Sociology of emotions and rituals: some readings from Durkheim

Sociología das emoções e dos rituais: algumas leituras de Durkheim

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DOI: 10.55905/revconv.17n.3-075

Originals received: 02/05/2024
Acceptance for publication: 02/20/2024

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ABSTRACT
This contribution aims to illustrate how Erving Goffman and Randall Collins develop Durkheim’s ritualistic-emotional model, making it an essential element in rituals of interaction (Goffman, 1967; Collins, 1975). In The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, Émile Durkheim (1912) considered the importance of emotional factors, objectified in ritual experiences, as agents of cohesion indispensable to social unity, found for Erving Goffman in the ritual representation of everyday life in which reciprocal relationships originate. For Collins, emotional solidarity and ritual order, are traceable in all those modes of interaction in which subjects, by reactivating their feelings, regenerate processes of sharing and belonging. Drawing on Durkheim’s analysis, this article illustrated how the ritual and emotional dimension represents a crucial theoretical junction for both Goffman’s sociology, committed to observing the presentation of the self in social contexts, and for Collins, who is attentive to interpreting the social interactions that are reproduced in “micro-situations”, and the emotional energy generated in contemporary rituals.

Keywords: Collins, Durkheim, emotions, Goffman, rituals.

RESUMO
Este contributo pretende ilustrar como Erving Goffman e Randall Collins desenvolvem o modelo ritualístico-emocional de Durkheim, tornando-o um elemento essencial nos rituais de interação (Goffman, 1967; Collins, 1975). Em As Formas Elementares da Vida Religiosa, Émile Durkheim (1912) considerou a importância dos factores emocionais, objectivados nas experiências rituais, como agentes de coesão indispensáveis à unidade social, encontrados para Erving Goffman na representação ritual da vida quotidiana em que se originam as relações de reciprocidade. Para Collins, a solidariedade emocional e a ordem ritual são detectáveis em todos os modos de interação em que os sujeitos, ao reactivarem os seus sentimentos, regeneram processos de partilha e de pertença. Partindo da análise de Durkheim, este artigo ilustrou como a dimensão ritual e emocional representa uma junção teórica crucial tanto para a sociologia de Goffman, empenhada em observar a apresentação do eu nos contextos sociais, como para Collins, atento à interpretação...
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Resumen

Esta contribución pretende ilustrar cómo Erving Goffman y Randall Collins desarrollan el modelo ritualístico-emocional de Durkheim, convirtiéndolo en un elemento esencial de los rituales de interacción (Goffman, 1967; Collins, 1975). En Las formas elementales de la vida religiosa, Émile Durkheim (1912) consideró la importancia de los factores emocionales, objetivados en las experiencias rituales, como agentes indispensables de cohesión para la unidad social, encontrada para Erving Goffman en la representación ritual de la vida cotidiana en la que se originan las relaciones de reciprocidad. Para Collins, la solidaridad emocional y el orden ritual son detectables en todos los modos de interacción en los que los sujetos, al reactivar sus sentimientos, regeneran procesos de compartir y pertenecer. Partiendo del análisis de Durkheim, este artículo ha ilustrado cómo la dimensión ritual y emocional representa un nudo teórico crucial tanto para la sociología de Goffman, comprometida con la observación de la presentación del yo en los contextos sociales, como para Collins, atento a la interpretación de las interacciones sociales que se reproducen en "microsituaciones" y a la energía emocional generada en los rituales contemporáneos.

Palabras clave: Collins, Durkheim, emociones, Goffman, rituales.

1 INTRODUCTION

What we intend to show is how Émile Durkheim in The Elementary Forms of Religious Life developed, through the study of shared rituals, a specific sociological approach to emotions, and to everyday rituals lato sensu, thus foreshadowing an interest that would only emerge among social scientists from the 1970s onwards (e.g. Hochschild et al., 1979; Kemper, 1978). Durkheim inaugurated a theoretical orientation that influenced several authors (Erving Goffman and Randall Collins in particular), who were interested in the rituals that unfold in the micro-situations of everyday life.

Religious rites, for Durkheim, play a role in social integration, arousing emotions among the members who take part in them. The “sacred”, while on the one hand granting space to emotionality, on the other hand circumscribes the selfish tendencies of individuals and groups. Emotions, writes Patrick Charauudeau, “are not only attributable to the drive, the irrational and the uncontrollable, but also have a social character. They [are] guarantors of social cohesion, [they] allow the individual to construct his or her own sense of belonging to a group, [they] represent the vitality of the collective consciousness”. (Charauudeau, Mantovani, 2010, p. 2). In the
sacred, the common mobilization of psychic energy “makes our will bend and inclines it in the direction indicated” (Durkheim, 1912, p. 216). This imposition dictates ways of acting and thinking. Durkheim’s exploration of the sacred highlights as

this invigorating and life-affirming influence […] is particularly manifest in certain circumstances. In an assembly warmed by a common passion, we become susceptible to feelings and acts of which we are incapable by our own strength alone; when the assembly is then dissolved, we find ourselves alone with ourselves and fallen back to the ordinary level. It is then possible for us to gauge the extent to which we had transcended our ordinary selves (Durkheim, 1912, p. 216).

Emotions and rituals allow us to explore the anthropological complexity of the Durkheimian homo duplex, in him “there are two beings: an individual being who has his basis in the organism and whose sphere of action is, consequently, strictly limited, and a social being who represents the highest reality in us, in the intellectual and moral order […]” (Durkheim cited by Bevilacqua, 2020, p. 25). Bevilacqua emphasized that both dimensions are co-present within the same subjectivity. The polemic with utilitarianism demonstrates, in this sense, the aim of problematizing human nature from the perspective of social science, advocating for the idea of a homo duplex that is certainly distinct from the neoclassical reification of homo oeconomicus (Bevilacqua, 2020, p. 25).

The indications offered by the French sociologist on religious rituals, emotions, and the duplicity of subjectivity find reference in Goffman, who secularizes the Durkheimian theoretical model, as we will attempt to illustrate. Next, we will focus on the ways in which ritual and interaction are central to understanding contemporary social micro-processes, according to Collins. Finally, it will be interesting to draw some conclusions on the relationship between these authors, whose analyses have provided an interpretation of the order of meanings created in moral episodes and symbolic relations.

2 ERVING GOFFMAN AND THE INTEGRATION OF THE DURKHEIMIAN MODEL

Showing continuity with the conception of ritual proposed by Goffman, the French sociologist’s approach allows us to articulate a reflection on the processes of social construction in everyday reality. Through Goffman’s reception of the Durkheimian scheme, we will reason on the importance for the subject of managing emotions in social interaction.
In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912) Durkheim emphasizes how the *conditio sine qua non* for a ritual to originate is the physical proximity of the actors and their reciprocal action, which finds its landing place in the normalized psychic transcendence, and in the “collective consciousness” the instrument capable of influencing the conduct and thinking of individuals, thus establishing an emotional energy. This energy is not, however, to be ascribed to individuals, but it is the result of the sum of widespread stimuli that transcend individual emotionality. The experience of sharing emotional states is occasional and temporary, and oriented towards the self-gratification of participating in the activities of a circumscribed group.

This social energy, which cyclically crosses and regulates individual histories on extraordinary occasions, is ensured by the awareness of sharing with others an experience that presupposes the construction of an order (also emotional). This order, from the Goffmanian perspective, is perceived as a form of respect and adherence to the norms that not only preside over “official ceremonies”, but also govern interactions in everyday practices, where there is room for expressiveness and the dramaturgical representation of the subject, and the dichotomy actor on the proscenium and/or behind the scenes.

The reception of Durkheim in Goffman is to be understood as an extension of Durkheimian lines of analysis (Cadario, 2000). Translating the Durkheimian model, the Canadian sociologist applies classical ritual theory to the secularized individual in modern society. Caldario writes of a Goffman:

> less inclined to recognize an overall set of norms and values of a social consortium, [Goffman] has rather emphasized how the Durkheimian ritualistic framework acts in the same way in the detail of everyday interactions. That is to say, in the stage setting of social situations, in the way one defines reality together with one’s interlocutor, through an articulated interplay of representations, obligations and ceremonial expectations, perhaps seeking to take advantage of them (*Ibid.*, p. 267).

The theoretical connection also matures in the acquisition of an emotional-situational script, the result of a broader socio-cultural dynamic in which the subject is immersed. Embracing on a micro level the intuitions of the French sociologist, the social and moral foundations, the value of ritual (Collins, 1975) and the categories of space and time within which to allocate bodies, this acquisition appears evident for both in the importance of individualization processes. This convergence is developed in Goffman’s essay *The Nature of Deference and Demeanor*.
(1988b, p. 51-104), in which Durkheim’s ritual-emotional potentialities are transferred to “profane rites”:

In this essay it is my intention to examine some of the senses in which, in our urban and secular world, the individual is granted a certain sacredness that is manifested and confirmed by symbolic acts. Trying to adapt some current anthropological terms, I will attempt to construct a conceptual scheme within which to frame the two concepts of deference and demeanor that I consider fundamental to this field of study. Through these reformulations, I will attempt to show that it is possible to successfully attempt a version in modern dress of Durkheim’s social psychology (Goffman, 1988, pp. 51-52).

This profanation recalls the positive/negative ritual dichotomy, the polarization of the individual and his sacredness. Insisting on this, Longo and Spina thus resolve the apparent controversy between the two authors:

[...] if, for the former, the sacralization of the individual in modern society is general, constitutive of the “moral patrimony”, institutionalized (the ‘religion[ of the individual is of social institution [...] it is society that assigns us this ideal’), substantiated in civil public rites and positive laws; for the latter, the cult of the individual is ‘more slender’, i.e. practiced through minor, banal, every day ceremonies that do not entail cost and effort to their participants (Longo & Spina, 2018, p. 75).

Concerning the importance of the emotional sphere, the contiguity with Durkheim lies in considering emotions as culturally prescribed attributions, responding to shared expectations of correct behavior in public (Thoys, 1989). Emotional labour\(^2\) in Goffman forces the self to act by managing feelings, considering demands of a structural nature. In this sense, one does not experience emotions depending on the context, but consciously attempts to display one’s behavioral “mask”.

Goffman’s observations on the ‘order of interaction’ form the background to the theme of the presentation of the self to others, which owes much to the insights of Charles Horton Cooley and his looking glass self (Cooley, 1983; Iagulli, 2015). The constructionist approach to the study of the self and social relations is the lens favored by the American sociologist through which to inspect the self and the appropriateness of emotions within the framework of social organisation\(^3\).

In the essay *The nature of deference and demeanor*, for Goffman the “self is in part [a] ceremonial object, something sacred that must be treated with ritual attention and which in turn must be presented to others in its proper light” (Goffman, 1988b, p. 99). The Goffmanian core

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\(^1\) Contribuciones a Las Ciencias Sociales, São José dos Pinhais, v.17, n.3, p. 01-15, 2024
concept, the presentation of the self in society understood as “suitable and just” conduct, according to Gabriella Turnaturi “opens the way to the study of emotions and their control by introducing concepts such as: the emotional congruence of the actor with the interaction experienced at a given moment; the embarrassment and the social and individual costs that must be paid there where the discrepancy between emotions and the rules of a given situation becomes evident” (Turnaturi, 1995, cited by Magnante, 2018, pp. 122-123).

The rituals observed by Goffman, are the rules “of face games”, those interactions in which the mutual respect and dignity of the participants is at stake (to avoid “losing face”), and which are based on the tacit agreement that such respect must be maintained by all (Longo & Spina, 2018, p. 75). The frontstage and backstage are the areas of physical space where the idea of an order built around the ritual and situated nature of the self, the foundation of interaction itself, comes alive: “The self is not something organic that has its own specific location, whose main destiny is to be born, mature and die; it is rather a dramaturgical effect emerging from a scene being performed” (Goffman, 1988, p. 89).

In a second study that we intend to analyze here, entitled Embarrassment and Social Organization (Goffman, 1988a, p. 105-22), Goffman, in what he prefigures as the two-dimensional breakdown of the individual, notes how the avoidance of proper management of emotionality is interpreted by the actor as a violation of the norms “that dictate appropriate behavior” (Goffman, 1988, p. 112), and whose balancing act between demeanor and embarrassment is achieved in adherence to collective moral obligations, which the individual must adhere to because these depend on the perception that others have of his or her social identity (Goffman, 1988, p. 112), and the balancing act between demeanor and embarrassment takes place in the adherence to collective moral obligations, to which the individual must adhere because the perception others have of his social identity depends on them (Goffman, 1988, p. 114). The projection of a multiple self, in a social system that admits “role segregations” and status differentiations, topoi of contemporary society⁴, ratifies the existence of forms of structural conditioning that act as variables in the individual’s emotional-behavioral scheme. The latter cannot disregard the evaluation (intrinsic and extrinsic) of constraints that permeate interactions (especially institutional ones):

The democratic tendency of some of our most modern institutions increases the likelihood that members of different importance in the same work team will be in places such as the canteen at the same time, causing them to be embarrassed. [...]. These
difficulties occur with particular frequency in lifts, as here individuals who are not entirely familiar with each other have to stay too close to each other for a while to ignore the possibility of a chat [...]. Due to the fact that he possesses several selves, the subject [may] find himself in the situation of having to be both present and not present on certain occasions. An awkward situation ensues: the subject finds himself torn apart, albeit not in a violent way. Depending on the way he behaves, there is a different position of his self (Goffman, 1988, p. 120).

To close, in Goffman, status differentiation is the presupposition at the origin of the “social function of embarrassment”, which produces a conflict of identities and “principles of organization”, the effect of a structural rigidity that takes on the pluralization of the self and emotions that can be presented in public. We read, again, the Canadian sociologist:

[...] the self in many respects consists only of the application of legitimate organizing principles of the self. We construct our identity through claims which, if rejected, gives us the right to feel justifiably indignant [...] The organizing principles of any social system must, in all probability, come into conflict with each other at certain moments. Instead of allowing the conflict to express itself in a meeting, the subject places himself between the two opposing principles. He sacrifices his identity for a moment and sometimes sacrifices the encounter, but the principles remain firm (Goffman, 1988, p. 122).

3 RANDALL COLLINS AND RITUALS: RECOVERING ÉMILE DURKHEIM’S SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

The element of continuity between the thought of Randall Collins and Émile Durkheim is also here in the latter’s later production on religion (Durkheim, 1912). Collins brings to maturity a rather singular interweaving between the functionalist Durkheim and his own, conflictualist approach. In fact, the sociological elaboration of Collins, a prominent exponent of a renewed theory of conflict, tends, in the words of the author himself, ‘to sever [on the one hand] all ties with the perspective of social equilibrium and consensus, and on the other to embrace the Durkheimian model of ritual by making it an essential element of mediation between the micro- and macrosocial dimensions’ (Collins, 2014, p. 299). In the essay The Durkheimian Tradition in Conflict Sociology (2011), Collins asserts that apart from the ‘triumvirate’ of sociological thought classics such as Karl Marx and Max Weber, Durkheim’s popularity since his death date (1915) is incidental due to the Anglo-American cooptation of the content of his works by Radcliffe Brown in Britain and Robert Merton in the USA, a fact that has depreciated the French sociologist’s intellectual reach.

Based on this tendentious appropriation, Collins writes
he is regarded as a conservative defender of the status quo by the Left, as an arch-functionalist by the anti-functionalist, as a naïve unilinear evolutionist by the historicists. The subjectivist sociologies tend to see in Durkheim, if not always a materialist, at least a social reductionist of a disturbingly deterministic sort. For the humanists, Durkheim is the anti-Christ; for the micro-sociologists, Durkheim is the most reified of the macro. It is small wonder that Durkheim’s reputation is at its ebb (Collins, 2011, p. 107).

Collins’ conflict theory sees among its precursors, besides Hobbes, Marx, Weber and, indeed, Durkheim. Marx is particularly influential for his evolutionary study of societies understood in terms of class conflict (power and status) and stratification insocial relations, which follow the rationalizations imposed by the relations ofproduction, conditions implicated by a dynamic process between structure and superstructure that influences, inevitably, the consciences of individuals. Weber, on the other hand, is interested in the “creation of emotional solidarity [...] one of the most powerful weapons of conflict itself. Emotional rituals can be used for the purpose of domination within a group or organization; by means of them alliances are formed to fight other groups, or some strata succeed in imposing a hierarchy of social prestige that allows them to dominate over others [...]” (Collins, 1980, p. 58). Durkheim, with his work on belonging and collective emotionality, gives us, de facto, an outline of the phenomenal elements common between distinct social organizations (in terms of complexity, temporality, and structure), in which the socionormative element (functional to a moral order) rather than the egoistic one, an aspect present precisely in CRIIs, is favored.

Collins’ emotional-symbolic solidarity finds its theoretical-conceptual framework in Durkheim’s sociology, mediating the Durkheimian framework of emotionalexperience with the configuration of a materialistic-social model of a Goffmanian nature (Cadario, 2000, p. 266). Conflict Sociology (Collins, 1975) was one of the most significant examples in the development of the field of study of the sociology of the emotions in the mid-1970s, and even more important, however, as noted Paolo Iagulli (2016), is the ‘theory of ritual interaction’ (p. 411), which is inextricably linked to emotions. By virtue of this approach, the American sociologist is to be credited with the great merit of having conceptualized a sociological theory characterized not exclusively by the primacy of rational actors but gives a mitigation of Homans’ (1961) Homo rationalis with the individual oriented to non-utilitarian maximization of his emotional gains.

As Vittorio Cadario (2000) writes, the basic assumptions of Collins’ (1988) conflict theory are three: the first argues that man is sociable, but at the same time conflictual; the second reaffirms that the emotional bases for solidarity become “tactical resources to be used in the
dynamics of conflict”; the third concerns the “presuppositional of human action, on the one hand rational and instrumental, on the other emotional-symbolic” (Collins, 1988, p. 264).

While ritual for Durkheim is primarily concerned with the sacred, in Collins’ work it is the foundation of any kind of social interaction, and Goffman’s ascendancy can be seen in this. In this reciprocity, the members of the group perceive a reciprocal obligation declined in the “sacralized” symbol, in this way the actors reproduce what Collins calls Emotional Energy (EE) through their shared experience, sense of belonging and the limitation of a psycho-social boundary that separates them from the out-group, which is heuristically identified with Durkheim’s moral force (Bellah, 2005). It is a process that has the property of reducing the complexity of social action (emotional instead of instrumental). For Collins, there are four fundamental conditions for a ritual to materialize (Collins, 2004): proximity of at least two people so that both exert a reciprocal bodily influence; clear definition of the situation, such that there is a distinction between those who participate and those who are outside; focus of attention on a common object or activity; emotional intensity. These, in turn, determine as many properties: the sense of cohesion, the emotional energy guiding the action, and the self-identification of the group with its objects.

Without this emotional energy, social interactions (IR) could not take place. It is also an instrument of group control (in both vertical and horizontal IR) ⁵. It is what Durkheim calls “moral sentiment”, which, if on the one hand stimulates specific acts of altruism, on the other is configured as a constraint, a means of defense of the group addressed to its sacred symbols, the violation of which leads to the persecution of heretics, outcasts, and all those subjectivities alien to collective morality (Collins, 2004).

This sentiment-based analytical model disrupts several methodological orientations: in addition to the aforementioned Homans and his behaviorist approach, there is also a distance with the Weber of Economy and Society (Poggi, 2004), who tends to emphasize the type of rational acting “with respect to purpose” over the other three in his typology. The theoretical anchors are instead to be found in George Herbert Mead’s intentional actor, for whom the subject acts in terms of sense and meaning (Bulle, 2015), a premise that contributed to the genesis and maturation of Symbolic Interactionism.

To conclude, exchanges for Collins are driven by “emotional and symbolic processes that individuals circulate in the course of their conversations (which we might call ‘conversational
markets’)” and the approach he calls ‘theory of chains of ritual interactions (IR)” (Collins, 1988, p. 424) moves precisely from the idea of a ‘conversational market’, where social actors go in search of exchanges favorable to them, but unlike a conventional economy, the conversational one is much more complex, as they converge in it “different cultural currencies” and streams of exhilarating emotions. All of these are versions of the Durkheimian “collective effervescence”, and the result of a successful accumulation of emotional coordination within ritual of interaction is precisely to produce feelings of solidarity (in contrast, the absence of EE is the lack of solidarity as D. understands it). Emotions are the ingredients of IR, and although transient they produce long-term experiences, determining or restoring group solidarity (Collins, 2004, p. 108-9).

The result is that what is exchanged “certainly does not end in advice, obedience, and other utilitarian acts; in the IR chain model, individuals are seen as actors seeking symbolic and emotional rewards, conveyed within conversations, often unconsciously” (Collins, 1988). In this regard, however long it may be, it is necessary to quote this further quotation by the same author, in which IR and EE are clearly set out:

> IR chains imply a symbolic baggage that is challenged in the course of conversations, at least until routine social structures emerge. In encounters, each actor brings three types of resources: a) cultural capital, b) emotional, and (c) opportunity in the marketplace (Collins, 1988, p. 454). If conversational exchanges produce positive feelings and increased cultural capital, actors will expend their resources in the ritual interaction and tend to repeat the exchange over time, i.e. create an IR chain. (Collins, 1988, p. 450-454). However, the crucial element of the exchange is not the personal return but "the shared focus of attention and the emotional contagion that accompanies it” (Collins, 1988). Ritual, in fact, is rewarding in itself insofar as it enables intense, shared emotions. It is the emblems of common experience (the sense of belonging to the group) that, enveloped in a halo of emotion, lead to reciprocation, for example, a gift. More generally, the conversational encounter calls into question symbolic and emotional resources of each individual; in the situation that is created, social actors ‘negotiate’ a model of social order (Collins, 1988, p. 271-72).

4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this essay, it was pointed out how Émile Durkheim, with his study on religion, in which the origins of the sociology of rituals and emotions can be traced, inspired the approaches of Erving Goffman and Randall Collins.

Given the emotional sphere, it has been observed that for Durkheim, the theory of emotions is a construction rather than a subjective self-expression, it is what consolidates and reproduces the corpus social (Fisher & Koo Choon, 1989). Emotions celebrate the power cohesion of society and forge the spirit of solidarity, in which ‘the question of integration and reflection
on the characteristics and function of the religious phenomenon’, are particularly relevant, since ‘there is [...] a source that inspires religiousand collective sentiments and that concerns the “fusion of consciences”, the possibility that they may be based “in a single thought”. From which derives their cooperation in the same work, thus an integrating effect that comes from “the morally invigorating and stimulating action that each society exerts on its members” (Longo & Spina, 2018, p. 73- 74).

If Durkheim emphasized how collective ideas, morality and group solidarity originate from the practices and ways in which they come together and idealize themselves, Goffman, in part, recognizes the overall set of norms and values that regulate the life of the social whole, highlighting how Durkheim’s ritualistic framework can be employed in everyday interactions, in which the symbolic order legitimizes itself in situations, ‘localist’ norms and ‘face-to-face’ expressions. Ritual interaction, and the individual’s efforts to manage emotions by controlling expressions, imply the a priori assumption of a role, of an acted character behind which the true Ego is concealed, which “does not originate in the person of the subject, but rather in the complex of the scene of his action, being generated by those attributes of local events that make them interpretable by the witnesses” (Goffman, 1959, p. 285). Giglioli writes, referring to Goffman’s micro sociological approach, in which it is possible to identify, in parallel, the influence exerted on Collins’s IR at a distance from Durkheim’s holistic model, that “the impact of structural variables [in Goffman] is never direct, but is mediated by a set of transformation rules that establish which aspects of the external world should be bracketed and which (and with which modifications) have the right of citizenship in the interaction” (Giglioli, 2007, p. 11).

Finally, in Randall Collins’ sociological theory, in antithesis to (neo)functionalism, the individual adheres to a transversal system of values, “continually transformed in the course of action and as a result of reciprocal actions between actors and the interdependence created between them” (Cadario, 2000, p. 273). The emphasis on the centrality of the “situational core” and of a social self-based on “a capillary network of micro-relationships, with their permanent negotiation and rituals”, recalls, albeit with due distinctions, the principles of Hans Joas’ pragmatist sociology and Goffman’s interactionism. Collins’ sociology, driven by Durkhemian theory, helps us interpret the ways in which, in everyday life, social solidarity is generated, and actions are performed (Bifulco, 2010). Ritual is that mechanism that shapes interactions and behavior, engendering symbols, belonging, procuring the emotional energy that determines and
orients human action and consecrates the cult of individuality, as observed with Durkheim first and Goffman later (Longo & Spina, 2018).
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Milano: Vita e Pensiero.


NOTES

1 For Durkheim, personality is not a monad, much less the consciousness that occupies our bodies. Social life is such insofar as it is based on subjective ambivalences and differentiation [cf. 1973, 278 (1912)], observations that led the French sociologist to distance himself from Leibniz [ibid., 276]. This allows us to identify a continuity of Durkheim’s thought in Jean Paul Sartre’s essentialist humanism, insofar as the French philosopher affirms that the individual is a being that sustains itself in being by virtue of its procedures, and therefore the subject is defined in the object [A. Badiou, 2013-73 ff.], in the symbol, in the represented reality in which the feeling of things is based [E. Durkheim, cit., passim] and physical and spiritual interaction is realised.


3 Cooley’s focus on self-evaluation, pride or shame arising from a combination of instinct and the social environment that surrounds us is clarified by Mariano Longo: ‘In the introduction added to the second edition of his Human Nature and Social Order, Cooley (1922) poses the questions of emotions within a discussion of the relevance of both hereditary and the social environment. Self and society are the complex output of the intertwining between what Cooley calls the germ-plasm (e.g. hereditary) and the cultural (language, intercourses, education) (ibid, pp. 4-5) so that it is hard to distinguish what contributes to what. Human behaviour is not predetermined by the instinct but is, on the contrary, made possible by what Cooley defines instinctive emotions. As opposed to instincts among lower animals, instinctive emotions do not produce “fixed modes of behaviour” (ibid., p. 29). They are, as it were, genetic prerequisites for plastic actions: “[t]hese instinctive emotions predetermine, not specific actions, but, in a measure, the energy that flows into actions having a certain function with reference to our environment” (ibid., p. 26). Some instinctive dispositions are clearly related to our animal nature (anger and fear, for example). Yet, simple emotions may not explain human behaviour. As Cooley writes: ‘all such dispositions [...] are rapidly developed, transformed, and interwoven by social experience, giving rise to a multitude of complex passions and sentiments which [...] change very considerably with changes in the social life that moulds them’ (ibid., p. 27). [M. Longo, Emotions Through Literature. Fictional Narratives, Society and the Emotional Self. Routledge, London-New York. London-New York: Routledge, 2019].

4 In this study, the author’s reference is to contemporary Anglo-American society.

5 In a stratified society, IR is based either on asymmetrical models, as in the case of a relationship between employees in a company, in which the object of ‘worship’, the focus, is represented by the manager, i.e. he who occupies the highest position in the hierarchy, who becomes the ‘fetish’ towards which emotional intensity is concentrated; or on linear models, such as a sporting activity, a funeral rite, a wedding or a baptism, in which the third party element towards which emotional transference is conveyed is divorced from inequality logics.