THE SOCIOLOGICAL DISCOURSE, A CRITICAL AND REALISTIC POINT OF VIEW

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Abstract: We speak in our days more and more about subjects that require a interdisciplinary and multicultural approach. Science gives its hand with medicine, literature is connected with psychology and history or communication in order to present in another way our society, a society different than all other societies ever existed.
This is the reason why today being a sociologist means, probably, another thing than in the traditional society. Now in the public area there are involved many actors with different interests, material or moral ones, and with different perceptions on the same subject, in according with their expectations.
The sociological research is now, considering these aspects, in a position of offering a realistic point of view about the actual society, looking towards real problems that exist. Also, one cannot be a sociologist if he is not critic. Any sociological analysis and scientific discourse is critical, because it shows the existence of social issues; there are persons in the social field who doesn't want these problems to be revealed to entire population, so they have a negative perception about sociologists and their work, but the sociologist should maintain his position, no matter what. Only accepting the existence of our problems we can try to find ways of solving them or to decrease their negative effects.
This paper is trying to reveal the importance of the sociological work for our actual society and the necessity that this work is accomplished respecting the ethical and procedural rules, offering critical and realistic analysis of social problems and, perhaps, solutions for solving them.

Keywords: sociologist, social actors, realistic, critical, equidistant.

Introduction

In our days, being a sociologist represents a difficult profession, because of many social factors. Still, it's a profession searched on the field of work, because the universities observed the preference of the students for this kind of studies and they offer many places and selection, existing even concurrence between public and private universities. The Faculty of Sociology and Social Work from The University of Bucharest is, as they say on their presentation site "in Center, in the Bucharest heart, in the middle of the events, in the middle of all things, connected to everything that happens in the world (…) we are, by historical tradition and the values that we promote, the first Faculty of Sociology and Social Work from Romania and the biggest Faculty from University of Bucharest, after the number of our students." These universities choose intelligent students, with good marks in the high school and with a great desire to make a difference and to produce changes in the society.

At the beginning, students don't know exactly what does it means to be a sociologist. They choose this faculty because parents or friends said so, because they have older brothers or sisters who followed this school or because the name sounded well and they wanted to see how things take place in sociology. After graduating the license studies, there are persons who choose not to work in this domain, because they found out in three years of study that they are

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not really connected with this profession, so they choose to leave and to continue their master studies in another domain, or they try to work in companies where salaries are bigger and the responsibilities are much different.

Still, there are persons who continue to study in advanced sociological research, who are interested in observing the reality we all live in and they accept from the beginning the fact that their incomes wouldn't be so big and the satisfaction they receive is more moral, rather than material. These persons follow master degrees and doctoral and post-doctoral programs and they become young researchers, with the availability of studying the social phenomena, social transformations, interactions between different social groups, the integration of marginal groups in society.

Now is the time when the sociologist becomes aware of its importance in the social structure: he acts like a social engineer, who founds out the problems and try to get the solutions for solving the related and the discovered issues.

Spontaneous and scientific knowledge

As Ioan Mihailescu said in the beginning of his book, "General Sociology: fundamental concepts and case studies", people have expected with the emergence of sociology to ask questions and give answers about the group or the society in which they lived. Gradually they accumulated a large amount of knowledge about social life, representing a genuine spontaneous sociology. The source of this knowledge is common sense. Spontaneous sociology is encyclopedic and is very widespread. Even people with low intellectual level are able to talk for hours about what is right and what is wrong in the group in which they live, how life should be organized within a certain group, how should be family relationships, neighborhood, economic relations or policy. Believing they know everything about the society in which they lead their lives, many people are surprised that there is a science - sociology - who claims to study what them it appears obvious to question the knowledge considered to be true by the majority of group. Doubting the truth based on common sense and transmitted by immemorial tradition seems to many people a company insolent or at least unnecessary. (p.9)

Although it is so widespread and entrenched in the mindsets of individuals and groups, spontaneous commonsense sociology suffers from several major drawbacks that make it unacceptable scientific standpoint:

Spontaneous knowledge is **passionate in nature** - every man has certain interests, views, prejudices, phobias and attractions. People are not content only to find what is happening around them, but their attitudes, interpreting and judging reality. Spontaneous knowledge has an **illusory nature** - social life deceives people, self-deception is so present that scientists sometimes fall prey to them. In scientific work, self-illusion is totally unacceptable.

Spontaneous knowledge is **contradictory** - people constantly oscillate between a sense of fatality and of free will. When analyzing their successes or when they are make future plans, they believe that everything depends on them, the successes are due to the skill and quality, and that they can decide their destiny. If you are confronted with failure, they invoke unfavorable circumstances, hostilities and plots planned by third parties or simply hostile fate.

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Spontaneous knowledge is **limited** - the individual has circumscribed life experiences to the social environment in which he lives. About what is happening in other groups or in other companies, the individual is not only occasionally or not know anything. What he is not familiar is considered abnormal or outrageous. For example, one of the characters created by writer Marin Preda, seeing for the first time in my life a giraffe, after looking at it for hours, concludes that no such thing exists.(p.9-10).

In the last 300 years, spontaneous knowledge based on common sense, has been increasingly replaced by knowledge. In the social field, this replacement occurred later, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. Science is based on verifiable evidence, rigorous observation of the facts. Scientific observation involves not only looking at things; however, a look at what is happening around.(p.11)

Scientific knowledge is based on **three principles**, three basic axioms. The first is the recognition by scientists that there is a real world independent of the observing subject, the observed facts are real and not a product of the mind of the observer. The second axiom consists in accepting the principle that relations between things are not random but have an effect. More specifically, this axiom requires the principle of determinism, the relationship in terms of cause and effect. Social determinism is more difficult to prove and analyzed against physical determinism, however, it is not less true.

The third axiom is that the outside world can be known through objective observation. Scientific truths can be proved by means rigorous and verified by other scientists. Unlike glance or contemplation of the external world, scientific observation meet most of the requirements: it is accurate - if you do not achieve the required accuracy, the observer must avoid hasty or poorly substantiated judgments - is rigorous, is systematic - it is done deliberately prepared and carried out with appropriate means. Scientific observation is objective, that is unaffected by passions, phobias and prejudices of the person observed. (p.11)

Objective character of scientific observation is the ability to see and accept the facts as they are and not as they would like the observer to be. The observation of social phenomena, objectivity is rather a goal, the observer must be aware of the need to limit its subjectivity and act accordingly. Unlike ordinary observer, the scientist must educate objectivity, learn to be objective. Scientific observation is recorded, performed by qualified and performed under controlled conditions. (p.12)

Sociology performs several **functions**: first of all, an expository function, description, presentation of facts and social processes, as they occur. Secondly, sociology aims and explaining social facts, establishing relations of determination or the covariance between different aspects of social life. In the third place, according to the stated purpose of the great researchers in this field, sociology aims and improving social life. Hence the fact that the declared or not reported critical sociology that studies society. Critical dimension of sociology makes this science cannot be developed only in democratic societies. In the end, the results of sociological research can have practical size and can be used in social policy. The sociologist is not a politician, nor its substitute, but its scientific results can guide the work of the politician. (p.13)

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Sociological discourse and human rights

Any sociological action should begin by exposing the problem that the specialist identified and with trying to find solutions for it. No sociologists would start exploring the real world if they wouldn't have the intimate belief that the results of their studies would be noticed by political deciders and make a difference in good, for a group of persons or even for one person. Any sociologist has the purpose of making the others life better in some aspects, because if we wouldn't have this belief, the studies wouldn't be done and the society and its subsystem groups would remain as they are if they wouldn't be changed.

As professor Septimiu Chelcea mention in his book, "The methodology of sociological research: quantitative and qualitative methods", "scientific understanding of social processes, as well as individual and group behavior is always done within the framework of theories recognized as true by the research community at a given time. By theory we mean: an intellectual construction that a number of laws are associated with a principle from which they can be rigorously derived".
(p. 40).

"Scientific knowledge of facts, phenomena and social processes is achieved by clearly defined concepts, using rigorous research methods and techniques, checking hypothesis or pursuing the objective description of social life. (p. 42). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted and proclaimed on 10.12.1948 by the UN General Assembly represents a veritable value sheet of researchers in social and behavioral sciences. Each of the 30 articles of the Declaration proposes the fundamental values in which the scientist, whether sociologist, psychologist, anthropologist or psychologist must state openly in his studies. << All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood, regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status>>". (p. 53).

In this essay we tried to explore the sociological discourse in a critical and realistic manner, the appearance of sociology as a science who studies, with concrete and measurable instruments different phenomena of social life, what is the sociologist's role in the social area and which are the traps that a sociologist may fall into while making their research.

As we said earlier, in the globalised society we speak more and more about interdisciplinary issues and multiculturalism. When specialists want to study a phenomenon, they make connections between different scientific domains. So, nowadays, medicine is totally connected with science and technological development, psychology and sociology is connected to literature and biology, so as in trying to explain the social issues, we have to look well in other domains that influence the reality.

The sociologist and the society

The sociologist Catalin Zamfir made in his book "To a paradigm of sociological thinking" interesting connections between the sociologist and the society he is in charge to study: the crystallization of sociology as a scientific discipline and outlining its possibilities of application raised a question of principle: which is the role of the sociologist practitioner? In what capacity and which position must he contribute to the proper functioning and

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improvement of society in which he belongs? In this respect two models distinguish through the position of the sociologist towards the system that sustains him :

The client/consultant model: systemically, the sociologist relationship problem society was addressed in the 50-60s in US, during which sociological research took an important upheaval: they were expected massive applications of sociology. In this model, the sociologist supports different subsystems of society, helping them to solve problems of social activities, to maximize operating efficiency. The model assumes two mutually independent systems: the social customer system and the consultant sociologist. The sociologist consultant provides its specialized services for the client's systems. They have complete freedom of decision, however. According to this model, the sociologist is a specialist who has a significant number of knowledge and action techniques, know-hows that can be useful to different particular systems comprising the company : small groups, families, businesses, communities, political parties and candidates policies, governmental institutions towards the system it supports.(p. 155).

The client/consultant poses however a number of **difficulties of structure**: firstly, an **uncritical acceptance of goals**. The model is based on the famous dichotomy promoted by Max Weber (1947) between ends and means , and justifies, in fact, political and ideological subjugation of sociology. According to the Weberian theory, sociology has as legitimate object of study only the sphere of means for achieving goals sphere that creates the social actors. The sociologist must accept, in principle, to be put in the service of social actors, the goals that they establish. The sociologist can not accept the offer for any customer. He must lay open the question of possible value. In practice, he must always pose questions, whether it is allowed to support its specialized instruments a political party that seeks to obtain and maintain oppressive power to promote minor interests? To support a system in competition with other systems, giving him a decisive advantage?

Second deadline refers to **unequal access to science**: who is in fact the client? The free market accredits the idea that every part of society is a potential specialist service. But such an assumption is inconsistent. The free market does not provide equal access to the support of science; they are groups, commonly referred to as marginal, which is not always leads to science: the unemployed, ethnic minorities , the elders, drug addicts. (p.156-157).

The third difficluty is the **heterogeneity of customer limit itself**. The idea that the sociologist must support the client's interests proved quite confusing, in fact, any social system is characterized by different interests, orientations among its members. Entering a social system the specialist sociologist is subject to strong pressure from their group, social classes and even private individuals. Each will be tempted to use sociologist work to promote the interests, with the risk that the sociologist to become manipulative instrument of one or other of the parties. Intervention can thus produce an imbalance in the social systems promoting certain interests at the expense of others.

In the co-participation model, sociologist defines himself primarily as an active and responsible member of the community, assumes the function of contributing to the improvement of the entire social life, both globally, and in some subsystems in part. He is no longer a simple exterior bidder whose services may or may not be bought, but a co-participant, a catalyst for social development. The sociologists that take this model as the right one assumes an active role, they fights for his ideas, seek to persuade.(p.158).

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The two models of the relationship sociologist society are not exclusive, but complementary. They can be considered general paradigm, limit the sociologist-society relationship between them there is a multitude of intermediate grades.(p.158).

In what concerns **Fair Sociology**, the sociologist Catalin Zamfir agree that the specialists in social sciences ask themselves whether there might be an approach to consider all social perspectives simultaneously, all the interests involved in a social reality without stressing one or the other. In other words, if it can be taken a fair attitude in relation to social groups and subsystems involved. Fairness can be achieved through a neutral stance: all perspectives are recorded objectively, all existing interests. This approach has come to be increasingly more of a necessary process in sociology, even though most times it is extremely difficult.(p. 164).

Assuming plurality has a real social base: the democratic option. Destructive in the long term, the use and/or handling is becoming increasingly evident. Open dialogue and negotiation are, therefore, a solution favored by specialists. Acceptance opens the possibility for democratic game specialist to assume a position objectively engaged in concrete plurality of perspectives. Sociology equidistant ignores the diversity of interests, but rather a highlight.(p.165).

The status-quo/alternative option :

Aldous Huxley 's book Brave New World, published in the 30's, surprised an era through the image of a possible future: a highly refined technological society with a high degree of integration and control over itself, but completely anti-human. The individual is crushed, handled with an extraordinarily effective technology in the name of rationality and efficiency, but bya system of rationality that is hostile even to humans. The book was, however, literature, a novel more fictional than scientific. When a few decades later, in 1977, Herbert Marcuse 's work appear one-dimensional man, the shock would be incomparably greater. This time it’s a book of philosophical-scientific type. Marcuse considers a possible mechanism of aberrant social systems. Any social system or global society or a subsystem of them is characterized by a certain mode of organization. To function, the social system is organized in a certain way develops integrative forces, a defense against all types of disturbances, destructive intrusions. Structurally, the system is geared toward preserving, perpetuating. Change is tolerated only as an improvement to that organization and not when pressed for structural transformation. The progress of human society was made not only because of the driving factor, but relative weakness of organizational forms. At one point, the forces of change manage to defeat in self-defense the mechanisms of the existing organization, requiring structural changes. Thus, Marcuse senses a real problem that the sociologist often meetst: the choice between the status quo (the organization's existing system) and its organization alternatives. There is here a danger for the sociologist: he can become a prisoner of social organization in which they operate; accepting the issues raised by a sociologist accepts the merits the status quo, its existing organization, without exploring alternatives for the organization. It is therefore the duty of the sociologist in this situation to decide whether to act to improve the organization 's existing system or organization promoting alternatives. (p. 174).

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Regarding social organization, there is another aspect the sociologist must take into account. In social systems, the dispute between alternatives is often used as an instrument of struggle between groups to obtain power. A group of people engaged in the struggle for power can assimilate a program, an alternative organization that to oppose other groups. Choosing the alternative is equivalent to favoring the group that claims may result transfer of power from one group to another. The case appears clearly in multi-party political system. A party or a candidate often adopt a specific program does not necessarily because they consider best, but to distinguish and oppose candidates. For this reason, the sociologist must not fall into the trap of power struggle. He must prevent cognitive polarization transformation (natural differences of opinion about alternatives) in social polarization (differentiation of interests and struggle for power between groups and individuals).

Thus, the true scientific objectivity and the possibility of effective application of sociology in the practice of human communities can only be achieved on the basis of explicit and responsible choices within social context it is applied in. (p.178).

Conclusions.

Considering the arguments we mentioned before, we think that it is difficult nowadays to be a sociologist, but not impossible. Is a profession full of expectations, that provides interesting points ok view and many exploratory possibilities. Of course, it was difficult to explore the social area in the classical period of this science, when studying human behaviour or the behaviour of man in relations with other persons became a challenge and when Auguste Comte or Emile Durkheim made real efforts to make the scientific community from that period understand that they were in front of a new science, with perspectives and scientific instruments of interogating the social area; this is a thing that we cannot deny. But it is also difficult to make sociological work in our days, when the society is more complex than ever, when the migration has no geographical limits; in our society, the distances reduced in a drastic way, because of communication development, the acces to the Internet from almost every place in this world and the evolution of air transportation.

Because of this, in the actual society there are, as we said, in the social area, a lot of social actors with different interests. Their activity may influence the professional and private life of different groups of persons. These persons hire sociologists to make different researches in various domains. The sociologists put together their experience with the field work and arrive at different conclusions, making prognoses about social life or about the implications of some actions, social and political ones, to several groups of persons.

The ones that ask for assistance come from different social parts, but, as we mentioned earlier, almost all the time they have the financial support and can afford to study the issue they are interested in. In this context, the sociologist is put in the middle: his conclusions should present the reality as it is, the sociological discourse should be pertinent and easy to check by other specialists, even if in the social sciences, the external factors are very fluctuating from one day to another. So, the sociologist should have even experience and theoretical preparation, in order to choose the right method to study a specific process or phenomenon, but also, a specialist in social sciences should carry out his activity using a set of ethical rules, rules that even unwritten, shoul be applied, without any doubt, to every scientific field, not only in sociology.

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As a conclusion, we think that the sociologists shoul claim for the respect of the scientific truth and should present the reality as it is, with no fear to offend the ones who ordered the study or the public opinion formers. Our society should be aware that we cannot live in lie forever. When we know that we have problems and what is their nature, we search solutions for solving them. If we keep lying to each other, as our forerunners lived before the 1989, in the socialist totalitary regime, we cannot see exactly the existence and the intensity of one problem, we can only make suppositions upon it.

Also, a sociologist's work means to have a critical point of view of the issue they study. They present the studied group and the interractions between his members as they really happen, and their conclusions may offend one participant or another in social life. The sociologist is critical by its own existence; he identifies problems and search for solutions. When identifying real issues, he can offend some managers or political decidents, but he should have the strenght of presenting the problems and give strong arguments and correct procents in support of his conclusions.

Even if it is well known that an specialist who make observations upon a subject for research pass that observation through his own perception and believes, its recomandable for sociologists to keep themseves as objectives as they can, with an equidistant position upon the decidents from community, free and not manipulated. They should maintain their personal opinions and believes and not let their internal structure manipulated in the purpose of gaining more money; they shouls tell the truth, no matter what and have in mind a special respect for the truth. A sociological discourse should present the reality in a critical an inteligible form and to propose solutions that political or private space decidents may take in consideration.

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