

ARTICLE

Émile Durkheim in the Pampas: The reception of his ideas in Argentina and Uruguay (1895-1947)

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Abstract

The present work aims to study the reception of Emile Durkheim's ideas and those of his disciples among the chairs of sociology at the Universities of Buenos Aires and Córdoba in Argentina, and the University of the Republic in Uruguay, between 1895 and 1947. This study recognizes three periods of reception: the first covers the initial appearance of Durkheim in the Río de la Plata from 1895 to 1915, when the approach to this sociological school was mainly limited to *The Rules of Sociological Method* and, secondarily, *The Division of Labour in Society*. The second period comprises the years 1915-1933, when the readings of Durkheimian sociology are extended to other works such as *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, although its most outstanding feature was its comparison with German sociologies. Finally, the third period (1933-1947) involves a re-interpretation of Durkheim's doctoral thesis in Argentina, creating a pre-functionalist thought, while in Uruguay this did not take place.

Keywords

Émile Durkheim, Reception, French Sociology, Argentina, Uruguay

INTRODUCTION

The present paper is framed within the reception studies conducted by authors in social sciences that, during recent years, made significant progress in the Río de la Plata (Canavese 2015; Losada 2019; Rodríguez Rial 2022; Tarcus 2016). Regarding the concept of reception, the theoretical developments of Tarcus (2016: 30) have been taken into account, where it is defined as a process of intellectual production/diffusion in which it is necessary to “analytically discriminate between producers, diffusers, receptors and consumers of ideas, although these processes may blur in practice and these roles can be assumed simultaneously by the same subject”.

For Tarcus, each participant occupies a place in the successive “moments” he recognizes. In this way, they can be distinguished:

- i. The “moment of production” of theories, carried out by “conceptual intellectuals” (a concept coined by Antonio Gramsci). In the case of the present work, it refers to Émile Durkheim's work on the division of social labor and his efforts to establish sociology as an autonomous

- discipline. But, as will be seen later, the Durkheim of “collective representations” will also appear, as well as some of the proposals from the members of his school, such as Célestin Bouglé and Maurice Halbwachs.
- ii. The “moment of diffusion” of a body of ideas through publication in books, papers, newspapers, magazines, conferences, reviews, lecture notes, summaries, etc. This task may be carried out by the conceptual intellectuals themselves, and undoubtedly, in the case of Durkheim, was true for the French context. In Argentina and Uruguay, the main venue for disseminating his ideas was the university, so the sociological production carried out by the course professors deserves consideration here.
 - iii. The “moment of reception” defines the diffusion of these ideas in a field of production which differs from the original. Here will appear mentions made by the receptors, that is, sociology professors from Buenos Aires, Córdoba and Montevideo regarding the work of the French sociologist.
 - iv. Finally, the “moment of appropriation” corresponds to the “consumption” of these ideas by a supposed “final” reader at the end of the circulation chain. The quotation marks remind us that the distinction is always analytical since there is never a “final” reader, as this reader may eventually become a new diffuser or receiver, even a producer.

As regards the time frame proposed for this study, it covers such a broad period that a concise presentation is necessary, which corresponds to the intention of demonstrating in the briefest, most precise, and most balanced possible way the readings made in the Río de la Plata about the father of French sociology during the first half of the 20th century. Consequently, it takes as a point of departure its first mention in 1895, even before the foundation of the sociology chairs, in both Argentina and Uruguay, and it is concluded in 1947.

During this final year there was a modification to the sociology teaching staff of both countries, although for different reasons. In Argentina, it was the rise of the Peronist government (1946-1955) and the intervention of the national universities. This led to a substantial reorientation of sociology towards Catholicism and anti-positivism (Blanco 2006). In Uruguay, it was the designation of Isaac Ganón after the retirement of Carlos M. Prando, the first professor of sociology at the University of the Republic. It was Ganón’s work that led to the creation of the Institute of Social Sciences (1956-1958), thus bringing empirical sociology to the country (De Sierra 2017).

Having said that, as noted in point ii), the sources used have been those through which vernacular sociologists disseminated their ideas: lecture notes, articles, books, letters or course syllabi from professors like Juan A. García, Leopoldo Maupas, Ricardo Levene, and Gino Germani in Buenos Aires; Raúl Orgaz and Alfredo Poviña in Córdoba; Carlos Prando and Isaac Ganón in Montevideo. These sources are used to trace the reception of both Durkheim and some of his most notable followers.

Thus, the guiding questions of the present work are the following: When was Durkheim’s work read for the first time in the Río de la Plata? What books were read and what was the interpretation of that work? How was the appropriation of such work modified over the years? Was there any creative appropriation for the analysis of the social national realities? And, in this sense, what are the differences between the interpretations of Argentine and Uruguayan authors?

IN THE LIGHT OF POSITIVISM (1895-1915)

The influence of positivism on Latin America, between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, has been studied on several occasions, both at regional level (Hale 1997; Terán 2008) and in the specific cases of Argentina (Biagini 1985; Soler 1968 [1959]) and Uruguay (Ardao

1968; Zum Felde, 1930). Thus, although the Río de la Plata was not an exception as regards the incorporation of this doctrine, there are some differences in the specific branches of positivism that each country adopted. In this way, while in Argentina the positivist readings of the intellectuals related to the social sciences included both their founders, Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer; in Uruguay, in general terms, the English version of this doctrine was apparently privileged.

However, in the context of the turn of the century, both countries experienced an economic crisis of great magnitude in 1890, and consequently the vernacular thinkers began to ask questions about their societies within this school of thought. In addition, it should be noted that during these years, massive migration occurred from Europe to the Pampas, leading to the emergence of what was then referred to as the “cuestión social”, that is, a series of problems associated with the modernization of these societies (social inequality, poverty, labor conflict, accelerated urbanization, overcrowding, etc.). These became priority issues for the intellectuals of the time, and encouraged theoretical developments in sociology.

Nevertheless, Argentina experienced an earlier institutionalization process since, in this country, a series of chairs was established in several universities (Buenos Aires in 1898 and 1908, La Plata in 1906, Córdoba in 1907, Santa Fe in 1910), while, in Uruguay, the teaching of this discipline began in 1898 as part of the Philosophy of Law chair at the University of the Republic, headed by José Cremonesi, to finally become independent from it in 1915 (Poviña 1959).

Certainly, it should be noted that this period also coincides with Durkheim’s first reception in South America, although showing significant variations among the different countries where sociology was institutionalized. For example, in Bolivia, the first sociology handbooks, written by Daniel Sánchez Bustamante and Roberto Zapata, showed little interest in Durkheimian sociology. Consequently, the “lack of success of the French professor in Bolivian sociology” became evident (Romero Pittari 1997:35).

Similarly, in Ecuador, Durkheim was read from the perspective of “individualist sociologies” or those emphasizing “the psychological”, so he ended up being used more as a “punching bag” (Altmann 2023:3) than as an authoritative reference. The case of Peru is striking in the context of Andean countries, where Mariano Cornejo not only subscribed to Comte’s positivism but “shared Durkheim’s analysis of the division of labor and social solidarity” and “criticized Gabriel Tarde’s individualizing approach” (Sulmont 2007:87).

In Colombia, “the first Durkheim” to enter was the one disseminated by Luis Eduardo and Agustín Nieto Caballero, and it was related to the education courses these intellectuals took in Paris (Cataño 2009). Finally, in Brazil, Durkheim’s reception occurred towards the end of the 19th century, with Paulo Egídio de Olivera Carvalho, a lawyer who focused on Durkheim’s analysis of “crime” (De Olivera 2013:82).

Considering these precedents, in the case of Argentina, various studies (Pereyra and Vila 2019; Vila 2017, 2021) have demonstrated that the first readings of Durkheim were basically related to two works: mainly *The Rules of Sociological Method* and, subsidiarily, *The Division of Labour in Society*. In this way, the first citation of Durkheim, by Juan A. García¹, appears in an 1895 letter sent to José

¹ García (Buenos Aires, 1862-1923) was part of one of the patrician families of the country, which is why he served as a Federal Judge and Minister of Finances (1890). García was also the first sociology professor at the Faculties of Law of La Plata (1906) and Buenos Aires (1908-1918).

María Ramos Mejía, referring to an article from the *Revue Philosophique*, where the distinction between “the normal” and “the pathological” appeared.

The level of interest in the French sociologist and his works is revealed in the handbooks published by other Argentine professors (Maupas 1911; Orgaz 1915). Eventually, this reaches its most refined expression in the interchanging of ideas between the years 1912-1913, in which Durkheim himself would participate and which occurred due to the publication of the book *Caracteres y crítica de la sociología* (1911)² by Leopoldo Maupas³. The discussion was focused on the characterization of the “social fact” and its different approaches.

Specifically, in Maupas’s response to Durkheim’s letter, he pointed out that his disagreement lay in the fact that, while for the French sociologist the “rule of conduct” was the expression that a social cause could be included in the explanation of a general human fact, he understood that the social fact to be explained was, precisely, the rule of conduct in itself. Hence the latter stated: “I also affirm that the social is the imperative rule: but in my mouth the phrase does not mean that the imperative rule is the sign of the social fact, but rather that this rule is the social fact itself, the data that the sociologist must explain” (Maupas 1913: 585)⁴.

In the case of Uruguay, the late institutionalization did not mean the complete lack of awareness of the sociological ideas. On the contrary, as has been said, sociology had been studied as part of the syllabus of Philosophy of Law at the University of the Republic since 1898. Nevertheless, the most relevant authors in Uruguay were, without doubt, Spencer, Comte and Marx. Therefore, the first citation of Durkheim on this side of the Río de la Plata has to be sought outside the university, and will correspond to the Socialist Party leader, Emilio Frugoni, in a conference entitled “Socialismo y Marxismo” (1970)⁵. However, it is notable that reference is also made to the “social fact” as the most relevant aspect of the Durkheimian theory.

At the same time, it should be added that other investigations, which show the concepts of “solidarity” and “interdependence” (just as Durkheim would develop in his doctoral thesis), were part of the jargon of the theorists of the Law of the Río de la Plata from that period (García Bouzas 2011). Therefore, it can be said that, during these years, both in Argentina and Uruguay, the interest in Durkheim’s work was centred on the two works mentioned.

More specifically, the emphasis was placed on the discussion surrounding the processes of social modernization and the autonomy of the object. This last serves as an indicator of these professors’ interest in justifying the establishment of new chairs. In other words, the entry of sociology into the university required a certain degree of legitimacy. Therefore, those who occupied the new positions

²This book was published in Paris because at that time a publishing market for Latin American authors had been established there (Colombi 2008). By the way, Maupas had taken classes with Durkheim in the 1900s and, in 1914, Raúl Orgaz would do the same before the outbreak of the First World War.

³Unfortunately, there is not much information available about Maupas’s life. It is known that he was born in Buenos Aires in 1879 and that he was the son of French immigrants. He studied law and then took a trip to Europe, where he studied in Berlin and Paris. After teaching at the University of Buenos Aires from 1908 to 1921, there are no further details, except for the date of his death in 1958.

⁴For a reconstruction of all the positions in this debate, see Pereyra and Vila (2019).

⁵This conference was published in 1970 by Cuadernos de Marcha in tribute to the author after his death. It does not have a date, but the texts cited by the author would indicate that his reading of *The Rules of Sociological Method* must have been carried out in the first decade of the 20th century.

had to gain institutional recognition from traditionalist sectors, which might criticize the inclusion of the subject in Law faculties.

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS (1915-1933)

The outbreak of the Great War meant the end of the “Long Nineteenth Century”, as defined by the historian Eric Hobsbawm, and the beginning of the “Short Twentieth Century”. This resulted in a severe blow to the ideals of liberalism: Progress, (European) Civilization, Reason and Science (Funes 2006). It also had an impact on the thought of several Latin American countries, which brought about some important differences between Argentine and Uruguayan intellectual paths. In Argentina, the democratic opening of 1916⁶ and the conferences, in the same year, organised by the international Spanish exponent of anti-positivism, José Ortega y Gasset, would result in critiques of positivism, which was at the peak of its glory at the time (Altamirano 2004).

The emergence of an anti-positivist movement would arrive a little later in sociology: in the second half of the 1920s. In particular, Raúl Orgaz⁷ and Alfredo Poviña⁸, sociology professors in Córdoba, were the ones who began a strong critique of French Sociologism. This was expressed in constant counterpoints between this tradition and the ascendant German sociology, in which the names of Georg Simmel, Alfred Vierkandt and Leopold Von Wiese were the most relevant for Argentine sociologists⁹.

For instance, Orgaz said that Simmel strived to make sociology a special science, combating the encyclopedic character attributed to it by French positivists and replacing the category of “society” with that of “social relation”. This explains the search for autonomy that Simmel, Vierkandt and Von Wiese posed in relation to “human relations”. Ultimately, it is about “the proper subject matter of an autonomous social science, although autonomous in a different way from that conceived by Durkheim” (Orgaz 1932:41).

In the case of Poviña, he criticized the idea of “society” as being nothing more than a “fictitious reality”. He argued that it was merely a product of human imagination that could be useful for discussing it as if it existed, “as Durkheim does (...) [but] such a fiction cannot be the main object of a science” (Poviña 1935:257). In short, it could be said that one of the key characteristics of the

⁶This was the first year in which there were presidential elections under the Sáenz Peña law, which ensured universal male suffrage, secret ballots and mandatory voting.

⁷Orgaz (Santiago del Estero, 1888–Córdoba, 1948) studied law at the National University of Córdoba and held significant positions at the university, particularly in the sociology chair of the Faculty of Law. He sympathized with political liberalism and maintained a consistent sociological vocation throughout his career. His legacy includes a significant body of work in sociology and history, making him a key figure in the Argentine academic landscape of the first half of the 20th century.

⁸ Alfredo Poviña Padilla (Tucumán, 1904–Córdoba, 1986) graduated in law in 1926 and held important positions in the academic sphere of Córdoba since 1930. However, his approach diverged from the liberal reformist currents of the University of Córdoba, aligning more with conservative positions. In fact, his prominence in Argentine sociology, which was diminished after the establishment of the sociology program at the University of Buenos Aires by Gino Germani, was recovered during the 1970s, when he played key roles during the last military dictatorship in Argentina, as the deanship of the Faculty of Philosophy of Córdoba (1977-1981) and the presidency of the Superior Court of Justice of Córdoba (1981-1982).

⁹As Argentina was not a country that cultivated the German language, most of the works of these authors were disseminated through the translations into Spanish carried out by the *Revista de Occidente*, an entrepreneurial journal under the editorship of Ortega y Gasset. According to Blanco (2007:14), this journal “published around 205 titles between 1924 and 1936, distributed among the 20 collections it had. The collection ‘Nuevos hechos, Nuevas Ideas’, the most important in the field of philosophy and social sciences, published 39 titles between 1925 and 1935”.

“relational school” (as Poviña called these German sociologists), is its assertion that sociology is an autonomous science with a content distinct from the other sciences.

Meanwhile, Uruguay shows a more complex situation, as the country did not experience an intellectual reaction against positivism, but rather what might be called an “improvement of positivism based on itself”, which means “it was searched for and managed to improve it without establishing an essential antagonism in relation to it” (Ardao 1956: 17). This is explained by the fact that, for the Uruguayan intellectuals, the most attractive ideas, during that period, were “French and, secondarily, Saxon, with very little or no enthusiasm for the German thought of that period” (Ardao 1956: 23). In conclusion, it could be said that the fact that Uruguayans had rid themselves of Spencerianism did not mean they had shifted towards German philosophy¹⁰.

In the case of sociology, the situation is accentuated. The coincidence between the date of the foundation of chairs and the moment of the decline of positivism seems to have played against the consolidation of a rejection of this doctrine. In other words, because there were no previous chairs there was no sociologist positivism against which to react and, therefore, the delivery of the new subject had to be in harmony with the education programme of the 19th century. Therefore, the sociology chair at the University of the Republic maintained the sociological systems of Spencer, Comte, Marx, Tarde, Durkheim, etc., in its teaching. In relation to the last of these, the preserved lecture notes show that Carlos M. Prando¹¹ gave central importance to *The Rules of Sociological Method*, a book in which he based his classes about the French sociologist, and, to a lesser extent, to *The Division of Labour in Society*.

Concretely, Prando noted a consensus that sociology’s object is “society”. However, he argued that breaking it down reveals two phases: the social fact itself (human association) and its manifestations or the “social product” (human activity). With respect to this, he stated that “for some, like Durkheim [sic], only the social fact should be studied” (Prando 1922: 10). Regarding *The Division of Labour in Society*, Prando suggested that the phenomenon’s initial form was due to “the natural conditions of age and sex” (Prando 1922:140). Nevertheless, when population growth and “moral density” lead to new divisions, this resulted in the emergence of professional and specialized groups.

In summary, discussions about the object of sociology remained the most important, although in the Argentine case, German sociology gained greater significance. However, French sociology continued to be a necessary reference, even if only to differentiate it from “individualist sociologies”. In contrast, sociology in Uruguay showed a delay in relation to the new ideas arriving into the Spanish-speaking world from Germany, maintaining by the 1930s the same understanding that could be found in Buenos Aires or Córdoba at the beginning of the 20th century.

¹⁰This does not mean there had not been any supporters of the phenomenological, existentialist or historicist ideas. In fact, Ardao himself dedicates a part of his book to the “philosophy of the culture”, and identifies among his supporters Alberto Zum Felde and Juan Llambías de Azevedo. Nevertheless, with the exception of the Krausism of German-Belgium origin present in the Battlism section of the Colorado Party, there was not a widespread interest in the German ideas.

¹¹Prando (Montevideo, 1885-n.d., 1950) was a member of the Colorado Party (Riverista) and participated in the Philosophy of Law chair and the Civil Law chair at the University of the Republic. He also served as Minister of Education (1925-1927) of Uruguay and Dean of the Faculty of Law (1934-1938).

REDIFINITIONS BEFORE THE SCIENTIFIC WAVE (1933-1947)¹²

The year 1933 was significant for both countries concerning changes among the teaching staff. On that date, Lincoln Machado Ribas became a substitute professor at the University of the Republic, and Alfredo Poviña was appointed chief of practical applications. Also, at this time, a new way of reading Durkheimian sociology emerged, aligned with the anti-positivism reaction, although it is also linked to the reception of *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* since the mid-1920s¹³, aimed to position Durkheim as an exponent of an “idealistic sociology”, with “collective representations” becoming the privileged object of analysis.

In this manner, for Orgaz (1950 [1933]: 45), Durkheim’s ontologism was now of a “psychic character”, which means that, since the “social being” is a “psychic being”, the “ultimate ratio of Durkheimian doctrine”, instead of the “social fact”, would now be the “collective representations”. That said, what were the other important changes regarding Durkheim’s work and his school during the 1930s and 1940s in the Río de la Plata?

In Uruguay, Prando’s classes do not have important variations until his distancing from the chair in 1942. As far as the object of study is concerned, the last lecture notes *Sociología General y Genética* (1943) only exhibit, for the first time, the inclusion of a new section dedicated to Célestin Bouglé, positioned as an heir of the School of Durkheim as it shares its characterization of “the social”, which aligns him closer to a “collectivist” approach¹⁴. Strictly speaking, this is the most important dimension of Durkheim’s thought among the sociology professors of the University of the Republic.

In this sense, the institutional victory of Isaac Ganón¹⁵ and his designation as professor of sociology in 1947, defeating Machado Ribas, will not represent noticeable modifications related to the interpretations of the French sociologist. Such an issue becomes evident in the handbook *Sociología: objeto, métodos, orientación, didáctica* (1944), published due to a call for applications to fill such a position. In this book, the section dedicated to Durkheim maintained the format of Prando’s classes. In it, Ganón discussed the different “rules” proposed by the author, and explained why Durkheim rejected the methods of concordance, difference and residues as inapplicable for social matters, accepting only the method of concomitant variations as valid.

Therefore, the most interesting readings will emerge on the other side of the Río de la Plata. In Buenos Aires, in a more feeble way, and in Córdoba, in a more noticeable way, between the end of the 1930s and the mid-1940s, a reinterpretation of the work of Émile Durkheim from a corporate

¹² The idea of “scientific wave” was expressed by Germani in reference to the book *Sociología. Teoría y técnica* (1941), written by the Spanish sociologist José Medina Echavarría who, according to Germani’s vision, laid the foundations for the Latin American sociological renewal of the 1950s.

¹³ Juan Ramon Beltrán, a psychologist who worked at the Criminology Institute of the National Penitentiary, was probably the first Argentine reader of this book. For a reception of Durkheim in Argentina, beyond the sociology chairs, the reader can consult Vila (2021).

¹⁴ By the way, Prando had already criticized this scope years ago, which he associated with Soviet statist politics, while valuing positively Gabriel Tarde, whose theory was akin to political stances that defended individual liberties (note that Prando was part of a liberal faction, opposed to Batllista statism, within the Colorado Party). In his words: “there is a great coincidence between the Durkheimian thesis of sociology and the political thesis of collectivism” (Prando 1929: 127).

¹⁵ Ganón (Salto, 1917-Montevideo, 1975) studied law at the University of the Republic, where he was professor of sociology until his death. He served as a lawyer for the Municipality of Montevideo and taught philosophy, sociology and economics at different higher education institutions. He was a founding member of the International Sociological Association and the International Political Science Association, both established in 1949. He was also president of the Uruguayan Association of Social Sciences and the Latin American Sociological Association, the latter from 1959 to 1961.

perspective, in particular of *The Division of Labour in Society*, will appear. In this way, it can be seen that the syllabus of the courses taught by Ricardo Levene¹⁶ was updated in line with the Durkheimian School.

This influence is evident in Levene's teaching, as he incorporated into his classes an article by Bouglé titled "Los sociólogos y el corporativismo en Francia", published in the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación* in 1938. In it, Durkheim's disciple argued that society could not be "a dust of individuals"¹⁷, and therefore it was necessary to create bodies that would perform regulatory functions and remedy the growing anarchy of the modern world. Bouglé mentioned that this idea was drawn from three lessons of Durkheim's course titled "Civic and Professional Morality" (1898), made public by Marcel Mauss in 1937, and that they should be connected "with the preface Durkheim wrote in 1902 for the second edition of his thesis on the division of labor", where one could find a doctrine that states "the most urgent task imposed upon our era (...) is the restoration (...) of professional power" (Bouglé 1938).

Likewise, the foundation of the Institute of Sociology of the School of Philosophy and Arts of the University of Buenos Aires in 1940 led to the publication of the first investigations of Gino Germani¹⁸ (González Bollo 1999). These concerned both the social reality of Argentina, with special emphasis on the study of the middle class, defined from the theoretical developments of Maurice Halbwachs (Germani 1942), and some Durkheimian categories of analysis relevant to the study of the local social conditions. In the latter, there appeared attempts to relate some classic concepts such as "collective representations" or "anomie", to others developed by the North American empirical sociology.

Germani addressed the last concept mentioned in *Anomia y desintegración social* (1945), analyzing the effects of abrupt changes on social norms and objective situations¹⁹. He first examined Durkheim's use of "anomie" in *The Division of Labour in Society*, noting that it emerged when functional specialization increased without a corresponding rise in organic solidarity, leading to an abnormal division of labor.

However, in *Suicide*, and following Parsons' interpretation in *The Structure of Social Action* (1937), Germani observed that collective consciousness was not only linked to mechanical solidarity, as it was in *The Division of Labour in Society*, but also organic solidarity, although with different content. In the latter, social life exists as long as there is a system of rules or values that guide human behavior. Nevertheless, as this framework weakens, people may fall into divergent behaviors or a state of

¹⁶Levene (Buenos Aires 1885–1959) held various teaching positions at the University of Buenos Aires and the National University of La Plata. At the former he was Professor of Sociology for many years (1911–1947) and founded key academic institutions such as the Institute of Legal History and the Institute of Sociology. At the latter, in addition to teaching Argentine history and sociology, he served as Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and as President of the University.

¹⁷This phrase is a translation of the original French expression "une poussière d'individus", used by Bouglé (and Durkheim) to describe an atomized society lacking social cohesion.

¹⁸Germani (Rome, 1911–1978) studied accounting in Rome and was involved in Italian socialism during Mussolini's era, which led to his arrest. Following his release, he moved to Buenos Aires in 1934, where he worked as an administrator in a family business and contributed to anti-fascist newspapers. In 1938, he enrolled in the philosophy program at the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, and from 1940, worked with Levene at the Institute of Sociology. During Peronism (1946–1955), he was excluded from the University due to his political views, and it was only after the fall of this government that he was able to establish the sociology program in Buenos Aires in 1957.

¹⁹It should be noted that during the 1930s, Argentina experienced an accelerated industrialization process that generated internal migration to the outskirts of Buenos Aires and led to the formation of the working class, which in the following years would become the social base of Peronism. This is the context in which Germani writes.

“anomie”. Thus, in societies with organic solidarity, although values differ from those in mechanical solidarity, individuals are still held together. In this case, the transition may fail if nothing replaces previously destroyed frameworks. Germani noted that his findings correspond with Halbwachs’ work on the causes of suicide, reflecting a theoretical alignment between his concept of “anomie” and what William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki termed “social disintegration”.

Having said that, and taking into account that Germani was still young and had little institutional weight, what is probably most relevant in that period is the construction of a *prefunctionalist* theory that Orgaz develops from the appropriation and re-elaboration of various sociological developments, external to the French sphere but combined with Durkheimian sociology. In particular, as has been said before, the author reinterprets the *The Division of Labour in Society* from a corporate perspective. Here, the concept of “social consciousness” is the key that allows thinking society as a “functional unity” in inter-institutional terms, since it refers to the “special functions” of societies where the social division of labour has been developed. In Durkheim's words:

As the terms collective and social are often considered synonymous, one is inclined to believe that the collective conscience is the total social conscience, that is, extend it to include the whole psychic life of society, although, particularly in advanced societies, it is only a very restricted part. Judicial, governmental, scientific, industrial, in short, *all special functions* are of a psychic nature, since they consist in systems of representations and actions. They, however, are surely outside the common conscience (Durkheim 2008 [1893]: 171, author's emphasis).

It is worth pointing out that what in the mid-1920s existed as an “inter-individual functional unity”, from the reading that Orgaz makes of Simmel, appears then at a social level, either between social groups (Orgaz 1935) or between institutions (Orgaz 1950 [1942]), after the appropriation of the thesis of Pitirim Sorokin developed in *Contemporary Sociological Theories* (1928). That, coupled with the holistic approach present in Durkheim’s work, results in what could be called a prefunctionalist theory, as it anticipates some elements that will be present in works such as *The Social System* (1951), by Talcott Parsons, or *Towards a General Theory of Action* (1951), by Parsons and Edward Shils. Specifically, it was the use of the category “function” and the “organicism” perspective of society that will be emphasized in Orgaz’s 1942 handbook.

Thus, in the chapter where Orgaz addresses the “regulated group in its functional unity”, he states that “social consciousness” is what “designates the functional unity of regulated groups”. In this manner, social consciousness would indicate the transition from “a physical aspect of society (comparison of society to an organism) to a psychic concept of society (comparison of the group to an organism of ideas, with a consciousness)”, revealing “a remnant of the now devalued organicist doctrine of society” (Orgaz 1950 [1942]: 235). Consequently, Orgaz (1950 [1942]: 253) uses the concept of “social consciousness” as the symbolic (“ideal”) translation of the functional (“material”) unity of the regulated group (i.e. “society with organic solidarity”).

On the contrary, Poviña never thought of society as a whole, and his rejection of sociology, along with his sympathies for German sociology, becomes evident. Therefore, it is not possible for him to think that society exists outside and over particular individuals and, as a consequence, that it constitutes the effective cause of human conduct, which prevents a *prefunctionalist* theoretical. In this manner, if Poviña succeeds at incorporating the concept of “function” into his sociologist theory, he cannot think of a systemic functionality, in such away that it articulates the different spheres of action of the life of human beings and, therefore, the function that can be separately performed by

education, morals and religion, etc., does not necessarily entail the reproduction of the social system as a whole.

In this way, instead of considering the interaction of the various functions of the social organism, whether among individuals, groups, or institutions, Poviña (1945: 276) focuses on the increase in the “intersection of social circles”, an idea developed by Simmel. Despite this, in the chapters of his handbooks *Cursos de Sociología* (1945) dedicated to the sociology of population, law, knowledge, and religion, some new references from the Durkheimian School will appear in the Argentine field, although further investigation of this matter would go beyond the analysis conducted for this paper.

CONCLUSIONS

The reception of Durkheim in the Río de la Plata during the period from 1895 to 1947 shows three distinct phases in its interpretation. However, some elements remained constant throughout this time frame. These include Durkheim’s categorization as a “collectivist” theorist in opposition to “individualist” sociologies; the importance of his definition of the “social fact”; and the characterization of this fact as a distinct reality from the individuals who constitute society. As a consequence, *The Rules of Sociological Method* was considered a central work that encapsulated both his general thesis and the principles shared by the members of his School.

In Uruguay, this trend was more pronounced, as the sociology chairs of the School of Law of the University of the Republic did not modify the syllabus of the subject at all during this time. As a result, even after Prando’s retirement in 1942, no changes were made in the interpretation of the French sociologist. This remained the case during the early years of Isaac Ganón, who would later lead a significant renewal of the Uruguayan sociological studies in the late 1950s.

In contrast, Argentine sociological thought, after the initial stage that broadly coincided with the Durkheimian approach discussed in relation to Uruguay, began to undergo significant innovations from the mid-1920s onwards. The reception of German sociology introduced an important counterpoint between the proposals of the Teutonic and French sociologists, with a relative affinity for the former in Córdoba and a stronger one for the latter in Buenos Aires.

Finally, the later period marked the beginning of certain developments that, after the Second World War, would prevail as a sociological tradition par excellence, namely, North American functionalism. Therefore, it is worth revisiting Gino Germani’s early works within the framework of the Institute of Sociology, as he would go on to renew Argentine sociology from the late 1950s, by founding the sociology program at the University of Buenos Aires in 1957.

However, Raúl Orgaz and Alfredo Poviña most clearly illustrate the attempt to develop a new perspective of social analysis. In certain respects – such as the use of the notion of “function” or the organicist perspective (particularly in Orgaz’s case) – this perspective prefigured some of the core elements of functionalism. These developments suggest that the most creative reception of the father of French sociology in the Río de la Plata during the first half of the 20th century took place within the School of Law at the National University of Córdoba.

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