



Current relevance of sociology in contemporary societies

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to study the current relevance of sociology in contemporary societies. A historical analysis was made with reference to two very important authors: Auguste Comte, creator of sociological positivism, and Anthony Giddens, recognized for his theory of structuring and his holistic view of modern societies. Sociology was the fruit of the immense social transformations that took place in the last two centuries. The analytical method was adopted, which is a research method derived from the scientific method and is used in the social sciences to diagnose problems and solve them. The main implications show that in the face of contemporary challenges, sociology is emerging as a pillar in the critical analysis of society and educational systems must strive to keep it in the curriculum.

Keywords: Sociology, society, transformations, contemporary societies.

INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this article is to study the importance of sociology in contemporary societies with emphasis on two very important authors: Auguste Comte creator of sociological positivism and Anthony Giddens, two fundamental figures, who have left a significant legacy in the development of this discipline.

Auguste Comte, considered the father of sociological positivism, was a 19th century French philosopher whose ideas laid the foundation for the emergence of sociology as a science. Comte was deeply concerned with the social and political changes that accompanied the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. His major work, "A Course in Positive Philosophy," proposed a scientific approach to the study of society, based on empirical observation and the application of methods similar to those of the natural sciences. Comte divided sociology into two branches: social statics, which focused on social structures and how societies were held together, and social dynamics, which dealt with social changes and transformations over time.

On the other hand, Anthony Giddens is a contemporary British sociologist whose work has had a profound impact on modern sociological theory. Giddens is known for his theory of structuration, which seeks to overcome the dichotomy between structure and agency by arguing that they are interrelated and mutually constitutive processes. Unlike Comte, Giddens focuses on the interaction between social structure and individual action, and how this interaction shapes everyday life and broader social processes. His holistic approach to society recognizes the importance of human agency in the reproduction and transformation of social structures.

Looking at these two authors, we can see how sociology has evolved from the positivist principles of Comte to a more reflexive and dialectical perspective represented by Giddens. While Comte sought general laws that could explain the functioning of society, Giddens emphasizes the importance of human action and agency in the creation and reproduction of social structures. Both authors have contributed significantly to the development of sociology as a scientific discipline and have provided conceptual tools to better understand the constantly changing social world.

DEVELOPMENT

Today, Sociology plays a fundamental role in Latin America, revealing surprising aspects in a still young science. After this period, a new generation of scholars continued to develop ideas that eventually crystallized into what we know today as Sociology. This field of study delves into human social behavior, unraveling the complexity of our interactions, organizational structures and group dynamics. Its aim is not only to understand social causes and manifestations, as Comte claimed, but also to discern their relevance to human needs.

Antony Giddens, with his theory of structuration, enriched the sociological landscape by proposing a vision that challenged both structuralism and functionalism. He argued that social structure manifests itself through the social practices of individuals, which leads us to speak more appropriately of "structuration". His analytical approach allows us to better understand how individual actions contribute to the shaping of society. (Antony, 1976).

Giddens urges us to adopt a broad sociological mindset, encouraging imagination and critical reflection on our social reality. His legacy reminds us that sociology is not just a static body of knowledge, but an ongoing commitment to understanding and improving our lives and communities.

The emergence of sociology is intrinsically linked to the social transformations of the last two centuries, from the French Revolution to the Industrial Revolution. These tumultuous changes prompted the need to reflect more systematically on the nature of society and emerging social phenomena, such as mass rural-to-urban migration and debates about democracy and political rights.

Auguste Comte, a pioneer in the establishment of sociology as a social science, believed in the application of the scientific method to understand society and its changes. His vision of social evolution through three stages - theological, metaphysical and scientific - laid the foundations for the systematic study of the emerging industrial society.

Throughout the 20th century, sociology has evolved, applying scientific methods to better understand man and society. Its goal remains the same: to contribute to the understanding and solution of the social problems we face in our daily lives.

ORIGINS OF SOCIOLOGY

According to Anthony Giddens, Sociology arose as a result of the social transformations that occurred in the last two centuries, including the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. These changes provoked a revision of traditional ways of life and led to a deeper and more scientific interest in the nature of society and ongoing social change.

The enormous transformations in Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries explain the emergence of sociology. With the disintegration of existing social structures, people began to reflect on scientific advances, mass migration from the countryside to the city, and debates about government and political rights.

Auguste Comte played a crucial role in the creation of sociology as a social science. His interest in understanding social change led him to coin the term "sociology" in 1838, which is divided into two parts: social statics and social dynamics, to study the mechanisms of social cohesion and social change.

Comte applied the scientific method to the study of society, proposing the law of the three states, which describes the evolution of human thought from the theological to the scientific. This evolution culminated in sociology, which sought to explain the recurrent social crises of the 19th century and to establish relative laws to better understand society.

Since its inception, Sociology has sought to apply scientific methods to better understand human beings and society, with the aim of contributing to the understanding of human nature and the solution of social problems.

IMPORTANCE OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology plays a fundamental role in Latin American societies by addressing processes of transformation in diverse areas such as the social, structural, cultural and economic. In a world marked by conflicts, tensions and the threat of nuclear war, as well as by the negative impacts of technology on the environment, sociology seeks to understand these changes and their implications in everyday life.

By taking a broad approach, sociology helps us question what we consider natural or inevitable in our lives, revealing how our individual experiences are influenced by historical and social forces. This allows us to reduce prejudice, foster empathy, and better understand human behavior and its origins, as well as the ethical and moral issues our society expects of

US.

Sociology stands as a scientific discipline that seeks to free knowledge from religious or philosophical influences, applying the scientific method to understand social phenomena. It is a continuous process of understanding and adaptation, involving the collective construction of meanings and the search for explanations to the challenges we face as a society.

In Latin America, societies face diverse challenges, from the transition from rural to urban to the evolution of the economy and employment in the capitalist context. Sociology analyzes these processes of change and their impact on daily life, including crime and violence, which are complex social phenomena influenced by political, economic and cultural factors.

Sociology helps us to understand the complexity of society and to identify repetitive patterns over time. By analyzing these patterns, we can address deficiencies and enhance virtues, thus contributing to the evolution and continuous improvement of our society.

AUGUSTO COMTE

Auguste Comte, considered the father of positivism and one of the first to systematize the study of society as a science, divided sociology into two main branches: social statics and social dynamics.

Social Statics: This branch focuses on the analysis of social structures and how societies are held together over time. Comte was interested in understanding the fundamental bases of social cohesion and identifying the elements that provided stability to a society. Some of the key concepts within social statics include social solidarity, division of social labor, social institutions, and shared norms and values. Comte believed that understanding social statics was crucial to understanding the nature of a society at a given time and to identifying the factors that contributed to its internal cohesion.

Social Dynamics: This branch focuses on social changes and transformations over time. Comte was interested in understanding how and why societies change and evolve throughout history. Within social dynamics, phenomena such as social development, progress, revolution, social conflict and the evolution of social institutions are analyzed. Comte argued that understanding social dynamics was essential to understand the course of human development and to foresee future trends in the evolution of society.

Comte's proposed division of sociology into social statics and social dynamics reflects his interest in understanding both structure and change in human societies. This division provided an initial conceptual framework for the scientific study of society and laid the foundation for the later development of sociology as an academic discipline.

Auguste Comte, as the founder of positivism, promoted a scientific and systematic approach to the study of society. His approach was characterized by the search for general laws that could explain the functioning of society, inspired by the model of the natural sciences. However, his vision evolved towards a more reflexive and dialectical perspective as he developed his thinking.

Initially, Comte believed in the possibility of discovering general laws governing human behavior and social organization, similar to the natural laws governing the physical world. This approach is reflected in his emphasis on empirical observation, experimentation, and the use of the scientific method to investigate society. He sought to identify patterns and regularities in human behavior that could be explained through universal principles.

However, as Comte deepened his analysis, he began to recognize the complexity of social phenomena and the influence of multiple factors in their development. This led him to adopt a more reflective and dialectical perspective, which implied a deeper understanding of the interaction between individuals and social structures, as well as the influence of historical, cultural and economic factors in shaping society.

Comte began to focus on social dynamics and on understanding the processes of change and development in society. He recognized that general laws could not always fully explain the complexity of social phenomena, and that it was necessary to take into account the historical and cultural context to fully understand their meaning.

Although Comte maintained his commitment to positivism and the search for general laws, his perspective became more reflective and dialectical as he recognized the need to consider the diversity and complexity of human experience in society. This more nuanced approach allowed for a more complete and contextualized understanding of social phenomena, rather than simply seeking universalistic and simplified explanations.

Auguste Comte, as a precursor of positivism in sociology, had a deep conviction in the applicability of the scientific method to the study of society. He sought general laws that could explain the functioning of society for several fundamental reasons:

Rationalization and understanding of the social world: Comte was a firm believer in the idea that the scientific study of society was fundamental to understanding and rationalizing the social world. He believed that sociology, like the natural sciences, should seek general laws that could explain social phenomena objectively and systematically.

He believed that identifying general laws in the functioning of society would make it possible to predict and control social events. By understanding the regularities and patterns of social behavior, one could anticipate certain outcomes and ultimately influence the course of society toward progress and stability.

Comte was interested in establishing a coherent unity in human knowledge. He believed that by discovering general laws encompassing both the natural and social sciences, a comprehensive understanding of the world could be achieved. This reflects his idea of "positivity," where all disciplines, including sociology, were to be based on the scientific method in order to achieve objective and verifiable knowledge.

In seeking general laws, Comte sought to give sociology the status of a legitimate and respectable science. He believed that this scientific approach would confer on sociology a status similar to that of the natural sciences, which would help to establish it as a rigorous and serious academic discipline.

Comte sought general laws in the functioning of society to provide a solid scientific basis for the study of sociology, to enable social prediction and control, to establish the unity of human knowledge, and to legitimize sociology as a legitimate scientific discipline.

ANTHONY GIDDENS

Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration represents an important advance in the field of sociology by attempting to overcome the dichotomy between structure and agency, two central concepts in the understanding of society.

Giddens argues that social structure and individual agency are not separate and independent entities, but interrelated and mutually constitutive processes. Rather than seeing structure as something external that constrains individual action, or agency as something entirely free of structural influence, Giddens argues that the two are intrinsically linked and affect each other.

Giddens focuses on how the interaction between social structure and individual action shapes everyday life and broader social processes. He argues that individual actions are both the result of social structures and a means of reproducing or transforming them. This perspective recognizes that individuals are not simply passive products of their social environment, but active agents who contribute to shaping that environment.

Giddens' structuration theory adopts a holistic approach to society, which seeks to understand it in its totality and not only in terms of its constituent parts. It recognizes the complexity of social systems and the interconnectedness between different levels of social reality, from face-to-face interactions to broader institutional structures.

Despite his emphasis on social structure, Giddens recognizes the importance of human agency in the reproduction and transformation of social structures. He argues that people have the capacity to reflect on their social environment, make decisions and act consciously to influence the course of social events.

Anthony Giddens' structuration theory represents a comprehensive and dynamic approach to understanding society, which emphasizes the interaction between social structure and individual action as fundamental elements in shaping social reality. His approach recognizes the complexity and fluidity of social life, and offers conceptual tools for analyzing both continuity and change in contemporary societies.

Importance of Human Action

Anthony Giddens emphasizes the importance of human action and agency in the creation and reproduction of social structures for several fundamental reasons:

Giddens distances himself from structural determinism, which considers that social structures completely determine human behavior. Instead, he argues that people have the capacity to act consciously and make choices that influence the configuration of social structures. This perspective reflects his critique of theories that underestimate the role of human agency in favor of an exclusive focus on social structures.

Giddens argues that human beings are reflective beings who are capable of reflecting on their situation and making informed decisions about how to act in the world. This reflexive capacity implies an awareness of the social structures in which they are embedded and an understanding of how those structures influence their lives. By recognizing human agency, Giddens gives people an active role in the creation and reproduction of social structures.

According to Giddens' structuration theory, the relationship between structure and agency is dialectical: social structures provide the context within which people act, but these actions in turn contribute to the reproduction or transformation of those structures. In other words, human agency is not only determined by social structures, but also influences them, creating a continuous cycle of dynamic interaction between structure and agency.

In emphasizing the importance of human agency, Giddens stresses the capacity of individuals to change and transform existing social structures. He recognizes that individual and collective actions can have a significant impact on shaping society, suggesting that social change is not simply the result of impersonal structural forces, but also the result of people's decisions and actions.

Giddens emphasizes the importance of human action and agency in the creation and reproduction of social structures to highlight the capacity of individuals to actively influence the course of social events and to challenge existing social conditions. His approach recognizes the complexity and interdependence of the relationship between structure and agency, offering a dynamic and empowering perspective on the nature of society. Table 1 below presents an argumentative and comparative synthesis of the exposition made in the article.

Table 1. Analytical synthesis of the basilar pillars of sociology exposed in the article.

ASPECT	AUGUSTO COMTE	ANTHONY GIDDENS
Approach	Sociological positivism: Scientific approach based on empirical observation and the scientific method to discover general laws governing society.	Structuration theory: Approach that seeks to overcome the dichotomy between structure and agency, arguing that they are interrelated and mutually constitutive processes.
Division of sociology	He divides sociology into social statics (social structures and social cohesion) and social dynamics (social changes and transformations).	He does not propose a formal division, but his theory highlights the interaction between social structure and individual action.
Importance of human action	Less emphasis on human agency; more focused on the search for general laws and stable social structures.	Greater emphasis on human agency and its role in the creation and reproduction of social structures.
Method	Scientific method and empirical observation to discover general laws of society.	Reflective and dialectical approach, recognizing the dynamic interaction between social structure and individual action.
Contributions	Founder of sociological positivism; noted for his scientific approach to the study of society.	He developed the theory of structuration, emphasizing the importance of human agency in the creation and reproduction of social structures.
Emphasis	In the search for general and stable laws governing society.	In the dynamic interaction between social structure and individual action.

Note. Own elaboration with the research data (2023).

CONCLUSIONS

Auguste Comte and Anthony Giddens, although both are leading figures in the field of sociology, present significant differences in their approaches to and thoughts about society and the sociological discipline. First, Comte, as the founder of sociological positivism, advocated a scientific approach to the study of society. He believed in the existence of general laws governing human and social behavior, and sought to discover these laws through the scientific method.

Comte divided sociology into two main branches: social statics, which focuses on social structures and social cohesion, and social dynamics, which deals with the processes of change and transformation in society over time. Comte laid

the foundations of sociological positivism and promoted a scientific approach to the study of society. On the other hand, Anthony Giddens is known for his structuration theory, which seeks to overcome the dichotomy between structure and agency by arguing that they are interrelated and mutually constitutive processes. Giddens places significant emphasis on the importance of human action and agency in the creation and reproduction of social structures. His holistic approach recognizes the dynamic interaction between social structure and individual action, and how this interaction shapes everyday life and broader social processes. Moreover, Giddens introduced a more reflexive and dialectical perspective, emphasizing the importance of human agency in the creation and reproduction of social structures.

These differences in their thinking and approaches have enriched the field of sociology and provided multiple perspectives for understanding the complexity of human society.

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