

## THE CONCRETE ANALYSIS OF A SOCIETY

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It is possible to classify nature into two; abstract and concrete. These are based on two different viewpoints. If we examine nature based upon its abstract events we can separate it into four groups: the material, the biological, the psychological, and the sociological worlds and its concrete items can be grouped into five: inanimate things-such as stones, soil etc. plants, animals, human beings, and societies.

We must point out at once that the first of these classifications separates natural events into various groups which have nothing to do with reality, but can only be imagined. Actually in nature, beyond the material world, there is nothing in reality such as the biological, psychological, and sociological worlds. For instance an animate being deprived of material properties can not exist in a concrete form, nor can a society exist without human beings and the soil they live on.

The second type of classification which is based on the concrete facts of nature, contrary to the first, conforms to reality and to nature's concrete beings. These concrete beings are inanimate things, plants, animals, human beings, and societies.

On which of these two classifications, the sciences like chemistry, physics, biology, psychology, sociology, are based? If we consider the qualities of each science studying natural events, and discriminate the part of nature which concerns it, it can be said that these sciences pertain to the classifications of nature which are based on the abstract view. Indeed, each one of these basic sciences separates its proper events among the perplexity of nature with some unique qualifications. For instance, the qualification of the material constituting the subject of physics is extension, meaning «That property of a body by which it occupies a portion of space». Those qualities of life events constituting the subject of biology, are nutrition and reproduction; of psychological events conscious-

ness; and of social events, social and collective consciousness. As it is known, the qualities separating collective consciousness from psychological are those of externality and constraint-recognized by Dürkheim.

It must be pointed out that doubtlessly many scientists — even those who accept the abstract natural viewpoint — are unawaredly inclined to the concrete natural viewpoint. Now, leaving aside the other sciences, let us investigate the relations of each of these two viewpoints — abstract and concrete — with our subject, sociology.

Almost all sociologists are based on the abstract viewpoint. Dürkheim, who limited the subject of sociology by pointing out the qualities of social reality as externality and constraint, stands foremost. On the other side many of these sociologists are inclined towards the concrete viewpoint as well and of this illogical tendency they are unawares. The reason for this is very clear. The abstract viewpoint restricts the limit of social reality to the utmost. According to this viewpoint the field of sociology consists of only **collective consciousness**, or, in other terms, of various values such as economy, technics, morals, customs, law, religions, languages, knowledge, education, art etc., and of their symbols reflected in materials. This field of values is only one of the various layers of society concretely studied. In addition to this there are many other layers. For this reason the sociologists who are inclined to the abstract viewpoint, when confronted with a society which is a concrete type of social reality, are unwillingly compelled to take elements beyond these values into consideration. Thus they have to extend the limit of the social field beyond the original Dürkheimian viewpoint.

All these explanations prove that if one desires to understand the social reality in its entirety, we must abstain from the abstract sociological viewpoint and turn to the concrete one.

**Definition of sociology :** — From this viewpoint sociology is a science investigating human societies and groups as families, villages, cities, nations, guilds, syndicates, etc. Or it may also be called a science investigating human societies and various events occurring in them, always considering the group or the society as a whole.

According to this concrete viewpoint: these groups and the societies which are the subject of sociology are extremely complex. They are always in relation with physical and natural events such as soil, wa-

ter, air etc. and also with plants, animals and other human beings. In short, when physical, biological and psychological events enter into the **whole**, called society, and become elements or organs of it, they are subject to sociology as much as is the collective consciousness or those values which are of sociological character according to the abstract viewpoint.

### ANALYSIS OF SOCIETIES

**Natural and Human Elements:** Societies or groups are made up of human beings thickly or thinly located in definite areas and with definite purposes. In other words, each society or group needs two elements: a natural environment and human beings. Here, by the word nature we mean the biological nature consisting of plants and animals and the physical nature surrounding man like soil, water, air. Now, let us investigate the relations between the societies and their physical and biological environments.

**Concrete Society and Physical Nature:** We can separate the physical nature surrounding societies into three different elements.

- a) Soil and water
- b) Underground
- c) Air

Every society is settled either on reliefs of the earth's surface such as mountains, hills, valleys, or plateaus etc., or near waters such as wells, brooks, rivers, lakes, and seas. Under the ground there are various soil layers. Apart from these, the regions where societies are settled, are open to all weather factors such as the seasons, the storms, the inundations, the hail, the blizzards and the droughts. If all these physical and natural events are studied according to their influence on societies or are considered as an element of «the whole» called society, they then become the subject of sociology.

Also a brook, a mountain, or a stone which is given a meaning in the various social values of society can likewise be the subject of sociology. For instance wood pieces called «Shuringa» which are used by primitive tribes as religious devices are no longer entirely the subject of physics but also the subject of sociology.

This raises a question: Do not the reliefs and waters of the earth such as mountains, hills, valleys, rivers, lakes and brooks, enter into

the subjects of physical geography, geology, or meteorology? If so, what is meant when we say sociology deals with such events?

At once we must state that an event can be subject to many sciences at the same time. For instance the burning of coal is above all a chemical process. But from the point of view of heat and of light it is a physical event. On the other hand, there is a need of organized human societies for the production and use of this coal. From this point of view this event is concerned with sociology.

To distinguish and classify the underground earth layers according to their kinds and types, is the subject of geology. But when we study the same layers or minerals with regard to their roles in the business organization, economy and commerce of human groups near them, they become subject to sociology.

The same can be said for the effects. For instance: to estimate the speed and the direction of a storm is the subject of meteorology. But to investigate the effects of the same storm on the economical and commercial organization of society, considering its destructive result on them, is the subject of sociology.

All these examples show that many events of physical nature are subjects of sociology as well as of the other sciences such as physics, chemistry, physical geography, geology, meteorology etc.

**Concrete Society and Biological Nature:** Societies are in contact with the events of a biological nature as well as with the events of a physical nature.

We can separate the biological nature surrounding societies into two parts as follows :

- a) Plants and their fruits.
- b) Animals and their production.

Now, let us consider first the relation of plants to society and then that of animals.

a) It is known that the growth of plants is closely related to soil, water, and weather conditions. For instance in parts of Central Asia and Europe where summers are very dry and where winters are cold and wet, mostly grass is grown. Since the Northern and other parts are good for tree growth, they are covered with woods. In some places water,

soil, and weather conditions are available for the growth of all kinds of plants. To inspect, to classify, and to examine the types of different plants, their anatomy, physiology is primarily a subject to various branches of botany. When we consider those plants from the point of their production they become subject to agriculture and to natural geography. The study of their growth belongs to botanical geography. On the other hand, if all these plants are considered according to their influence on the living conditions of societies, and the industries and business life of people, they then become the subject of sociology.

Indeed a society may have many different structures or business organizations determined by the types of soil on which they live. For instance there is cattle herding by the people who live on grasslands and hunting or fruit-gathering by the people who live in forests. When plants and their crops are studied as to their effects on societies, they are subjects of sociology. Sometimes, even contrary to this, social values will affect these plants. For example: a type of plant accepted as a totem by Indians becomes sacred. So, this plant which has been given a religious value becomes not entirely subject to botany but to sociology as well.

b) The same may be said for the various kinds of sea and land animals surrounding societies. The science which deals with the anatomy and physiology of animals is zoology. But when these animals are considered according to their service to man and to societies, they become a subject of sociology.

For example : A hunting or a herding occupation in a society affects the social structure, the business organisation, the economy, the industry, the morals, the beliefs, and the laws of that society in many ways. Or sometimes, these different animals, or their products, are given values by the society. Then they enter into the subject of sociology. For instance in Moslem societies the forbidding of pork eating is not a characteristic of zoology but of sociology.

It is apparent that biological nature ( plants and animals ) may be the subject of sociology because it affects the structures and living ways of societies as much as does physical nature, I must also add that with the growth of man's control of his environment the influence of physical and biological nature on societies decreases.

**Concrete Society and Man :** So far, we have tried to point out the effects of the physical and biological natures upon societies, by analy-

zing the first of the two main elements which constitutes society, that is, nature. Now, taking man into consideration we will try to understand the mutual effects of each element on the structure of society.

The being called **man** consists of physical body and consciousness. Man is in relation to organic nature because of his body and to psychological or sociological nature, especially to values, because of his consciousness. Now, first let us study the various possible relations of his body with society and then his consciousness.

**The Human Body and Society :** We may look at the human body from both the quantitative and qualitative viewpoints.

Human beings are settled on the earth more and less densely. To calculate the number of men per square kilometer is closely related to Statistics. But when this populousness is taken according to its effects on the other events of society, these statistical numbers become a subject of sociology. They belong to a special branch of it, demography.

The number of people in a certain space has a great influence on the structure and the other elements of the society. For instance, according to many sociologists like Dürkheim, when human beings are settled thickly in a small area, division of labor starts. As a result of this; differentiation begins between individuals. Then compensatory law becomes dominant over punitive law. Mechanical social solidarity gives way to organic solidarity. Collective possessions recede in favor of private properties. Political and economic organizations, the beliefs, and in short, the whole structure of the society changes completely. When population is considered as an element of society as above, it thus becomes subject for demography. This is a branch of sociology which deals with these population events.

We must also remember that not only does the populousness affect the other elements of society but, contrary to this, various beliefs and prohibitions of law affect the populousness. In other words, as populousness affects other events, in the same way other events affect the population. Therefore, population events are subject to sociological study since they are not only causes but results of various social events.

The qualities of the organic structures of human beings, has also an influence on the structure of societies. Anthropology deals with the qualities of the structures of body. Indeed, anthropologists see very close relations between the body — especially the type of head, the tallness,

the color etc — and the psychic structure of human beings. So, they separate human beings into various groups called races according to their certain organic structures. When we consider these organic structures, that is, these races with regard to their influences on societies, they become subject to sociology. Although anthropologists study races separately from societies, sociologists consider these as elements of the whole called Society.

Also we must not forget that social beliefs, customs, and morals affect the human body itself. For instance there is the change of the feet of Chinese girls who wear special types of shoe from their childhood. Then there is the change caused by circumcision which is still found amongst Jews and Moslems as a survivance of primitive customs. Piercing ears and tattooing of the body are other illustrations. All these organic changes are related to sociology.

These cases show the relations of human bodies with the structures of societies.

**Human Consciousness and Society :** Now, let us consider the relationship between human consciousness and society. But beforehand let us analyze human consciousness into its parts. Our psychic life is very complex and an indivisible whole. However it consists of two kinds of consciousness which can be differentiated from each other by their proper qualities. One of these is the personal and the other is the collective consciousness. The first is the subject of psychology, the second of sociology.

In our conscious life, there are some factors that make it possible to distinguish these two kinds of consciousness. In fact, the roots of the psychological consciousness can be found in the organism itself. Since it is based on the roots of animality, it is identical in all men. In other words, it does not change from time to time and from society to society but is definite, Also it is present at birth and can not be acquired later. On the other hand, social consciousness is relative and differs from time to time and from society to society. Also it is not present at birth, it may be acquired later.

As a result we see that conditions of psychological consciousness are absolute and are events that start at birth whereas conditions of social consciousness are relative and are acquired later.

For example various instincts like impulsion, reflex, hunger, sex, and organic pleasures and displeasures are psychological events because these conscious events are from birth and are the same in all periods and in all human beings. But the values like technics, economy, morals and customs, law, languages, religion, art etc., are social events, because they change from time to time, from society to society and can also be acquired by education. Animals also have the power of developing intelligent movements such as new responses for new conditions. But these have never reached the high degree of human values. In short, although the psychological side of human consciousness is similar to the animal consciousness, the social side of the human has no contact with animality. Indeed, the only being who observes consciousness objectively and creates his own world and values is man. Man has reached the consciousness of consciousness. Therefore, the social conscience is human field, the field of values. Man objectifies the values he has created and imputes them to materials. So, he establishes his tools, his symbols, and his conceptions. He creates his remembrance and his character by objectifying the past. He creates his ideals by objectifying the future.

Human beings are separated into elements of body and consciousness. They are joined to animals with the psychological side of their consciousness as well as with their physical bodies. Man is distinguished from animals only in the social side of his consciousness. The creation of values such as technics, morals, customs, laws, languages, religions, arts etc is proper only done by man.<sup>1</sup>

Now let us try to understand the psychological and the social sides of human consciousness.

The events of consciousness being both psychological and sociological

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<sup>1</sup> We must point out that here we use psychology neither in its narrow sense like bio-psychology (which studies the conditions of consciousness dependent on organisms, such as impulsions, reflexes, and instincts) nor in its wide sense as appertaining to the field of all values. When we say that psychology deals with animal consciousness, we include in it highly intelligent movements like new responses for new conditions in addition to the conditions of consciousness which are dependent on the organism. Briefly, when the values proper for man are omitted from human consciousness, then it is subject of pure psychology. It deals with the individual consciousness which is separated artificially from indivisible human psychicism. Sociology deals with social or collective consciousness. In other words, both of the fields of psychology and of sociology are abstractions. Therefore, a complete study of human psychicism is possible only with psycho-social methods and approach.



are inclined to be extrovert and to be objectified. Psychic events are double sided. One side is the consciousness inside us. We understand this, with the introspective method. The other side consists of the parts which may be understood objectively and reflect from face, body, stones, soil, plants, animals. We can observe this side with our sense organs by means of the objective method.

All kinds of objective materials or psychological events which are given meanings by the consciousness pass from the world of materials, of life to the world of meanings. That is they pass to the psychic world. For instance, a mimic, a gesture or a behavior representing an emotion is no more a physiological event but a psychic one. Australian primitive tribes which live as clans, have some religious tools called «Shuringa». These are very sacred. They keep those tools in a sacred underground place called «Ertnatulunga». In fact, these are only pieces of wood and stone having a picture of a totem on them. But these pieces of wood and of stone are made holy by religious beliefs and then become subject to sociology.

For instance a road, a bridge, a house, or a temple is made of stone and soil. But because they are given a meaning in human consciousness and because they carry the signs and marks of these meanings, they have left the physical field and have entered into the sociological. In the same way, the movements performed in a religious rite are not mechanical but sociological events.

All these explanations show that there is a very great difference between an ordinary piece of stone or of wood and the one which is given a meaning by various human values. Again there is a difference in origin between the bodily movements of a robot and the religious movements of a pious person. Although the first are only simple mechanical events, the second are social.

There is no basic difference between the beliefs of a religious man which are in his conscience, and the various bodily movements and religious rites which are the objectification of these beliefs on materials. These are merely the subjective and the objective views of the one and the same social event. Therefore both psychological and sociological events include some parts spread out over materials.

This leads to another point. Materials of the physical world are usually mixed with the materials of psychic world. The things like stones, soils, plants, and animals, which are given meanings in the social values (such as in economics, technics, morals, customs, laws, languages, and religion)

have rid themselves of their physical and biological nature. It is no longer possible to consider them as merely ordinary stones, soil, plants, and animals. They have become the subjects of psychic investigation. When this is understood we can see that the phrase «Historical Materialism» loses its meaning. The term no longer applies, because the economical life becomes a human value and does not belong any longer to the material world. Instead it belongs to the psychic world, or as better said, to the social or collective world.

**Psychological Consciousness and Society :** As mentioned above psychology deals with impulsions, reflexes, instincts, organic pleasures and displeasures, needs, individual or animal desires, inclinations, and interests. In animals it deals with all kinds of developed intelligent movements, in short with individual consciousness or with animal consciousness. But when psychological events just like physical and biological ones are considered as an element of the whole called society, in other words, when they are studied according to their influences on the ideologies, organizations, and living ways of societies, they become subject to sociology.

For example : psychologists such as Freud,<sup>1</sup> Hans Bluher,<sup>2</sup> and Westermarck<sup>3</sup> have tried to show the various effects of sexual instincts on social life, on social organizations like the family, the clubs, and even on religion, law, and moral life. Some of them have thought that the motherhood - fatherhood instinct was the base of family life. According to McDougall cooperations, growth of cities, immigration, and crowds on streets are different appearances of the grouping instinct.<sup>4</sup> Sorokin has studied the effects of hunger — the deprivation of the nourishing instinct — on social life. According to him, "Hunger causes the organization and the development of the methods for nourishment. People move from barren grounds to fertile lands. Hungry people spread everywhere and capture fertile lands. A great number of aggressions to possessions and to human beings take place. The poor begin to hate wealthy people. Governments control economical organizations more closely. The number of deaths increases whereas the number of births decreases. In daily talks, in newspapers, and in all groups generally discussions about nutrition take place."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Freud, *Totem et Tabou* French translation, Payot, Paris

<sup>2</sup> Bluher, Hans, *Die Rolle der Erotik in den mannlichen Gesellschaft*. 1920

<sup>3</sup> Westermarck, *History of Human Marriage*.

<sup>4</sup> Mc Dougall, *Introduction to Social Psychology*. p. 272.

<sup>5</sup> Sorokin, *Les Théories Sociologique Contemporaines*. Paris, 1938. pps. 449-457

In a society when a psychological event like the insufficient nourishment of people, in other words, the hunger instinct, is considered according to its influences on the other elements of the society it becomes the subject of sociology.

As a matter of fact, this same event — that is, hunger — can be considered as to its effects on organisms or on individual consciousness. From this point of view it becomes a subject of bio-psychology.

**Collective Consciousness and Society :** As we have said the events of collective consciousness are various values created only by man such as economics, technics, morals, customs, laws, languages, religions, art etc.

Particular social sciences like economics, technology, law, grammar, history, ethnography etc deal with various events or values of the collective consciousness. These particular sciences consider their events separate from the whole called society or as independent events. Sociology or better to say different branches of sociology such as economical, juristical, moral, religious and linguistical sociology, study these events as elements of the society always considering them in their relations with other events.

Among these particular social sciences, however, history and ethnography possess a global view similar to that of sociology. But there are differences between these particular social sciences and sociology because history and ethnography study events by particularizing them. Sociology studies the same events but generalizes them.

This global view, which is the particularity of sociology, has been explained in different forms by many sociologists. For instance Marcel Mauss means this by his term "total social phenomena."<sup>1</sup> Georges Gurvitch by saying "In analysing social facts in order not to lose their sociological character, we have to consider all depth layers of social reality."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Marcel Mauss, **Sociologie et anthropologie**, "Essais sur le Don" Paris, 1950.

<sup>2</sup> Gurvitch has devoted the second part of his book **La vocation actuelle de la sociologie** to "Sociology into depth". According to him social reality is constituted of many depth layers. These tangled layers affect each other and the relations among them are tensional and conflictive. This conflict is vertical between different layers and horizontal in each one. The duty of the sociologist is to examine these conflicts. Gurvitch advises sociologists to pay attention to three points so as to find the relations among these layers. These are :

a) The terms "The most profound" and "The most shallow" layers of social

means the same thing. The Le Play school paying attention to the monographic method and investigations shows that it understood this global view of sociology very clearly. Indeed, according to the sociologists of this school abstract social events have no scientific value. These events have a sociological value only when they are taken as elements of a definite society and have definite places and times. Since to investigate various events occurring in a society, always considering the whole of it, is only possible by means of the monographic method, the Le Play school chose this method as basic.

Let us point out once more that sociologists who favor the abstract sociological viewpoint study only the events of the collective consciousness. That is they make the collective values among various elements and branches of a concrete society the subject of sociology. They define sociology according to this point of view.

However, our discussion shows that a society considered concretely puts the events of the collective consciousness as only one type of the physical, biological, psychological events constituting that society. Therefore, if we want to acquire a complete knowledge about a society we must study the physical, biological, and psychological events as well as the events of the collective consciousness.

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reality must be kept away from the field of evaluation. These terms never mean "the most valuable" or "the least valuable", «the most effective» or «the least effective», «the most rooted» or «the least rooted.» It merely indicates that the shallow ones are very convenient for objective observation and the profound ones are less convenient. For instance when we say «The bases of morphology, geography or demography constitute the most shallow layers of social reality and symbols, ideas, values, or ideals its deepest layers.» we simply mean that the shallow ones are easier to understand than the others.

b) All layers of social reality are entangled with each other and they make an indivisible whole. If you separate them from each other they lose their characters as elements of social reality.

c) The numbers and characters of these layers are based completely on pragmatical and practical foundations. According to Gurvitch, the layers are as follows: (1) Ecological and morphological layers, (2) Social organizations or organized superstructures, (3) Social patterns, (4) More or less regular collective behaviors which are beyond organized superstructures, (5) Webs of social roles, (6) Collective attitudes, (7) Social symbols, (8) Creative collective behaviors, (9) Collective ideas and values, (10) Mental conditions and psychic collective actions.

## CONCLUSIONS

Thus we now reach the following results :

a) Nature may be classified in two ways according to different viewpoints (Abstract - Concrete).

b) The first, or the abstract sociological viewpoint studies only values, that is, collective consciousness. This is a very small area of sociology which can be taken separately only mentally. But the second or concrete viewpoint considers social reality in a large way as to embrace all elements of society. It studies all social reality starting from the layers most convenient for observation like physics, geography, and geology, to the least convenient ones, which are the layers of values.

c) In a society which is studied concretely the events or the values of physical geography, geology, meteorology, botany, zoology, demography, anthropology, individual consciousness, and collective consciousness are held to be very entangled and to constitute an indivisible whole.

d) This concrete whole, called society, is an active and dynamic equilibrium made up from the effects upon each other of various events, elements or layers. As a matter of fact, if societies were considered not in a dynamic equilibrium they would remain as beings deprived of changes and liveliness.

e) The degree of importance of all of these social elements changes according to the types of societies and even to the special conditions of societies in the same type. In other words, a social event which is very effective for a certain type of society may not be so effective for another.

f) Those sociologists who wish to explain societies by examining only one or a few of their elements, always make the mistake of trying to explain wholes by examining only one part.

g) All events which are considered as elements or organs of the whole, society, — whether physical, biological, psychological or collective — are social and therefore become subject to sociological study.

h) We have tried to show the different sorts of elements of a concrete society by analyzing it.

It should be made clear that, if the concrete sociological viewpoint is not accepted, it is not easy to understand the meaning of the different

sociological theories that have been put forth in the past centuries. In fact, since the followers of the abstract viewpoint of sociology have the idea that social reality is made up of only the collective consciousness processes, how is it possible for them to explain the relationship between the social field and theories like those of the geographers, demographers etc, which are outside the different values shown in this outline?<sup>1</sup>

If the concrete sociological viewpoint is accepted, as is seen in this outline, the boundaries of social reality will be widened to the utmost. All events which may be taken as elements and organs of the whole, called society, — such as physics, geography, geology, meteorology, botany, zoology, demography, anthropology, individual consciousness, collective consciousness — are subjects of sociology. Since this is true, it is not difficult to comprehend why there are physical, social, geographical, demographical, anthropological as well as psychological and sociological schools which put forth various theories to explain social reality or society. Indeed, many of the schools seen in the history of sociology are one-sided,

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<sup>1</sup> In connection with this it is necessary to point out that many scientists who have the abstract viewpoint unawaredly depend upon the concrete sociological viewpoint. As an example take Dürkheim who is a follower of the abstract viewpoint; Dürkheim asserts in many of his books, especially in **The Rules of the Sociological Method**, that the subject of sociology is collective consciousness. He also says that the cause of a social event can only be sought in another social event.

According to Dürkheim's explanation, the field of social reality is limited to the events of collective consciousness. In other words, sociology has no right to expand outside of the events of the collective consciousness, both in its subject and its explanations. But Dürkheim had to go outside of these limits and break his own rules in his book «On the Division of Labor in Society». In this work he explains the movement of societies from the mores of "Mechanical-Solidarity" to the mores of "Organic Solidarity" with increased division of labor. Up to this point he follows his own rules. But when in the same book he attempts to show increased population as a cause for the division of labor, he is going out of the social field which he had limited only to the collective consciousness. Also he is breaking his own rule which said "The cause of a social event should be sought in another social event." According to this only the events of the collective consciousness and their material symbols have a right to be called social events. As a result of this rule demographic events which are outside of collective consciousness should really be left out of social reality. So it is clear that even the followers of the abstract viewpoint about sociology are influenced by events and accept unawaredly the viewpoint of concrete society, that is to say reality.

because they consider only one or a few of the several elements of concrete societies that are shown here.

But it should be realized that there are some theories, even if only a few, which consider society as an equilibrium of the mutual influences of many elements. These try to give the real share or credit to each element. They are inclined, more or less, to the global viewpoint by getting rid of one-sidedness. As examples: Le Play's School; Pareto's sociological doctrine; Marcel Mauss' theory of "Total social phenomena;" and, at last, in our day, Gurvitch's "Sociology into Depth layers". These are theories that are inclined to global viewpoints in sociology and are free from being one-sided.