, Einaudi, Torino 1968, p.20
10. H. Saint-Simon, *op. cit.* p.182
11. A. Comte, *op. cit.*, p. 189
12. H. Spencer, *op. cit.*, p.189.
13. A. Tocqueville, *op. cit.*, p.189.
14. A. Small, *Origins of Sociology*, University Chicago Press, Chicago 1911, Ch.3
15. T. Parsons, *La struttura dell'azione sociale*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1962; orig. ed. 1937
16. F. Tönnies, *Comunità e società*, Edizioni di ComunitàMilano 1963, p.45; orig. Ed. 1887
17. *Ibid.*, p.52
18. *Ibid.*, p.458
19. E. Durkheim, *Le regole del metodo sociologico. Sociologia e Filosofia*, Edizioni di Comunità, Torino 2001; orig. Ed. 1895. In A.R.Calabrò, *Oggetto e metodo della sociologia: parlano i classici*, Liguori, Napoli 2003, pp.56-7.
20. M.Weber, *Economia e società*, Edizionidi Comunità, Milano 1961, in A.R. Calabrò, *op. cit.* p.63; orig. Ed 1922.
21. *Ibid.*, p.78
22. *Ibid.*, p.79
23. K. Marx, *L'ideologia tedesca, Critica della più recente filosofia tedesca nei suoi rappresentanti Feuerbach, B.Bauer, e Stirner, e del socialismo tedesco nei suoi vari profeti*, in K. Marx e Engels, *Opere*, Editori Riuniti, Roma 1972, Vol. V, p.27.
24. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p.18
25. *Ibid.*, vol III, p.304
26. G. Simmel, *Sociologia*, Edizioni di Comunita', Milano 1989; in A.R. Calabrò, *op.cit.*, pp.105-6
27. *Ibid.*, p.119
28. G. Simmel, *La gratitudine*, in G. Simmel, *Sull'intimità* in V. Cotesta, Armando Editore, Roma 1996, pp.91-103.
29. The principle of fraternity, in reality, was the last, after liberty and equality, to be inserted in the project of the French revolutionaries, who inserted it in 1793, as a substitute for national unity.
30. U. Beck, *Capitalismo o libertà? Varcare le soglie della modernità*, Carocci, Roma 2001.