

# On the Paradigm of Sociology as a Science

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**Abstract** Our article discusses the basic prerequisites for the formation of a unified theoretical basis for sociology and thus its transformation into a true fundamental science, capable of identifying objective regularities of social life and applying them to the study of specific social phenomena. The methodological basis for the article is an approach to the actions of individuals and social groups from the standpoint of their objective belonging to the natural world, expressed in the various needs of people, inducing strongly enough representatives of any social groups to certain social behavior, which can lead to significant contradictions and generate acute social conflicts in society. The author considers the main task of sociology as a science to participate in the handling of such conflicts by means of studying the position of conflicted social groups in the system of social labor division. The proposed method for the real participation of sociologists in state social policy involves studying the professional preferences of representatives of such social groups, as well as recommending proposals for creating social "niches" for these groups within the framework of certain forms of socially useful activity.

**Keywords** Paradigm, Social division of labor, Social contradictions, Social regularities, System approach, Social "niche"

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## 1. Introduction

For all the diversity of modern sciences, one of their common properties remains orientation towards meeting the needs of society. Based on a fundamental theoretical framework, physicists, chemists, biologists, etc., conduct research that ultimately serves the practical interests of people in one way or another. Therefore, since the only reliable measure of scientific truth is practice, that is, the achievement of results that will satisfy these needs, the truth itself should always be unambiguous. There can be no two truths, one negating the other. Had there been, science would lose all meaning. In any serious science, its very paradigm, that is, the fundamental concept expressed in a set of attitudes, ideas and concepts; should be unambiguous, accepted and shared by the scientific community. The very development of such science is cumulative, expressed in the continuous accumulation of new knowledge and the rejection of unconfirmed hypotheses. The above is an axiom from the point of view of sciences that study nature, both inanimate and living. However, when it comes to the discipline that studies the social life of human society, that is, sociology, an opposing situation emerges. It is a well-known fact that within the framework of sociology there are a number of directions, each based on its own specific paradigm, often completely different from other paradigms. In other words, sociological knowledge is devoid of

unambiguity, although it refers to the same object of research. This situation became possible because almost all of these areas of modern sociology deny the existence of objective patterns of development, immanently inherent in human society.

From the very beginning, the history of sociology as a theoretical discipline was a process of developing socio-philosophical concepts. The authors of these concepts tried, through speculative constructions, to explain the social behavior of people, the direction of social processes. However, if in the development of natural sciences, as a rule, one can see consistency in achieving positive results, in approaching the knowledge of scientific truth, the same is not relevant to sociology. The theoretical conclusions by O. Comte, M. Weber, G. Spencer, E. Durkheim, V. Pareto, P. Sorokin and other famous sociologists, were barely connected, both to one another and to the research of modern representatives of sociological thought (G. Becker, N. J. Smelzer, E. Giddens and others). Accordingly, there is no possibility for discovering any significant continuity in the process of shaping a system for sociological knowledge.

Pitirim Sorokin, one of the greatest sociologists in the 20th century, expressed the currently prevailing point of view on this issue: «Contrary to my desire to see the stages of ongoing progressive development in history, I inevitably fail, trying to somehow support such a theory with facts. Because of these circumstances, I have to be content with a less enchanting, though perhaps more correct, conception of aimless historical fluctuations. Probably, in history there is a certain transcendental goal and invisible ways of advancing towards it, but they have not yet been established by anyone» (Sorokin, 1992, p. 310). American sociologists H. Becker

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Received: Dec. 8, 2021; Accepted: Jan. 21, 2022; Published: Jan. 24, 2022

Published online at <http://journal.sapub.org/sociology>

and A. Boskoff spoke in the same vein: «We don't know where we're going, but we're on our way... since we are demonstrably on our way, we need give no attention to where we seem to be going. Rejecting forecast, we nevertheless feel that close scrutiny of recently evident changes in sociological emphases, in the light of abortive or actual continuity, may help us to steer our course a little less blindly into at least the immediate future» (Becker and A. Boskoff, 1957, preface, V).

Also, there is a consensus currently among professional sociologists, actually denying their discipline the right to the status of rational science. John Scott, for example, openly writes that «Sociology is a diverse and pluralistic discipline. There are a variety of socially located standpoints, each with its own truths and an equal right to be heard in sociological debates. For this reason, no single and coherent body of ideas acceptable to all practitioners can be set down. Many commentators have drawn the conclusion that sociological concepts are, therefore, 'essentially contested': that there can be no agreed and binding definition of any of the principal concepts used by sociologists in their research» (Skott J., 2006, Introduction, xvii). A closer examination of individual studies gives the impression that almost all of these studies have one thing in common, expressed by the phrase «sociologists are interested». "They can be interested in anything. Noted by Kathy S. Stolley, for example: «Sociologists are quite interested in the large amount of diversity that occurs even within particular cultures. Observers of culture in the United States would easily find many differences if they studied Hollywood's celebrity community, a neighborhood in Chicago largely populated by descendants of Eastern European immigrants, a Florida town that is home to many retirees, and a coal mining town in southwestern Virginia». Or «As part of their interest in cultural diversity, sociologists study subcultures ... They may form, for example, around hobbies (as with ham-radio operators, custom-car enthusiasts, bingo players, online-game players, hunters, stamp collectors, recreational-vehicle owners); shared interests such as music styles (jazz, hip hop, rap), other behaviors or interests (cheerleaders, Bible study participants, skydivers, drug users, gamblers, outlaw bikers...)» (Stolley Kathy S., 2005, p. 49). The only question is what is the benefit to society from all this?

Unfortunately, presently, in world sociology there are practically no general works considering the problem of its transformation into a rigorous scientific discipline, having a solid and univocal methodological foundation. As frankly admitted, e.g., by Stephan Fuch: «The prospects for cumulative advances become dimmer still as an intellectual network becomes fragmented into competing ideological positions and movements. Structural fragmentation also fragments the common attention space. A science turns into rival ideological camps when the suspicion hardens that observation is not «disinterested» but driven by unacknowledged standpoints, perspectives, or political biases. Then, a central intellectual strategy is to «reveal»

these underlying biases and interests. Science turns into mutual ideological critique and exposure. Theories lose their innocence and are not to be taken at face value. Science becomes ideological politics, driven by the institutional entrenchment of diverse status groups. In the end, science itself becomes ideologically suspect, as an ally of capitalism, imperialism, ethnocentrism, sexism, and so on» (Fuchs S. p. 33-34).

Ultimately, the only thing that in reality unites the bulk of modern sociology's representatives is the factor of subjectivity, coming to the forefront, while actually excluding objective scientific truth from the group of research priorities. A completely natural question arises: why then does society need theoretical sociology at all? Of course, if sociology is to be a methodology for sociological surveys, then everything will be clear here. Such methods serve the political interests of various political parties and government bodies, and are useful to entrepreneurs, to study the sales market, as well as to the press to attract a readership. This is not science yet: only its tool. As for the applied works aimed at studying various specific aspects of social life, they are mainly due to the personal research interests of individual sociologists, and in real life are mostly useless. The results of these countless sociological studies, almost entirely based on the inductive method, barely get to be used for their intended purpose, that is, as reliable recommendations for the implementation of state social policy. This is quite justified, since in such a complex object of study as the social life of society, local empirical studies, devoid of a reliable methodological base, do not allow us to reveal the operation of objective social patterns. Accordingly, the conclusions based on the results of such surveys are not suitable for use in social planning.

The main argument raised by opponents to the recognition of sociology as a monoparadigmatic science boils down to the assertion that it is impossible to obtain strictly scientific sociological knowledge. If in the natural sciences, the scientist deals exclusively with objectively existing facts, then the sociologist likewise will have to take into account the existence of a subjective factor. This factor manifests itself in the infinitely diverse features of individual people's behavior, since such behavior has been the result of not only external objective circumstances, but also the characteristics of their individual psyche. Indeed, it is rather difficult to trace a general direction in the infinite variety of actions by particular individuals belonging to any social group. When faced with any social phenomena that appear as separate facts, a sociologist, as a rule, applies an inductive research method. However, this method does not make it possible to connect social phenomena with a theory that the sociologist accepts as a paradigm and, thus, to confirm this theory in a practical way. It is hardly possible to trace any significant correlation between various sociological concepts, both classical and modern, on the one hand, and the specific results of applied sociological research, on the other. The concepts remain general reasoning, retained only in the history of sociological doctrines. In order to apply the

deductive method, as is done in the natural sciences, a sociologist must proceed from a general methodological basis, formulating a hypothesis for his research. In the event that such hypotheses are confirmed by representative research results, they will become a property of science.

From the above, a conclusion emerges - the transformation of sociology into a true science is possible only if based on a single paradigm. This refers to a paradigm that would allow, using knowledge of general objective regularities, inherent in the object of science, to obtain reliable practical results in any specific empirical study.

## 2. Nature and Society

To consider sociology as a genuine science means to recognize the objective nature of the processes that continuously occur within human society in the course of its natural-historical development, independent of the will and desire of individual people. The opposite point of view inevitably ignores the inextricable link between the life of human society and the development of the natural world in all its diversity, preceding this life. Man, as a product of nature, emerges from it and becomes its highest form. It is therefore obvious that, on the one hand, the fundamental laws invariably underlying all natural phenomena and processes, are a necessary prerequisite for the emergence of intelligent life and the unification of people into an integral community, and on the other hand it manifests itself in the life of this community, albeit in specific forms, inherent only to society.

When it comes to the study of society within the framework of a scientific discipline called «sociology», the natural component of this very society most often remains beyond the interests of the researchers. Numerous works by modern sociologists create an impression that in the social behavior of both individuals and entire groups, no general objective patterns are identifiable for the development of a competent and effective social policy. Although, each one of the people making up society as a whole, as we know, is a part of the natural world, and by virtue of this, cannot ignore the laws inherent in this world. The only question is how a person depends on natural laws from the aspect of his or her social behavior.

One of the results gained from the scientific knowledge of nature was an understanding of the conditioning of all natural processes and phenomena by the prerequisites objectively inherent in the material world. Sciences studying the world of inanimate nature, relying on experimental data, prove a universal interconnection within this world, in which complex forms derive from less complex forms. The laws inherent in the motion of physical bodies differ from the laws observed in the motion of elementary particles, atoms and molecules, but, ultimately, are a consequence of the latter. In other words, in the process the natural world evolves, its forms become more complex, but its previous laws do not disappear, undergoing transformation, and retaining their

former basis in a latent form.

The same is true for the laws of living nature, which naturally arise on Earth from the laws of inanimate nature. This process was the result of an interaction of various elements in the natural environment, producing new forms of matter with corresponding new properties. At first glance, it may seem that the development of various forms in flora and fauna has nothing to do with the movement of forms in inanimate nature. However, in reality, all the chemical elements that make up the tissues of plants and animals existed long before the appearance of life on our planet.

Of course, compared to the non-living nature, the living nature is a giant qualitative leap in the development of the material world. The objective patterns, under which it develops did not arise from nothing, but are a consequence of an action by the natural laws that preceded them. Just like objects of inanimate nature (atoms, molecules, chemical compounds, planetary and stellar systems), plants and animals are natural systemic formations. At the same time, plants and animals are not separate from the surrounding natural environment; on the contrary, they are closely linked to it through metabolism. For their existence, both plants and animals need sunlight, air, and specific natural conditions necessary for their survival. For all its complexity, living nature remains an integral part of the natural environment as a systemic whole beyond which it cannot function.

Without understanding the above general features of living nature, it is impossible to understand the essence of the emergence and development of human society. Science has long ceased to dispute the fact that man emerged from the animal world. Accordingly, like other animals, a person is in a systemic connection with other elements of his natural environment, that is, he carries out metabolism. On the other hand, if other animals adapt to natural conditions, then a living being, who has become a man, has learned to adapt nature to itself through labor. It was labor, the transition from the mere consumption of natural means of sustenance to the creation of tools for the extraction of these means that mainly contributed to the emergence of man as an active actor capable of knowingly influencing his natural environment. At the same time, the productive labor activity of our ancestors was possible only through joint efforts.

For many millennia, people have improved the tools of labor, passing on labor skills from generation to generation through articulate speech, which was the result of not individual, but group creativity. Accordingly, the emerging consciousness of people, impossible without communication, was simultaneously not only individual, but also public.

The foregoing means that the transformation of an animal into a man represented its internal bifurcation. On the one hand, a person, although he lost many of the natural instincts inherent in his animal ancestors still remained a part of the animal world, a physical subject in the process of constant metabolism. On the other hand, he also became a product of his second, social nature, which, in fact, makes him human. Instead of instincts, he acquired new, perfected properties that allow him to reduce his dependence on the natural

environment. Thus, the essence of man can be viewed as an indissoluble unity of two intrinsic sides inherent in him - animal (biological) and human (social), which are in constant contradictions with each other. The first of these aspects of the essence of man presupposes his unconditional obedience to the laws of external nature. The second aspect gives people the opportunity to stand out from nature and to make their activities conscious. All of humanity's development is ultimately a continuous process of resolving this fundamental contradiction. The natural aspect of this contradiction has certainly remained the leading one. However, unlike animals that fully incorporate into the system of nature as its objects, humans realize their dependence on this system and enter into diverse relationships with it, calling them needs. Any human need is a relation to something. At the same time, the primary needs of human beings, expressed as their relationship to nature as a condition of physical existence, remain the most vital. Objectively, however, this fact – a conscious attitude to the surrounding world - does not change anything in the natural essence of a person. Without satisfying the needs for food, housing, clothing, protection from cold and heat, human life is simply impossible.

What has been said is a key point in understanding the objective nature of the functioning and development of human society as a system of human relations, independent of the consciousness and behavior of its individual parts. Just as movement is a way of existence for matter, just as metabolism is a way of existence for living beings, labor activity of people transforming nature to satisfy their basic needs is a way of existence for humanity as a social system.

### 3. Methodological Foundations for Sociology as a Science

With all the conceptual diversity of theoretical concepts, modern sociologists have developed a certain consensus regarding the object they are studying, which is the social life of society. This term, however, is somewhat vague, as it includes all social phenomena, processes and institutions, without singling out their main essence. This essence consists of *social relations*, that is, relations between people, conditioned by the belonging of these people to certain social groups. People enter into a wide range of social relationships, not by subjective desire, but because of the necessity to satisfy their needs, especially primary needs (for food, clothing, housing, etc.) which are entirely objective, and not ignorable under any circumstances. Consequently, also objective are the basic prerequisites of social relations themselves, the understanding and consideration of which gives sociology an opportunity to get rid of conceptual "pluralism" and become a fundamental science. These "prerequisites" were the most adequately articulated in the manuscript «German ideology» published in the mid-19th century by K. Marx and F. Engels, with the phrase itself coined by Marx. He makes a theoretical conclusion that

simultaneously with the development of society's productive forces, and an increase in the satisfaction of peoples' basic needs and the variety of these needs, «each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape... This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development until now. The social power', i.e., the multiplied productive force, which arises through the cooperation of different individuals as it is determined by the division of labor, appears to these individuals, since their co-operation is not voluntary but has come about naturally, not as their own united power, but as an alien force existing outside them, of the origin and goal of which they are ignorant, which they thus cannot control, which on the contrary passes through a peculiar series of phases and stages independent of the will and the action of man, nay even being the prime governor of these.» (Marx & Engels, 1978, p. 160).

In my opinion, this is where the key to understanding the essence and main content of man's historical development lies. Unfortunately, even those sociologists who deeply studied Marx's theoretical legacy did not pay serious attention to this statement. However, there is no denying the fact that the general division of labor is what ultimately determines the entire totality of social relations.

No person in modern society (with the exception of the most primitive tribes) can ignore his dependence on the fact that meeting almost any of its needs for products and services involves the participation of a huge number of people in various spheres of labor activity. If we look closely at any particular manifestation of social relations, we can see that it ultimately boils down to the position of representatives of a particular social group in the system of universal division of labor, often referred to as aggregate social production. After all, the satisfaction of the most essential human needs in one way or another depends precisely on what place a person occupies in this system. This conclusion is so axiomatic that it gives full reason to consider the conditionality of all social relations, without exception, by the total division of labor as a general sociological law, the knowledge of which makes it possible to apply the method of scientific deduction in specific studies of actual social problems (Vinogradov, 1997, p. 3-16).

In contrast to this law, repeated connections of a more particular order inherent in specific manifestations of the social life of society should be called regularities, since in this case the conditioning of consciousness and behavior of people by macrosocial factors is less rigidly manifested. Social regularities appear in the form of prevailing trends expressed in the statistical characteristics of the social communities studied. The statistical character of such social regularities will be shaped by the fact that real participants in social relations, i.e., specific people, are affected by extremely diverse factors of social life, unique in each case. Such regularities are manifest in certain stereotypes of social

behavior. In this case, while the social behavior of the majority in the group studied as a whole will correlate with objective regularities, the behavior of its certain percentage may, for various reasons, deviate from them.

An example for such social regularities in action can be the process of the reproduction of a social structure in society. Each representative of the younger generation (with the exception of a relatively few marginal cases) becomes an independent person, taking a certain place in the aggregate social production. His choice, however, shall not be random. Most often, such a choice shall be determined by a young person's socialization, occurring mainly in his family's social environment. It is unlikely that anyone will question the fact that in the families of people engaged in intellectual work, children, in the vast majority of cases, will be focused on such type of work, since they firmly assimilate the stereotypes of their parents' social behavior, among which one of the most important is the intellectual content of a practical activity. In the families of laborers, completely different stereotypes are common, which place the acquisition and accumulation of material goods in the first place among the fundamental social values. Naturally, children from such families, not focused on obtaining fundamental education, cannot claim any significant place in the social pyramid and shall be forced to occupy places in the lower layers of this pyramid, that is, just like their parents, to engage in physical labor. The manifestations of this regularity are not absolute, of course, but certainly massive.

Another example for the effect of social regularities is the peculiarities in the social adaptation of people migrating to other countries. In cases where migration is natural, gradual, these people, for the most part, occupy a specific niche in aggregate social production, carrying out mainly those types of activities that they engaged in before. This is because such activities are necessary for society and do not face serious competition. Due to the existence of such a social niche, migrants retain their native language and other specific ethnic traits for a long time. If their previous labor skills do not find application in a new place, and they have to engage in activities inherent in the indigenous population, they shall have no choice but adopt to the basic stereotypes of social behavior in this population. As a result, after two or three generations, migrants almost completely assimilate.

A different fate awaits those forced to migrate, which is typical, in particular, for refugees from countries with economies destroyed by wars. The vast majority of these people have to take those jobs (usually low-paid and not requiring special qualifications) that do not suit local residents. Such a situation exists, for example, at present in the cities of Russia, which have become asylums for numerous refugees from some Central Asian countries. In this case, we can also talk about a social niche that allows migrants to join the aggregate social production in a specific way as a special social group and at the same time preserve their ethnic characteristics. However, in a society new for them, they will remain in the lowest layers of the social pyramid for a long time, since the basic stereotypes of their

social behavior are radically different from the stereotypes inherent in the local population. In all these examples cited, as we can see, such objective regularities are at work, ultimately determined by the nature of social labor division.

A separate individual is of little interest to society outside of his social qualities. By the nature of his relationship to property, he can be a hired worker, landowner, businessperson or small merchant. At the same time, he or she may have any profession, be a resident of a city or a village, a representative of a particular nation or ethnic group, as well as a religious denomination. Even his demographic features - gender and age, marital status, period of residence in a certain area - one way or another give rise to specific needs, as well as features and possibilities for meeting such needs. Being a bearer of several social qualities at the same time, a person belonging to a particular society enters at once into several corresponding social groups. Moreover, if we take into account individual psychological characteristics superimposed on these qualities, it becomes a clear indicator for the incredible complexity of society's social life, in which millions of people interact in relatively small spaces.

This fact, among other things, means that social processes do not lend themselves to theoretical modeling. Meanwhile, the main sociological concepts are, in the final analysis, certain speculative models. As R. Grundmann and N. Stehr write, «major theoretical models of sociology – again in contrast to natural science – are even today closely connected with the various founders of the discipline who first formulated the origins of society; the so-called sociological classics... Contemporary sociological ideas are, in many ways, interpretations, revisions and elaborations of models first advanced as major sociological perspectives by one or another of these intellectual founders of sociology. And the main difference between sociology today and the contribution of the founders is one of content, not of theoretical intent and concepts» (Grundmann & Stehr, p. 3-4). It is not surprising that the conclusions of sociologists, based on the use of any such models, most often do not find practical application.

Yet social behavior at both the micro and macro levels is quite accessible to study, if considered in a systemic way. Systemic, as we know, is a universal property of matter, starting with atoms. The whole process of development of the surrounding world represents a continuous complication of systemic formations. Natural systems are characterized by a functional interconnection between their constituent elements. At the same time, the processes within natural systems occur completely spontaneously, in the form of natural self-development. In the course of the historical process, people began to create artificial systems that made it possible to increase labor productivity and, thereby, satisfy the growing needs of society better. Such systems, be it a bicycle, an airplane or a power plant, also consist of interconnected elements, however, unlike natural systems, they are completely devoid of internal natural contradictions, and therefore cannot develop. This, by the way, is the main reason for the impossibility of creating an artificial mind that

can compete with a human mind. Communities of people represent the third type of systems, in which the aspect of spontaneous self-development shall necessarily combine with the aspect of regulation. These communities of people in each individual country are systemic formations, the main elements of which are large social groups participating in one form or another in aggregate social production. The primary aspect in the functioning of such systems is spontaneous, since the process of labor division as a fundamental factor in their formation itself is predominantly spontaneous in nature. Moreover, the self-development of these systems is possible only with socially useful activities performed on individual level. However, society as a system has a fundamental difference from natural systems.

Unfortunately, the systematic approach to the study of social processes in modern theories has not developed properly, mainly because one of the main aspects of these theories has become the concept of social stratification. In this concept, social groups are considered as «strata» that are part of a certain hierarchy and differ primarily in terms of social status and the level of well-being from people belonging to other strata. As for social dynamics, within the framework of the concept of stratification, such dynamics is considered mainly in the form of social mobility, that is, «vertical» movement of representatives of different strata (in terms of changing social status) or «horizontal» (within the same stratum). The main drawback of the concept of social stratification is that it considers the differences between «strata» primarily from the point of view of material well-being and social prestige, that is, ultimately, consumption. Meanwhile, the real basis for society, as a system of socio-economic relations, is not the consumption of products and services, but their creation, i.e. aggregate production.

Society, like any integral system, has a structure, that is, an aggregate of functional connections between the elements of the system that give it integrity. These connections themselves are not manifest in social mobility, not in social stratification according to the level of consumption, and not in the hierarchy, conditioned by social prestige. Essential for society as a system are primarily those relations, without which it is impossible to satisfy vital human needs. This means the relationship between large groups of people, generated by the social division of labor. It is them who ultimately constitute the social structure.

At the same time, if in natural systems the internal connections between functioning elements are relatively stable and constant, the internal connections inherent in the main systemic elements of society, that is, social relations, contain not only a constructive component, but also a destructive one. The latter, as we know, is primarily due to people's social inequality. On the surface, such inequality is manifest in the possibility to satisfy basic vital needs in the form of consumption of material goods, but its true essence is associated with a different approach towards the means for the production of these goods.

Social relations in society are extremely diverse, as are the

groups of people participating in aggregate social production. These relations are of real interest to society mainly insofar as they manifest in social contradictions between social groups, generated by social inequality. Contradictions are objectively inherent in human society; they are the driving force behind its development. However, their exacerbation in the form of social conflicts threatens social stability. Accordingly, society has no choice but to look for ways to weaken them, moving, thereby, along the path of social progress. Understanding this trivial truth, it would seem, should prompt sociologists to engage primarily in the study of contradictions between social groups. After all, the existence of any science is primarily due to the need for it on the part of society. Accordingly, the existence of sociology can be justified primarily by the fact that it should serve both the study of social contradictions and the development of practical recommendations for the handling of social conflicts. However, the rational proposals by sociologists in public discussions concerning acute social conflicts (of which there are many these days), are hardly heard.

Emile Durkheim was the first professional theoretical sociologist to draw attention to the division of labor as a factor related to social relations. In his book «The Division of Labor in Society», he correctly observed: «...the division of labor is not peculiar to the economic world; we can observe its growing influence in the most varied fields of society» (Durkheim, 1933, p. 40). Durkheim also recognized that the division of labor gives rise to social relations (Durkheim, 1933, p. 61). However, Durkheim's approach to understanding the division of labor as a social phenomenon was subject to the methodology of philosophical positivism. Durkheim did not want to notice the aspect of the division of labor, expressed in the strengthening of contradictions between social groups, generated by the deepening of socio-economic inequality. In search of ways to achieve social harmony, he concluded: «It is quite legitimate to suppose that... great political societies can maintain themselves in equilibrium only thanks to the specialization of tasks, that the division of labor is the source, if not unique, at least principal, of social solidarity» (Durkheim, 1933, p. 62). At the same time, Durkheim made a fundamental theoretical error, claiming that «social solidarity is a completely moral phenomenon» (Durkheim, 1933, p. 64). Thus, in his work, he detached social relations from their real economic basis, which is conditioned by the natural essence of man, and transferred these relationships into the sphere of public consciousness (part of which is morality), that is, their subjective reflection in the heads of people. The whole history of human civilization shows that universal moral norms by themselves, that is, without relying on state power, cannot consolidate society, due to their interpretation in different ways by representatives of different social groups. The division of labor does indeed generate social solidarity, but only within social groups participating in aggregate social production, while simultaneously intensifying the contradictions between these groups.

Karl Marx was the first to draw attention to the role of the

division of labor in society as a fundamental factor in social differentiation. Using the dialectical method, he showed that the division of labor in society was the fundamental condition for the emergence and spread of private property. Moreover, he considered these two phenomena as two aspects of a single whole: «Division of labor and private property are, moreover, identical expressions of one and the same thing. One is affirmed with reference to an activity and the other with reference to the product of the activity» (Marx & Engels, 1978, p. 158).

At the same time, Marx saw private property as an unequal distribution of labor and its products (Marx & Engels, 1978, p. 158), and, consequently, as inequality in the possibilities of satisfying people's needs, which makes social contradictions more and more essential. Recent history has shown that in the question of the role of labor division in the development of social relations, it was not Durkheim, but Marx who was right.

At the same time, the conditionality of all social relations by the social division of labor, as a basic law of sociology, is only the starting point for sociological research, i.e. its general methodological basis.

#### 4. The Purpose and Objectives of Sociology

The real benefit to society from sociological research is possible only if the results of these studies, thanks to their practical application, contribute to social progress. Therefore, based on the points discussed in this article, we can conclude that the main goal of sociological science should be the development of reliable, practical recommendations for public authorities to reduce the severity of social conflicts.

The tasks of sociology should correspond to this goal. Firstly, they include the identification of the essence of social processes that negatively affect various spheres of social life and the behavior of certain segments in the population. Furthermore; studying the real needs of social groups, causing public concern; identifying the place of these groups in the system of social labor division, as well as the characteristics of their inherent social qualities; finally, the identification of the labor preferences for the representatives of these social groups and the search for real opportunities for their employment. Only then can the work of sociologists be of genuine public interest.

There can be no doubt that the basis of any significant social conflict is the dissatisfaction of a relatively large number of people with the possibilities for satisfying their most essential needs. After all, the well-being of the overwhelming majority of people, the relative harmony of their relations with the surrounding society depends primarily on the opportunity to work, on the degree of remuneration for work, as well as on the conditions for the implementation of this work. Of course, there are some groups whose social behavior does not fall entirely under this dependence, for example, students, ultra-orthodox

Jewish communities, organized criminal associations, and some others. They, for the most part do not participate in aggregate social production, and, therefore, only in very rare cases can they really create social tension.

The function of handling social conflicts that split society into hostile groups and damage the economy is primarily the prerogative of state authorities. However, instead of studying the real causes for such conflicts and trying to eliminate them, the state's behavior is most often limited to police measures and attempts to influence people's consciousness through ideology. Such methods are not for solving social problems. The reasons for these problems are due to the spontaneous nature of the process of social labor division. The only force capable of intervening in this process in order to reduce the contradictions between social groups is the state. The only question is how such intervention is feasible so that it be the least painful for society as a whole. History shows that any arbitrary social experiments, devoid of a scientific basis, are only harmful.

Social contradictions can be very different, subject to people belonging to certain groups. However, all these contradictions have one thing in common - in one way or another they are associated with the nature, conditions and characteristics of meeting the specific needs of these people. Having internal connections between the functioning elements that are relatively stable and constant, the internal connections inherent in the main systemic elements of society, that is, social relations, contain not only a constructive component, but also a destructive one. This destructive component is primarily due to the social inequality between people. On the surface, such inequality is manifest in the ability to satisfy basic vital needs in the form of consumption of material goods. Its true essence is due to inequality in relation to private property, without which the production of these goods is impossible.

Therefore, the management of society in the form of regulation of social relations is a necessary condition for preventing social conflicts that threaten the integrity of society as a system.

The history of the development of human civilization shows how the nature of state regulation of social relations has changed over the centuries: from the most severe repressions in Antiquity and the Middle Ages to an extremely humane social policy in modern highly developed countries. At the same time, social regulation carried out at the state level most often ignores contradictions due to the peculiarities of social labor division in a particular country. As Johan den Hertog notes, for example, «Economic regulation is mainly exercised on so-called natural monopolies and market structures with imperfect or excessive competition. The aim is to counter the negative welfare effects of dominant corporate behavior and to stabilize market processes. Social regulation comprises regulation in the area of the environment, occupational health and safety, consumer protection and labor (equal opportunities and so on). Instruments applied here include regulations on the discharge of environmentally harmful

substances, safety regulations in factories and workplaces...

... the obligation to include information on the packaging of goods or on labels, the prohibition of the supply of certain goods or services unless in the possession of a permit and banning discrimination on race, skin color, religion, sex, or nationality in the recruitment of personnel» (Den Hertog J., 2010, p. 3-4). However, such measures are predominantly palliative in nature, since they do not affect the objective causes of social contradictions. Even at the present time, such regulation is mainly the result of activities by representatives of the legislative and executive branches, guided by a variety of, including subjective, motives. However, the real processes taking place in society both as a whole and at the regional level, which give rise to significant contradictions between social groups, as well as between these groups and the state, are perceived by the power establishment as separate, often unrelated phenomena. Therefore, social policy, even if targeted, often does not achieve its goals. As an example of the foregoing, one can cite the so-called «positive discrimination» policy, implemented in some countries. With its help, the state is trying to alleviate dissatisfaction with unequal opportunities for social advancement among socially weak strata of the population with racial and ethnic differences. To this end, it creates certain advantages for such people when entering higher educational institutions, as well as when recruiting for public service without taking into account their real knowledge and abilities. However, in a society where professional competence is one of the decisive conditions for progress, such a policy can only yield a negative result.

In 1995, while working on my post doctorate, I was researching the problem of social adaptation of Kazakh rural youth in the city of Almaty. The essence of this problem was that young representatives of the indigenous nation of Kazakhstan, who did not have a sufficient education and did not speak Russian, migrated on a massive scale to the cities of this country, seeking the most affordable jobs. These jobs, dominated by the Russian-speaking environment were offered primarily by industrial enterprises. Meanwhile, the national mindset of Kazakhs living in rural areas was characterized by a low level of labor differentiation compared to the Russian-speaking residents in the cities of Kazakhstan. It is associated with a relatively low level of production labor division and the preservation of some elements of tribal relations among the Kazakh population, left over from the former nomadic lifestyle. With such a mentality, which presupposes the priority of interpersonal communication as opposed to technical knowledge, skills and abilities (without which qualified labor in industrial production is impossible), the Kazakh rural youth in cities, as shown by the corresponding survey, are not interested in working in industrial enterprises, preferring the service sector. Therefore, based on the results of this study, I proposed to strengthen the purposeful orientation of such young people to the service sector, while simultaneously creating an appropriate social niche. Thus, it would be possible to weaken social discontent in this environment,

preventing the strengthening of criminal tendencies (Vinogradov 1995, p. 126-158].

The conclusions and practical recommendations made in the study, were unfortunately ignored by the scientific community at the time. Meanwhile, according to information provided in Kazakh press, youth crime in this country is constantly growing (Kazakhstan Today (kt.kz), (2015, May, 25).

In general, we are talking about the implementation of a purposeful long-term social policy that relies on a strictly scientific basis. This refers to the creation of a certain social «niche», specifically integrated into the system of aggregate social production, for representatives of the problematic social sector. It is quite possible to do this, since each person has an inborn need for activity, which is actually a way of his existence. The peculiarity of the sociological approach to solving this problem is that it does not involve any violent actions to correct social processes. Since these processes, as well as the whole life of society, are based on the social division of labor, it is precisely the change in the nature of people's practical activities that leads to a change in the social and material conditions of their livelihoods. The only important thing is that people themselves should be interested in such changes.

As for the concrete implementation of the idea of creating a social «niche» for a particular group of society, it is implementable in several stages. The initial stage is the creation of a sociological laboratory (which must include authoritative representatives of the group under study as well). The laboratory develops a specific program and a number of questionnaires, which together allow for the determination of the main professional preferences by respondents. The next stage is a questionnaire, carried out exclusively by representatives of the same researched group, which enables the trust of the respondents and encourages truthful answers to the questions. Further - the processing of the information received in order to identify the types of socially useful activities that are the most popular in this social environment and, at the same time, the most promising.

Activities to implement a scientific sociological basis for the implementation of a competent state social policy should look something like this. Such a policy may include the development of specific projects, their financing, a targeted public campaign to promote certain types of socially useful labor to form the corresponding socio-psychological attitudes among the bulk of the representatives of a group studied. The ultimate goal is the creation of appropriate jobs, the attraction and training of labor force from among the representatives of this group, the formation of a new social «niche» organically «built» into the system of social division of labor.

## 5. Conclusions

A general picture of the state of sociology in the modern world, if considered from the aspect of the practical needs

of society, looks rather depressing. Having practically abandoned the search for objective scientific truth, the bulk of sociologists come up with research topics of a local nature, or carry out orders for questionnaires emanating from both politicians and entrepreneurs. This position is very convenient because it allows one to create the appearance of scientific activity and at the same time avoid responsibility to society. As long as this situation persists, there can be no question of any serious sociological authority in the life of society. Therefore, the question of forming a truly scientific paradigm of sociological knowledge remains extremely relevant to this day.

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