

BOOK REVIEW

“I’m not afraid of death, I’m sorry it won’t let me write everything I’ve accrued.” (Ion Ungureanu)

ION UNGUREANU. “THE PARADIGMS OF SOCIETY KNOWLEDGE”

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ABSTRACT

The present paper aims to review a fundamental book for any sociology student. Social scientist Ion Ungureanu, author of the book “The paradigms of Society knowledge”, has organized in an original way the “theoretic core of sociology”: its main paradigms. He argues that sociology is a multi-paradigmatic science. Sociology does not have a universal paradigm, but several paradigms are competing for hegemony. The Romanian sociologist establishes the main fields of study: the constitution, organization, change and evolution of society. Although synthetic, the book is a vast one, and the review will be limited to the presentation of the links between sociological paradigms. Each paradigm has a scientific potential, and from this point of view, Ion Ungureanu’s work can reopen old fields of research in Romanian sociology.

Keywords: core of sociology, paradigms, sociological studies fields, Romanian sociology, sociologist model.

Ion Ungureanu was one of the most prolific Romanian sociologists before 1990. Managing to distinguish himself from ideological influences, he devoted himself to sociology and won the appreciation of his colleagues²⁷⁹. He was a professor of the history of sociology at the University of Bucharest. Unfortunately, his life was short, and he failed to elaborate all the ideas he has acquired over time

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²⁷⁹ Florin Tănăsescu, “Confluente emoționale și spirituale”, in *Sociologie Românească Jurnal*, vol.3, no. 2/1992, pp. 133–134, Available at: <https://revistasociologieromaneasca.ro/sr/issue/view/62>, Accessed on January 15, 2021.

through his sociological activity. However, he managed to make remarkable progresses in universal and Romanian sociology. Ungureanu contributed to the shaping of a:

“... new interpretative vision on the genesis of Romanian sociology as science and on the role of exemplary cultural personalities in the affirmation of the sociological perspective in Romanian culture ...”²⁸⁰.

In universal sociology, he discovered that this science is multi-paradigmatic. The result of this vision is “The paradigms of society knowledge”. The book is a foundation for re-establishing the Faculty of Sociology in Bucharest after 1990²⁸¹. The Romanian sociologist also helped plan the reform of the Faculty of Sociology in Bucharest after the fall of communism in Romania.

BOOK INTRODUCTION

“The paradigms of society knowledge” aims to establish the place of sociology among other sciences. Compared to natural sciences (which have a dominant paradigm, physics for example), sociology is multi-paradigmatic:

“If the development of sociological science were to follow the same path as physics, for example, we could say that sociology is today only a pre-paradigmatic science, because it does not have only a paradigm used as an ‘example’ for defining and resolving all of the problems that rise in the study of society”²⁸².

Thus, the book establishes the core of sociology. Ungureanu defines the paradigm in multiple ways. The paradigms are:

“fundamental statements in the socio-human sciences because, starting from them, many theories, theses, sentences and ideas concerning the lives of people in society have been and are derived”²⁸³.

A paradigm is also a denomination for:

“... the complicated road that a sociological sentence goes through, from the first writing, through various forms of redrafting from the perspective of sociological

²⁸⁰ “o nouă viziune interpretativă asupra genezei sociologiei românești ca știință și a rolului unor personalități culturale exemplare la prefigurarea și afirmarea punctului de vedere sociologic în cultura românească ...”, *Ibid.*, p. 134.

²⁸¹ Radu Baltasiu, “Lucrări ‘Șantier’. ‘Întâlnire’ cu cartea lui I.Ungureanu. Paradigme ale cunoașterii societății (1990). Prima întâlnire”, in *Etnosfera Journal*, no.1/2018, p. 127, Available at: <https://www.etnosfera.ro/revista-etnosfera-nr-1-2018/>, Accessed on April 18, 2021.

²⁸² “Dacă evoluția științei sociologice ar urma aceeași traiectorie ca fizica, de exemplu, am putea spune că sociologia este astăzi doar o știință preparadigmatică, căci ea nu are o singură paradigmă folosită ca ‘exemplu’ pentru definirea și rezolvarea tuturor problemelor studierii societății.”, Ion Ungureanu, *Paradigme ale cunoașterii societății*, București, Editura Humanitas, 1990, p. 13.

²⁸³ “Ele [paradigmele] reprezintă enunțuri fundamentale în științele socioumane fiindcă, pornindu-se de la ele, au fost și sunt derivate numeroase teorii, teze, propoziții și idei privind viața oamenilor în societate.”, *Ibid.*, p. 21.

theories other than the one in which it was originally born, and will be accepted or unaccepted in the end, as a sociological law ...”²⁸⁴.

Sociology comprises some dominant paradigms because all are in a race for hegemony:

“But sociology is a multi-paradigmatic science because there are at most dominant sociological paradigms, not an universal paradigm in sociology (more paradigms compete to win hegemony)”²⁸⁵.

The paradigms are organized into four main categories: the constitution, organization, change, and evolution of society. Each chapter of the book is part of a category. “Man in society: Sociality and sociability” is part of the society constitution study issue. “Anatomy of society: Structure” and “Social structures: Classes, stratification and social mobility” are part of the organization category. The category of social change and evolution is included in the chapter of “Evolution of societies”.

MAN IN SOCIETY: SOCIALITY AND SOCIABILITY

Society's constitution is explained through the concepts of sociality and sociability. Sociality is “the quality of man to be a social being, and the property of society to be established as a form of people's inter-existence”²⁸⁶ and sociability is “the ability of a man or a group of people to integrate into society”²⁸⁷. Each paradigm covers one aspect of sociality or sociability as demonstrated in the next sentences.

Through socio-biology, Ungureanu begins to explain why the human is a social being. Sociality is in human genes by natural selection and altruism is a condition for society's existence:

“The human population is "genetically" forced to be altruistic and cooperative, because natural selection will facilitate those who help each other and cooperate, and will not facilitate those who refuse cooperation”²⁸⁸.

²⁸⁴ “Pentru a indica printr-un singur termen drumul complicat pe care îl parcurge un enunț sociologic, de la prima formulare, trecând prin diferite forme de reelaborare din perspectiva altor teorii sociologice decât cea în care a apărut inițial, urmând să fie acceptat sau neacceptat, în final, ca o lege sociologică, am folosit termenul de paradigmă.”, *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁸⁵ “Deoarece sociologia este însă o știință *multiparadigmatică* (mai multe paradigme competiționează pentru a câștiga hegemonia), există cel mult paradigme sociologice *dominante*, nu și o paradigmă universală în sociologie”, *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁸⁶ “calitatea omului de a fi ființă socială și proprietatea societății de a se constitui ca formă a inter-existenței”, *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁸⁷ “capacitatea (abilitatea) unui om sau a unui grup de oameni de a se integra într-o societate”, *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁸⁸ “Populația umană este obligată „genetic” să acționeze altruist și cooperativ, fiindcă selecția naturală va favoriza pe cei care se ajută între ei și cooperează, și nu pe cei care refuză cooperarea.”, *Ibid.*, p. 27.

In the second paradigm, “The residues of sociability” of Vilfredo Pareto, Ungureanu explains sociability as an effect of social discipline:

“Pareto analyses sociability as a residual form of discipline, considering, as well as modern sociobiologists, that the latter is a ‘natural’ trait of the human being, on account of its ‘herd spirit’. Discipline is the manner in which the social actors stimulate, control and elaborate association or by which they repress actions that can undermine the association of individuals”²⁸⁹.

Society has other residues that consolidate the discipline of their members, residues like the ‘us sentiment’, the “need for uniformity”, “mercy and cruelty”, “altruism” and “asceticism”. The “The principles of social exchange” paradigm argues that sociality exists because of the social interaction in which people give and receive different kinds of services.

The fourth paradigm of Emile Durkheim demonstrates that sociality is based on the dynamic/moral density of society. The growth of division of labor, Durkheim argues, may modify sociality. In primitive societies, the people were organized on the basis of their common traits, but in modern societies the difference between humans became the criteria of organization:

“Based on this, Durkheim sets out the law of the social division of labor as the law of human sociality by the following formula: the more the collective human being type is in a society, and the more rudimentary division of labor, the more repressive rules governing interhuman relations; conversely, as the collective human being type is differentiated and individual types are developing, and the division of labor expands, the regulation of interhuman relationships loses its repressive character and takes the form of restitution (‘compensation’ by compensating the victim)”²⁹⁰.

Muzafer Sherif in the paradigm of “The effect of the social norm” highlights Pareto’s idea: discipline is essential for sociability. In this sense, sociability varies by compliance with the social norm. Ungureanu explains starting from the paradigm “The pyramid of needs and their social derivation principal” (B. Malinowski) that both sociality and sociability are essential pillars for society’s survival. The institutions and culture are “derivate needs” that satisfy human needs (A. Maslow). However, is it contemporary sociality a servant of human needs? Based on T. Veblen and J. Baudrilard, Ungureanu’s answer was negative.

²⁸⁹ “Pareto analizează sociabilitatea ca o formă reziduală a disciplinei, considerând, ca și sociobiologii moderni, că aceasta din urmă este o caracteristică ‘natural’ a ființei umane, datorită ‘gregarismului’ ei.” Disciplina este modalitatea prin care actorii sociali stimulează asocierea, o controlează, o dezvoltă, sau prin care ei reprimă acțiunile ce pot submina asocierea dintre indivizi.”, *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁹⁰ “Pornind de aici, Durkheim enunță legea diviziunii sociale a muncii ca lege a socialității omenești prin următoarea formulă: cu cât tipul uman colectiv este mai pronunțat într-o societate, iar diviziunea muncii mai rudimentară cu atât regulile de reglementare a relațiilor interumane sunt mai represive; invers, pe măsura ce se diferențiază tipul colectiv și se dezvoltă tipurile individuale, iar diviziunea muncii se extinde, reglementarea raporturilor interumane își pierde caracterul represiv și îmbracă forma restitutivă (‘reparații’, prin despăgubirea victimei)”. Durkheim, 1899–1900, pp. 65–80 apud Ion Ungureanu, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

In the seventh paradigm of J. Baudrillard (“The consumption of signs”), Ungureanu develops an answer and thus describes a form of negative sociality. In contemporary society, people consume signs instead of satisfying their human needs: “What is meant in the traditional society by satisfying a need, whether elementary or derived, simply becomes in the consumer society the consumption of signs in which the object is no longer valued by its usefulness or by its worth for use, but is arranged in the context of meaning, in what J. Baudrillard calls social logic or sign logic”²⁹¹.

The eighth paradigm explains the strong correlation between socialization and both sociality and sociability processes. Based on Robert K. Merton’s theoretical approach, Ungureanu argues that by socialization individuals become part of different human organization forms (sociality). Alternatively, the efficiency of socialization influences the sociability degree of individuals. The final paradigm of the chapter “Law of sociability” tries to synthesize the variables of sociability starting from Stefan Odobleja’s cybernetic thinking.

ANATOMY OF SOCIETY: STRUCTURALITY

In the introduction section of this chapter, Ungureanu defines the structure of society. It is similar to a scheme of society and is “a total of constant relations, relatively unchanged, through which the social life manifests itself”²⁹². The scientific anatomy of society cannot be possible without the existence of an important function of society’s structure: to provide stability and predictability. The paradigms of society anatomy are linked, the author tries to highlight the complementarity between them instead of their differences.

The first paradigm of A. Comte (“The law of material force’s preponderance”) defines society as a form of condensed social forces: material, moral and intellectual force:

“... society is possible because of ‘social condensation of individual forces’, in a word, because of sociality ...”²⁹³.

The purpose of the social forces’ concentration is the survival of society. The intellectual and moral forces are volatile, Comte argues, and in order to comprehend the anatomy of society the scientist should focus on material forces. Moreover, intellectual and moral forces are results of the decomposed material force.

²⁹¹ “Ceea ce se înțelege prin satisfacerea unei nevoi, elementare sau derivate, în societatea tradițională, devine, în societatea de consum, pur și simplu consumul de semne, în care obiectul nu mai este valorificat prin utilitatea lui, nici prin valoare de întrebuințare, ci prin „aranjarea” într-un context de semnificații, adică în ceea ce J. Baudrillard numește logica socială sau logica semnelor.”, Ion Ungureanu, *op. cit.*, pp. 58–59.

²⁹² “o totalitate de relații constante, relativ invariante pe care și prin care se manifestă viața socială propriu-zisă”, *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁹³ “... societatea este posibilă ca urmare a „condensării sociale a forțelor individuale”, într-un cuvând, datorită socialității”, *Ibid.*, pp. 73–74.

The decomposition of material force in intellectual and moral ones led to a typology of social rationality. Intellectual force is characterized by a “technical” spirit, while moral force by an “aesthetic” spirit. Generally, the disjunction of social rationality is one of the modern sociology research subjects.

In the second paradigm of this chapter (“The law of Community and the paradox of society”), Ungureanu presents an extension to Comte’s law. The paradigm author F. Tonnies discovers a typology of social structures: community and society. A community is based on organic will (which corresponds to ‘aesthetic’ spirit) and a society on the reflexive will (related to ‘technical’ spirit).

In the next paradigm of Spencer (“The law of integration and differentiation of society”), a typology of the society’s structural components is described by the criteria of differentiation and integration. Vilfredo Pareto introduces the idea of a functional relation between society’s structural components. In “The cycle of mutual dependency” paradigm (V. Pareto), Ungureanu highlights that every part of society has an important influence on social structure. Comte has assumed that only the material forces influence social structure. Also, Pareto explains that every part of society’s structure is in a dependency relationship, all the components can have an important influence upon others in a cycle.

The next paradigm of T. Parsons argues that between structural parts exists an informational exchange with energetic and control dimensions.

Further, in the “Law of sociological parallelism”, the paradigm of Dimitrie Gusti, Ungureanu strengthens the idea of the structural parts’ dependency with Gusti’s concept of parallelism. Gusti argues that a social unit consists of four frames (cosmic, biological, psychological, and historical) and four manifestations (economic, spiritual, political, and judicial). The frames and manifestations (components of the society’s structure) are correlated rather than being in a causality relation.

The paradigms of G. Zapan and P. Andrei extend Gusti’s discoveries. The ‘surface’ and ‘substratum’ concepts (P. Andrei) nurture Gusti’s theory of frames actualization by human activities. Also, P. Andrei highlights that the social process is a differentiating process. Parts of society exist because of a permanent differentiating process.

I. Ungureanu finishes the chapter with Thomas theorem. Every part of society’s structure is a form of people activity’s regulation. As long as people define these regulations (components of the social structure) as real, social system will continue to exist:

“Furthermore, the historical dimension of the structure of society makes possible its transformation, the ‘transient’ nature of social forms and, in fact, all the structures of society, from the economic ones to the institutional and cultural structures, are under constant construction and reconstruction because they exist objectively only through the practical social work of humans and social groups”²⁹⁴.

²⁹⁴ “Mai mult decât atât, dimensiunea istorică a structuralității societății face posibilă transformarea ei, caracterul „trecător” al formelor sociale, și, în fapt, toate structurile societății,

SOCIAL STRUCTURES: CLASSES, STRATIFICATION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

The third chapter explores the sociological problem of social stratification: what are its components? What are the types of relations between their parts? In chapter two of the book, Ungureanu analyses society parts at a macro-level, following in the third chapter to introduce the reader in a micro-level of social anatomy analyses.

Firstly, social structure is a component of the societal structure and it refers to “the capacity or the quality of the human being to associate, or belong to a social group”²⁹⁵.

The first paradigm of Max Weber explains why classes are a “group with maximum societal significance”²⁹⁶ and how they produce social order by interaction with social status. Society is structured hierarchically on the levels of classes:

“This (class structure) obviously corresponds to the activity and rational relationship ‘of purpose’. As the activity determined by the rationale of the purpose is again similar, even if it is not identified with economic activity, it means that class structures are determined by the economic order of a society”²⁹⁷.

And status groups:

“The status criterion is, as Weber stated, the respective privilege ‘claim for social consideration’ and the privilege arises from a way of life, a type of education or professional prestige”²⁹⁸.

The next paradigm of Dahrendorf (“The social conflict pluralism”) is an example of using in the correct way the notions of status and classes for explaining the social process in a developing society. Dahrendorf answers the question of why communism did not emerge in the United States?

After “The social conflict pluralism” paradigm, Ungureanu begins the discussion about an essential process of social structure: social mobility. Before presenting its principles, typology and laws in the P. Sorokin paradigm, Ungureanu

începând cu cele economice și terminând cu structurile instituționale și culturale, sunt într-o permanentă construcție și reconstrucție întrucât ele există în mod obiectiv doar prin activitatea socială practică a indivizilor umani și a grupurilor sociale”, *Ibid.*, p. 125.

²⁹⁵ “capacitatea sau calitatea ființei umane de a se asocia, de a aparține unor grupuri sau grupări sociale, *Ibid.*, p. 133.

²⁹⁶ “grupurile cu semnificație societală maximă”, *Ibid.*, p. 134.

²⁹⁷ “Aceasta (structura de clasă) corespunde, evident, activității și relației raționale ‘de scop’. Cum activitatea determinată prin raționalitatea scopului este iarăși asemănătoare, chiar dacă nu se identifică cu activitatea economică, înseamnă că structurile de clasă sunt determinate de ordinea economică a unei societăți”, *Ibid.*, p. 138.

²⁹⁸ “Criteriul statusului este, așa cum preciza Weber, privilegiul respectiv ‘pretenția pentru o considerație socială’, iar privilegiul se naște dintr-un mod de viață, dintr-un tip de educație sau din prestigiul profesional”, *Ibid.*, p. 142.

demonstrates the existence of a “negative” social mobility, by M. Eminescu’s thinking:

“In a social and national environment corrupted by foreign influence and domination, elements that adapt passively, easily and quickly to the corrupt social environment will be promoted in the social hierarchy”²⁹⁹.

Eminescu explains that in a conquered country the elite will be ‘selected’ by negative criteria (positive ones are knowledge, ability, and work). A country governed by negatively selected elites will be on the underdevelopment path.

The social stratification’s study domain researches the relation between the component groups of a hierarchical structured society. Using the paradigm of “The Social imitation” (G.Tarde), Ungureanu demonstrates through a theoretical analysis that imitation is an important cultural relation in a stratified society.

In the second half of the 21st century, the Western countries raised the question whether education is an important variable of growth for an individual’s vertical mobility:

“When transition between positions at the same level of the social hierarchy, mobility is horizontal, but when levels are different, we are dealing with vertical mobility, which can be ascending (social climbing) or descending (social sinking)”³⁰⁰.

The paradigm “Paradox of Anderson and the devaluation of diplomas” (R. Boudan) offer an answer: desynchronization between social structures and the increase in education accessibility will produce diploma inflation. The importance of education’s role in social mobility still persists in contemporary society. In this context, Ungureanu presents the law of social intelligence growth by the Spiru Haret paradigm. If a society has organic elites (positively selected) then intelligence will grow double geometric:

“What is the factor that determines the multiplier effect of smart growth? The maximum intelligence of society, represented by individuals with superior intelligence who broaden the average intellectual field of society and raise its level ...”³⁰¹.

The last paradigm of this chapter is called "The law of the requisite hierarchy" (A. Aulin). Ungureanu argues that hierarchy is a necessity of society’s survival, but a high amount of hierarchy can block society.

²⁹⁹ “Într-un mediu social și național corupt prin influență și dominație străină vor fi promovate în ierarhia socială elementele care se adaptează pasiv, ușor și repede mediului social corupt”, *Ibid.*, p. 125.

³⁰⁰ “Când trecerea se face între poziții de la același nivel al ierarhiei straturilor sociale, mobilitatea este orizontală, dar când nivelurile sunt diferite avem de a face cu mobilitatea verticală, care poate fi ascendentă (social climbing) sau descendentă (social sinking).”, *Ibid.*, p. 163.

³⁰¹ “Care este factorul care determină efectul de multiplicare al creșterii inteligenței? Inteligența maximă a societății, reprezentată de indivizi cu inteligență superioară care largesc câmpul intelectual mediu al societății și-i ridică nivelul ...”, *Ibid.*, p. 186.

EVOLUTION OF SOCIETY

The latter chapter of the book is shorter because the study of social change and revolution is not as developed as the others. In the introduction, Ungureanu defines the essential concepts of society's evolution study area: social and societal evolution, social development, modernization, progress, revolution, and social change.

The first three paradigms of this chapter are related to a particular structural change: progression of society. In the first paradigm of A. Comte, Ungureanu states that modernity is different from the other historical époque by the increasing rationality in society. Rationality is specific for economic action. From this perspective, capitalism is the cause of the evolution of modern rationality. The emergence of capitalism was explained by M. Weber in the birth of Protestant religion. The Protestant religion has supported the capitalist spirit of bourgeoisie. Therefore M. Weber demonstrates in his paradigm, that the modernization of Occident civilization is an effect of the birth of Protestant religion. In the third paradigm of the chapter, H. Mendras explains how social innovation (*e.g.*, the spirit of capitalism) can spread across society.

The issue of social development was raised by Ungureanu through W.E. Moore, J. H. Steward and E.R. Service paradigms. The first identifies 10 evolutionary curves. The second explains their diversity through the principle of multilateralism. Any society has a different evolution path from the others. The principle of phylogenetic discontinuity of progress (E. R. Service) points that every evolutionary path has the potential to be a source of social innovation.

The next concept analyzed is social development. W. W. Rostow proposes a social model of economic development. No society is isolated. Therefore, the social development of one society can be influenced by its interaction with another. These ideas were explained through the paradigm of Constantin Dobrogeanu Gherea and Eugen Lovinescu, who analyzed the evolution of modern Romania. Modernization is an instrument of social development. Ungureanu exposes the positive and negative consequences of this instrument in W. Moore's paradigm.

Structural changes in society can suddenly occur through a revolution. In the paradigm of J. C. Davies, Ungureanu detailed a principle for the start of a revolution: relative deprivation.

The last paradigms of the book analyses the concept of social change. In the "cultural gap" paradigm (W. F. Ogburn). Ungureanu illustrates the process of change within the components of the company. A social innovation that has emerged in one part of society will be delayed in another part of it. In the latest paradigm of the book, P.A. Sorokin argues why social change is imminent and its variations are limited.

CONCLUSIONS

The book mirrors the thinking of a true scientist. By reading Ion Ungureanu's masterpiece, you have access to the mind of a sociologist for whom objectivity, lucidity, clarity and accuracy are moral norms.

Ion Ungureanu managed to organize all theoretical sociology in 260 pages. Thus, the book presents the “core” of sociology, and the essence of this science. Compared to other sociology textbooks, Ion Ungureanu does not confine himself to presenting the main sociological trends (functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism, etc.). He succeeds to give autonomy for every paradigm to a sociological trend and thereby turning every paradigm into a possible new sociological study field. In addition, the book brings to the fore the Gustian fundamental idea: society must be studied interdisciplinarily. Sociology integrates other social sciences because only in this way it can study society as a whole. Some sociology paradigms derive from scientific domains such as economics, psychology, or socio-biology.

Sociology is in a constant paradigm competition. Ungureanu demonstrates that there is no universal sociological paradigm, but only a dominant one. From this perspective, each paradigm is valid and has potential for development. The paper of the Romanian sociologist is becoming an act of national conscience. He shows that sociology in Romania can excel by developing its own inherited paradigms, such as those of Eminescu (“The negative social selection”) or Gherea (“The orbitation law”).

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