

Two cultures and the real thing

What comes first: society or the individual human being? Can the social ends justify the involuntary human individual sacrifice?

The answer to these questions does not separate right wing from left wing politics. Collectivists, as capitalists, do not care much about individuals, when they come to terms to make history. Mainstream liberal politics are not friendly with losers, as they call most of other people. For sociologists without borders (SWB) is the reverse: it should make the difference. Human rights and social solidarity means that society should prevent and heal individual unhappiness, organize material distribution and promote the sharing of spiritual social ambiance. Social responsibility should be assessed by these criteria, meaning that sociology should be able to assess social individual responsibility by assessing the solidarity quality of intentionality and decision making. *Social individual responsibility* is, at the same time, indistinctively individual and social. Individuals are, as Durkheim noticed, constrained by the social environment. Anyway, individuals can make the difference and should be responsible for it. For instance, it should be recommended to denounce human rights violations as a matter of individual responsibility. It is unacceptable to cooperate with human rights violations, even if one is pressured to accept that, as it is the case of authorized drowning simulation police inquiry, or to charge poor people with all social responsibility of fighting poverty. As sociologists, sociologists without borders should give priority to individual well being, meaning by that the social ability to behave within social solidarity criteria.

These criteria matters whenever we face whatever different situations. If a college tenure is at stake, should we concern about eventual injustice or politics misleading? If a woman is being lapidated, should we send emails? If one associate feels happy to talk about his/her experience, should we promote the opportunity of interacting between colleagues? Or we should restrain our solidarity to strategic and for certain transforming issues? Should we vote what kind of efforts should be shared by our network? Or should solidarity be valid at any level of influence we live in?

To these questions there are two main kinds of answers: the *economic answer* and the *empowerment answer*. Most of the time for most of sociologists, only the economic answer seems rational. Sociologists love to compare sociology with the queen of the social sciences (be it as the neo-classical version of economics, as social system approach or as rational individualistic approach, be it the political economy version of economics, as class classification census or as geo-strategic resources based analysis) and to stay far from psychological and legal perspectives (eventually for good reasons, such as avoiding the manipulative inductive persuasion stand).

The economic kind of answer goes like this: shortage of good sociological energy and knowledge recommends collective planning, in order to be able to make the difference changing structural problems. The second kind of answer, recommended by this paper, presuppose that *different levels of potential energy* are developed by human beings during their lives, depending on social structural conditions and depending on happiness, conviction, freedom, solidarity, companion feelings conditions. Look at Vietnam or Iraqi wars. The western concentrated knowledge and technological apparatus, the planning different abilities of the contending parties and the different access to material resources worldwide, all are against the winning side. Why? Because the economic answer do not work on humans, whenever *human nature* is at stake. That is why the world needs sociologists and why human rights are useful as a development index.

The problem is: are sociologists aware of that? What is the human nature?

The answer is: for theoretical reasons, it is very difficult for sociologists to be aware of these matters. In general, it is not clear, for sociologists, why sociology has been, very recently, in modern history, accepted inside university and promoted as a profession: who and what does it serve? Why should its special scientific perspective justify any credit and admiration? Should sociology care about individuals, for instance, as social lawyers? Or should it keep the distance from social problems? There is no uncontroversial answer to these key questions about who are sociologists as professionals. That is why SWB makes a difference: SWB cares about people, as body and mind human real people. That is why SWB needs to develop the discussion about what is the human nature.

This paper will argue that facing actual global radical society changes, sociology has the opportunity, and the need, to open and to adapt itself, as a science, to the new kind of society, without borders. The arguing path goes from renewing organicism sociological perspectives in order to define the way one can understand the split and the linkage between individual and social reality levels. One follows the anti-Cartesian critic by António Damásio, a Portuguese-american neuro-biologic researcher, merging in one single theoretical frame organic, individual and social analytical levels of reality and, doing so, counter equalitarism decay as a relevant modern social value.

Two cultures

Western cultures use very often dualistic references to classify and understand reality. The expression *two cultures* became famous because it is the title of a best seller essay of Lord Snow, the first British science ministry, a writer and a scientist at the same time, an essay where he supports the need to conciliate the scientific and the literary approach to life comprehension. A kind of the same need has been felt by positivists, which conceive the sociological methods as part of a unified scientific method, conciliating hard and soft sciences. The religious/science divide of the world between irrational and rational facts of life and emotional and material realities are other expressions of the two cultures. Mechanics of equilibrium and dynamics through two or more equilibrium states is a way science found to deal with the absence of the spirit as a scientific tool of explaining of real phenomena. Dialectics use the dualistic representation of reality searching to find the way out of the contradiction, revealing the historical effect of emerging new phenomena and of stopping old phenomena.

It is clear for everybody the difference between the represented phenomena – as a total complete and real living phenomenon – and its scientific stereotype representation. Even the most optimistic and positivist scientist cannot assure that one can find a way to produce a perfect bi-univocal relation between representation expression and represented phenomena. As a virtual world, representations depends on ambiance conditions (such as knowledge, culture, information and communication techniques). As a real world, represented phenomena depends on other very different ambiance conditions (such as air, soil, social coercion, for instance).

Is it not about the same kind of problem what Durkheim wrote about the elementary forms of religious life, when he mention the radical divide between sacred and profane social experiences of Australian native peoples?

One of the main differences between mankind and the other animals is the ability to speak and the development of complex communication standards. Every culture learned how to use this

ability in very different ways. The question is: is it universal for mankind the social and experience dividing between the world of spoken and represented ideas (imaginative or realistic ideas, mystic or practical ideas, does not matter) and the world beside ideas and representations, as we usually imagine the animal world? Accepting Durkheim's thesis on elementary forms of human knowledge and social organization, this should be the case: the radical division of the sacred world from the profane world is a consequence of the radical divide between the world as one represent it by social means and for one another, and the world as it is without the human intentionality.

What is universal in positivistic philosophy is the reference to the questioning of human social nature. That is why Descartes said: "I think, therefore I am!", meaning the superiority of human thinking regarding the world (as a tool or an instrument). Till today, in the western world, mainstream thinking uses this philosophy for many different purposes: to legitimate social privileges (as within meritocratic criteria); to build the boundaries of scientific theories (expelling mental phenomena from real world); to distinguish religious fields of reasoning and science fields of work; to split art and beauty from truth and real experience; the divide theory and practice; and so on.

The evolutionist principle, adopted by August Comte, enabled sociology to acquire a special perspective over this conceptual divide, which is, at the same time, a social divide. Priests, as thinkers or as people in charged of diffusing the sacred knowledge, have traditionally specialized themselves as a privileged social order in western societies, the same way as warriors did, ruling the material and contingent world. Comte found the French Revolution and a new equalitarian society brought to light, then, a good opportunity to shape a new kind of epistemology, a new kind of knowledge engine as a anchor to support, at the same time, the new men and the new kind of society. In a worry, he found himself teaching (and preaching) the new positive philosophy against the old ways of thinking, believing that new social conditions needed and supported, at least for a while, new ways of dealing with the divide theory and practice.

His revolutionary thinking about thinking becomes globally controversial in the 19th century, till Marxism took over against idealism (not against positivism) in the 20th century. Both shared the perspective against the social privileges of the priests. Both are trapped by the social system that reproduces social divide between thinking worlds (as virtual worlds, now a day) and the hand working worlds (the proletarian world Marx thought to be, in socialism, the only world, once the social superstructure fall down).

The split between the worlds of existence, of the body, and the worlds of thinking, the mind and the soul, is not only metaphysical. Every sociologist knows, nowadays, that superstructures (legal framework, institutions, political process, cultural traditions, common knowledge, techno-scientific knowledge, professional knowledge, and so on) are part of our world and they contribute to quality in people's lives. Even one still is uneasy to frame that reality in the theoretical sociological framework. One normally chooses between macro level theories opposed to micro level theories, as two different kind of social worlds, instead of facing the divide as a undesirable theoretical effect.

The real thing

Facing a new phase of half a millennium of globalization, the globalization without borders phase should we say, brought about since Portuguese discoveries of the 15th century, should we think about renewal of modern values imprint on common sense and sociological mainstream

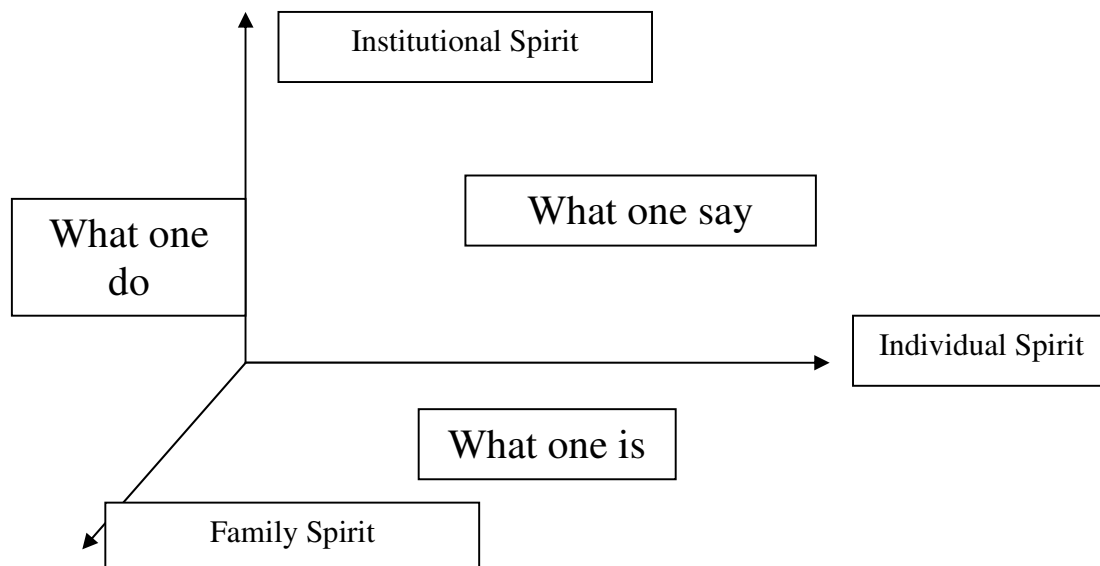
epistemological practices? Should we hope to achieve today what the classic giants of thought didn't achieve? What shall we do?

History of ideas is not a perfection history: it is a political struggle history. When positivism (and Marxism too) emphasized the end of history (for philosophy, for religion, for ideology, for the State, for capitalism), it exaggerated. It called its contemporaries attention about the extreme relevance of what they felt were their revelations, their discoveries. Of course, in our classes or in our discussions sociologists can and must use their work to criticize them. Our pupils or listeners will think we are superior to them, because we talk against what they propose us to follow. (We all continue depending and living a society where thinking is a show, asking for social privilege – it is a fight. Like it happens in sports, old heroes fight for us till new ones come along, and most of the contenders fall down in our memories, especially in brand new memories of new generations). Our pupils or listeners are right. We have the opportunity to be better than them because we have the opportunity to live their lives by the books, by the historical experience resulting of their idea's inspirations for all society, by the institutional results they inspire society to develop. It is no wrong to exaggerate in order to join the social struggle for a better future for mankind.

What is the fight one is looking for? The decay of equalitarism as a shared social value after 1989 is not good. What is sociology doing to oppose that trend?

The path one presents in this paper is not be taken as the only sociological path possible to reach the equalitarian social movement. And one is aware of the social and theoretical result of this exercise (if ever it works) will be recoverable for other proposes than the original one. What is at steak is the actual need to fight (in the theoretical fields too) for a better world. That is the real thing: body and soul together for social improvement. That is the main lesson one should learn from the founders of sociology.

Figure 1 – Modern Differentiation



The real thing exists as being, joining and splitting, at the same time, the two cultures. In the family one is born and learns how to use the world, doing and saying. For control purposes, during childhood, one does and says whatever the family wants to. Till we become socially and

personally more independent, a free individual. As Marx noticed, the accumulation of free individuals (from land and families) is a result of capitalism and it is not – as a fact – very different from slavery. Except the hope for humanity that socialism joins together equality and freedom, as asked by workers unions. Capitalistic social institutions, such as politics, economy and the laws of propriety, for instance, according to Marx, should stop exploiting and oppressing individuals. All that was needed, under the Marxist conception, was the cooperative process of doing exploiting procedures of natural health for human kind needs satisfaction.

For that purpose, as a positivist, Marx conceived the proletarian ideology as the last and self-destructive ideology of the pre-history of mankind, as historical faith. Max Weber developed the critic of historical materialism, which he called *spirit of capitalism*. Without a socialised individual will and understanding shared by some class of people, from generation to generation, no machinery or social movement will prevail on changing society. Without a religious-like inspiration, no social movement is strong enough to emerge. Durkheim calls the same kind of reasoning. He points the priority of moral consciousness over technological or economic results on causing the social labour division characteristic of modern societies. In fact, Karl Marx too, wrote about the need of the revolutionary spirit in order to transform bourgeois class behaviour into historical action of those who are submitted conquering self determination as single and social human beings.

Sociology means believing that what people thinks reflects and causes, at the same time, social individual and collective behaviour. Strangely enough, sociology, as we know it today, does not work with intentionality, i.e. how people take what is said collectively and individually in order to develop the strength, the stamina, needed to change social habits. Most of the time sociologists specialize themselves on macro level observation of what is going on, or else they specialize themselves recording and learning about micro level social phenomena, or else they specialize themselves understanding how it works this or that kind of institution.

Mainstream sociology does not believe that this happens, that, from times to times, societies change suddenly or, at least, sociologists do not believe these kind of emergence can be understood by social sciences. The main epistemological reason for that to happen is the way one conceives analytically the different levels of reality: they are not mechanical and juxtaposed. The different reality levels have empirical existence and their existence does not depend on our imagination. It is our sociological responsibility to find out how the different reality levels merge each other and, at the same time, still maintain several grades of freedom.

For that purpose, as organicist sociological currents already tried in the past, one can read António Damásio bio-neurological best-sellers explanations about how human emotions, feelings work and how he suggests social emotions would probably work.

He found several levels of neural processing. Those processes responsible for our defensive ability to react scarily work very fast. One reacts automatically, without knowing it, by effect of deep stimulus that mobilizes our organic defensive systems. One does not have the time to perceive or to reflect on what is going on. Perception systems and cognitive systems work slower; they even work very fast if one thinks about intentional motivated actions.

All these different organic and neural systems are connected each other in many ways. One of these ways is the homeostatic panel, a virtual neural system that enables individuals to feel the general state of his/her body as something emerging from it, as if it could be something external. One feels in love or seasick and concludes that the cause is something strange and external. When one looks around, what is happening most of the time relates to one's single body and to the way one relates with the living existence on each moment, because other people don't feel

the way one does. In special occasions one can observe a social synchronisation phenomena that joins a large amount of people as if all of them felt the same, by listening to music or sport performances or by joining social or political movement action.

For social analytical purposes, one can conceive the hypothesis of considering three different reality levels, related each other organically like, i.e., they normally do not interfere in different level, even if everybody noticed the presence, but it can happen a situation of change that turns on several direct linkage from a level to another, and vice versa. The quotidian level normally is not connected with cultural or symbolic or professional level. Some people, such as artists when they feel very enthusiastic, or at some special historical moments, when everybody feels very enthusiastic about a soccer game or a song festival, it may arise rare linkages between quotidian and cultural symbolic levels of reality. This cultural or symbolic or professional level is not quotidian nor reveals social changing intentionality. It refers to out family social relations, such as religious festivals that calls Durkheim's attention over Australian autochthones. This kind of social excitement is different from the even less common social situations when people intend to change their lives and push other people to do the moves needed to make it happen.

Semantic turn

Society as all the people living under the sovereignty of a modern State do not match anymore with the real situation on the ground. Social cohesion is not anymore the main political goal, as it was in the era of nationalisms. Progress is not anymore the mainstream assess criteria for a better (or worse) social and political situation. Security and peace are no longer a political goal, as they have been in Europe after the WW II. Social institutions that frame welfare state became economically and politically undesirable for people and parties in charge. Social equality is no longer a reference value. Society means, more and more, the group of people who networks with each other having some kind of control and influence over the social environment. The later becomes each time more violent, criminal, hostile and useless.

The rise of security sector, the growing metropolitan insecurity both psychological and factual, the divide between medical care and education services along class divide, the instant unanimism, both national and international, produced by double fear from terrorism and from terrorist fighters, reveals the rise of new kind of modern societies. Even if the same institutions are standing and evolving, comparing with the sixties political situation, even if their main social missions stays defined as always – to heal, to teach, to help, to regulate – the way they are politically runned, using the new spirit of capitalism,¹ changed, in fact, the nature of their social missions.²

There are ways of changing societies changing the concert of institutional systems, and there are ways of changing societies changing the understanding of the meaning of social statements. There are mechanic ways of changing and there are semantic ways of changing.

When British Prime Ministry, Mrs Thatcher, declared “society does not exist” she was referring to the fragilities of sociology actual strategy, as a science. But she felt the need to declare politically an ideological war against mainstream sociological perspectives.

If one insists on the divide society/individual it becomes clear that the individual should prevail whenever one thinks about objectivity and conceptual clarity. If sociological statement means to

¹ Richard Sennett (2006) *The New Culture of Capitalism*, Yale University Press.

² This effect is clear and denounced within Breton Wood's institutions, after the Washington consensus.

diminish personal responsibility in every day life, given the social causes that always can be found behind any action or decision, everybody understands these kind of assessment are not accurate or useful. These are strong fragilities of mainstream sociological approaches.

Social theory develops itself for a few decades in symbiosis with, and supported by, a rising Social State. Sociology knows very well how to define the institutional missions and how to assess their social practical results. This alliance between sociology and a social democrat understanding of state powers is a threat to neo-liberal policy: sociology is in the ideal scientific epistemological position to observe the semantic turn and to assess the social results of it.

The question is: what should sociology do in order to escape to neo-liberal attack and, at the same time, to adapt its perspectives to the actual globalitization era?

Answer number one: sociology needs to return to classical dilemma and look for the paths that have been followed and to the path that has been forgotten, in order to assess and to open all strategic possibilities and, at the same time, unite all sociologists in defence of the value of social approach to human personal and institutional problems.

Answer number two: sociology can discuss deeper why it does happened the neglect and miss use of Durkheimian positivistic contribution to sociology at the same time that it is fashionable to merge the social theories developed by Marxists and Weberians as if the original theories were not born epistemologically and ideologically conflictuant.

The points are these: how it occurs that sociology did not learn to deal with social structural violence during these last decades?³ How it occurs to fail to preview and assess the new rise of religious social feelings and the influence of it in the global securitarian mood worldwide?

The questioning does not need to be answered. Its value should be assessed by its heuristic sociological research value. Anyway, this paper presents two kinds of answers. A) To look at what people say and what people do at institutional level, at the Weber's professional functionary level, avoiding politic level and, at the same time, neglecting quotidian life level analysis; B) To look at what people are as human beings, as result of their single life experience and as result of the social influences of social ambience experiences, as they are said and done by families, by friends, by other more or less formal and long social grouping, by institutions and politics discourses, and also by the individual need and will to decide what to do with his/her reception of all these influences and with his/her life.

For this second and less frequent kind of sociological answer, it is useful to return to positivistic questioning about the way modern social organization open the opportunities to each modern individual to climb a new philosophical level of understanding of the world, that enable each one and everybody to use reasoning in order to solve social integration problems.

Some times revolutions are made by violence, by institutional destruction. Other times revolutions can be made by changing the way people understand their own way of living. It is not our faith to adapt to the way state institutions are being ruled these days, knowing that the same institutions can be runned differently. To change the institutions social output – as neo-liberalism did prove it – there is no absolute need to destroy old institutions. They can be regenerated by new ways of understanding and processing them, by adopting new strategic courses. That is the power of institutions and democracy. That is why so many different social movements are working (alone and together at the same time) looking for changing institutional proceedings in order to avoid and to fight social problems. To do that one must not be naïve.

³ Anthony Giddens (1985) *The Nation-State and Violence - Vol II A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*, Cambridge, Polity.

Of course the people in charge, as political professionals, know what kind of social interest should be served in order to stay in place. They even know their role can be to fake by saying what one really do, in bureaucratic secrecy, in institutional representation of the all organization. This is what sociology of organization conceives as informal organization. This analytical category of “informal” should be used, too, beside economic informality and organizational informality, to address institutional leadership intentionality analysis, according or against institutional social mission.

Sociology should not compete with police investigations of corruption or human rights violations. Sociology could develop systematically reporting social inquiries about what everybody knows and cannot say, because people are oppressed or afraid. Just two examples: why prison themes, since torture to selective justice in courts, are treated as specialized sociology of an exotic kind of people – the criminals – living in a strange foreigner place – the prison – tamed by a special state department, instead of being at the centre of empirical and theoretical discussion about what is it (bad or good) human nature? Why domestic violence – that produces more causalities than every war together – is treated as a psychological problem and very rarely sociologists work this subject?

Closure

Marx’s legacy has been pushed away from its original conception by Marxists and by history. One should not separate the young Marx, who spoke about happiness of living, from the old Marx, who discovered the theory as a revolutionary tool. The difference between Marx and Marxists is that the later forgot the end of Marx’s revolution: the abolition of the state and human individual self-determination.

Historical determinism does not comply with the knowledge we have today about the history of the 20th century. After the end of socialist experiment, capitalism continues exploring working people.

Why it happens like that? If it happened another way, if Marxists did not forgot Marx’s end and if history had given the victory in Cold War to the Soviets, historical determinism theory would be true, today? Or is it impossible the history runs another way? What comes first: society or the individual human being? Can the social ends justify the involuntary human individual sacrifice?

Karl Marx called for the continuity of the bourgeois revolution in order to complete the social path through a freedom, equal and solidary world. He showed how material conditions were offered by industrial power and capitalism to the people to do that: “They need to explore us. So, if workers of the world unite, one can continue to fulfil revolutionary goals”. That is why he states: “Philosophers tried to understand the world, till now. The time comes to change it”, if people incorporate the will needed to do that.

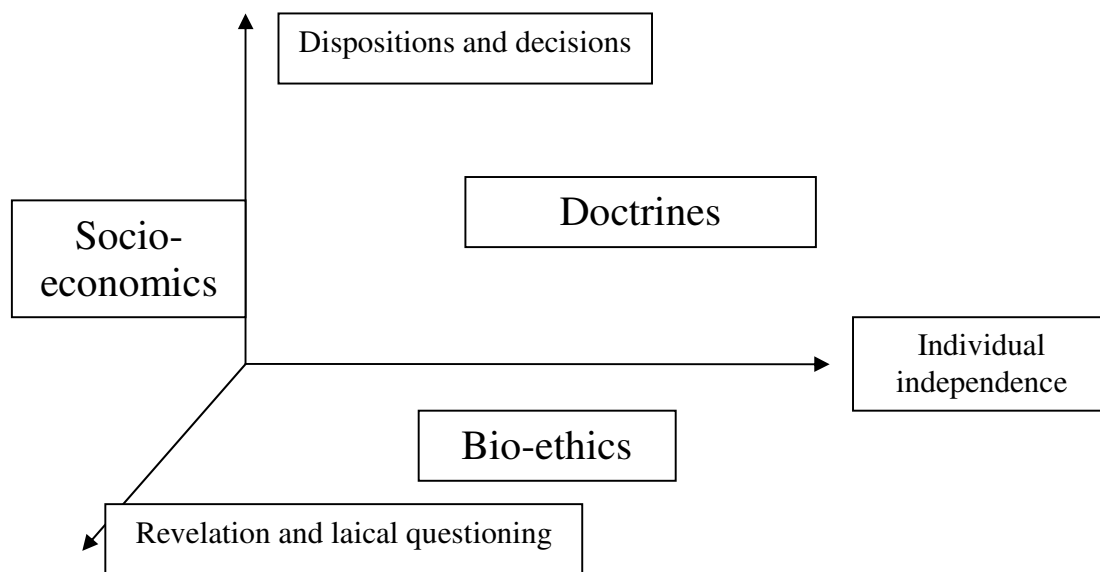
In many parts of the world, many people felt the will of changing for a better world. In the 21st century, individual self-determination is, still, inaccessible for most of the people. To achieve that goal, to emancipate people, one needs to understand better how society incorporates ideals and ideas from an individual level to a social level and the way around again, so many times around till the goals and the ideas are not, any more, understandable. Then the goals have been achieved and the ideas used. There is not the case of Marx ideas, for the moment.

Is it because social workers movements have not been revolutionary enough? The virtual historical hero, the Proletariat, has not been able to produce his work. Why?

For many reasons, we should find. Sociologist's contribution goes like this, which is the proposition stated by this paper: the body without the mind does not work, and vice versa. If the body was eventually ready, if the social accumulation of impoverished workers gives the opportunity to develop on them the believe and the desire of self-determination, the individuals and collectives minds did not reach the adequate state in order to realize the historical opportunity to build better structural social conditions for developing human happiness, meaning freedom, equality and solidarity as a convergent pack of social values.

What people said in revolutionary times did not mach with what people did (as it happens often in human experience). The determination of human will, and the social dispositions for translating into social actions the felt desires of living a time when the social values come true, contrasts with the social spirit that comply with submission times. As the abolition of slavery shows, is not easy for human societies and for human beings become free from undesired ways of living, even when the idea comes clearly to one's mind. The problem is to comply, to synchronise, body and mind, both individually and socially. When it happens, the problem becomes meaningless, forgotten and very difficult to understand, as it is for us, today, to understand historical epochs or other people's ways of life.

Figure 2 – Multidisciplinary analytical framework



Definition: states-of-spirit are abstract and alternative dispositional systems, both immanent and independent of people, temporarily adopted at the social level as a patterned way of existence, controlled by conscious and/or intentional cultural, institutional or personal activities. These dispositional human systems work together, in a somewhat tuned way, with developed social systems of reason, more or less codified and open to innovation.

What does it mean state-of-spirit? Is it a result of a psychological analysis of a person? Is it an ideal-type of the behaviour of a social actor? How it mach with institutional analysis?

State-of-spirit is an instable performing result of primary socialization, interpreted by several persons who learned how to do it, which is replicated by several others as ways to become stabilized what is not: human life. Take an example: professional spirit. If one wants to become a professional one has to understand, learn and develop professional behaviours. With training people will achieve the ability to become stable during more time, as in swimming, running a bicycle or driving a car. One can switch on the state-of-spirit for a while, concentrating one self in the task and in the social performance. One cannot stay much time in that situation without rest, even if one has a lot of training.

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At the beginning of the 21st century, lying to cover strategic non-legitimate purposes is commonly accepted in Europe. People do not believe in politicians as a professional group but they vote for continuity of the same structural political situation. Why does it happen like that? Should sociology study the phenomena or is it reserved to political science or even to psychology? Is sociology able to discuss decision making process as a social process of making will and, so doing, changing or promoting social action? Should it be an entry on management or international relations science fields?

Mainstream social theory scientific division of thinking labour implies to exclude the will of singular people, taken within rational action paradigm as Reason ex-machine (não percebo), being the reason the spirit of capitalism. This vacuum can be discussed and occupied by more realistic social theories that knows better how social human nature works, how social dispositions turn into opinions, when opinions turn into decisions, when decisions turn into action, when individual action turns into collective action.

This paper does not have the space to present the sociological theoretical approach that supports these proposals. Any way one will let some synthetic references to the epistemological paths one is developing: a) neuro-biology, as António Damásio explain it, reveal as the multicelular bodies, as human bodies, lives because they give the opportunity to single cells to live their own lives. To comply, as an orchestra, all these lives together as a superior body, a homeostatic panel, a virtual control system, should be in place. Human beings show that these virtual control systems can be developed by evolution through social virtual control systems, as those human societies has developed since at least 5 thousand years till now. And still, the secret is that the quality of these developments has always to conform to some kind of cells autonomy, including the environment ability to survive, within its own level of reality; b) there are different ways of synchronizing and tuning the lives of all kind of levels of living natures: it is possible to define and to compare them, as states-of-spirit. For instance, autochthon American people, as Portuguese found out during globalization process, did not comply with slavery owners need's for work, as much as Africans. Different societies give its people different levels of energy potential that supports (or not) different kind of social and economic relations; c) equality, as a

modern value, means the will of class abolition between mankind, which is not the same as a fair distribution of goods. The latter is an economic view about assuring equity of respect for human rights at its basic terms. The first is a sociological understanding about the need of equalize the opportunities of every human being to access and to assess to all human living social levels available, be it a quotidian way of life in New York or S. Paulo or at Amazon forest as an autochthon, be it what happens at G7 summits or what happens at informational design of security intelligence systems. For society to change, individual changing is needed, too.