

Universidad de Huelva

Departamento de Sociología, Trabajo Social y Salud
Pública



Beyond the dichotomy egoism / altruism. Society and positive actions

Memoria para optar al grado de doctora
presentada por:

Emiliana Mangone

Fecha de lectura: 11 de julio de 2023

Bajo la dirección de la doctora:

Estrella Gualda Caballero

Huelva, 2023



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TESIS DOCTORAL

Beyond the Dichotomy Egoism / Altruism.
Society and Positive Actions

Emiliana Mangone

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Huelva, 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

If I can stop one Heart from breaking

I shall not live in vain

If I can ease one Life the Aching

Or cool one Pain

Or help one fainting Robin

Unto his Nest again

I shall not live in vain

[Emily Dickinson, 1864(J919)]

This thesis concludes my formal training path, it certainly does not conclude my “life training” path because there is always learning and improvement to be made.

Every path, however, crosses the lives of other people who in different ways mark your path: those such as family members who do it completely unselfishly because they love you, and those who do it by “profession”. Both categories deserve due thanks, but here I would particularly like to thank the people in the second category. I would like to thank all those colleagues who have offered me an open discussion on the topics - such as affirmative action - that are the focus of my studies; here I am not naming anybody because I could accidentally forget someone.

However, I would like to thank, in a personal way, Estrella Gualda Caballero who followed me along the research path and in the writing of this thesis with great attention and scientific rigour and for introducing me to the other researchers of the Research Centre *Estudios Sociales y Intervención Social-ESEIS* (SEJ-216) with whom I had fruitful exchanges of ideas and reflections. My thanks, however, are twofold because as the scientific coordinator of the project PID2021-123983OB-I00: “Conspiracy theories and Hate speech online: Comparison of patterns in

narratives and social networks about COVID-19, immigrants, refugees and LGBTBI people [NON-CONSPIRA-HATE!]", funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033/ and by "ERDF A way of making Europe", allowed me to use - for the drafting of chapter VII of the thesis - the tweets related to Italy collected in the time span of the three-year period 2020-2022 characterised by the presence of the Covid-19 pandemic. This allowed me to present some concrete examples to support the theoretical reflections of the thesis and the model I presented in it. Thus, this Doctoral Thesis is benefitted by my participation in this project, as member of their International Team Work.

AGRADECIMIENTOS

*Si puedo evitar que un corazón se rompa,
entonces no viviré en vano;
Si puedo aliviar el pesar de un hermano,
consolar el dolor del vencido
ayudar al petirrojo a encontrar su nido,
entonces no viviré en vano.*

[Emily Dickinson, 1864]

Con esta tesis se concluye mi trayectoria de educación formal, pero desde luego no concluye mi camino de “formación para la vida”, porque siempre quedan aprendizajes y mejoras por hacer.

Sin embargo, cada camino se cruza con la vida de otras personas que, de distintas maneras, marcan tu recorrido: los que, como los familiares, lo hacen de forma totalmente desinteresada porque te quieren, y los que lo hacen por “profesión”. Ambas categorías merecen el debido agradecimiento, pero aquí me gustaría dar las gracias especialmente a las personas de la segunda categoría. Quiero agradecer a todos los colegas que me brindaron un debate abierto sobre los temas -como la discriminación positiva- que centran mis estudios; no cito nombres aquí porque correría el riesgo de olvidarme de alguien.

Además, quiero agradecer, de forma personal, a Estrella Gualda Caballero por su atento y riguroso acompañamiento en el camino de la investigación y en la redacción de esta tesis, y por presentarme a los demás investigadores del Grupo de Investigación *Estudios Sociales e Intervención Social-ESEIS* (SEJ-216) con los que mantuve fructíferos intercambios de ideas y reflexiones. Mi agradecimiento, sin embargo, es doble porque como investigadora principal del proyecto PID2021-123983OB-I00: “Teorías de la conspiración y discurso de odio en línea:

comparación de patrones en narrativas y redes sociales sobre COVID-19, inmigrantes, refugiados y personas LGTBI”, financiado por MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033/ y por “FEDER Una manera de hacer Europa”, me permitió utilizar -para la redacción del capítulo VII de la tesis- los tuits relacionados con Italia recogidos en el lapso temporal del trienio 2020-2022, caracterizado por la presencia de la pandemia de Covid-19. Esto me permitió presentar algunos ejemplos concretos para apoyar las reflexiones teóricas de la tesis y el modelo que presenté en ella. Esta tesis doctoral, por este motivo, se beneficia de mi participación en este proyecto, como miembro de su Equipo de Trabajo internacional.

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ABSTRACT

The starting assumption of this doctoral thesis is that the social and human sciences (especially sociology) have, since their inception, adopted a “negativistic” *modus operandi* that highlights only negative or pathological phenomena without ever focusing on positive or healthy ones. From here, the thesis relies on the hypothesis that there is no such thing as altruism or egoism in the behavioural sense as claimed by sociobiologists or behaviourists – there are, instead, “altruistic relationships” and “egoistic relationships”. It follows that its focus will be on “relationships in action”, *i.e.*, on a relational process that is both action and interaction between individuals embedded in a socio-cultural context. In a reciprocal motion, the context partly influences these processes and the processes, in turn, influence the context.

I will support this hypothesis using two main tools: literature review, theoretical analysis, and the presentation of some cases of “altruistic and selfish relationships” that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic in Italy, based on my participation on the project PID2021-123983OB-I00: “Conspiracy theories and Hate speech online: Comparison of patterns in narratives and social networks about COVID-19, immigrants, refugees and LGTBI people [NON-CONSPIRA-HATE!]”, funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033/ and by “ERDF A way of making Europe”. The former will encompass those scholars (such as Comte, Durkheim, Sorokin, Moscovici, Mauss) who investigated positive phenomena and contributed to the advancement of knowledge on them (either using the term “altruism” or with other social constructs). The theoretical analysis (metatheory), instead, will identify the elements determining positive and negative actions. Furthermore, it will detect their significant relationships with all the components that constitute and give life to socio-cultural phenomena (personality, society, and culture). This way privileges the Ego/Alter relations within societal processes, since all social phenomena, attitudes, and actions are constructed in a sphere with specific places, times, and symbols. These three elements are crucial for the cognitive self-signification

processes activated by individuals to build social realities in their daily relational experience.

My final objective is to overcome the egoism/altruism dichotomy starting from a procedural and methodological order relating to the object of study. It is not altruism and egoism (static terms) that must be studied, but processes – *i.e.*, relationships. More specifically, “altruistic relationships” and “egoistic relationships”, where the former are positive relationships that benefit society (pro-social or hetero-directed) and the latter are negative self-centred relationships (anti-social or self-directed).

I will emphasize two fundamental aspects. First, I will assert the need for positive relationships (gratitude, altruism, solidarity, cooperation, etc.) to become an object of study for the social sciences once again. On this issue, I will specify the role that both positive actions and the social sciences hold for the development of humanity. Second, I will identify the elements determining and influencing the most significant relationships, to pinpoint those able to promote such actions.

The above are the essential elements I will address in the nine chapters that make up this thesis (plus Introduction and two Appendixes) with the help of supporting references.

RESUMEN

La suposición inicial de esta tesis doctoral es que las ciencias sociales y humanas (especialmente la sociología) han adoptado desde sus inicios un *modus operandi* “negativista” que destaca únicamente los fenómenos negativos o patológicos sin centrarse nunca en los positivos o sanos. Con base en esta suposición, la tesis se fundamenta en la hipótesis de que no existe el altruismo o el egoísmo en el sentido conductista, como afirman los sociobiólogos o los conductistas, sino que hay “relaciones altruistas” y “relaciones egoístas”. De ahí que se centre en las “relaciones en acción”, es decir, en un proceso relacional que es a la vez acción e interacción entre individuos inmersos en un contexto sociocultural. En un movimiento recíproco, el contexto influye en parte en estos procesos y los procesos, a su vez, influyen en el contexto.

Respaldo esta hipótesis utilizando dos herramientas principales: la revisión bibliográfica, el análisis teórico y la presentación de algunos casos de “relaciones altruistas y egoístas” ocurridos durante la pandemia de Covid-19 en Italia, basado en mi participación en el proyecto PID2021-123983OB-I00: “Teorías de la conspiración y discurso de odio en línea: comparación de patrones en narrativas y redes sociales sobre COVID-19, inmigrantes, refugiados y personas LGTBI”, financiado por MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033/ y por “FEDER Una manera de hacer Europa”.

El primero englobará a aquellos estudiosos (como Comte, Durkheim, Sorokin, Moscovici, Mauss) que investigaron fenómenos positivos y contribuyeron al avance del conocimiento sobre ellos (ya fuera utilizando el término “altruismo” o con otros constructos sociales). El análisis teórico (metateoría), en cambio, identificará los elementos que determinan las acciones positivas y negativas. Además, este análisis detectará sus relaciones significativas con todos los componentes que constituyen y dan vida a los fenómenos socioculturales (personalidad, sociedad y cultura). De esta manera se privilegian las relaciones Ego/Alter dentro de los procesos sociales, ya que todos los fenómenos sociales,

actitudes y acciones se construyen en un ámbito con lugares, tiempos y símbolos específicos. Estos tres elementos son cruciales para los procesos cognitivos de auto-significación activados por los individuos para construir realidades sociales en su experiencia relacional cotidiana.

Mi objetivo final es superar la dicotomía egoísmo/altruismo a partir de un orden procedimental y metodológico relativo al objeto de estudio. No son el altruismo y el egoísmo (términos estáticos) lo que hay que estudiar, sino los procesos, es decir, las relaciones. Más concretamente, “relaciones altruistas” y “relaciones egoístas”, donde las primeras son relaciones positivas que benefician a la sociedad (pro-sociales o hetero-dirigidas) y las segundas son relaciones negativas egocéntricas (anti-sociales o auto-dirigidas).

Haré hincapié en dos aspectos fundamentales. En primer lugar, afirmaré la necesidad de que las relaciones positivas (gratitud, altruismo, solidaridad, cooperación, etc.) vuelvan a ser objeto de estudio de las ciencias sociales. A este respecto, precisaré el papel que tanto las acciones positivas como las ciencias sociales desempeñan para el desarrollo de la humanidad. En segundo lugar, identificaré los elementos que determinan e influyen en las relaciones más significativas, para señalar aquellos capaces de promover dichas acciones.

Los anteriores son los elementos esenciales que abordaré en los nueve capítulos que componen esta tesis (más la introducción y dos apéndices) con la ayuda de referencias de apoyo.

PRESENTATION

If one wants to understand why some scholars decide to research some themes rather than others, it is essential to understand the genesis of these choices. In sociological terms, it is vital to know the *scripts*¹ (Goffman, 1959) underpinning such choices. *Scripts* support us because they are

complex knowledge structures about an ordered succession of actions, which define various situations known from experience. The use of this form of knowledge does not require specification or explanation of what one is doing (Mangone, 2015, p. 11).

These introductory lines will describe the sequence of actions (*scripts*) that led me to choose the subject underlying the drafting of this thesis.

My interest in positive action (prosocial behaviour) began when I was still a teenager and attending secondary school in the mid-1980s. I was elected as a student representative on student bodies and nicknamed *Solidarność* (Solidarity) – from the Polish autonomous workers’ trade union founded in September 1980 following strikes in the Gdansk shipyards and initially led by Lech Wałęsa – because I took on the task with a considerable commitment to the protection and equality of students’ rights. This led me to study sociology at the university, becoming in 2006 a researcher in Sociology of Culture and Communication at University of Salerno (Italy), then Associate professor (2015) in the same discipline. I achieved the Italian Academic Qualification as Full Professor in Sociology of Culture and Communication (2018) and in General Sociology (2022). This was possible because in Italy until 2010 (the year in which the reform law to reorganise universities and the recruitment of academic staff was passed) the title of Doctor (PhD) was not mandatory to start a university career. And once this career started,

¹ Goffman uses this term to refer to recurring “sketches of interaction” that generically define the essential role of the actors in a given situation.

in Italy, it was not possible to obtain this title because attending a PhD course (by law) is incompatible with the role of researcher or professor. The protective attitude of my teenage years never left me. In 2017, an episode prompted me to turn my attention to a sociological classic (Pitirim A. Sorokin) and, subsequently, to delve into prosocial actions.

In 2016, my Italian colleague, Giuseppina Marsico, suggested that I write – as a sociologist – a short monograph on Sorokin (Mangone, 2018a). Together with Jaan Valsiner (then at Aalborg University in Denmark) had ascertained that his thoughts strongly influenced in many respects the birth of what was to become Cultural Psychology. It thus seemed interesting to highlight those traits of Sorokin’s thought that directly or indirectly flowed into this specialist branch of psychology. It was the metaphorical beginning of my “marriage” with Sorokin, which continues to this day – and which, according to the reviews of my publications, seems to have made me the leading non-Russian European scholar (Zyuzev, 2020) on this imposing sociological figure.

While delving into Sorokin’s thoughts, I came across the works published in his last years at the *Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism*, particularly his book *The Ways and Power of Love* (Sorokin, 1954). The last part of this essay, consisting of only one chapter (*From Tribal Egoism to Universal Altruism*) describes the necessity of the passage from “tribal altruism or tribal egoism” to “universal altruism”. The former is in-group altruism, *i.e.*, expressed exclusively within the group, making its members indifferent or even aggressive towards other groups (out-groups). The latter, instead, extends beyond the in-group to embrace the whole of humanity, bar none. In closing, the chapter poses humankind a dilemma that is yet to be solved:

By the mysterious forces of destiny mankind is confronted with a stern dilemma: either to continue its predatory policies of individual and tribal egoism that lead it to its inevitable doom, or to embark upon the policies of universal solidarity that brings humanity to the aspired for heaven on the earth. It is up to everyone of us which of the two roads we prefer to choose (Sorokin, 1954, p. 489).

Reading this book led me to turn my attention to prosocial actions, although it was not the only cause. I embraced Sorokin's idea of committed sociology. This branch of the social sciences should be free from the "negativistic" *modus operandi* that brings out only negative or pathological phenomena without ever highlighting positive and healthy ones. I also heartily agree with Sorokin's belief that the future of humankind – and its development – is in the hands of humanity itself.

My first contribution on the topic was an article, *Gratitude and the Relational Theory of Society* (Mangone, 2019a), in which, starting from Archer's morphogenetic cycle (1995) and through the asymmetry in gratitude proposed by Luccarelli (2019), I examined gratitude through the perspective of the relational theory of society (Donati, 2011a). As a symbolic-cultural reality, gratitude is a key to reading everyday life. From this point onwards, I published yearly a variety of research outputs on altruism as a form of prosocial action.

In the 2018/2019 academic year, I enrolled at the Escuela de Doctorado of the Universidad de Huelva [University of Huelva Doctorate School] in the Programa de Doctorado en Ciencias Sociales y de la Educación [Doctoral Programme on Social Sciences and Education]. In the current phase of my academic career, attending and obtaining a doctorate was the best way to focus my research activities on this "niche" of the social sciences. Besides, it allowed me to consolidate the relationships and academic collaborations already in place with colleagues at the Universidad de Huelva and in particular with colleagues from the Research Centre "Estudios Sociales y Intervención Social" (Grupo ESEIS, SEJ-216, www.eseis.es) directed by Estrella Gualda Caballero. And also to initiate a line of publications on positive actions during the time of realization of my Thesis (Appendix A) that has currently culminated in the publication of the Italian-language book, *Solidarietà Sociale* [Social Solidarity] (Mangone, 2022a).

In short, these are the reasons behind the idea of my doctoral thesis entitled *Beyond the Dichotomy Egoism / Altruism. Society and Positive Actions*, which has been accepted by the Escuela de Doctorado of the Universidad de Huelva [University of Huelva Doctorate School]. It is a doctoral thesis registered in the

Doctoral Programme in “Social and Educational Sciences” and it is part of the research line “Investigación e Intervención Social y Educativa” [Social and Educational Research and Intervention]. The results of this thesis will be presented in the following pages.

PRESENTACIÓN

Para entender por qué algunos estudiosos deciden investigar unos temas en lugar de otros, es esencial comprender la génesis de estas elecciones. En términos sociológicos, es vital conocer los guiones [*scripts*]¹ (Goffman, 1959) que sustentan tales elecciones. Los guiones nos apoyan porque son

estructuras complejas de conocimiento sobre una sucesión ordenada de acciones, que definen diversas situaciones conocidas por la experiencia. El uso de esta forma de conocimiento no requiere especificar o explicar lo que se está haciendo (Mangone, 2015, p. 11).

Estas líneas introductorias describirán la secuencia de las acciones (guiones) que me llevaron a elegir el tema que subyace a la redacción de esta tesis.

Mi interés por la acción positiva (comportamiento prosocial) comenzó a mediados de los años ochenta, cuando aún era adolescente y asistía a la escuela secundaria. Me eligieron representante de los estudiantes en los órganos estudiantiles y me apodaron *Solidarność* (Solidaridad) - del sindicato autónomo de trabajadores polacos fundado en septiembre de 1980 a raíz de las huelgas en los astilleros de Gdansk y dirigido inicialmente por Lech Wałęsa - porque asumí esta tarea con un considerable compromiso para la protección y a la igualdad de los derechos de los estudiantes. Esto me llevó a estudiar sociología en la universidad, convirtiéndome en 2006 en investigadora de Sociología de la Cultura y la Comunicación en la Universidad de Salerno (Italia), luego en profesora asociada (2015) en la misma disciplina, y logré la titulación académica italiana como profesora titular en Sociología de la Cultura y la Comunicación (2018) y en Sociología General (2022). Esto fue posible porque en Italia hasta el 2010 (año en que se aprobó la ley de reforma para reorganizar las universidades y la contratación

¹ Goffman utiliza este término para referirse a los “esbozos de interacción” recurrentes que definen genéricamente el papel esencial de los actores en una situación determinada.

del personal académico) el título de Doctor (PhD) no era obligatorio para iniciar una carrera universitaria. Y una vez iniciada esta carrera, en Italia no era posible obtener este título porque asistir a un curso de doctorado (por ley) es incompatible con la función de investigador o profesor.

La actitud protectora de mi adolescencia nunca me abandonó. En 2017, un episodio me impulsó a dirigir mi atención hacia un clásico de la sociología (Pitirim A. Sorokin) y, posteriormente, a profundizar el tema de las acciones prosociales.

En 2016, mi colega italiana, Giuseppina Marsico, me propuso escribir -como socióloga- una breve monografía sobre Sorokin (Mangone, 2018a). Junto con Jaan Valsiner (entonces en la Universidad de Aalborg, Dinamarca) comprobé que su pensamiento influyó fuertemente en muchos aspectos en el nacimiento de lo que sería la Psicología Cultural. Así pues, parecía interesante destacar aquellos rasgos del pensamiento de Sorokin que directa o indirectamente desembocaron en esta rama especializada de la psicología. Fue el comienzo metafórico de mi “matrimonio intelectual” con Sorokin, que continúa hasta hoy y que, según las reseñas de mis publicaciones, parece haberme convertido en el principal experto europeo no ruso (Zyuzev, 2020) sobre esta imponente figura sociológica.

Al profundizar en el pensamiento de Sorokin, me topé con los trabajos publicados en sus últimos años en el Centro de Investigación de Harvard sobre Altruismo Creativo, en particular con su libro *Los caminos y el poder del amor* (Sorokin, 1954). La última parte de este ensayo, que consta de un solo capítulo (“Del egoísmo tribal al altruismo universal”) describe la necesidad del paso del “altruismo tribal o egoísmo tribal” al “altruismo universal”. El primero es el altruismo dentro del grupo, es decir, que se expresa exclusivamente dentro del grupo, haciendo que sus miembros sean indiferentes o incluso agresivos hacia otros grupos (fuera del grupo). El segundo, en cambio, se extiende más allá del grupo interno para abarcar a toda la humanidad, sin excepción. Para terminar, el capítulo plantea a la humanidad un dilema aún por resolver:

Por las misteriosas fuerzas del destino, la humanidad se enfrenta a un severo dilema: continuar con sus políticas depredadoras de egoísmo individual y tribal que la conducen a su inevitable perdición, o embarcarse en las políticas

de solidaridad universal que llevan a la humanidad al anhelado cielo en la tierra. Depende de cada uno de nosotros cuál de los dos caminos preferimos elegir (Sorokin, 1954, p. 489).

La lectura de este libro me llevó a centrar mi atención en las acciones prosociales, aunque esta no fue la única causa. Hice mía la idea de Sorokin de una sociología comprometida. Esta rama de las ciencias sociales debería liberarse del modus operandi “negativista” que saca a la luz únicamente los fenómenos negativos o patológicos sin destacar nunca los positivos y saludables. También estoy totalmente de acuerdo con la creencia de Sorokin de que el futuro de la humanidad -y su desarrollo- está en manos de la propia humanidad.

Mi primera contribución sobre el tema fue un artículo, *Gratitude and the Relational Theory of Society* [La gratitud y la teoría relacional de la sociedad] (Mangone, 2019a), en el que, a partir del ciclo morfogenético de Archer (1995) y a través de la asimetría en la gratitud propuesta por Luccarelli (2019), examiné la gratitud a través de la perspectiva de la teoría relacional de la sociedad (Donati, 2011a). Como realidad simbólico-cultural, la gratitud es una clave de lectura de la vida cotidiana. A partir de este momento, publiqué anualmente diversos trabajos de investigación sobre el altruismo como forma de acción prosocial.

Durante el año académico 2018/2019, me matriculé en la Escuela de Doctorado de la Universidad de Huelva, en el Programa de Doctorado en Ciencias Sociales y de la Educación. En la fase actual de mi carrera académica, cursar y obtener el doctorado era la mejor manera de centrar mi actividad investigadora en este "nicho" de las ciencias sociales. Además, esta decisión me permitió consolidar las relaciones y colaboraciones académicas ya existentes con colegas de la Universidad de Huelva, y en particular con colegas del Grupo de Investigación “Estudios Sociales e Intervención Social (Grupo ESEIS, SEJ-216, www.eseis.es) dirigido por Estrella Gualda Caballero, y también iniciar una línea de publicaciones sobre acciones positivas (Anexo A) que actualmente ha culminado con la publicación del libro en italiano *Solidarietà Sociale* [Solidaridad Social] (Mangone, 2022a).

Finalmente, estas son las razones que subyacen a la idea de mi tesis doctoral titulada *Beyond the Dichotomy Egoism / Altruism. Society and Positive Actions*

[Más allá de la dicotomía egoísmo/altruismo. Sociedad y acciones positivas], cuya realización ha sido aceptada por la Escuela de Doctorado de la Universidad de Huelva. Se trata de una tesis doctoral inscrita en el Programa de doctorado en “Ciencias Sociales y de la Educación”, adscribiéndose mi tesis doctoral a la línea de investigación “Investigación e Intervención Social y Educativa”. Los resultados de esta tesis se expondrán en las páginas siguientes.

INTRODUCTION

When we speak of altruism and egoism, we usually refer to individual conditions. However, a deeper analysis reveals that, in everyday life, egoism and altruism are closely linked to social and cultural contexts and, therefore, to meaningful interactions and relationships.

There is, unquestionably, no single definition of altruism, nor a single approach to its analysis, and common sense considers egoism to be its opposite. Throughout the history of thought, different disciplines have proposed their key to its explanation and interpretation, basing it on the typical characteristics of their specific areas of analysis.

The term altruism was first used by Comte (1851-1854, 1852) and became widespread after 1852 (Dixon, 2012) with the translation of his works into English. For Comte, a positivist, altruism represented the compelling impetus for the intellectual and moral development of humankind, who should strive for such a development. With this term, he commonly refers to those actions that benefit others than the actor. Indeed, for Comte, altruism means “living for others” (*vivre pour autrui*) and egoism is its opposite.

Since Comte, the various bids for defining the concept have fallen far from clarifying them. Their pronounced relativity and ambiguity are due to certain aspects, chiefly the typical processes and forms of human sociability, and their constant and repeated functional correlations over time and social space.

Be that as it may, all definitions of altruism agree on some aspects, which Simmons well identifies and summarises (1991, p. 3): altruism, *1)* seeks to increase the well-being of another, not one’s own; *2)* is voluntary; *3)* is intentional, designed to help someone else; and *4)* does not expect any external reward in return. The four features above constitute the essential elements of human relationality: *a)* the presence of another, be it generalised or not; *b)* the willingness to interact and form a relationship; *c)* a precise sense and meaning, and finally *d)* the absence of expectations towards the other.

This contribution embraces the concise and precise definition of altruism proposed by Macaulay and Berkowitz (1970) “as behavior carried out to benefit another without anticipation of rewards from external sources” (p. 3). The definition implicitly refers to relationships between individuals. It also implies that such behaviour is universally present and independent of external sources: those who decide to act altruistically do so voluntarily. We can thus unearth a sort of agreement on definitions based on two orders of principles. First, altruistic behaviour presupposes a non-egocentric position (self-sacrifice). Second, there is no such thing as altruistic personalities because individuals behave differently along the temporal dimension even in the face of the same situation.

Moscovici (2000a) reaches this conclusion when, in his essay on the elementary forms of altruism (participatory, fiduciary, and normative altruism), he wonders whether there are “true altruists” or, better, whether there is an “altruistic personality”, as well as an “introverted” or “authoritarian personality”. While no scientific evidence can support the existence of an “altruistic personality”, there are similar conditions that unite individuals, highlighted by both Rusthon (1980) and Futz and Cialdini (1990). These qualities can be summarised as follows: *a*) individuals help others only in certain situations; *b*) individuals are not always in a position to help others, and *c*) the same individuals who help others in certain circumstances may not do so in other circumstances.

One cannot say that a given individual is more “altruistic” than another once and for all, nor can it be said that if an individual has behaved altruistically in a specific situation, he will always do so in different contingencies: it depends on the context. Pro-social behaviour knows no constant, apart from the core issue that altruistic and egoistic behaviour both occur within a relationship.

Individual lives and the social system are in a reciprocal exchange. Attention should be paid not to the individual as the recipient of decisions but as the “subject” and active participant in decision-making processes. The approach should shift from reducing altruism and egoism to economic aspects alone (particularly rational choice, see Abell, 1991; Allingham, 2006) to focusing on the overall interactions between all the other relevant social and cultural variables. In this perspective, the concept of common sense (van Holthoon, Olson, 1987) is paramount for the

construction of social reality. Whenever individuals directly experience any situation, they mobilise that “embedded knowledge” typical of common sense. The latter is here understood as a cultural system: a set of thought frameworks, representations, and perceptual schemes with both cognitive and symbolic aspects (social practices and rules). Acting subjects employ it implicitly: it exists latently in their mind; they activate it without being aware. Individuals represent their actions in different ways and at different levels by considering them acceptable according to their everyday life experience. Changes in attitudes towards other individuals result from the combination of the psychic component and a broader understanding of the social context. The latter arises from the constraints and conditioning of the context and the actions of humans on it – understood as history, relationships, and collective transformations. All individuals elaborate an idea and representation of what “altruism” and “egoism” mean to them, which appear as objective facts. However, they are highly relative and dependent on three key points: the spatial-temporal dimension, culture, and the relationality and sociality of individuals.

In other words, the relationship between how individuals think about altruism and egoism and how they perceive them appertains to the cognitive activity of classifying, which enables systematically grouping the information coming from outside and inside (body signals). Attitudes towards others are guided by one’s perception of altruism and egoism. Social reality arises from the social meaning attributed to situations and those produced by the subjective world.

Altruism and egoism, perceived as reality, affect individuals precisely because of their relationship with others, manifested through everyday roles. Recalling Griswold (1994), we can consider them a cultural object, in between a “fact” and a “structure”. They are the result of interpretation and, therefore, as interpreted cultural objects, they see the forms of representation shared over time increase or decrease. In such a scenario, the portrayals of altruism and egoism express the subjective sense attributed to this category and the cultural and social frame of reference of a precise time and space (Schütz, 1932). Time and space thus become fundamental variables: the construction and representations of altruism and egoism

are present both in the micro scene of everyday life and in the macro-institutional scene.

The starting points are the embedded knowledge (common sense) and primary relations (Cooley, 1962) that precede all reflections and cognitive insights in everyday life. Through the primary relationships, individuals recognise themselves and, more importantly, are open to recognising others. They recognise the other and recognise *themselves* in the other (Mead, 1934), thus determining the Self by combining self- (I) and hetero-referentiality (Me). The Self stems from the social process of self-interaction in which individuals point out to themselves the dynamics involved in the situations they experience; the resulting action depends on the interpretation of those same dynamics. Since both altruism and egoism are part of the self-interaction process, the Self allows individuals engaged with others to shape the ideas of altruism and egoism to guide their conduct, acting for changing not only the attitudes but also the social structure.

The “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*) – which Husserl (1954) defined as the “realm of original evidence” – and the subjects¹ are thus reciprocally connected. Such a connection allows for the recognition of the other. Since individuals are constantly seeking a balance between the psychic and social components, they are somewhat obliged to relate to the surrounding world and, consequently, to the other. All cultural aspects and social relationships are paramount for “constructing” and “producing” the concepts of altruism and egoism in everyday life.

Hence “altruistic relationships” develop when relations aim at the continuous search for well-being in a situation of individual and collective “consciousness” and “responsibility”. In everyday reality, the social, value, cultural or relational component can represent the multiplier of well-being, without which any work, good, structure or service are either sterile or perceived as unimportant. “Altruistic relationships” are an abstract concept no longer. They become the “social place”

¹ Here, “That Subject is freedom, and the criterion of the good is the individual’s ability to control his or her actions and situation, to see and experience modes of behaviour as components in a personal life history, to see himself or herself as an actor. *The Subject is an individual’s will to act and to be recognised as an actor.*” (Touraine, 1995/1992, p. 207).

generating reciprocity between individuals, engendered by trust-promoting reflexivity.

Given these theoretical premises, this research project based its existence on the hypothesis that there is no such thing as altruism or egoism in the behavioural sense, but instead “altruistic and egoistic relationships”. It follows that the focus will be on “relationships in action”, *i.e.*, on relational processes that are at the same time action and interaction between individuals embedded in a socio-cultural context. The latter partly influences these processes which, in turn, affect the context.

I will support this hypothesis using a twofold method: literature reviews and theoretical analysis. The former will address those scholars (such as Comte, Durkheim, Sorokin, Moscovici, Mauss) who investigated positive phenomena and contributed to advancing our knowledge of them (either using the term altruism or through other social constructs). The theoretical analysis will identify the elements determining positive and negative actions. It will also detect their significant relationships with all the components that constitute and give life to socio-cultural phenomena (personality, society, and culture). This approach privileges the spaces of Ego/Alter relations within the societal processes, since all social phenomena, attitudes, and actions are constructed in a sphere with specific places, times, and symbols. This trio is crucial for the cognitive processes of self-signification with which individuals erect the social realities of their daily relational experience.

I aim to overcome the egoism/altruism dichotomy starting from a procedural and methodological order related to the object of study. We should not study altruism and egoism (static terms) but replace them with processes. We should examine relationships – more specifically “altruistic relationships” and “egoistic relationships”. Altruistic relationships are positive and favour the whole of society (pro-social or hetero-directed); egoistic relationships are negative and favour just the actor (anti-social or self-directed). My main guidelines will be two: 1) claiming the need for positive relationships (gratitude, altruism, solidarity, cooperation, etc.) to be again an object of study in the social sciences – and I will specify the role of both positive actions and the social sciences in the development of humanity; 2) identifying the elements determining and influencing significant relationships, to pinpoint those who can promote such actions.

This thesis consists of nine chapters plus the presentation and two appendixs, this introduction, the conclusions, and the bibliographical references.

In the Chapter I, *Sociological Knowledge for Understanding Sociocultural Phenomena*, it is explained why it is essential to know about socio-cultural changes in society and the role of sociological knowledge in the processes of explaining and understanding sociocultural dynamics in order to be able to outline pathways and tools suitable for improving the quality of life of individuals.

Chapter II, *Objectives and Hypotheses*, describes the hypotheses and aims at the basis of the research project from which this thesis stems. In it, the hypothesis and the two General Objectives are made explicit, and the Specific Objectives that made it possible to achieve the General Objectives are also described. The following chapter (Chapter III), *Research Steps and Methodology*, describes all the steps involved in the research and its methodology. It also offers the reasons behind the choice of meta-theory as a method. The Chapter IV (*The Rediscovery of Altruism and Sociology*) discusses the main sociological theories to support the more specific meta-theoretical analysis on the topic, which I carry out in the fifth chapter (*The Intellectual Legacy of the Social Sciences*). Chapter VI, *Beyond the Dichotomy Altruism/Egoism*, applies the second of Ritzer's types of meta-theory (1990): the constitution of a new theory. In this case, it is the presentation of a new model of analysis of altruism and egoism through relationships.

Chapter VII (*The Role of Dichotomy Egoism/Altruism During the Covid-19 Pandemic: The Case of Italy*) bases, on the model presented in the previous sections, some case studies that marked Italy during the Covid-19 pandemic. The last two chapters respectively present concluding reflections (Chapter VIII) and possible new lines of research (Chapter IX) on some of the factors influencing the transformations of relationships.

INTRODUCCIÓN

Cuando hablamos de altruismo y egoísmo, nos referimos en general a condiciones individuales. Sin embargo, un análisis más profundo revela que, en la vida cotidiana, egoísmo y altruismo están estrechamente ligados a contextos sociales y culturales y, por lo tanto, a interacciones y relaciones significativas.

Indudablemente, no existe una única definición de altruismo, ni un único enfoque para su análisis, y el sentido común considera que el egoísmo es su opuesto. A lo largo de la historia del pensamiento, diferentes disciplinas han propuesto sus claves de lecturas para su explicación e interpretación, basándose en las características propias de sus áreas específicas de análisis.

El término altruismo fue utilizado por primera vez por Comte (1851-1854, 1852) y se generalizó a partir de 1852 (Dixon, 2012) con la traducción al inglés de sus obras. Para Comte, que era un positivista, el altruismo representaba el impulso imperioso para el desarrollo intelectual y moral de la humanidad, que debía esforzarse por alcanzarlo. Con este término se alude comúnmente a aquellas acciones que benefician a otras personas distintas del actor. De hecho, para Comte, el altruismo significa “vivir para los demás” [*vivre pour autrui*] y el egoísmo es su opuesto.

Desde Comte, los diversos debates para definir el concepto han estado lejos de aclararlo. Su pronunciada relatividad y ambigüedad se deben a ciertos aspectos, principalmente a los procesos y formas típicos de la sociabilidad humana, y a sus constantes y repetidas correlaciones funcionales a lo largo del tiempo y del espacio social.

Sea como fuera, todas las definiciones de altruismo coinciden en algunos aspectos que Simmons identifica y resume bien (1991, p. 3): el altruismo, 1) busca aumentar el bienestar del otro, no el propio; 2) es voluntario; 3) es intencional, diseñado para ayudar a otra persona; y 4) no espera ninguna recompensa externa a cambio. Las cuatro características anteriores constituyen los elementos esenciales de la relacionalidad humana: a) la presencia del otro, generalizada o no; b) la

voluntad de interactuar y formar una relación; *c*) un sentido y un significado precisos y, por último, *d*) la ausencia de expectativas hacia el otro.

Esta contribución recoge la definición concisa y precisa de altruismo propuesta por Macaulay y Berkowitz (1970) “como el comportamiento realizado para beneficiar a otro sin anticipar recompensas de fuentes externas” (p. 3). La definición se refiere implícitamente a las relaciones entre individuos. También implica que dicho comportamiento se da universalmente y es independiente de fuentes externas: quienes deciden actuar de forma altruista lo hacen voluntariamente. Así pues, podemos desenterrar una especie de acuerdo sobre definiciones basadas en dos órdenes de principios. En primer lugar, el comportamiento altruista presupone una posición no egocéntrica (abnegación). En segundo lugar, no existen personalidades altruistas porque los individuos se comportan de forma diferente a lo largo de la dimensión temporal incluso ante la misma situación.

Moscovici (2000a) llega a esta conclusión cuando, en su ensayo sobre las formas elementales de altruismo (altruismo participativo, fiduciario y normativo), se pregunta si existen “verdaderos altruistas” o, mejor, si existe una “personalidad altruista”, así como una “personalidad introvertida” o “autoritaria”. Aunque no hay pruebas científicas que avalen la existencia de una “personalidad altruista”, hay condiciones similares que unen a los individuos, destacadas tanto por Rusthon (1980) como por Futz y Cialdini (1990). Estas cualidades pueden resumirse así: *a*) los individuos ayudan a los demás sólo en determinadas situaciones; *b*) los individuos no siempre están en condiciones de ayudar a los demás, y *c*) los mismos individuos que ayudan a los demás en determinadas circunstancias pueden no hacerlo en otras.

La vida individual y el sistema social se encuentran en un intercambio recíproco. Debería prestarse atención no al individuo como receptor de decisiones, sino como “sujeto” y participante activo en los procesos de toma de decisiones. El enfoque debería pasar de reducir el altruismo y el egoísmo únicamente a los aspectos económicos (en particular, la elección racional, véase Abell, 1991; Allingham, 2006) a enfocarse en las interacciones globales entre todas las demás variables sociales y culturales pertinentes. En esta perspectiva, el concepto de sentido común (van Holthoon, Olson, 1987) es primordial para la construcción de la realidad

social. Cada vez que los individuos experimentan directamente cualquier situación, movilizan ese “conocimiento incorporado” típico del sentido común. Este último se entiende aquí como un sistema cultural: un conjunto de marcos de pensamiento, representaciones y esquemas perceptivos con aspectos tanto cognitivos como simbólicos (prácticas y reglas sociales). Los sujetos que actúan lo emplean de forma implícita: existe de forma latente en su mente; lo activan sin ser conscientes. Los individuos representan sus acciones de distintas maneras y a distintos niveles al considerarlas aceptables según su experiencia de la vida cotidiana. Los cambios de actitud hacia otros individuos son el resultado de la combinación del componente psíquico y una comprensión más amplia del contexto social. Este último surge de las limitaciones y condicionamientos del contexto y de las acciones de los seres humanos sobre él, entendidas como historia, relaciones y transformaciones colectivas. Todos los individuos elaboran una idea y una representación de lo que significan para ellos el “altruismo” y el “egoísmo”, que aparecen como hechos objetivos. Sin embargo, son muy relativos y dependen de tres puntos clave: la dimensión espacio-temporal, la cultura y la relacionalidad y socialidad de los individuos.

En otras palabras, la relación entre cómo piensan los individuos sobre el altruismo y el egoísmo y cómo los perciben pertenece a la actividad cognitiva de clasificar, que permite agrupar sistemáticamente la información procedente del exterior y del interior (señales corporales). Las actitudes hacia los demás se guían por la propia percepción del altruismo y el egoísmo. La realidad social surge del significado social que se atribuye a las situaciones y las que produce el mundo subjetivo.

El altruismo y el egoísmo, percibidos como realidad, afectan a los individuos precisamente por su relación con los demás, manifestada a través de los roles cotidianos. Recordando a Griswold (1994), podemos considerarlos un objeto cultural, entre un “hecho” y una “estructura”. Son el resultado de la interpretación y, por lo tanto, como objetos culturales interpretados, ven aumentar o disminuir las formas de representación compartidas a lo largo del tiempo. En tal escenario, las representaciones del altruismo y el egoísmo expresan el sentido subjetivo atribuido a esta categoría y el marco de referencia cultural y social de un tiempo y un espacio

precisos (Schütz, 1932). El tiempo y el espacio se convierten así en variables fundamentales: la construcción y las representaciones del altruismo y el egoísmo están presentes tanto en la microescena de la vida cotidiana como en la macroescena institucional.

Los puntos de partida son el conocimiento incorporado (sentido común) y las relaciones primarias (Cooley, 1962) que preceden a todas las reflexiones y percepciones cognitivas en la vida cotidiana. A través de las relaciones primarias, los individuos se reconocen a sí mismos y, lo que es más importante, están abiertos a reconocer a los demás. Reconocen al otro y se reconocen en el otro (Mead, 1934), determinando así el Yo mediante la combinación de autorreferencialidad (Yo) y heterorreferencialidad (Mí). El Yo surge del proceso social de autointeracción en el que los individuos se señalan a sí mismos la dinámica implicada en las situaciones que experimentan; la acción resultante depende de la interpretación de esa misma dinámica. Dado que tanto el altruismo como el egoísmo forman parte del proceso de autointeracción, el Yo permite a los individuos que se relacionan con otros dar forma a las ideas de altruismo y egoísmo para guiar su conducta, actuando para cambiar no sólo las actitudes sino también la estructura social.

El “mundo de la vida” (*Lebenswelt*) - que Husserl (1954) definió como el “reino de la evidencia originaria” - y los sujetos¹ están, entonces, conectados recíprocamente. Dicha conexión permite el reconocimiento del otro. Dado que los individuos buscan constantemente un equilibrio entre los componentes psíquico y social, se ven obligados en cierto modo a relacionarse con el mundo circundante y, en consecuencia, con el otro. Todos los aspectos culturales y las relaciones sociales son primordiales para “construir” y “producir” los conceptos de altruismo y egoísmo en la vida cotidiana.

De ahí que las “relaciones altruistas” se desarrollen cuando las relaciones apuntan a la búsqueda continua del bienestar en una situación de “conciencia” y “responsabilidad” individual y colectiva. En la realidad cotidiana, el componente

¹ Aquí, “Ese Sujeto es la libertad, y el criterio del bien es la capacidad del individuo de controlar sus acciones y su situación, de ver y experimentar modos de comportamiento como componentes de una historia vital personal, de verse a sí mismo como actor. *El Sujeto es la voluntad del individuo de actuar y de ser reconocido como actor*” (Touraine, 1995/1992, p. 207).

social, valorativo, cultural o relacional puede representar el multiplicador del bienestar, sin el cual cualquier obra, bien, estructura o servicio son estériles o se perciben como carentes de importancia. Las “relaciones altruistas” dejan de ser un concepto abstracto. Se convierten en el “lugar social” que genera la reciprocidad entre los individuos, engendrada por la reflexividad promotora de la confianza.

Dadas estas premisas teóricas, este proyecto de investigación parte de la hipótesis de que no existen el altruismo ni el egoísmo en el sentido conductual, sino “relaciones altruistas y egoístas”. De ello se deduce que la atención se centrará en las “relaciones en acción”, es decir, en los procesos relacionales que son al mismo tiempo acción e interacción entre individuos inmersos en un contexto sociocultural. Este último influye en parte en dichos procesos que, a su vez, afectan al contexto.

Demstraré esta hipótesis utilizando un doble método: revisión bibliográfica y análisis teórico. El primero se referirá a aquellos estudiosos (como Comte, Durkheim, Sorokin, Moscovici, Mauss) que investigaron los fenómenos positivos y contribuyeron al avance de nuestro conocimiento de los mismos (ya fuera utilizando el término altruismo o a través de otros constructos sociales). El análisis teórico identificará los elementos que determinan las acciones positivas y negativas. También detectará sus relaciones significativas con todos los componentes que constituyen y dan vida a los fenómenos socioculturales (personalidad, sociedad y cultura). Este enfoque privilegia los espacios de relaciones Ego/Alter dentro de los procesos sociales, ya que todos los fenómenos sociales, actitudes y acciones se construyen en una esfera con lugares, tiempos y símbolos específicos. Este trío es crucial para los procesos cognitivos de auto-significación con los que los individuos erigen las realidades sociales de su experiencia relacional cotidiana.

Pretendo superar la dicotomía egoísmo/altruismo a partir de un orden procedimental y metodológico relacionado con el objeto de estudio. No debemos estudiar el altruismo y el egoísmo (términos estáticos), sino sustituirlos por procesos. Debemos examinar las relaciones, más concretamente las “relaciones altruistas” y las “relaciones egoístas”. Las relaciones altruistas son positivas y favorecen a toda la sociedad (pro-sociales o hetero-dirigidas); las relaciones egoístas son negativas y favorecen sólo al actor (anti-sociales o auto-dirigidas). Mis líneas guías serán dos: 1) reivindicar la necesidad de que las relaciones positivas

(gratitud, altruismo, solidaridad, cooperación, etc.) vuelvan a ser objeto de estudio de las ciencias sociales -y precisaré el papel tanto de las acciones positivas como de las ciencias sociales en el desarrollo de la humanidad-; 2) identificar los elementos que determinan e influyen en las relaciones significativas, para señalar a quienes pueden promover tales acciones.

Esta tesis consta de nueve capítulos más la presentación y dos apéndices, esta introducción, las conclusiones y las referencias bibliográficas.

El capítulo I, *Sociological Knowledge for Understanding Sociocultural Phenomena* [Conocimiento sociológico para la comprensión de los fenómenos socioculturales], explica las razones por las que es imprescindible conocer los cambios socioculturales de la sociedad y el papel del conocimiento sociológico en los procesos de explicación y comprensión de las dinámicas socioculturales para poder trazar caminos e instrumentos adecuados para mejorar la calidad de vida de las personas.

En el capítulo II, *Hypotheses and Objectives* [Hipótesis y objetivos], se describen las hipótesis y los objetivos en los que se basa el proyecto de investigación a partir del cual se desarrolla esta tesis. Explica las hipótesis y los dos objetivos generales, y describe también los objetivos específicos que han permitido alcanzar los objetivos generales. En el capítulo siguiente (Capítulo III), *Research Steps and Methodology* [Pasos de la investigación y metodología], se describen todos los pasos de la investigación y su metodología.

También ofrece las razones que subyacen a la elección de la metateoría como método. El capítulo IV, *The Rediscovery of Altruism and Sociology* [El redescubrimiento del altruismo y la sociología] analiza las principales teorías sociológicas para apoyar el análisis metateórico más específico sobre el tema, que llevo a cabo en el quinto capítulo (*The Intellectual Legacy of the Social Sciences* [El legado intelectual de las ciencias sociales]). El capítulo VI, *Beyond the Dichotomy Altruism/Egoism* [Más allá de la dicotomía altruismo/egoísmo], aplica el segundo de los tipos de metateoría de Ritzer (1990): la constitución de una nueva teoría. En este caso, se trata de la presentación de un nuevo modelo de análisis del altruismo y el egoísmo a través de las relaciones.

El capítulo VII (*The Role of Dichotomy Egoism/Altruism During the Covid-19 Pandemic: The Case of Italy* [El papel de la dicotomía egoísmo/altruismo durante la pandemia de Covid-19: El caso de Italia]) está basado en el modelo presentado en las secciones anteriores, y analizará algunos estudios de casos que caracterizaron a Italia durante la pandemia de Covid-19. En los dos últimos capítulos se presentan respectivamente las conclusiones (Capítulo VIII) y las posibles nuevas líneas de investigación (Capítulo IX) sobre algunos de los factores que influyen en la transformación de las relaciones.

CHAPTER I

SOCIOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE FOR UNDERSTANDING SOCIOCULTURAL PHENOMENA

1.1. Global society and sociocultural change

The reciprocity between the “life-world”, *Lebenswelt* (Husserl, 1954), and the social system (conjugation of the social and cultural dimensions, socio-cultural phenomena) is well represented by the fact that attention is no longer paid only to the individual as the recipient of decisions, but to the individual as “subject” and active participant in social processes. In this way, there is a shift from an approach that tends to reduce the cultural dimension to aspects of a symbolic nature alone, to an approach that pays attention to the overall interactions between all the social variables, i.e. which can be precisely defined as “sociocultural” and which is characterised by being linked to the dimensions of space (situational) and time (temporal).

What can be defined as sociocultural constitutes, perhaps, the fundamental dimension of everyday life and as such it is necessary to understand it in relation to different contexts. It is through this study, in fact, that pathways can be hypothesised to improve the relationships and forms, which derive from it, through which interactions between individuals and between them and the other systems of society are expressed.

It is also clear at this point that the controversy between those who proclaim the supremacy of the individual over society and those who, conversely, proclaim the supremacy of society over the individual is insignificant, because the individual, social and cultural components are interdependent and mutually influential. As one can easily understand, what has to do with the socio-cultural dimension is not static, but is in constant motion, and the first aspect of dynamics is how systems of meanings, norms and values are born, reproduce and are incorporated by individuals and groups of individuals. Human beings in their daily life experience

are producers of meanings, norms and values because they experience and produce meaningful interactions. The shared values and attitudes that underpin structure and actions are, in fact, about the experience related to individuals' thinking and the processes of symbolic mediation that enable the attribution of meaning. Therefore, all cognitive activities (i.e., knowledge acquisition) that allow for the construction of conceptual and representative maps can be considered as the achievement of a balance between the assimilation process that ensures continuity over time and the accommodation process to be understood as the ability to deal with future changes and uncertainties in the present.

Both the assimilation and accommodation processes with the advent of globalisation, understood as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Giddens, 1990, p. 64), have changed as social connections (cultural, economic and political) have crossed the borders of individual states, creating new forms of interdependence between different social actors and conditioning the ways and forms of interaction of individuals themselves. In fact, there are changes that move individuals away from shared goals and objectives of social solidarity (Zoll, 2000) as they increasingly favour individualistic approaches that are markedly competitive and competitive. The scarcity of resources that now appears to be intrinsic to all societies forces individuals to impose themselves on competition, which is increasingly accentuated, transforming the very life biographies of individuals.

Part of the population tends to homologate to this type of approach, which has the negative outcome of inducing distrust and distance by increasing the degree of social uncertainty. We are, therefore, faced with what Bauman described as the “uncertainty society” in which we find ourselves

“the view of the future of the ‘world as such’ and the ‘world within reach’ as essentially undecidable, uncontrollable and hence frightening, and of the gnawing doubt whether the present contextual constants of action will remain constant long enough to enable reasonable calculation of its effects... We live today [...] in the atmosphere of ambient fear” (Bauman, 1997, pp. 21-22).

The changes produced by globalisation have certainly not reduced inequalities, on the contrary, in many cases the gaps have widened. Nevertheless, one cannot avoid considering certain aspects that have characterised above all the dissemination of knowledge and the development of forms and tools for the expansion of knowledge.

The processes of globalisation, with multidimensional characteristics, influence and condition not only the economy, but also political choices, culture and the way of acting through the elaboration and interpretation of the knowledge possessed by individuals: it is therefore necessary to analyse the conditions and situations within which the process of knowledge acquisition occurs and how much these influence the construction of the reality of individuals and, therefore, their social acting. In other words, the cognitive process does not consist in the mere mechanical recording of information but means reorganising, reworking, representing and interpreting it to construct a set of meanings. It is clear that these processes (in their totality) simultaneously involve psychological aspects (perceptions, emotions, cognitions) and social, cultural and historical aspects that enable their transformation into models and representations. In short, to know means: a) to participate in the construction of meanings of social and cultural reality so as to transform it (through the activation of knowledge structures) into symbolic representation; b) to attribute “meaning” and “significance” to facts, objects or individuals, on the basis of information, expectations and hypotheses; c) to process in a complex and dynamic manner the information that individuals gather in order to transform it into applicable knowledge. The future of societies, and the explanation and understanding of the socio-cultural phenomena that take place in them, thus hinges on the acquisition of new knowledge.

“The outstanding feature of a man’s life in the modern world is his conviction that his life-world as a whole is neither fully understood by himself nor fully understandable to any of his fellowmen” (Schütz, 1946, p. 463). This is the incipit of the essay on the social distribution of knowledge in which Schütz argued that there is a complex of knowledge (practical experience, science and technology) that is accessible to all (at least on a theoretical level) and whose guarantee is provided by the degree of validity attributed to it. It is a non-integrated knowledge complex

because it is composed of knowledge systems that are neither coherent nor compatible with each other, differing in the speed with which things are taken for granted. And this applies to both science and everyday practice.

And it is precisely within the confines of what can be taken for granted today while tomorrow may be questioned, that questions arise about what is unknown; indeed, it is the individual's interest to separate what is problematic from what is not. From this it follows that the "world within my reach" of individuals - a world that is immediately observable and also partially dominable (techniques and skills that allow one to intervene at the appropriate time and moment - constitutes the core of primary relevance, but this is not within the reach of a single individual but is common to several individuals and it is in this "common surrounding" that interactions with the individualised other are defined:

each may act upon the Other and react to the Other's action. In short, the Other is partially within my control as I am within his, and he and I not only know of this fact but even know of our mutual knowledge which itself is a means for exercising control. Spontaneously turning to each other, spontaneously 'tuning in' ourselves to each other, we have at least some intrinsic relevancies in common. But only some. In my social interaction there remains a portion of each partner's system of intrinsic relevancies not shared by the Other [...]. Such is the distribution of knowledge in the social relationship between individuals if each has his definite place in the world of the Other, if each is under the Other's control. To a certain extent the same holds good for the relationship between in-groups and out-groups if each of them is known to the Other in its specificity. But the more the Other becomes anonymous and the less his place in the social cosmos is ascertainable to the partner, the more the zone of common intrinsic relevancies decreases and that of imposed ones increases (Schütz, 1946, pp. 471-472).

All forms of interaction influence each other on the basis of the meanings attributed to them and are based on typifications that undergo a continuous process of negotiation on the degree of anonymity (typifications become increasingly

anonymous as one moves away from situations, but the degree of anonymity is also influenced by the degree of intimacy of the interaction). This issue has become more pronounced in contemporary society because the spread of new communication technologies has multiplied remote interactions, making cognitive processes take on a new relevance, bringing with them all the dynamics associated with symbolic mediations between the intimate aspects of individuals' private and public lives. In actual fact, the changes induced by globalisation processes have produced a rearrangement of time and distance within social contexts that have consequently modified all social processes including those of knowledge production and distribution.

The changes described so far and rapidly unfolding in society, inevitably, lead to considerations regarding the role of sociology (or rather sociological knowledge) and social scientists in the reading of precisely these sociocultural transformations and global society in general. The inherent complexity of sociocultural phenomena, therefore, makes it necessary for sociology to move towards the enrichment of (sociological) knowledge around individual sociocultural phenomena that takes the form of a new "sociological imagination" capable of reading the biographies of individuals and history in reciprocal relationship with society. And this is even more true in the current historical phase in which there is a transition from the network society (Castells, 1996), that is, from that society which is characterised not only by the consequences of technological innovation and a change in capitalist structures but for the cultural transformations that are based on individual freedom and social autonomy through which to express identity claims, to the platform society (van Dijck, Poell & De Waal, 2018) in which platforms are characterised as places in which to exchange communicative practices, forms of being together and participation (entering into relationships) also in public life.

1.2. Towards a new sociological imagination

I do not intend to join the debate on what constitutes scientific knowledge. However, I must underline that sociology – or, rather, sociological knowledge – is

a crucial tool for interpreting social transformations. This statement relies on the assumptions of the so-called “strong programme”, widespread at the beginning of the 1980s (Bloor, 1991; Barnes & Bloor, 1982) and the current swift changes. To carry my point, I will address the problems connected to knowledge in sociology, applying them to the issues raised in this thesis.

As argued in previous contributions (Mangone, 2009, 2011) the “debate of sociology around sociology” is no longer about overcoming the qualitative/quantitative *querelle* – taking for granted the integrated coexistence of the different methods – but the conjugation between theory and practice, and the object of study of sociology.

On this debate, Goldthorpe (1997) was particularly critical and spoke of the “scandal of sociology”. He claimed that sociology had lagged in reaching the same standards as other disciplines, such as psychology and economics, for integrating theory and empirical research. Neither did its scholars fully grasp the gravity of this situation. Contemporary sociologists disagree on the relationship between theory and empirical research (their two main activities) as well as on what kind of academic or scientific enterprise sociology is or should be. They also dissent on how to interpret and address this intellectual division – or, rather, *disciplinary fragmentation* (Goldthorpe, 2000).

Responding to these criticisms is not easy, nor is it the aim of this thesis. However, some clarifications are necessary to understand its logic and methods. I chose a methodology based on theoretical research or, to be more precise, on meta-theorisation and the passage from methodological nomism to relationships. If we consider social research activities in a relational perspective (Donati, 2011a, 2011b; Emirbayer, 1997), we can affirm that social reality consists of both objective (objectual) and subjective (symbolic) aspects. Sociology is, therefore, a search for such typical real connections, at the same time actions and functioning, intersubjectivity and organisational structure. It follows that there is no precise boundary between scientific research, professional activity, and social utility. If we consider the interactions between knowledge and social intervention, we can replace these concepts with those of theory, empirics, and operativity. In so doing, we see that they are functionally integrated in such a way as to project activities

towards positive social change. We can no longer speak of a contrast between theory and empirics, and between the objective and subjective dimensions. We face a continuum of interdependencies that goes from theory to empirics to operativity. Similarly, the objective (and objectifiable) aspects of social reality and the subjective aspects of symbolic mediation are interdependent and entangled in this continuum. Empirical research becomes crucial for acquiring that knowledge that allows us to read the social phenomena (individual and collective), to translate the theoretical premises into actions that are not merely technical, but also reflect on themselves. Sociological knowledge breaches the wall of the complexity of the problems linked to social phenomenology. Knowledge associated with action allows identifying possible paths to improve the issue under consideration.

It follows that the object of study of sociology is the individual and collective phenomenological reality in relation to social systems. Sociological studies cannot focus only on *macro-social* phenomena and exclude *micro-social* or *meso-social* ones¹. I agree with Gallino (2007) in stating that the “sociology-world”, which flourished with the globalisation processes, will have to start assessing social representations rather than the

representations of society scientifically constructed by the media, either on the strength of its self-legality or as the product of a political commission, but also scientifically developed representations, especially by the economic sciences. The reality of any society is generally different from what it appears to its members. The nature and the constraints that really exist, which deeply imprint the actions and thoughts of individuals and groups, deriving both from the social relations present in it in a given historical period, almost never correspond to the mental representations that are formed in the minds of subjects (Gallino, 2007, p. 117).

¹ *Macro-social* phenomena relate to social systems and their form of organisation. *Micro-social* phenomena relate to the relationship between individuals and society and social actions. *Meso-social* phenomena relate to the relationship between the social system and the life-world, understood as the set of meanings and representations of culture.

Sociology seems to have difficulties in interpreting social changes because of its excessive self-referentiality or “sociologism” that makes it pen all possible knowledge within its reference frames and paradigms.

In an ever-changing society, sociology could take on a leading role as the science of society. The debate on the usefulness of sociology or sociological knowledge has not died down since the 1970s, especially in the Anglo-American world – see Gouldner’s *The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology* (1970) - and in France (Boudon, 1971). In many other European countries – such as Italy – the discussion was never organic, dogging the development of the discipline itself in the country (Sgritta, 2013). Italian sociology is not transdisciplinary (Piaget, 1972), nor does it have a holistic vision of society. It certainly does not tend towards enhancing theoretical innovations but aims at preserving the so-called traditional approaches. It remains penned within the boundaries (and limits) of the individual disciplines (for autonomy or, more trivially, for career-related reasons), resulting in self-referentiality and a partial or total absence of redefinition of its paradigms, methodologies, and methods. The sociological knowledge thus produced is not an exchange resulting from “comparisons” and “conflicts” between ontologically different disciplines – beyond any real or virtual boundary delimiting the “free-roaming areas” or spaces of movement of the individual fields.

Hence why, in carrying out this thesis, I followed Polanyi’s suggestion to return to the “intellectual passion”: the active cognitive process that connects beauty, reality, responsibility and science. “Any process of enquiry unguided by intellectual passions would inevitably spread out into a desert of trivialities” (Polanyi, 1958, p. 143) – and nobody wants to be trivial. Several elements are thus intertwined here: *a)* the real skills acquired within a discipline; *b)* the curiosity and intellectual freedom that lead to the transgression of pre-established disciplinary borders; *c)* the ability – not to say the humility – to develop points of view harbouring no other ambition than to show what would otherwise remain unknown. Interdisciplinarity may shape new intellectual passions that, in turn, overcome the outdated models that think of science as a structure of disciplines, sub-disciplines, and specialisations.

The debates around these themes had their ups and downs, regaining momentum in the United States about “public sociology” following Buroway’s address (2005) at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association in 2004. By “public sociology”, Buroway intends that form of sociology² that establishes an open and two-way confrontation with all its interlocutors. Indeed, this discussion started even earlier. For example, Sorokin’s presidential address (the mention is not intentional) entitled *Sociology of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (1965), offers an accurate prognosis for sociology and the hope that the future will orient it towards “creative growth” to experience a new period of great synthesis. Or I could mention the debate around Charles Wright Mills’ *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), which confirmed that one cannot understand the life of individuals without understanding society and *vice versa*. Additionally, it argued that individuals need a quality of mind that helps them use the information to develop a reason for achieving an unambiguous synthesis of what *is happening* and *can happen* to themselves and the world. This quality – called precisely “sociological imagination” – allows for reading biographies and history in reciprocal relation to society. Indeed, it

enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions. Within that welter, the framework of modern society is sought, and within that framework the psychologies of a variety of men and women are formulated. By such means the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused upon explicit troubles and the indifference of publics is transformed into involvement with public issues. The first fruit of this imagination—and the first lesson of the social science that embodies it—is the idea that the individual can understand

² Buroway adds three more: the professional, critical and policy forms. The first refers to academic sociology and is articulated in theoretical speculations and empirical research. The second refers instead to the study of the trajectories of scientific knowledge and verifies its effects on society. Finally, the third refers to the answers posed by third parties who commission empirical research to direct actions or projects.

his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period, that he can know his own chances in life only by becoming aware of those of all individuals in his circumstances (Mills, 1959, p. 5).

In other words, the sociological imagination allows scholars to move from one perspective to another, grasping what is happening in the world and at the same time understanding what is happening to themselves and other individuals as intersections of the biography and history of society. Those same intersections are what Bourdieu will then recognise as relationships. In other words, “relational thinking” is the foundation of the social sciences and must lead sociology to become reflexive (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

It is to be hoped that the knowledge of the social sciences – first and foremost sociology – will become reflexive knowledge that promotes the construction of connections in the living environments *of* and *between* subjects. I do not mean, here, to deny the autonomy of the individual disciplines. Rather, I hope to leave behind the excessive self-referentiality that pens all sociological knowledge within their specific reference frames and paradigms. Sociological knowledge should go beyond Comte’s “social physics” to lay the (theoretical/empirical) foundations for interventions aimed at positive transformations at both an individual and a social level that, in turn, translate into “knowing how to live”, as might be the case with the promotion of “altruistic relationships”.

According to some scholars, the challenge of the continuous changes in society, which is moving more and more towards globalisation, raises two types of issues for sociology (Ossewaarde, 2007). On the one hand, globalisation poses a threat to both citizenship and a new take on sociology. On the other hand, it offers new possibilities to return sociology to the “public” of world citizenship, calling for its “reinvention” in the form of a “new sociological imagination” (Fuller, 2006; Solis-Gadea, 2005).

Following this logic, the human and social sciences – particularly sociology – are paramount for establishing (first) and maintaining (later) the integration of factors, disciplines, and methodologies of investigation. Sociological knowledge and that of the other social sciences must come together in a single integrated

knowledge system (integral social sciences). This new system of knowledge must focus on all aspects of societal transformation in a holistic sense: personality, society, and culture. It should also consider the reflexivity of the activities of the researchers themselves. This shift marks the transition from the order of explaining (*erklären*) to the order of understanding (*verstehen*). The search for the reason of phenomena must no longer refer to a *cause* but to a *meaning* that can represent the key to understanding the dynamics of the interactions between individuals and society.

CHAPTER II

OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The assumption given in the presentation was that the social and human sciences (particularly sociology) have since their inception adopted a “negativistic” *modus operandi* that brought out only negative or pathological phenomena without highlighting positive and healthy ones (Sorokin, 1966). From this starting point, this thesis relies on the additional hypothesis that there is no such thing as altruism or egoism in the behavioural sense - as advocated by sociobiologists or behaviourists. Instead, there are “altruistic relationships” and “egoistic relationships”. I will thus focus on “relation in action”: a relational process that is both action and interaction between individuals embedded in a sociocultural context in dynamics of mutual influence (processes influence contexts and the contexts influence processes). This way privileges the spaces of the Ego/Alter relationships within societal processes. All social phenomena, attitudes, and actions are constructed in a sphere with specific places, times, and symbols, paramount in the cognitive processes of self-signification activated by individuals when building social realities in their daily relational experience.

In the light of the above, my thesis poses questions (related to general and specific objectives) in order to understand not only the dynamics of individuals, but the dynamics that these individuals realise within a relational context that differs by social and cultural system. This is of primary importance for the study of affirmative action because from the answers that will be identified through research it will be possible to make hypotheses and also establish future prospects (not only of research, but also of social action).

The objectives, therefore, will be divided into general objectives and specific objectives with the latter constituting a “basket” of objectives more in line with the requirements of achieving the general objective. Each specific objective, in fact, highlights different aspects of the sociocultural phenomena that are the subject of this thesis (egoism and altruism) and are in a complementary and/or functional

relationship with each other. The General Objectives (**GO1** and **GO2**) and the Specific Objectives (**SO1, SO2, SO3** and **SO4**) are described below.

General Objective1 (GO1). This first objective is the one on which the entire theoretical framework of the thesis is built. It is the one that asks the questions on the selfishness/altruism dichotomy by going on to identify the essential elements and the disciplines also of reference that in the course of their scientific development have made a contribution to expanding knowledge on this object of study. The aim of broadening knowledge around affirmative action is to try to elaborate a new process-based idea of these two socio-cultural phenomena. In other words, this objective is the one that asks the questions. To exemplify: when it comes to selfishness and altruism, are people really faced with a behavioural dichotomy or are they meaningful relationships that differ? Is altruism always positive and selfishness always negative? Are there meaningful interactions where these two phenomena transform each other? These are some of the questions that will have to be answer.

General Objective2 (GO2). This second general objective is more of an epistemological nature, in that it asks questions concerning the social sciences and how they (not only sociology) over the decades (in some cases centuries) have approached the analysis of the object of study of this thesis (egoism and altruism). A further question that this objective will attempt to answer is whether the contribution of the social sciences is to be considered relevant or marginal in the expansion of knowledge around these phenomena, and whether the approach taken is to be traced back to a single discipline or is interdisciplinary in nature.

The specific objectives that will enable the acquisition of knowledge for the general objectives are as follows. They are to be understood in a descending sense, i.e. from the general to the particular:

Specific Objective1 (SO1). This specific objective is aimed at getting to know, collect and catalogue the literature review of various scholars who have

investigated positive phenomena and contributed to advancing our knowledge on them (either using the term altruism or through other social constructs).

Specific Objective2 (SO2). This second specific objective seeks to identify, through theoretical analysis (metatheory), the elements determining influencing significant relationships, to pinpoint those who can promote positive and negative action, and also their significant relations with all the components that constitute and give life to sociocultural phenomena (personality, society, and culture).

Specific Objective3 (SO3). This further specific objective seeks to explore the possibility of the constitution of a new theory (meta-theorisation) to propose a new model of analysis of altruism and egoism through relationships (“altruistic relationships” and “egoistic relationships”).

Specific Objective4 (SO4) This specific objective, after having acquired all the cognitive elements of the previous objectives, is dedicated to the exploration of social reality for the identification of certain cases of “altruistic relationships” and “egoistic relationships” (as specified in the model of the preceding specific objective - **SO3**) that were observed in Italy during the pandemic due to the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that has been spreading in Europe since the beginning of 2020.

This theoretical study, after the necessary acquisition of knowledge and the possible identification of the different forms of selfish and altruistic relationships (**SO4**), will attempt to propose conclusions on the basis of the evidence that has emerged from the study and the continuous transformation of these phenomena in conjunction with the transformation of society itself. An attempt will therefore be made to understand, through a meta-theoretical analysis, whether it is possible to abandon the idea that the factors determining altruism or selfishness reside in mere human nature (people’s behaviour), and turn instead to freedom, relationships, the associative forms of the individual and society. The focus will therefore be on

meaningful relationships to describe the egoism/altruism dichotomy in an attempt, after analysing our sources, to overcome it.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH STEPS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Steps of the research

Based on the objectives (general and specific) and hypothesis described, the research design, configured as a meta-theoretical analysis, is difficult to construct due to the multiple factors involved (first and foremost the multidisciplinary interest in the object of study). Since all these factors are linked to different dimensions (individual, cultural and social), it follows the necessity to integrate several operational steps that had to converge coherently on the main objective. The steps identified are as follows: *a)* theoretical investigation: selection criteria of main works on altruism/egoism to be analysed; *b)* critical interpretation; *c)* reconstruction of the reference context; and finally, *d)* presentation of the case study with examples of altruistic and egoistic relationships. Each of these steps will be described in detail below.

Theoretical investigation:

selection criteria of main works on altruism/egoism to be analysed

This step is based on the retrieval and in-depth study of the existing literature. Except for some forays into biology and economics, I went angling for the literature within the boundaries of social-psycho-anthropological disciplines. To retrieve these materials, which temporally focused between modernity and contemporaneity, I relied on the bibliographic sources available and accessible through different channels and mainly using electronic bibliographic search platforms primarily those of the Universidad de Huelva (<https://www.uhu.es/biblioteca/>) and the University of Salerno in Italy (<https://www.biblioteche.unisa.it/>). In addition, the main repositories and databases for scientific publications in Open Access (DOAJ - Directory of Open Access

Journals, DRJI - Directory of Research Journals Indexing, EBSCO Delivery Service, ERIH PLUS - European Reference Index for the Human e Social Sciences, EuroPub - Directory of Academic and Scientific Journals, OCLC Worldcat - The World's Largest Library Catalog, OpenAIRE, ROAD - Directory of Open Access scholarly resources) as well as using a search in WoS. For studies related to Pitirim A. Sorokin, on the other hand, the database of the Pitirim A. Sorokin Foundation (<http://cliffstreet.org/>) in Winchester (MA-USA) and Archive Special Collections of the University of Saskatchewan in Canada were used (<http://library2.usask.ca/sorokin/>).

I based the collection and systematization of all the literature on some specific criteria:

Criteria 1: The first pertains to language: I examined documents in a handful of languages (French, English, Italian, and Spanish – indicated in alphabetical order and not in order of importance) on the various sources (books, chapters in books, articles, conferences reports, and all other types of material appropriate for achieving the objectives) that studied altruism and egoism, or other forms of positive actions.

Criteria 2: The second criterion is temporal: excluding references to classical philosophy (which inevitably became necessary), the literature examined focuses between modernity and contemporaneity. In other words, it focused on the time from the birth of the modern state – which also coincides with the dawn of sociology – onwards.

Criteria 3: I focused on some classic authors (Comte, Durkheim, Sorokin, Mauss, Moscovici, in chronological order) who best represented the issues related to the dichotomy of altruism vs. egoism.

This first step allowed me to broaden my knowledge on some principles that constituted the founding blocks of this thesis and make it more organic. This allowed me to make a “snowball” selection of primary sources, constructing a sort of short reasoned bibliography (Appendix B) - critically interpreted in the next step. In other words, the selection began with the literature considered milestones in the

social sciences' reflections on this topic, which also led me to scholars considered classics of sociology (i.e., Comte, Durkheim, etc.) and then went on to select that scientific literature of different disciplinary fields on altruism, egoism, or similar concepts that made it possible to ascertain how much these topics have actually been abandoned as a subject of study since the last century.

Critical interpretation

The next step is the critical interpretation of the materials acquired in the theoretical investigation, which allowed for identifying and framing the issue, from its definition to the discussion of whether it is a real problem. The critical interpretation led to a selection of the relevant aspects on which to base the analysis, thus delimitating its scope and the identification of the key aspects of the problem. The critical interpretation of the sociocultural phenomenon of altruism and egoism must be framed following a logic that sees research as a tool to expand the ability to “describe” the phenomenon, through the increase of knowledge that leads to its “explanation” and “understanding”, and then to its “prediction”. These levels are neither sequential nor separate (Homans, 1967), but a single whole that results in methodological integration between the disciplinary areas of the social sciences (theoretical, empirical, operational). Bringing together these three analytical levels (macro, meso, and micro) entails an intellectual activity that goes beyond discipline-related viewpoints and methods of investigation. The study of sociocultural phenomena and the methodologies adopted must aim at integrating the subjective and objective dimensions. What binds it all together is the interpretation and construction of reality through the relationships between individuals, and between individuals, society, and culture. Since individuals are agents of interaction (in both institutions and the world of everyday life) all these aspects should be read as a *correlation of interpretations* (Cipolla, 1998) rather than a mere response to a trigger.

Reconstruction of the reference context

This third step allowed the definition of the overall picture of the phenomenon, placing it and its interpretation in its original environment (particularly Western-European and American society), including in its spatial and temporal dimensions. To reconstruct the reference context, I first must point out two necessary premises. (1) time and space are constituent elements of all social interaction processes. Plus, they are two core categories *of* and *for* sociological analysis and the social sciences in general. The everyday experiences of individuals can be perceived – and, therefore, studied – in their continuous unfolding, their flow within the unity of the single experience and situation. Alternatively, they can become the object of subsequent reflection, *i.e.*, the reflection takes place after the experience rather than during it (Schütz, 1967). In the first case, the past coincides with the experience and cannot be separated from it (researchers included). In the second case, reflecting on the past action is separate and distinct from the lived experience itself. Time is thus no longer unitary: individual actions and interactions depend on the temporal and spatial dimension (social and historical context). (2) the study of sociocultural phenomena must take into account all three levels of analysis of sociology and the social sciences: (a) the *macro-social* level (relating to social systems and their forms of organisation); (b) the *micro-social* level (relating to the individual/society relationship and social actions); (c) the *meso-social* level (relating to the relationships between the social system and the life-world, where the latter is the set of meanings and representations of a given culture).

Presentation of the case study with examples of altruistic and egoistic relationships

The final step is the presentation of a sort of practical application of what emerged from the theoretical research and reflection. Through my personal experience – autoethnography (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010; Gariglio, 2017; Pensoneau-Conway, Adams & Bolen, 2017) lived during the lockdown and an empirical research on Italian newspapers and Twitter, I selected different cases of “altruistic

relationships” and “egoistic relationships”, that were observed in Italy during the pandemic due to the SARS-CoV-2 virus spread in Europe from the beginning of 2020, are presented.

3.2. Research methodology: meta-theories

In the objectives, hypothesis, and methods, it has been emphasised several times that the latter is a theoretical research that wants to promote new theory around the sociocultural phenomena of altruism and egoism. This is why sociological knowledge - as already explained in Chapter I - is paramount for a concrete and successful reading of sociocultural phenomena, but the method by which theoretical research is carried out must also be clarified.

The epistemological problem is to construct and maintain elements of significance between sociological thought and its autonomy from the other sciences. To outline the elements that define the study of altruism and egoism, it was first necessary to clarify the relationship between the development of sociological knowledge and the approaches followed to acquire such knowledge. Such clarification must consider the epistemological and methodological aspects through a meta-theoretical approach (Ritzer, 1990, 1992) commonly employed for so-called second-order studies.

This approach was necessary because the social sciences, have developed unevenly in both the internal development of the individual disciplines and the relationships between them. As *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (Kuhn, 1962) shows, sociologists disagree on what should be understood by “theory”, how to reach it, and by what methods to express and prove it. There is no consensus even on what the objects of investigation should be. In simpler terms, sociology lacks what Kuhn calls a *paradigm*, *i.e.*, a system of concepts to guide and organise scientific research, to make it immediately communicable and modifiable within the community. The lack of paradigms, however, does not equate to a lack of theories and methods. On the contrary, social sciences researchers are faced with innumerable potential paradigms, none of which emerges as hegemonic.

Against expectations, the “weakness” of the paradigms has given rise to a remarkable development of the discipline. Insiders even dwelt on the crisis of sociology, engendering that spiral process defined by many as *the sociology of sociology* (Morin, 1985). This, in turn, created a new genre in sociological production from the second half of the last century:

the activity of “theory” as a particular group of people within a profession that produces certain kinds of texts and knowledge claims. In short, metatheory, in its most empirical form, is nothing but sociology of sociology, which is itself a special branch of the sociology of science and knowledge (Fuchs, 1992, p. 532).

But what is meant by the term metatheory?

Metatheory is a subtype of metastudy that focuses on the examination of theory and theorizing. The rise of metatheory in social science was primarily the result of the persistent failure of social science to uncover the general laws of society that can be used for social prediction, design, and engineering. Such failure had been initially attributed to the deficiencies in the methodology of theorizing, which led to the emergence of a theory construction movement aiming to model social theorizing after theory formation in natural science. When the allegedly improved techniques of theory construction again failed to produce the desired outcome, social scientists began to look beyond the issues of methodology to engage in metatheoretical reflections (Zhao, 2005, p. 501).

George Ritzer, one of the leading exponents of meta-theory, clarified in his 1990 essay that there are three types of meta-theory, which are distinguished based on their nature and aims:

The first type, metatheorizing as a means of attaining a deeper understanding of theory (MU), involves the study of theory in order to produce a better, more profound understanding of extant theory [...]. MU is concerned, more specifically, with the study of theories, theorists, communities of theorists, as

well as the larger intellectual and social contexts of theories and theorists. The second type, *metatheorizing as a prelude to theory development* (M_P), entails the study of extant theory in order to produce new sociological theory [...]. There is still a third type, metatheorizing as a source of perspectives that overarch sociological theory (M_O), in which the study of theory is oriented to the goal of producing a perspective, one could say a metatheory, that overarches some part or all of sociological theory. All three types involve the systematic study of sociological theory; they differ in terms of their objectives in that study. The third type of metatheorizing (M_O) is not identical to O_M, or the creation of an overarching metatheory without a systematic study of theory (Ritzer, 1990, p. 4).

The need to apply this type of methodology to the study of altruism and egoism was inherent in the objectives set in the research project. To achieve these objectives, it was necessary to apply all the types of meta-theorising identified by Ritzer and described above. It was necessary to achieve a deeper understanding of the inherent theory by studying Comte, Durkheim, Sorokin, Moscovici, Mauss – authors who, directly or indirectly, referred to altruism and egoism. It also required defining a new theory through the clarification of the new model based on “altruistic and egoistic relations”. Finally, it implied the creation of a global theoretical perspective (a meta-theory) based on this new model.

3.3. Empirical Research Methodology

If the methodology described above is the methodology inherent to the theoretical part of the research, this section describes the methodology of the empirical research. This is divided into three segments using an integrated methodology as they make use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The first two are more strictly qualitative: the first, which made it possible to identify cases of 'altruistic relations', was based on autoethnography; the second, which concerns the narrative of the pandemic, was based on content analysis of

newspapers. The third, also relating to the narrative of the pandemic on the social platform Twitter, is more quantitative in nature. The first two segments refer to the time of the pandemic, which in Italy has been identified as Phase 1 (21 February-3 May 2020), corresponding to the identification of the first infected until the day on which the lockdown of the first wave of the pandemic is called, while the third segment also refers to the subsequent time period, which has been called Phase 2 and which concerned the political actions for the definitive exit from the emergency and the vaccination campaign.

Let us now see in detail how this was done.

For the first segment of empirical research, I relied on a relatively recent research trajectory that is emerging in the broader field of ethnography, namely, autoethnography, which according to the definition of Ellis and others is:

an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*) (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010, p. 1)

A research approach and methodology of data collection and narrative re-elaboration aimed at observing, describing, analysing personal experiences in order to understand the process of symbolisation and signification of cultural constructions. And this is exactly what was done for the first research segment, I used my personal experience with the pandemic to be able to produce the construction of cultural meanings around 'altruistic and selfish relationships'. Autoethnography originated in the 1960s and emancipated itself in the 1980s within field studies, as social researchers began to emphasise aspects that had previously been considered residual or background to the classical ethnographic approach (Masullo, Addeo & Delli Paoli, 2020): (a) the relevance of the subjective and biographical dimensions of the researcher; (b) the centrality of the writing process in scientific production in the social and humanistic disciplines; (c) the importance of reference understood as the point of view and perspective of the writer and narrator; (d) the overcoming of the separation of the social sciences and the scientific literature.

The innovative aspect of autoethnography is the possibility of seeing the relationship between the phenomenon studied and the researcher in a new light. For instance, by identifying aspects in the biography of the observer (researcher) that can clarify, describe or act as a key to the information and data collected in their interpretative process (Anderson, 2006). What will be presented in Chapter VII can be categorised as a case of analytical autoethnography - the other form being evocative autoethnography⁷ - which represents an attempt to systematise and empiricise narrative processes within the autoethnographic approach within clearly identifiable and definable parameters:

The five key features of analytic autoethnography that I propose include (1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis (Anderson, 2006, p. 378).

Autoethnography offers the possibility, therefore, of studying a phenomenon in the multiplicity of its aspects and dimensions, also disproving the idea (sustained mainly in recent years) that this type of investigation is a non-traditional and poststructuralist form of research, since it fits in very well with traditional symbolic interactionist ethnography. Through, the autoethnographic investigation that lasted for the entire period of the pandemic in Italy, I was able to undertake a path of reflection on the symbolic-cultural aspects that allowed me to observe the activation of communities that put the subjects in contact with the formal and informal support networks existing in the area.

The second and third segments of empirical research, respectively the one on newspapers and the one on the social platform Twitter, have their theoretical foundation in the concept of narrative. Referring the theoretical investigation to the

⁷ Evocative autoethnography (Bochner & Ellis, 2016) is essentially characterised by an open and integrative nature of methodological approaches, as well as by the creativity of the narrative process that often clashes with the rigours of scientific writing.

specific section in Chapter VII, here I will only refer to the methodology adopted for each of these research segments.

In the second research segment, by way of example, we present an analysis of the media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy, as already stated at the beginning of this paragraph, also in this case the time span considered is that which goes from the detection and confirmation of the first case (21 February 2020) to the end of the lockdown of the first wave of the pandemic (3 May 2020), that is, the so-called Phase 1.

This part of the research consists of an analysis of the front pages of the main newspapers representing both the national territory and the different political orientations (*Corriere del Mezzogiorno* edition of Campania Region, *Corriere della Sera*, *il Fatto Quotidiano*, *il manifesto*, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, *L'Osservatore Romano*, *la Repubblica*, and *Libero*). The choice of these newspapers is based on the 2020 ranking that sees them among the top 20 newspapers read in Italy (source: AND-Associazione Accertamenti Diffusione Stampa [Press Association]), except for *L'Osservatore Romano* which was chosen because it is the official organ of the Vatican City, *il manifesto* which is the only newspaper that still declares itself 'communist' and *Corriere del Mezzogiorno* is the southern Italian edition (geographical area where I live) of *Corriere della Sera* which is ranked number one. The analysis perspective starts from a general assumption, i.e. the point of view of the newspaper reader who knows what happened not only because it was narrated by the media but because it was experienced first-hand (the aspect of autoethnography described above). To this is added an analysis that takes into account the media representation of the illness, paying particular attention to the style of writing and the possible presence of rhetorical figures. The interpretative frames⁸ – as defined by Goffman (1974) – are those within which the pandemic is placed and can influence the interpretation process to the extent of creating (or

⁸ The frame is that cognitive and social framework that makes a series of events interpretable and intelligible. These are not static because they are dependent on the situations occurring at a given time. The construction of reality turns out to be that resulting from the understanding of the situation and reflection on it that individuals experience and communicate.

reinforcing) a sense of generalised alarm in some cases – *moral panic* (Cohen, 2002).

The methodology adopted (inductive type) is related to the so-called grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Carrero Planes, Soriano Miras & Trinidad Requena, 2012), whereby a “funnel structure” is applied to the collected documents, starting from the particular and arriving at the universal. According to this method, the theory should define a series of concepts that explain and interpret certain events (Silverman, 2000) represented, in this case, by the pandemic. The choice of selecting newspapers that are representative of the entire country and of different political orientations made it possible to compare the ways in which the story was treated, in order to verify possible differences and/or convergences. The analysis takes into consideration three aspects: 1) the way in which the front pages are constructed: space dedicated to the news (in the middle of the page, on the side, at the bottom), the presence of photographs and any in-depth analysis; 2) the *time factor*, the diachronic analysis of the media treatment allows us to identify any variations in interest or in the way the news is represented; 3) the way in which the headlines are constructed. To summarise, two fundamental aspects must be taken into account when constructing this narrative: the first concerns *the form*, i.e. the way the news is presented and placed within the newspaper's front page; the second concerns *the content*, i.e. the themes and the direct or indirect protagonists. These two aspects contribute to giving space and, consequently, relevance within the agenda setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) of each newspaper.

The analysis based on the three points highlighted above (mode of construction of headlines, diachronic dimension, and mode of construction of headlines) has made it possible to reconstruct, with respect to the pandemic, the frames that, “are *organizing principles* that are socially *shared* and *persistent* over time, that work *symbolically* to meaningfully *structure* the social world” (Reese, Gandy & Grant, 2001, p. 11). These frames come in two forms (the second of which will be explored in Chapter VII): on the one hand, there is the everyday tale of evolution that refers to the theme of individual and collective (public) health not only in Italy but worldwide, to the virus capable of affecting everyone indiscriminately; on the other hand, having used a particular terminology has contributed to promoting a key of

interpretation - even a very similar one among the newspapers - suggesting that the emergency could be recognised as “a war against an enemy” (Martinez-Brawley & Gualda, 2020), fuelling a climate of fear and insecurity and, more generally, a sense of distrust towards others already present due to “conspiracy” theories (Gualda & Rúas, 2019; Gualda et al. , 2021; Douglas, 2021) fuelled by fake news (Orso et al., 2020; Rocha, 2021) that the virus was built in a Wuhan laboratory in China.

The last research segment, on the other hand, concerns the narrative of the pandemic through the social platform Twitter and specifically it is based on the analysis of tweets. The collection of tweets (retweets were excluded) covers the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022 (a total of 150,431) with the R `academictwitter` package for the API2 in Twitter (Barrie & Ho, 2021; see also the website: <https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/academictwitter/index.html>) and were collected within the framework of the project PID2021-123983OB-I00: “Conspiracy theories and Hate speech online: Comparison of patterns in narratives and social networks about COVID-19, immigrants, refugees and LGTBI people [NON-CONSPIRA-HATE!]”, funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033/ and by “ERDF A way of making Europe”. I was able to benefit from the use of this data as a member of the International Team Work of this project. The query with which the tweets for Italy were collected was as follows:

```
coronavirus OR corona OR Covid-19 OR covid19 OR covid OR pandemia  
OR vaccino OR #coviditalia OR #coronavirus OR #Covid-19 OR #covid19  
OR #pandemia OR #vaccino; #stayathome OR #novaccino OR #novax OR  
#nomascherina OR #riapriamomilano OR #plandemia OR #nolockdown OR  
#5G OR complotto OR negazionisti OR #untori OR #negazionismo OR  
#torniamoliberi OR #andratuttobene OR #iorestoacasa OR #italiazonarossa  
OR #irresponsabili OR #quarantena OR #dittaturasanitaria OR #greenpass  
OR #obbligovaccinale.
```

The words in the query not only include words closely related to the spread of the virus and the vaccination campaign, common to other countries as well (e.g. covid-19, coronavirus, mascherina [mask], vaccino [vaccine], etc.), but also words

that characterised hashtags in particular in Italy both during the pandemic period (Phase 1) and the vaccination campaign period (Phase 2). Think for instance of the phrase “Tutto andrà bene” [Everything will be fine] which originated in Italy and then spread to other countries, or “Riapriamo Milano” [Reopening Milan] or “Green Pass” referring to the certification issued by Italy to those who had complied with the vaccination obligation. Some of the words were intentionally selected because they were considered useful for exploring narratives on particular topics that are hypothesised to be related to egoistic and/or altruistic expressions.

The analysis of the tweets was divided into calendar years (2020-2022) with a focus on the time period that coincides with Phase 1 (21 February-3 May 2020) and starts by considering the occurrence of four hashtags among those selected for the query: two with a positive orientation (*#andratuttobene* [*#everythingwillbefine*] and *#iorestoacasa* [*#stayathome*]) and two with a negative orientation (*#novaccino* [*#novax*] and *#nomascherina* [*#nomask*]).

The recurrences were calculated with the aid of the various functions of the excel spreadsheet of the Microsoft Office application package and the R programme (Barrie & Ho, 2021). In this regard, it should be noted that for three of the four hashtags, the hashtags in the English language versions were also counted because they are also recurrent in the Italian language; from the total of these hashtags, however, the tweets that contained hashtags in both languages were eliminated. The English language was excluded, however, for the hashtag *#everythingwillbefine* [*#everythingwillbefine*] because – as mentioned above – it originates in Italy and then spreads to the rest of the world.

From this analysis it emerges that, as will be seen in Chapter VII where the results of the three research segments are described, unlike print media, Twitter users promoted a narrative that was ambivalent with a propensity towards building positive relationships in Phase 1, while in Phase 2 it proposed a conflictual narrative favouring conflicting relationships.

CHAPTER IV

THE REDISCOVERY OF ALTRUISM AND SOCIOLOGY

4.1. The concept of man in modern times

As specialists in the field know well, Comte (1851-1854, 1852) first used the term altruism to commonly refer to all actions whose benefits fall on others rather than on the agent (actor). Indeed, altruism means “living for others” (*vivre pour autrui*). However, a similar phenomenology existed in the previous centuries and evolved based on the different “concept of man” assumed as reference.

The Renaissance saw the affirmation of man engaged with other men, the natural world, and God. This renewal banks on the awareness of man’s relationship with nature and it cannot be understood without considering two essential features. First, the new idea of science, based on observation and experimentation (Copernicus and Galileo), according to which the human knowledge of the world is neither fixed nor based on a closed system, but fallible and correctable. Second, the relationship with politics, *i.e.*, a renewed thought of living in a community. Machiavelli’s *The Prince* (2011) refers precisely to the latter aspect, with quite a pessimistic view attributing man a nature that can be summed up in the *homo homini lupus* later taken up by Hobbes in *The Leviathan* (1651). Following this logic, the man in his natural state is fundamentally selfish, and actions are determined essentially based on the instinct of survival and oppression. In the state of nature, everyone is driven by instinct and tries to eliminate whatever (or whomever) hampers the satisfaction of their desires. Simply put, individuals consider their neighbours as enemies (*bellum omnium contra omnes*) denying the possibility of approaching their fellow man under natural love. It follows that the state of man is a perpetual conflict abounding in evil and malicious actions.

If the Enlightenment brings man back to reason, Rousseau wants to bring reason back to nature. The result is the same: both cases question the relationship between the natural man and artificial man resulting from social constraints, as Rousseau

clarifies in his *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men*.

Unlike Hobbes and his harsh state of nature (*Homo homini lupus*), Rousseau (2014) believes in harmony between man and nature. The state of nature knows no oppression. Then, as more complex forms of social organisation develop, civil society based on the distinction between “mine” and “yours” also emerges, setting inequalities. For Rousseau, a new form of social organisation takes shape to re-establish “in law the natural equality between men”.

Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. Here's one who thinks he is the master of others, yet he is more enslaved than they are. How did this change come about? I don't know. What can make it legitimate? That's a question that I think I can answer. If I took into account nothing but force and what can be done by force, I would say: 'As long as a people is constrained to obey, it does well to obey; as soon as it can shake off the yoke, it does even better to shake it off. If its right to do so is challenged, it can answer that: it gets its liberty back by the same 'right'- namely, force - that took it away in the first place. Any justification for taking it away equally justifies taking it back; and if there was no justification for its being taken away no justification for taking it back is called for'. But the social order isn't to be understood in terms of force; it is a sacred right on which all other rights are based. But it doesn't come from nature, so it must be based on agreements. (Rousseau, 2017, p. 1)

The concept of man as above shifts the attention from religion to politics. The focus is not only on the individual but also on his life in the associated form. Machiavelli, in a way, ferries human history towards modernity and its conception of humanity that will characterize the following systems of ideas.

Common to both modern and ancient philosophy is the principle of the “receptivity” or “passivity” of individuals to external reality. The world acts on the perceptive-sensory apparatus of man. Man's “perceiving” is passive (one is not free

not to hear a signal, such as a sound, or to hear it differently), while “thinking” is active (one is free not to think or to think differently).

The two ways in which the Enlightenment philosophy tried to solve this problem are: on the one hand, Empiricism, and, on the other, Rationalism. The former highlights the revealing character of “perception” and theorizes reason as a set of powers limited by experience (there are no innate ideas), understood as the source of the cognitive process and tool through which to validate intellectualistic thought only if it can be verified and measured.

If Empiricism highlights the revealing character of “perception”, Rationalism, starting with Descartes, emphasizes its occulting aspect. Similarly, Rationalism bases its knowledge on reason while Empiricism bases it on experience. In other words, for rationalists, the construction of “knowledge” happens based on principles disconnected from experience (*a priori* or innate). This does not detract from reality; on the contrary, knowledge overcomes experience and bridges it with reality, going beyond the occulting character of perceptions. It is not a question of going from an ever-developing reality to an immutable one, but rather of building a passage from man’s representations to the external reality. This opens the way to man’s dualism (being and reason) that will then characterize the whole of modernity.

The centrality acquired by reason with the Enlightenment gains a new guise with Romanticism. With the term “reason” we mean that “infinite” force dominating and inhabiting the world, understood as consciousness, freedom, the ability to create. In its declination, it has taken on two interpretations: as “feeling” and as “absolute reason”. The former is understood as an activity free from any determination and manifested precisely in those activities more closely connected to feeling, such as religion and art; while the latter moves from one determination to another.

If these are the assumptions and basic concepts that influenced the thought of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century, the second half of the century saw the first signs of further revision. Positivism transposes in science the Romantic tendency to identify finite and infinite and to consider the former as the progressive realization of the latter. Comte’s social positivism is of greater importance for the present reflections. Following both personal intention and his contemporaries’

perception, he stands out as a prophet of a new religion stemming from philosophy. He is so convinced of it that he even writes *The Catechism of Positive Religion* (Comte, 1852) in which he first introduces the term “altruism”, deriving from the Italian “altrui” (another person) and meaning the willingness to care for others and their well-being. For Comte, “*Vivre pour autrui*” [Live for Others] is the most elemental summary of the whole Positivist moral code; altruist is he who selflessly places the good of others as the end of his actions. Of particular importance is Comte’s doctrine of science, since the science of nature has shown that only by knowing the laws it is possible to govern nature for the social development of humankind. Comte argues the need for a science of society – and here he coins another term, *sociology*, that will become for him the science of society – and for knowing the laws of human conduct to find true social engineering (Comte, 1830-1842) that must tend towards the “religion of humanity”. Science is – or must be – positive knowledge, that is, a knowledge that renounces the knowledge of causes, restricting itself to the verification of phenomena and their relations, constructing general laws to make science pragmatic for social ends. The characteristics of this new society are its orientation and regulation towards the common good, with a great associative spirit and altruistic feeling, which also becomes a religious feeling, having Humanity as its new god.

4.2. The social sciences and the rediscovery of altruism

The social sciences developed and became an autonomous set of knowledge. In parallel more and more categories of phenomena were “removed” from philosophical speculation and moral or political “discourse” to form the core of the new disciplines. Demography, statistics, economics, and sociology were a way of collecting data and observing the fresh and complex society emerging from the extensive transformations of western societies from the 18th century onwards. The overall tendency was to break with tradition and to bring back the analysis of phenomena to experience. Man begins to be studied as *homo sociologicus*, that is, as an acting subject at the nexus of a dense network of social relationships.

The question, then, is: which changed in the studies on social change at the end of the 19th century? The answer is twofold. On the one hand, the religious aura that accompanied the reading of the transformations of primitive societies is gone. On the other hand, new research methods (developed mainly for the natural sciences) are adopted to examine the social transformations occurring in that historical period.

The choice to study *altruism* must be considered in light of these social transformations. “Altruism” is one of the two terms coined by Comte (1852) that became paramount for the development of social sciences – the other term being, indeed, “sociology”. Comte also coined others, such as “sociocracy” and “biocracy”, but these did not find proselytes, nor did they catch on like the first two. As Habito and Inaba made clear,

The original French term ‘altruisme’ was suggested by the French legal phrase ‘le bien d’autrui’ (the good of others), and was formed from the Italian equivalent, ‘altrui’, itself a derivative of the Latin ‘alter’ or ‘other.’ Altruism is precisely ‘other-ism’: the effort or actual ability to act in the interest of others (2006, p. 1).

The term “altruism”, quite uncommonly, then left the scientific field for the common language while maintaining its original meaning: the opposite of egoism. Since its terminological inception, although with ups and downs, altruism became an analytical construct of the social sciences. Indeed, the debate on altruism – or, in other terms, on moral solidarity or social solidarity – are among the open questions of these budding sciences of society and its importance emerges in many classics (Wuthnow, 1993; Bykov, 2017). For example, Durkheim explains the basis of social solidarity in modern society by contrasting altruism and egoism (Durkheim, 1960). The scholar also defines its implications in his well-known work *Suicide* (Durkheim, 2005) by counterposing altruistic and egoistic suicide, identifying what will later become the most famous type of suicide. Subsequently, the functionalists (Parsons and Merton) will again subordinate individual actions to the society in a functionally positive way – and, therefore, oriented towards the

collective. Similarly, both Weber and Marx refer indirectly to altruism despite not employing the term. The first, when describing the ethics of love of charismatic authority as opposed to legal and rational authority, the second, when raging against Christian charity.

This interest in altruism as an object of study for the social sciences then gradually decreased, especially in Europe. From the 1950s, theoretical and empirical studies display the disinterest of social scientists in this object. An exception is a Russian American sociologist, Pitrim A. Sorokin who, in 1949, with funding from Mr Eli Lilly and the Lilly Endowment, established the *Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism*. The *Centre's* research activities over the years (1949-1959) produced four primary lines of results: (a) one claiming that there are three types of altruists; (b) one that confirms “the law of polarisation” previously formulated by Sorokin (1942/2010), according to which many individuals in a community following a catastrophe transform their behaviour either in a selfish direction (*carpe diem*) or an altruistic direction; (c) one that leads to the revision of the prevailing theory of the structure and integration of the personality; and finally, (d) one that has brought out the strategies for prompting altruistic behaviours through the detailed study of how group affiliations, values, and actions of the individual achieve this result.

In recent years, however, the study of altruism seems to take on new vigour, especially in the United States: in 2012, the American Sociological Association started including in its ranks the section “Altruism, Morality & Social Solidarity”¹ (Nichols, 2012) – a single specialization field due to their interdependence in the sociocultural reality (Jeffrey, 2014). Europe also experienced a renewed interest in studies on altruism. French sociology saw the numerous retakes on Marcel Mauss’ work on the gift (2002), the anti-utilitarian movement (Caillé, 1988; Steiner, 2016),

¹ The promoter was Vincent Jeffrey who, together with other colleagues, outlined the reasons for the need for this field of study in the article *Altruism and social solidarity: Envisioning a field of specialization* (Jeffrey et al., 2006). Subsequently, as early as 2009, a Newsletter of the nascent section of “Altruism & Social Solidarity” was launched, which will then take its final name when “Altruism, Morality & Social Solidarity” was established in 2012.

and Moscovici and his followers' studies of social representations (2000a), which bring to the definition of the elementary forms of altruism.

Despite this renewed vitality of the studies on altruism, European literature does not number Sorokin among the classics that contributed to their development. Conversely, in the United States, his intellectual legacy has been collected by various scholars (Jeffrey, 2002; Johnston, 2001; Krotov, 2012, 2014; Nichols, 2009; Weinstein, 2000). Here, I will try to outline how this rediscovery of altruism can lead to a new configuration of the Ego / Alter relationship in contemporary society. I will use deduction in presenting this idea, given the scant relevance of the concept of altruism in the social sciences (as mentioned above). I will indirectly deduce the references to altruism from those to actions that benefit others.

4.3. Towards a new configuration of the *Ego/Alter* relationship

Considering the statement above, the starting hypothesis to overcome the egoism/altruism dichotomy is that there is no such thing as altruism or egoism understood in a behavioural sense, as claimed by socio-biologists or behaviourists. Instead, there are “altruistic relationships” and “egoistic relationships”. It follows that the focus will be on “relation in action” (“rela/c/tion”), that is, on a relational process that is at the same time “relation” and “action” between individuals in a sociocultural context. The term “rela/c/tion” is, therefore, a play on words that holds together these two words “relation” and “action” which are held together by the letter “c” delimited by the slash symbol (/). In other words, the focus is on the individual, an individual who is capable of significant interactions that fit into a cultural context. Undoubtedly these relationships are influenced, on the one hand, by culture, and, on the other, by the indissoluble link with everyday life and context. Consequently, it is possible to transition from an approach to the study of social phenomena aimed at searching for a cause (causality) to one focusing on the overall significant interactions between what Sorokin (1948) defined as “indivisible sociocultural trinity” (Society, Culture, and Personality). This passage outlines the reciprocal relationship between life-world and social system and represents the

pivotal moment in which attention is paid not only to the individual as the recipient of decisions but to the individual as a “subject” and active part in relational processes (Donati and Archer, 2015; Mangone, 2019a). This approach privileges the spaces of relationships, crucial for the recognition of identity *through* and *within* individual relational investments (thus within a relationship that is based on altruism or egoism or their expression).

This process involves an “objective transaction” between the identities attributed (communicational identity) and the identities assumed, which can be conflictual between the individuals who have a desire for identification and recognition, and the institutions that offer statuses, categories, and different forms of recognition. It brings into play key *identification spaces*—places where “Goffman’s main status” (1981) is recognized—within which individuals consider themselves sufficiently recognized and valued. Being able to “play” with different spaces and thus “negotiate” one’s own investments and “manage” one’s own affiliations is a fundamental element of the objective transition. In fact, with regard to the give-receive relationship, which would hypothetically have inherent in itself a subsequent expression of gratitude, it is possible to argue that the exercise of negotiation eliminates the supremacies that arise within the relationship: negotiation is seen, therefore, as a form of regulation of the social relationship and ensures that the goal to be achieved is not preordained, but is built during the process and, even when it is fixed, is never final, but subject to further modification and discussion (Mangone, 2019a, p. 37).

These aspects were examined by both Mauss (2002) and Moscovici (2000a): the former referred to the need to close the “give/receive/return” cycle of the gift, while the latter discussed the elementary forms of altruism. Both highlight how these actions stem from the relationality of individuals. Sorokin focused his concluding studies at *The Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism* on the transformation of human solidarity. He claimed its replacement by the “love relationship” – that

iceberg-looking feeling (“Love is like an iceberg: only a small part of it is visible, and even this visible part is little known”; Sorokin, 1954, p. 3) that he considered “the supreme and vital form of human relationship”.

This way privileges the spaces of the *Ego/Alter* relationships within societal processes. All social phenomena, attitudes, and actions are built in an environment with its places, times, and symbols, which are fundamental in the cognitive processes of self-signification activated by individuals for constructing social realities in their daily relational experience. What should be analysed, therefore, is neither altruism nor egoism, but the relationship. This procedural and methodological order overcomes the altruism/egoism dichotomy since these two static terms are replaced by processes: the “altruistic relationships”, for society (pro-social or hetero-directed) and the “egoistic relationships”, for oneself (anti-social or self-directed).

Showing some ambiguity, any form of relationship fluctuates between the exchange of information and the symbolic action on the other: implemented and experienced relations are, therefore, problematic actions that most often do not allow reciprocity between the subjects, which is paramount for “altruistic relationships”.

The social relationship connects *Ego* and *Alter*, allowing for discovering the Others and acting towards them. The idea of otherness, which usually leads to the concept of “unfamiliar” or “foreign”, depends on the recognition or not of the other within the cognitive order pre-established by the society or reference groups (Gutmann, 1992). As Simão stated in describing the importance of human relations,

the process to which the notion of otherness concerns a complex and even paradoxical recognition of similarities and differences among an I and his or her Others, with which the I could share or not his or her experiences, expectancies, hopes, and fears, in affairs related to work, educational, leisure, familiar, private, and public situations” (2012, p. 1281).

For example, in Bauman's (1995) reading of contemporary society, "the other" as "foreigner" is defined by *distance*, perceived as an element of "strangeness" that separates what we need to know from what we do know, or believe we know, about the potential or actual attitudes that others will assume. "Otherness" is almost always traced back to "strangeness" and therefore to the foreigner – but each society has its own "foreigners". In Simmel's work on the stranger (1908), this category is rife with dichotomies such as near/far, same/different, inside/outside the community). Today, such dichotomies no longer apply to the category of the "foreigner" *per se* (understood as someone coming from distant places and with her specific symbolic dimension). Nor do they apply to those (others) who are among us and create ambiguity or undermine certainty as they cannot be ascribed to a strict category.

And it is precisely recognition that can push the relationship towards altruism or egoism. The lower the anonymity of the relational "Other", the more one tends towards an altruistic relationship. The *Ego/Alter* relationship thus no longer relies on *inequality* (in what) but *differentiation* (for whom). The focus should be on *Ego's* attitudes, as she perceives herself as similar to/different from *Alter* in a given symbolic sphere. It should also be on *Alter's* responses within a relational framework built on expectations that may influence the determination of closeness/distance and openness/closure. Regarding anonymity, I cannot but mention the antinomy "remote vs. direct" social interactions (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The more anonymous the contact with the Other (remote interaction), the more difficult it is to find common elements that also allow civil coexistence – as in the case of discriminatory actions against minorities or weaker sections of the population. It is starkly evident in the face of imposed relevance and when knowledge transforms from socially derived into socially approved. Individual knowledge largely derives from others, with only a modest part resulting from direct experience (socially derived knowledge). Then, it is recognized and accepted by others and not only by those who own it (socially approved).

Actions towards others depend on the idea that individuals construct of them, the interpretations of their past and present actions, and the predictions of what they will do in the future (Berger and Luckmann, 1969). One of altruism's

presuppositions is a hypothetical (not guaranteed) restitution of the good or service granted to the other. Therefore, attitudes (positive or negative) towards others depend on one's perception of them. Individuals construct their action schemes based on the meanings they attribute to their daily existence. These social representations (Farr and Moscovici, 1984) understood as systems of interpretation of the social environment that constitutes reality (the idea of the world, *Weltanschauung*), determine the meaning and significance of actions and events. Furthermore, they define the experience of reality by identifying limits, meanings, and types of interactions by reducing the information ambiguity and making the meanings of actions unequivocal (turning the unfamiliar into familiar).

If we try to further analyse this process based on representations as cognitive-descriptive processes, we find that the recognition of otherness refers to a wider and more complex categorization process. This, in turn, leads to the visibility of the *Ego/Alter* nexus (the basis of social identification) and at the same time makes the near/far dimension apparent and visible. The *Ego* strengthens and unfolds positively, thus negatively defining the *Alter*. This process is particularly significant when the individual is already aimed at “defending her own world”. The opposite happens instead in an altruistic relationship and particularly with what Moscovici (2000a) defined as “participatory altruism”. This form of altruism gives rise to an “Us” that connects and binds together the members of the group, community, or society, and it is for this “Us” that individuals are ready to sacrifice themselves. Individuals still defend “their own world” but this world is no longer individualized but referred to the collective as humanity. In this case, the altruistic relationship is directed towards supporting that bond that cannot be broken for the survival of the group of which one is part (humanity), regardless of its form. In a certain way, *Ego* connects with *Alter* in the “Us”, becoming almost interchangeable – so much so that it is no longer possible to distinguish when something is being done for the other or our good. Attention should be paid to *Ego*'s attitudes that perceive himself as equal to/different from *Alter* in a given symbolic sphere, as well as to *Alter*'s responses within a relational framework built on expectations. Expectations can determine closeness/distancing and openness/closure. When *Ego* perceives itself as equal (similar) to *Alter*, its attitudes are the closest to being “altruistic relations”.

All inequalities are cancelled as both *Ego* and *Alter* recognise themselves in an “Us” that differentiates without creating differences.

It is, therefore, necessary to activate transformation processes of the perceptive and cognitive system of individuals so that their experience unfolds as a synthetic re-interpretative experience of the *Ego/Alter* relationship. A widespread idea in contemporary society is that globalization hindered the *humanitarian ethos* aimed at that communicative interaction for the “understanding” between two subjects in action who refer to each other and act taking into account their mutual intentions, motivations and expectations. And yet this ethos should be considered a valuable opportunity for individual growth, in the perspective of changing everything that hampers the construction of a new civil and solidaristic coexistence.

4.4. The theoretical framework of sociological analysis

Studying altruism and egoism is first and foremost a theoretical challenge because – according to evolutionists – the behaviour of an organism that promotes the survival of another organism rather than its own violates the principle of individual selection. Sociobiology (Wilson, 1975) tried to dispel these doubts by defining individuals as altruistic if, in their decision-making processes (Piliavin & Charng, 1990), they give more weight to others – or, better said, to the effects of their actions if they are beneficial to others rather than themselves. However, it must be made clear that sociobiologists approach the study of altruism or egoism only from the perspective of survival and/or genetic outcome, basing their reflections on the conjugation of natural processes of evolution and cultural processes (Dobzhansky, 1962) and without addressing moral issues (Sigmund and Hauert, 2002). Sociobiologists are very interested in the altruistic and egoistic phenomena implemented by individuals, explaining the former through two key hypotheses: kin selection and group selection. For his part, Ruse (1991) argues that altruism is a collective illusion "fobbed off on us by our genes to get us to cooperate" (p. 506). Both hypotheses are akin to utilitarian economic and rational choice approaches. On this basis, some authors (Fehr and Rockenbach, 2004; Sigmund and Hauert,

2002) strengthen the reciprocal selection hypothesis (Trivers, 1971), which in sociology is defined and referred to as social exchange (Blau 1964; Homans 1961). According to this hypothesis, individuals choose to help those who, in the future, could help them or their relatives, in a condition of reciprocity. This investment, however, is uncertain, since individuals can never know for sure whether the other that they helped will reciprocate them in the future in case of need. It is the exchange of mutually beneficial acts between different individuals, whether they are related or not. It is not a question of exchanging a material good, since the good is the survival of a person (or his relatives). This is precisely one of the aspects that does not allow us to fully explain altruism (and, therefore, its opposite, egoism): individuals often help other individuals who are neither relatives nor members of the group to which they belong, but strangers, so that there is no certainty that reciprocity will be maintained in the future.

This confirms once again that discussing egoism and altruism is a theoretical challenge (meta-theory) that must be approached through the social sciences, especially sociology. To do so, it is necessary, precisely from a theoretical point of view, to clarify certain concepts and approaches that can be linked directly or indirectly to the altruism/egoism dichotomy and that will be taken up again (if necessary) in the continuation of this work.

It is widely held that sociology is a science developed at the end of the 19th century to study the changes that occurred in that period in the forms of association of both individuals and institutions – those same changes that will then characterize the so-called “modern states”. Although it is customary to date the birth of sociology when Comte, with his *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830-1842), attributes the term “sociology”² to those studies that until then had been called “social physics”, the discipline – albeit not structured into a “science” – existed for

² The new term is the result of a neologism that combines two words: the first of Latin origin (socius, societas), the second of Greek origin (logos). These two words merged mean precisely the study of society.

much longer than it is commonly believed³. This is especially true if one considers the innumerable philosophical studies containing the first “sociological thought” that, since classical times, have addressed social transformations and the relationships between social structures and individuals (among many, we can mention Aristotle’s study on the birth of Greek cities).

These are the reasons why we will reflect on the objects of study of sociology that can be traced back to altruism, or at least to positive actions, by covering the evolution of this thought. Nisbet (1977) designed two ways to present the history of sociological thought: the first, and more classic, is based on thinkers whose works are the content of the discipline itself; the second, less usual, but not less used, is based on schools. In the present contribution, we will try to integrate both ways, since it is important to refer not only to the so-called “masters” but also to the orientations or traditions that have spread and have contributed to the affirmation and the autonomy of sociology as a science, as well as to the critical reflection on it.

What characterized the evolution of sociology was not so much the object of study, which starting from Comte was clear to all those who wanted to undertake sociological studies, but the need to make it independent from other sciences, particularly from natural science. In a highly complex scenario like the social one, with the paramount role of relationships at various levels, it is necessary to distinguish the various dimensions of analysis (Collins, 1988): the *macro*, concerning social systems and their forms of organization; the *micro*, which deals with the relationship between individual and society and with social actions; and the *meso*⁴, which, trying to integrate the two previous dimensions, addresses the

³ It cannot be said that there is a univocal periodisation in the history of sociology since this is usually linked to the training of the scholar who tries to explain it (for this reason, we refer to the many textbooks addressing the history of sociological thought).

⁴ For further details on meso-analysis, see Collins (1988), while for their concrete application see Archer’s *theory of agency* (2003).

relations between social system and lifeworld (the totality of meanings and representations of culture).

Concerning the origin of the discipline, if we owe the birth of the term “sociology” (as well as “altruism”) to Comte⁵, its dissemination is due to the transformation of the traditional forms of social life triggered, on the one hand, by the French Revolution and, on the other, by the Industrial Revolution that was spreading throughout Europe from the mid-nineteenth century. The reason for this last statement is very simple: we resort to the new science (and no longer to religion!) to explain the transformations – or destruction – of traditional forms of life, trying to predict possible future scenarios. The birth of sociology, therefore, brings with it some open questions, including the debate on altruism or, in other terms, on moral solidarity or social solidarity.

In this paragraph, we will try to outline, in broad terms and based on Collins’ three dimensions of analysis (1988), how, by some of sociology’s objects of study (social order, integration, social action, interaction, etc.), we can derive references to altruism or those actions that benefit others than the actor and for which have been used the terms *solidarism* and *social solidarity* – see for example Durkheim (1960) and his differentiation between organic solidarity and mechanical solidarity. We will resort to the deduction because the term altruism or, rather, the concept of altruism, even after Comte, has never attained great relevance in sociological studies.

The approaches to the study of socio-cultural phenomena have inevitably followed the development of sociology and its affirmation as an autonomous discipline and therefore have been characterized together with the definition of social sciences, based on the reference paradigm.

⁵ The French scholar based all his studies on the belief that this new disciplinary field could produce knowledge about social phenomena (through scientific evidence) and at the same time well-being for the whole of humanity by using science to predict and thus control human behaviour.

4.4.1. From functionalism to conflict theory

At its origin, sociology placed the social order (structure or system) as an essential prerequisite for individual and collective action (macro dimension) and this element has been the key to understanding the socio-cultural phenomena of both Durkheim's Positivism and Parsons' pure functionalism (1949), as well as Merton's structural-functionalism (1949). Briefly said, in this approach the whole explain the parts. Parsons, for example, dedicated all his studies to the development of a model of analysis suitable for all types of communities, claiming that individual actions are based on requests from society (the social system determines both individual and collective actions). Individuals would therefore act – in a positive or negative direction – based on rules learned and internalized through primary and secondary socialization.

The higher the degree of integration of the individual in the social system, the more he contributes to its conservation. In this sense, the action of the individual is functionally positive, otherwise, the action will be dysfunctional (harmful).

Hence the supremacy of the system over the individual, whose action is subordinated to the necessity of survival of the system itself.

The American sociologist solves the classical problem of order through a scheme valid for every social system: the role played by the individual mediates between the structure of the personality and the institutional structure. The social structure can be said to be constituted by normative cultural models, internalized by the individual through socialization (primary and secondary), and institutionalized by the social system. The primary object of the analysis must therefore be the set of mechanisms that allow for the integration of the individual into the social system, and at the same time between societal subsystems. These actions, which can be called “interdependent actions”, are identified in role behaviours: individuals act based on their roles defined by institutionalized expectations. Individual action is oriented towards a given situation, built by a set of physical, social, and cultural objects that motivate the subject.

The whole process of interdependence is aimed at the basic motivation for human action: obtaining gratifications and avoiding sanctions. The problem of

order is solved through the *interpenetration of the systems*. Although Parsons criticized Sorokin (who had been his professor at Harvard), this concept derives from the latter's idea of the indivisible sociocultural trinity (Sorokin, 1948) – personality, society, and culture. But what does Parsons claim through his idea of system interpenetration? He argues, as did Sorokin, that to study social phenomena one cannot consider only the social system (society) but must also study that of the personality of individuals and the cultural system. And it is precisely in the interpenetration between these three systems that interconnection, integration, and mediation between the individual/individualistic aspect of the action and the holistic feature of the structure develop. The constitutive elements of this process are the values that represent the criteria for defining the role and that, at the same time, form the basis of the motivational structure of the personality. To clarify this, it is essential to examine the assumptions of the theory of social action – understood as structural action – within a more general framework that can reconcile actions such as altruism and solidarity.

Parsons' theory of action requires the following elements: 1) the actor (the subject); 2) the purpose of the action, *i.e.*, the future situation towards which the process is oriented; 3) the situation in which the action begins, whose potential development differs from the situation to which the action is directed. This situation can be analysed based on two elements: a) what the actor cannot control (conditions of the action); and b) what he can control (means of action); 4) the implicit relationship between conditions and means (choice of alternative means for a given end). It is in this choice that the normative element arises; Parsons resolves every motivation and behaviour of the individual within the normative definition. And it is within this normative definition that we find positive actions (functional to society) and negative actions (dysfunctional to society). It follows that a positive action (gratitude, altruism, solidarity, cooperation, etc.) is not aimed at other people's good, but at preserving the social order.

There is therefore a fracture between individual and society: on the one hand, human action aimed at achieving a goal; on the other, the world itself – apparently meaningless – in which action is developed through the means-ends scheme. Thus sketched, the theory of action poses action and the role as a voluntary overcoming

of the rift between social and individual, without allowing, however, to fully grasp the real dynamic processes of the former. Consequently, deviance (negative action) is for Parsons the main origin of the mechanisms of change in society. In Parsons' social system, based on shared normative expectations, deviant actions originate from and consist in a disturbance of the communication between *ego* and *alter*, more specifically, a deficiency of *alter* in favour of *ego*. Such a deficiency is structured in the personality of an individual through a system of needs-dispositions based on a distorted orientation towards shared expectations (egoistic orientation). The structure of needs-dispositions of the personality within the system of social roles can either conform to it or refuse (oppose) it. Therefore, the personality is explained in terms of the system of roles, and the system of roles in terms of individual personalities. However, this generates a vicious circle with an inevitably random exit. This process can only be analysed in terms of a series of psychological mechanisms, based on which the negative action is outlined as an individual orientation towards the normative system, and is seen as an adaptation to an experienced individual tension.

Like Parsons, but with different nuances, Merton (1949) bases his "functional analysis" (he does not speak of functionalism) on the relationship between means and ends, namely between "cultural goals" and "legitimate means"⁶. To better understand the balancing processes between "cultural goals" and "legitimate means", we will invoke Merton's theory of deviance (middle-range theory)⁷,

⁶ "Goals" and "means" are two types of institutionalized values within the social or cultural structure. The "goals" are the aims, aspirations, legitimate interests of the members of society ordered according to a hierarchical model of priority that characterizes the society of reference; and the "means", or norms, set the ways of achieving the goals. There is not always the same emphasis between cultural goals and norms, nor is there a constant relationship.

⁷ In sociology, medium-range theories occupy an intermediate position between the general theories of social systems – too far from particular categories of behaviour, organization and social change to explain what is observed – and those detailed descriptions that are all but generalized. Merton then tries to find a middle ground, which he defines in this way: the "Middle-range theory is principally used in sociology to guide empirical inquiry. It is intermediate to general theories of social systems which are too remote from particular classes of social behavior, organization and

according to which the choices, and therefore the consequent actions (positive or negative), are not due to biological or instinctual impulses badly repressed by social control but are a completely “normal” response to the social pressures experienced by individuals. Contemporary societies are characterized by the growing importance attached to “cultural goals” and the simultaneous lessening of that attached to the “means”, thus dissociating final values and instrumental values, particularly when the importance of strictly *legitimate* means is lessened in favour of any *effective* means for achieving the cultural purpose. When the legitimate practices for reaching a strongly supported cultural goal are overshadowed, we witness a form of “anomie” (absence of rules). Possible solutions are schemes of actions (adaptation) that vary according to the individual’s position in the social organization (the social status and its related sources of knowledge are the elements determining the opportunities to reach a given goal through legitimate means). Within this context, uncertainties are emphasized for two reasons: on the one hand, there is an almost complete lack of rules on the legitimate procedures for achieving the “goals”, and, on the other, these very cultural goals are urged for everyone, without real openings in the institutionalized ways to reach them (for example, the American dream of a self-made man). Negatively oriented attitudes are therefore helped by these anomic conditions, and take different forms depending on how individuals resolve the antinomy between the “goals” set by culture and the “means” used to achieve them (adaptation).

Every society sets limits, through juridical or cultural norms, to the satisfaction of individual aspirations, also determining the legitimate means to be employed. In a stably structured society, these limits are perceived as necessary and fair. However, when these normative values change, there is less respect for them and consequently, a greater number of individuals will perform negative actions (deviance). If the norms lose credibility, a greater number of individuals are not

change to account for what is observed and to those detailed orderly descriptions of particulars that are not generalized at all. Middle-range theory involves abstractions, of course, but they are close enough to observed data to be incorporated in propositions that permit empirical testing. Middle-range theories deal with delimited aspects of social phenomena, as is indicated by their labels”. (Merton, 1949, pp. 39-40).

willing to respect them: the state of “anomie” frames a situation of loss of credibility of the rules. In this condition, individuals are particularly uncomfortable because, given that normative values are no longer working, they lose their points of reference – both if the norms are no longer effective, and if formally present but without any meaning.

Merton’s first objective, concerning the theory of deviant behaviour (and therefore to negative actions), is to find out how some structures exert a well-defined pressure on some individuals to make them behave outside the norm. Societies always try to maintain a balance between institutionalized goals and means. A real integration between the two values – at the base of the stability of the social system – occurs only when gratifications are obtained not only in achieving the goals but also in using certain means over others. It can be argued that, as contemporary society is a system based on competition, it is integrated if the emphasis is placed not only on the object of the competition (*i.e.*, the goal) but also on how it is achieved. Some individuals, for various reasons, start at a disadvantage for important goals, and it is, therefore, necessary to provide for the possibility of a more accessible alternative destination. If this were not the case, we would have what Merton calls aberrant behaviour:

that aberrant behavior may be regarded sociologically as a symptom of disassociation between culturally prescribed aspirations and socially structured avenues for realizing these aspirations (Merton, 1949, p. 67).

According to Merton, modern societies seem to be characterized by the great importance attributed to cultural goals and the parallel attenuation of the importance of means. This causes anomie, a condition for which the American sociologist proposes an individual adaptation scheme (not personality types) that vary according to the position of the individual in the social structure. Merton’s model of the social system is anomic in two senses (as told above) and the adaptive behaviours are therefore favoured by these anomic conditions, and take different forms (conformity, innovation, ritualism, renunciation, rebellion) depending on

how individuals resolve the antinomy between the “goals” set by the culture and the “means” employed to achieve them.

Merton’s model is a tool for the interpretation, above all, of negative (deviant) actions in modern society, where cultural dissociation is structurally linked to class division. Anomie is the form of a contradiction typical of this social system that cannot be solved in terms of the existing situation. Adaptations to the state of anomie, which in Merton’s scheme are considered as responses subjectively and individually processed to deal with psychological distress (subjective anomie), must be considered as responses elaborated collectively and consciously based on real social contradictions.

Functionalism was widely criticized for its systematic and generalizing claims (particularly Parsons’ works). The first criticism was to have considered exclusively or, at least, predominantly the phenomena of integration and social order without taking into account the problems of change and conflict. The attention paid to culture and the importance attributed to the process of internalizing values have caused functionalists to lose sight of the fact that culture can also be a “constraint”, thus leading to social interests aimed at change. The conflictual perspective follows this idea: for its scholars, it is conflict, rather than regulatory integration, that performs the primary functions of preserving the system and promoting changes. The deviation from the norm is considered paramount for the interpretation of functional consequences. This implies a different evaluation of individual action, to be traced back to a specific definition of “conflict”: according to the major exponents of the conflictual current, particularly Coser (1962), deviations from the norm are not always dysfunctional to the group because greater moral cohesion can be built around the violated norm and its redefinition.

If for structural-functionalists (Durkheim, Parsons, Merton) society is based on its order and therefore every single action must be functional to society, in Weber’s theory, and even more in Marx’s critical theory (1932), society is based on an unstable equilibrium of opposing forces that generate social change.

If functionalists assert that the structure prevails over the individual, Max Weber considers sociology as the comprehensive science of social action. Weber’s (1978) “sociology of meaningful understanding” (*Verstehen*) qualifies human action as a

social action only when it is “meaningful”. Actions are social when individuals take into account those of others, which are driven by *individual motivation*. Therefore, actions are social as they always refer to the behaviour of others, which in turn influences them in their evolution. In other words, social actions must be defined in terms of “objective meanings” of the activity of the individual. And, in this perspective, sociology

is a science which attempts the interpretative understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a casual explanation of its course and effects. In ‘action’ is included all human behaviour when and in so far as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning (Weber, 1947, p. 88).

For Weber, actions become the key for the interpretation of Western modern society, which is increasingly dominated by instrumental rationality. Weber defines a type of social action (goal-instrumental and value-rational actions, affective action, and traditional action) through the conceptual tool of the *ideal type*⁸. Weber’s development of the ideal type begins with the criticism of the use of collectivist concepts. He thinks that sociology should proceed from the actions of the individual, few or many separate individuals, and the concept of the ideal type is nothing more than a tool that allows measuring reality. It is not an accurate copy of reality; it is only a means that emphasizes the connections that the scholar considers relevant. Through the ideal type of a phenomenon, the researcher will then focus on those connections that have meaning for her in the causal web that determines the phenomenon itself.

When Weber refers to individual motivations, the reference to values is implicit. He interprets the plurality of values by overcoming the contrast between Kant’s

⁸ In constructing the ideal type, it is necessary to isolate from the complexity of the phenomenon those elements that are uniform in their repetition. These uniform elements will be the basis for the construction of a model that will not be the real measure of the phenomenon, but only an instrument for measuring reality. The ideal type is the right mediation between historical experience and the search for a synthesis of knowledge.

principle of “never using others only as means but always also as ends” and utilitarianism which claims to always choose “actions that maximize people’s utility and happiness”. The contrast is overcome through the dualism between the ethics of principles, *Gesinnungsethik*, also called intentions or beliefs, and the ethics of responsibility, *Verantwortungsethik* (Lassman and Speirs, 1994; Lassman *et al.*, 1989). The first refers to absolute principles, which are assumed regardless of their consequences (example: religious ethics), the second to all those cases in which particular attention is paid to the relationship between means and ends and the consequences of an action. The ethics of responsibility restores to individuals the burden of the consequences of their actions towards themselves and others (both for good and for evil), even beyond temporal and spatial proximity. Ascribing the conduct of human beings to a single general principle is a flawed approach. In modern society, the idea of responsibility for choices has often been delegated to law, in the form not of ethics of responsibility, but ethics reduced to a simple procedure.

In discussing the link between material interests (economy) and ideal interests and beliefs (religion), Weber refers to the Protestant Reformation by developing the idea of *Beruf* (Weber, 1904-1905), a term introduced in Luther’s German translation of the Bible. The idea of *Beruf* – which in German means both “vocation” and “work” – expresses the central dogma of all Protestant churches: daily work – that is, carefully fulfilling the duties of one’s profession/vocation – is the only way to be acceptable to God, since the division of labour has forced every individual to work for others. Luther himself will take charge of the evil of society because it is inherent in his mission of help (profession) which he carries within himself.

Concerning professions, Weber has also been interested in the distribution of power between the various positions occupied by individuals within the different forms of social organization (particularly in the bureaucratic structure), as well as in its legitimation, thus opening a new window in the study of the satisfaction that comes from the participation of individuals in the various social organizations. In his studies, Weber wonders how to control the members of a social organization to

maximize efficiency and effectiveness, minimizing the unhappiness that comes from the very use of control.

According to Weber, all forms of social organization, particularly the bureaucratic one, set certain norms that must be observed to guarantee their own functioning. The exercise of this power, however, can produce a state of alienation in those who obey and comply with the norms do not consider it legitimate. Indeed, Weber uses the term *power* for the ability to induce others to obey, *legitimacy* for the acceptance of the exercise of power and *authority* for the combination of these two (legitimate power). On this last element, the German sociologist provides a typology of the authorities, which differ in their origins and legitimation rather than in the type of power exercised: 1) *traditional authority*, based on the belief in the sacredness of traditions (“we have always done so”) and on the legitimations of those who hold authority based on these traditions. This type of legitimation, in the modern world, has weathered down, being a power that derives directly from God (an exception is the authority of the Pope); 2) *charismatic authority*, when individuals accept the order of their superior due to his personality and because they identify themselves with him. Charismatic authority springs from a relationship of devotion or even love between the leader (leader) and his disciples (followers). The validity of the charisma is based on the “recognition” by the followers and the legitimacy is based on having been chosen (*e.g.*, Jesus). According to Weber, however, the charismatic leader does not have to be a positive force (see, for example, Mussolini and Hitler). Sociology considers all types of charismatic domination like the charisma of heroes, prophets, saviours, etc.; 3) *legal-rational or bureaucratic authority*, based on normative rules and on the right of those who have been given authority by such rules. This type of power legitimacy comes directly from the legal systems and is granted by law. It is the power of modern “democracies”, in which the people freely elect their rulers.

If the traditional authority does not exist in modern societies, since the “sacred” is no longer considered an explanation of the earthly things of men, charismatic authority is opposed to legal-rational authority because the latter evolves into what Weber defined a “steel cage” and only a charismatic authority with innovative actions can counter this situation.

In Weber's theory, but even more so in Marx's critical theory (1932), society is based on an unstable equilibrium of opposing forces. Marx's entire work is imbued with moral values centred on human dignity, achieved by satisfying two primary needs of man: sociality and individual freedom. However, in the philosophical tradition, these two needs are considered as opposed to each other, hence the need for an ethic that guarantees the development and realization of individuals in terms advantageous for both themselves and others. The rejection of the hedonistic morality (promoted by the bourgeois class), as well as of the renunciation-oriented Christian one, projects individuals towards a simple, austere, and, at the same time, satisfying and happy lifestyle. Marx openly opposes Christian charity solidarity, because they guarantee the dignity of human beings by making them all equal. As such, Christian charity should be considered as a way for covering social conflicts, a sort of alibi behind which to hide to avoid facing the structural knots of existing injustices.

In other words, the development of modern society, according to Marx, is based on actions of social conflict aimed at satisfying primary and secondary needs (Maslow, 1954): in this way

the motivation for action arises from the universal tendency to satisfy certain orders of needs, which are different by nature and complexity, in ways other than according to a logic of purpose-oriented rationality. In this way, actions cannot be enveloped in an ideal model, as they escape all rational logic (Mangone, 2018a, p. 70).

The actions implemented to satisfy needs are the first ones, but since men tend to modify their needs, these, like thought systems, are transitory and are rooted in different historical periods. It follows that the evolution of human beings depends on their material condition and on the different forms by which they associate to satisfy their needs. Conflict is not a structural property of human societies but is to be found primarily in the individual and is at the same time outside and within social norms, in the tension between the needs that can be satisfied within a social form and those that cannot be institutionalized.

Social change, therefore, cannot be ascribed to extra-social elements (climate or geography), as it was for moral statisticians, nor to the system of ideas, since they are not the driving forces of society, but the reflection of material interests that drive men to action and to relate to others. In such a society, production systems become independent from all other systems, and on these relationships rely the entire cultural *superstructure* of society and the division into social classes. Marx, however, does not reify either the society or the class, indeed, he maintains that the social entity *par excellence* is the individual, even if only within the society in which he builds relationships that affect his actions.

In general, the Marxist approach posits that the system of thought reflects the political and economic interests of small groups of individuals, particularly those who own the means of production. The system of thought becomes the mere instrument of reproduction of social inequalities and injustices; this approach, therefore, is obviously an interpretative reading of reality that starts from very specific instances, although with some peculiar aspects. The system of representations (system of ideas), which is the result of social practices, can increase or decrease the transparency of a society. In other words, social reality, human beings, and human groups in their interactions produce “images” that at a given historical moment become a *mode of consciousness*. The things that are evident in society are explained by not-so-evident relations of production. This establishes a dialectical and reciprocal relationship by which we can understand the true nature of things, in which the social relations are ordered by the means of production underlying them. Accepting this Marxist perspective increases our disposition to solve the problems of the poor through political liberation.

4.4.2. Phenomenological approach and daily life

The evolution of sociology has been characterized by two *querelles*: quantitative/qualitative and macro/micro. Neither dimension has clear-cut boundaries: it is necessary to give due consideration to the micro and macro aspects of human action, reiterating how the individual is that component of society from

which attention cannot be diverted. Microsociology deals with small segments of time and space (human action rather than social change) and a limited number of individuals: actions and individuals, behaviour and responsibilities. This approach generally highlights meaningful action in the sphere of everyday life: the starting point is no longer society, but individuals or, better, their interactions. The scholars who apply this paradigm (interactionism) base their research precisely on the study of the interactions between individuals. The innovative idea of this approach is the emphasis placed on the interpretation that individuals give of their “life situation”. The key factor is not only the structuring of roles within society but also the culture within which interactions develop. Subjective factors, even more than objective ones, allow for interpretation: the symbolic relationship of the individual with her body, with others, and with the context of reference, is fundamental for the process of interpretation and signification.

Thus configured, the phenomenological approach no longer focuses on how integration happens, but on how this is considered a fact of everyday life, allowing interpretation and the consequent choice of decisions and actions (be they positive or negative). This approach studies the mundane by paying attention to the obvious actions of everyday life, which then become the object of further study to demonstrate that the forms of everyday life play an important role in maintaining the social order.

Schütz (1970-1971; 1967), for example, claims the importance of what “appears obvious” in everyday life, since it is precisely in it that social phenomena are represented. Everyday life, which he more specifically calls “the world of everyday life”, has an intersubjective character. Each interpretation of this world is based on a set of “available knowledge” that acts as a framework of reference, which in turn allows individuals to understand and control everyday experience, based on meaningful actions expressed in interactions. Starting from Weber’s concept of meaningful action, Schütz makes a further effort to clarify its underlying connections. In consideration of the criticism posed to Weber, according to which he conceives meaningful action mainly in relation to his model of purpose-oriented rational action, for Schütz, actions can have both a meaning and a representation before they are carried out, *i.e.*, when they are a project for the future (*sense of*

production); while they are carried out, that is, when they are experienced in the present (*sense of produced*); and, finally, after they have been accomplished, in other words, when they are a memory – past – for the person who carried them out (*self-understanding*) and for the recipient or spectator (*hetero-understanding*). In simpler terms and following Schütz's theory, we can state that the attribution of meaning to action is arbitrary as it is connected with an individual project and thus susceptible to modifications. Indeed, the action planned and the one taken often do not coincide, entailing the necessary distinction between aims (action planned) and cause (action taken). Therefore, actions can be understood only if we can understand their ultimate purpose and the timespan they refer to.

Thus outlined the connection between action and meaning, it follows that the authentically subjective sense of action remains almost completely inaccessible to the understanding of the other, while, on a social level, the meaning of an action is generically interpreted with the objective sense that is actualized in typifications.

With Schütz's theory, the object of study of sociology becomes the meaningful action that takes place in the "world of everyday life", thus laying the foundations for a future understanding of the processes at the origin of culture, objectified and generalized, through the social communication of meanings. The meanings are born in the intentionality of consciousness and, once shared and internalized, influence consciousness itself, in addition to action and intersubjective relationships. These, in turn, are the object of study of phenomenology, of which Goffman is the most prominent scholar is. Starting from the assumption that society is nothing more than a scenic representation, Goffman denies any dialectic between inside and outside: the subject is considered as a pure *mask* in a social staging, whose rules and structural characteristics determine the various roles acted by the subject himself. Goffman addresses the concept of integration of individuals within social organizations in two of his main works: *Stigma* (1968) and *Asylums* (1971). These two works have a "political" character: the first describes and analyses the practices of social "inferiorization" of people different from us through stigma and, therefore, through the attribution of moral judgments that allow labelling someone as belonging to a lesser category; the second analyses the dynamics within total institutions, particularly psychiatric ones.

Interaction, identity and the self are the fundamental elements characterizing Goffman's work. Concerning the Self, he distinguishes in it two characters: the *actor*, the free and independent component of the subject, and the *character*, the set of characters needed by men every time they interact with others in their lifeworld. The Self is the result of a situation (*frame*) that occurs and is experienced. It originates from the meaning attributed to the situation around which the relationship is organized based on a sort of negotiation. Individuals adapt to situations, try to adapt these to their own needs, and build their own behaviour based on the role expectations of the external world and, in this way, try to control and guide their actions based on the idea that others have of them. These are the dynamics normally occurring in the construction and strengthening of identity and the Self.

In their everyday life, individuals experience a reality full of direct or mediated social encounters. In these contacts with others there is a tendency to assume a certain line, a model of verbal and non-verbal acts with which one expresses his opinion on the situation and his evaluation of its participants, particularly ourselves (Goffman, 1967). Goffman (1959) appropriately illustrates this mode of interaction: he states that individuals take and interpret different identity expressions according to the contexts and social situations in which they find themselves (dramaturgical approach). The American scholar claims that every man needs a kit for his identity, thanks to which he can manipulate his image, and rely, in the external world, on objects that give him a feeling of himself – his body, his immediate actions, his thoughts, his possessions – free from any contact with foreign and contaminating elements.

For Goffman, identity must be distinguished in *personal identity* and *social identity*. The latter, in turn, must be distinguished in *virtual* – attributed to the individual based on his appearance, that is, what others imagine and through which our categorization is only approximate – and *actual*, that is real, since it allows to attribute, with certainty, to which category that individual belongs. The constant oscillation of social identity between *virtual* and *actual*, due to the continuous changes of situations, forces the subject to redefine her social identity when she suffers stigmatization. Stigma is a personal attribute (physical or cultural), such as mental illness, homosexuality, skin colour, handicap or religion, whose

examination arouses in the other individuals a strong doubt about the social identity of the subject, determining the predominance of the virtual component over the actual one. For his part, the stigmatized individual always tries to control the difference between the two components of his identity or to hide the elements that could cause the stigma, forestalling any action that could be frowned upon and hinder integration.

The identity of a subject is redefined, therefore, through the systems and interaction techniques implemented in a situational manner. It follows, according to Goffman (1959), that the roles played and interpreted by each subject in the various social contexts and situations are nothing more than a dramatic effect emerging from a scene. As a scholar of interactions, Goffman defined the *scripts* as recurring “sketches” of interaction that generically define the essentiality of the actors’ roles. In other words, this notion refers to a structure suitable to describe an appropriate sequence of actions in a given context. The *scripts* are therefore complex structures of knowledge on an ordered succession of actions and define situations that have become known by experience. The use of this form of knowledge does not require specifications, nor explanations about what is done. In everyday life, the most effective method that individuals implement to better manage situations is that of environmental interpretation. This happens through recurring schemes (conceptual representations of single objects) and scripts (conceptual representations of events and social relations) that generically define the essentiality of the role of the actors in a relationship.

Goffman, often considered Mead’s successor, has mainly addressed micro-processes of interaction between the I (self) and the Other, focusing particularly on face-to-face ones⁹. If these interactions have motivations intrinsic to some preconditions of social life¹⁰, what provides indications on the status of the

⁹ This type of interaction can be defined in the strict sense as what transpires only in social situations, *i.e.*, in areas in which two or more individuals are physically in the presence of each other’s response (Goffman, 1967).

¹⁰ There are many reasons why individuals establish social interactions, in each other’s presence, inevitably valuing public visibility.

individual or the character of social relations is neither their aspect nor the set of forms through which they are made explicit that, but information and the factors independent from what individuals are. Thus, in all social relations, the social position of the individual depends on the participatory structure, which can change depending on the context, as the latter influences the subjective attitude of each participant in the interaction. This gives rise to various kinds of social relations: formal or informal, spontaneous or planned, symmetrical or asymmetric, altruistic or egoistic, etc.

4.4.3. The relationship between social system and lifeworld

The classical sociological approaches have allowed us to highlight the central problem of the processes of integration and social order, especially regarding how the external (objective) reality is transformed into an internal (subjective) reality. If for functionalism and conflictualism this reality is given – therefore, imposed – for interactionism it is placed in a communicative and intersubjective perspective. Emphasizing intersubjectivity and communication means recognizing the individual's capacity not only to share but also to re-elaborate and transform reality and therefore to construct new meanings to be shared. Objective reality seeps through the individual, who initially perceives it as unique, but at the same time develops that reflective capacity (May and Perry, 2017) which allows her to consider external reality as relativized and therefore no longer as the only one possible worldview. It is, therefore, necessary to try and redefine the paradigms: the *micro* and *macro*-dimensions of social action must receive the same attention. Sociology is not conceivable if it does not integrate the actor and the contexts within which the actions take place. It is essential to switch from the order of explaining (*erklären*) to that of understanding (*verstehen*), and the search for the reason for the manifestation of socio-cultural phenomena should no longer refer to a *cause*, but a *meaning*.

In such a complex scenario as the contemporary society, in which relations (at different levels) are paramount for socio-cultural phenomena – and therefore also

for decision-making and action processes – the *meso* dimension of analysis, addressing the relations between social system and lifeworld, allows overcoming the *macro* (structure) and *micro* (social action) opposition. Due to its relevance for the present work, we will examine Archer's morphogenetic theory (1979; 1987; 1988; 1995; Donati and Archer, 2015), which claims the simultaneous presence of multiple factors and levels in the process of defining the goals and characteristics of the social systems that implement them. Indeed, she argues that

the crucial linkage to make and to maintain is not between the 'micro' and the 'macro', conceived of as the small and impersonal in contrast to the large and impersonal, but rather between the 'social' and the 'systemic'. In other words, systemic proprieties are always the ('micro') *context* confronted by ('macro') social interaction, whilst social activities between people ('micro') represent the *environment* in which the ('macro') features of systems are either reproduced or transformed [...] Two implications follow from this. Firstly, that the central theoretical task is one of linking two *qualitatively* different aspects of society (the 'social' and the 'systemic', or if preferred 'action' and its 'environment') rather than two quantitatively *different* features, the big and the small or macro and micro. [...] The second implication is that if the misleading preoccupation with *size* is abandoned, then the linkages which need forging to account for the vexatious fact of society are those between the 'people' and the 'parts' of social reality (Archer, 1995, pp. 11-12).

In this way, the relationship between individual and society assumes a multi-dimensional connotation, falling within the morphogenetic theory in which the *macro* emerges from the *micro*, and conditions it by retroacting on it (cycle). The two elements cannot be studied separately, or made to prevail one over the other, since structure and action constitute different levels of stratified social reality, each with specific and non-reducible characteristics.

In the morphogenetic approach, processes depend on the interaction with the real world; therefore, the systems must be studied for their actual shape (morphogenetic cycle¹¹) rather than for how we would like them to be. In the present work, we will apply the morphogenetic cycle, which in its general form is characterized by structural conditioning, socio-cultural interaction, and structural elaboration, to altruism.

Starting from the assumption that the cultural system is the fruit of human action, and that once it reaches its autonomy it influences future generations, we want to emphasize the importance of the interactions between the subjects (within the morphogenetic cycle), connected with both cultural conditioning (structural arrangement of the cultural system), and the resulting processing towards its confirmation (reproduction) or change (innovation). This shows that processes can deliver expected or unexpected results, and those of the processes of interaction have several directions. When analysing positive actions, we should therefore understand “where they come from” and “how they work”, linking (*meso* analysis) their becoming a system (*macro* analysis) with interactions (*micro* analysis).

This multidimensional vision allows us to observe the elements of a socio-cultural process, but above all the relationships formed between them, overcoming the traditional visions that kept these levels separate. It is necessary to combine the system (objective dimension) with individuals (subjective dimension). The objective aspects must be combined with the subjective ones, taking into account all the dimensions, levels, and factors involved in the socio-cultural process considered. This process leads to the constitution of the “social subject” since it implies exchange between individuals by activating communication processes, rather than by closing oneself towards the other. It is not born to satisfy private or corporate needs but is connected to sociality and citizenship. These definitions of socio-cultural processes entail that their analysis must consider their characterizing multidimensionality and multifactoriality. Each process, regardless of its context, presupposes the knowledge for the construction of reality, and this is even more necessary in an ever-more complex scenario where actions are less and less precise

¹¹ The cycle represents a temporal sequence because the structure always precedes the action and its outcomes in the form of reproduction or innovation.

due to continuous changes. In other words, the socialization process is paramount, because it influences the relationship between individuals, and between individuals and society, in an attempt to construct an identity that is as social as possible while taking into account the role played by individuals. This shift privileges the relational spaces within the socio-cultural processes, which become an important factor for the recognition of identity *through* and *within* the relational investments of individuals. Identities are built in an environment with its places, times, and symbols. These three features are preeminent for the cognitive processes of self-signification that individuals activate and implement *in* and *on* their everyday life experiences starting from primary socialization. Identities are ever-moving realities, with structuring and de-structuring dynamics, the result of a continuous process of socialization that allows for the construction of individuality, but also of an individual inclined towards the community (social subject).

Considering the above, the study of altruism or, in general, of positive actions, cannot entail mere simplistic analyses within the sociological field. Individual activities appear only with the expression of a need to be satisfied and in relation with others: the multidimensionality and multi-contextuality of everyday life impose an interdisciplinary analysis. The reality experienced by every individual is built daily through a process of socialization which is learning and internalization, but also externalization and objectification (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). These phases sketch the basic process of self-structuring, which represents the link between society and the individual. This process must ensure, on the one hand, the integration and adaptation of individuals, and on the other, the maintenance, development, and updating of knowledge that allows civil coexistence, social inclusion, and the right degree of competitiveness in the economic and work world.

CHAPTER V

THE INTELLECTUAL LEGACY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

5.1. Auguste Comte and the term “altruism”

From the 18th century, a *new* and *complex* reality emerged because of the great transformations that were taking place in Western society. Consequently, a vast repertoire of behaviour previously falling under the domain of moral authority (clergy or army) or attributed to individuals, took on forms of autonomy detached from the previous subordination, albeit as yet not with full awareness. Society, and particularly individual behaviour, broke the bonds of tradition, and the analysis and study of social phenomena were brought back to the experience of the individual within a dense network of relationships: the *homo sociologicus* was born.

In light of these transformations that were affecting the whole of society, we decided to begin our reflection on the “*altruism universe*” and the intellectual heritage that we received, by examining Auguste Comte’s work, in which we can find one of the first attempts to formulate generalizing laws for the development of society. These laws are the expression of an immanent order of the phenomenal reality of society, in transformation.

As the readers should by now have clear, the word “altruism” is one of the two terms coined by Comte that in later times have become paramount for the development of social sciences – the other word being, obviously, “sociology”. Comte had also coined other terms such as “sociocracy” and “biocracy”, but these have not found proselytes or become widespread like the other two. From its birth, although with ups and downs, the term altruism has become an analytical construct for the social sciences.

To understand why Comte considered altruism superior to egoism, it is necessary to outline the theoretical and social context (Coser, 1977) framing this thought. The latter then became the core idea in Comte’s project of a “Religion of Humanity”

(Comte, 1858) that was to direct and accompany the improvement of modern society, no longer under the influence of religion or the army. The humanity of which Comte speaks includes many individuals of all generations, but it does not contain all of them: it excludes those defined as “parasites” and “criminals” because they have not passed on to the next generations what was transmitted to them. Therefore, only those men who have cooperated and worked for human endeavour, and to whom we are in debt, are part of it.

The concept of altruism appears on the scene of the transition to modernity because of the need for a new moral guide for the budding society. Comte leaves open the question of when and to whom to be altruistic, but he makes it clear that individuals can be altruistic or pursue their self-interest. In this way, Comte allowed for pro-social behaviours linked to altruism to be motivated by selfish interests.

Comte's main objective was to create a new science – the science of society, first “social physics” and then “sociology” (the new positive science) – that, along the lines of the natural sciences, could explain the previous development of society and predict its future. This new science was considered the most complex and dependent on the evolution of the other ones, which is why Comte places it at the highest level of the hierarchical scale of sciences. It also employs all the tools used by the sciences that precede it in the hierarchical scale, while also paying attention to the historical method.

The studies of the new positive science are based on the social order and on the elements that determine the stability within this system; therefore, the cornerstones of this new system are the *social statics* and the *social dynamics*, that is, the study of all the elements that produce stability or change for society. Statics and dynamics come together in a single direction of analysis focused on the mutual relations between the elements within a social whole that must be balanced. When this does not happen, according to Comte, we are faced with a pathological condition (crisis). The elementary unit of this social group is not the individual but the family, since it forms tribes, communities, and nations. And it is within the family that, according to Comte, the natural egoistic tendencies of human beings are mitigated and oriented towards social purposes rather than mere individual self-interest. Together, the families constitute the society that is bonded not by physical ties, as in nature,

but by spiritual ties in which language and religion are two essential elements for cohesion (solidarity and *consensus*). Comte adds the division of labour to these two constructs, considering it a further instrument to strengthen human solidarity as it can make individuals aware of their dependence on others – although some aspects of the division of labour in industrial society were considered unfavourably.

The new science laid its foundations on reasoning and observation as the only legitimate means of acquiring knowledge. The latter, in turn, had to translate into social utility for the improvement of the human condition. As Comte argued, the fundamental problem of human nature is the subordination of Egoism to Altruism, and an important role in this subordination is played by the social sciences, or rather by sociology, whose task is to identify the laws that govern society, as the natural sciences do for nature. According to the French Scholar, social actions are neither arbitrary nor fortuitous: individuals tend to pursue their interests in a society founded mainly on the Hobbesian motto *Homo homini lupus*, and laws help individuals set limits to their actions. At the same time, individuals understand that they can modify the course of social laws for the pursuit of their interests. The new positive science that used observation, experimentation, and comparison as tools to explain the laws and perturbations of society had therefore the task of teaching men to look at things not in an absolute way but relative terms. Relativity rejects all-encompassing social solutions (considered to apply to all societies, regardless of their characteristics) and is based on the conviction that every solution must be adapted to the concrete state of the society to which it refers. Comparisons in the sociological field become important because they allow researchers to examine and juxtapose the state of society in different parts of the world. This is necessary because even though humanity has essentially planned its development in overall the same way, this has been achieved unevenly throughout the world. Not all societies have reached the same states, nor have they reached them at the same time. We thus also need a historical outlook on this evolution.

And it is precisely on this evolution that Comte conceives its *Law of human progress* or *Law of the three stages* according to which humanity has evolved through three main consecutive stages, in which the next stage is reached only by the destruction of the previous one. The same process affects the organizational

system of society, as well as the system of ideas, alternating “organic” periods (balance) and “critical” periods (imbalance). The three stages are divided into the *theological stage*, dominated by priests and the military (Antiquity); the *metaphysical stage*, dominated by clergymen and jurists (Middle Ages and Renaissance); and, finally, the *positive stage*, governed by industrialists and moral and scientific guides (Modernity). The predominant factor in this development is undoubtedly what Comte defined as “intellectual evolution”, although we should not forget the influence of many other factors in the evolution of humanity.

Comte's reflections must be included in what he defines as the “normative theory”, which is also the most interesting for the present considerations. He believes that the development of a positive society should be spearheaded by industrialists and sociologists because, possessing superior knowledge, they act as guides for the rest of humanity – as did the priests and the military in the past. Science is – or should be – positive knowledge, that is, a knowledge that forswears the study of causes, focusing instead only on the verification of phenomena and their relations, building general laws to make science pragmatic for social objectives. Positive knowledge is the perfect form of knowledge, hence its placement in the third stage (positive stage) identified by Comte.

In the eyes of his contemporaries, Comte appears – willingly – as the prophet of a new religion, transforming philosophy (the new positive science represented by sociology) into religion, and is so convinced of it that he writes *The Catechism of Positive Religion* (Comte, 1858) which introduces the term “altruism”, which should have overcome the egoistic behaviours until then dominant in society. This new society is characterized by its orientation and regulation towards the common good, with great associative spirit and altruistic feeling; the latter also becomes a religious feeling, having Humanity as its new god. Altruists selflessly aim their actions at other people's good. The new positive order, in Comte's words, will have “Love as a principle”, “Order as a Base”, and “Progress as an Objective”. In this way, individuals will be full of love for their fellow human beings.

The evolution of altruism entails the subordination of self-love to the love for others and the satisfaction of their needs, as a source of well-being for the individual and society. Altruism can overcome selfish instincts (Comte believed that some

inclinations of human beings – including egoism and altruism – came from specific areas of the brain) only if it is paralleled by the rational capacity of human beings to negotiate within the system of needs by mediating between individual needs and social needs. In this logic, intellect and rationality function best at the service of human needs when they do so through the practice of altruism. Altruism, therefore, combined with rationality and intellect, pays attention to the freedom of others to compete for their existence and individual realization. Since individuals are limited by other people's freedom –the freedom of each is built not *at the expense* of others but *on* their freedom – it is imperative to complete individual freedom by devoting oneself to others. Individuals are a pure abstraction if they are not conceived in these terms in the social system. One way to achieve salvation is to act according to the spirit of brotherhood and a feeling of duty.

And it is precisely on this moralistic vision of altruism, which Comte would like to become universal for humanity, that the French scholar dwells in his last works. His main assumption went against the idea of egoism and altruism held by the Catholic Church. The latter, predominant until then, posed human nature as selfish and stated that positive actions toward others existed only as gifts from the divine grace, whereas modern biology was demonstrating that altruistic inclinations were innate in the human species. On these biological foundations, Comte bases his idea of the social system, even considering it one of the two most important discoveries of modernity, together with Nicolò Copernico's heliocentrism (Dixon, 2012) to the point of stating that positivism alone finally establishes a correspondence between theory and practice, relying mainly on the discoveries of modern science on the natural existence of altruistic instincts.

For Comte,

The individual must subordinate himself to an Existence outside itself in order to find in it the source of his own stability. And this condition cannot be effectually realised except under the impulse of propensities prompting him to live for others. The being, whether man or animal, who loves nothing outside himself, and really lives for himself alone, is by that very fact condemned to pass his life in a miserable alternation

of ignoble torpor and uncontrolled excitement. Evidently the principal feature of Progress in all living things is that the general consensus which we have seen to be the essential attribute of vitality should become more perfect. It follows that happiness and worth, as well in individuals as in societies, depend on adequate ascendancy of the sympathetic instincts. Thus the expression, *Live for Others*, is the simplest summary of the whole moral code of Positivism” (Comte, 1851-1854, I, pp. 565-566).

The “Religion of Humanity” is not pure worship but aims at organizing social life. Thus Comte, in his last works, returns to the germinal – political – problem: finding a solution for a state of crisis by trying to identify the laws that govern change and development in society. Once these laws are identified, it is possible to intervene, modifying the very structure of society. From these motivations began the birth of the new positive (sociological) science which, not by chance, Comte placed at the top of the hierarchy of sciences, not only for historical reasons (it was the last one to be born) but because this science had as its object of study the most complex one, society.

This aspect of Comte's religiosity was considered a minor part of his vast theoretical system and given scant weight. And the French scholar indeed faced plenty of criticism, particularly from Spencer who refused the assumptions on which he had founded all his theory aimed at establishing a “Religion of Humanity”. Comte’s “Religion of Humanity” had no other purpose than to make the social sphere sacred, because he was convinced that only the social man (*homo sociologicus*) could exist. I will not join this debate, my purpose being purely to highlight the greatest contributions to the development of altruism as an analytical concept for the social sciences. Synthesizing greatly, it can be said that Comte – whose thinking has affected much of the development of systems of ideas from the Enlightenment onwards in the Western world, regardless of their sharing – theorized that human altruism is natural, an instinct similar to egoism. They differ particularly for one aspect, the latter tending to the conservation of the individual,

while altruism is oriented to the conservation of the species sometimes playing a major role in the maintenance and social development of mankind.

5.2. Émile Durkheim and social solidarity

With Émile Durkheim's work, the history of sociology reached a fundamental stage. He intended to build a social science that could act as solid foundation for public action. At the same time, he was well aware that sociological research had not made progress enough to allow this new discipline to be the basis of new policies.

The approach of this French scholar – the natural father of sociology – presents a strong element of innovation compared to moral statistics, which in that historical period represented the positivistic *mainstream*. According to Durkheim's approach, the social order (structure or system) is the essential prerequisite for individual and collective action: the whole explains the parts. Human beings, only if and to the extent that they are inserted (integrated) into a system or belong to a structure, become social beings ("social actors"). Individuals regulate their behaviour in groups and society according to a complex system of norms that are consciously or unconsciously internalized, that is, they become an integral part of each. Given the theory in these terms, the functions of reproduction and persistence are highlighted. These functions are carried out by inculturation, education, conformity to norms, the combination of role expectations, in a society in which the constitutive element is supposed to be the consensus around values.

This difference between individual and social is outlined in dualistic contrasts: organic solidarity *vs.* mechanical solidarity, altruism *vs.* egoism, social fact *vs.* psychic fact, collective representation *vs.* individual representation, sacred *vs.* profane, social order *vs.* anomie. These contrasts are paramount in the explanations of many socio-cultural phenomena and of society in general. For example, Durkheim, through the opposition between altruism and egoism, explains the foundations of social solidarity in modern society and defines its implications in the book *Suicide* (Durkheim, 2005) published for the first time in 1897, identifying

what will later become the main typology of suicide by contrasting altruistic suicide with egoistic suicide. And it is precisely the theme of social solidarity that permeates Durkheim's entire work, as he considers it to be the element that binds and integrates individuals *to* and *into* society. Indeed, its absence determines what Durkheim will call social pathologies, such as suicide.

At the heart of Durkheim's studies, as mentioned above, lies the difference between individual and social. This dualism is outlined through contrast throughout the whole of the French sociologist's work (organic solidarity *vs.* mechanical solidarity, social fact *vs.* psychic fact, etc.). Among these is the contrast between altruism and egoism, expressed in the juxtaposition between altruistic suicide *vs.* egoistic suicide. Since the beginning of the last century, Durkheim's book (2005), *Suicide*, lies at the basis of all studies dealing with suicide. It is considered the "classic" text for an empirical approach to the study of this phenomenon since its first publication in 1879. According to Durkheim, suicide must be considered a social phenomenon and not an individual one. This is the work in which Durkheim proves more strongly that the new budding sociological science could study such a specific and individual problem as suicide, and provide, after careful analysis of the data, conclusions that can contribute to the explanation of this complex phenomenon.

In this study, Durkheim does not consider suicide as a mere individual act. On the contrary, following the line laid down in his other works, he wants to highlight, with empirical data, the predominance of social actions over individual ones. At the centre of his treatise, therefore, is not the act of suicide or the individuals who perform it, but the social conditions that determine it.

In Durkheim's theory, sociology must identify and eliminate the potential divisions within society before they create discomfort among its components. Furthermore, it must guide the subjects, leading them to plan their behaviour in a society that is increasingly functionally differentiated.

The French sociologist is therefore not interested in the way in which an individual decides "in full awareness" to end her life. An individual can decide to end her existence in a non-violent way (for example, by refusing food), but, according to Durkheim's theory, this behaviour still falls under the category of

suicide. All the acts that can be traced back to similar factors, well defined and tending towards the same end, constitute the elements of the same category – in this case, that of suicide.

Durkheim argues with the moral statisticians who preceded him in these studies, considering implicit the idea that the causality factor is exclusively social and not extra-social as they claimed. In the first part of his work, he goes so far as to refute the statements of these scholars about the reasons determining (or not) suicide. He does not explain the high suicide rates through natural phenomena (natural-telluric, climatic-seasonal, etc.), nor does he consider them a consequence of mental pathology. If the tendency to suicide, by its very nature special and defined, were a variety of madness, it would be partial madness and limited to a single act. A so-called “suicide madness” would be a “monomania” – and, indeed, that is how it has often been qualified.

It follows that the action of an individual is influenced by her environment, and this is true also for gestures as dramatic as suicide. Taking this position to the limit, Durkheim goes so far as to argue that the causes of suicide are to be found in the balance of two pairs of opposing moral forces (egoism-altruism and anomie-fatalism) resulting from the combination of two variables: *intégration* (integration) and *réglementation* (regulation). He opposes any form of individualism through the concept of social order¹ understood as the moral balance of society resulting from the combination of these last two variables. Durkheimian sociology, therefore, states the primacy of the social over the individual. By stating that society has a higher value than the individual, Durkheim wants to make it understood that society can only be explained through *social facts* and it is by observing the characteristics that these social facts assume in society that he gives shape to his typology of suicide, based on the different degree of dependence of the individual on society (egoistic, altruistic, anomic, to which he adds a fourth type, fatalistic). The four types of suicide trace this act back to the individual’s bond with society, which is the common substratum, even if these types are different from each other.

¹ The social order is subordinate to integration – a concept very dear to Durkheim. This integration is based on sharing and consensus around factors (beliefs, rules, values, etc.) that are thus consolidated and transmitted to become common.

“Egoistic” suicide results from poor integration of the individual into the social groups to which he belongs. This is the case when the individuality of the subject prevails over the community. Durkheim highlights these characteristics by analysing suicide rates in three social groups (religious, family, political) which he considers paramount for the moral and social order of society. These are the groups with which the individual interacts almost daily and throughout his life.

The support of the cohesive community prevents self-destructive dynamics. However, this is true only to a certain extent, beyond which integration acts in the opposite direction.

What characterizes *altruistic suicide*, unlike egoistic suicide, is the excessive integration within the social group, with the total cancellation of the individuality of the subject, who is completely absorbed by the duties imposed on him by collective life. This type of suicide can be found, in various forms, even in ancient populations, such as the suicide of individuals at the threshold of old age. A similar case was the voluntary death of servants and slaves following that of their masters, or the suicides of women following the loss of their husbands. These forms of suicide fulfil a duty towards society, hence why Durkheim defines them as *obligatory altruistic suicide*:

The combination of these two adjectives is required to define it; for not every altruistic suicide is necessarily obligatory. Some are not so expressly imposed by society, having a more optional character. In other words, altruistic suicide is a species with several varieties (Durkheim, 2005, p. 180).

Finding common elements in these two types of suicide (egoistic and altruistic) can be done only in terms of a flattened vision of life: for suicidal individuals of the first type there is no world outside themselves, for those of the second there is strong deprivation of an individual reality. This is even truer if we consider the synthesis proposed by Durkheim on egoism and altruism:

Having given the name of *egoism* to the state of the ego living its own life and obeying itself alone, that of *altruism* adequately expresses the opposite state, where the ego is not its own property, where it is blended with something not itself, where the goal of conduct is exterior to itself, that is, in one of the groups in which it participates (Durkheim, 2005, p. 179).

This definition not only highlights Durkheim's juxtaposition of two forms of individual conduct, but also the distinction between individual and society. Indeed, the dichotomy of altruism/egoism shows Durkheim's main ontological idea of society: its primacy over the individual. According to Durkheim, altruism and social solidarity are indistinguishable. As Bykov stated,

The idea of altruism in his [Durkheim's idea, editor's note] conception is almost indistinguishable from the idea of social solidarity as the emphasizes the formula 'Everywhere that societies exist there is altruism, because there is solidarity' (2017, p. 800).

Durkheim's hope, which also translates into his moral idea of society, is that in modern society – in which the individual and collective dimensions coexist – these types of suicide (altruistic and egoistic) will no longer occur.

Anomic suicide is the type of suicide Durkheim dwells on the most, because he considers it the most characteristic of the contemporary world. The basic difference between this type and the two previous ones is that, while their basic aspect is the *quantum* of the individuals' bond to society, *i.e.* the degree of integration to the society to which they belong, anomic suicide is linked to the lack of strong social rules – hence the term *anomie*².

² The concept of anomie has been analysed, in addition to Durkheim, by other scholars. In particular, this concept was redefined in the last century by Merton (1949), one of the leading exponents of structural-functionalism. The American sociologist states that the state of anomie indicates a situation in which there is a loss of credibility of the norms rather than their total absence. In this state, the "social actors" find themselves in a condition of discomfort because, since the normative

The term anomie can be considered as that condition in which forms of regulation of the relations between the organs (individuals) of a society (organism) are missing or lacking. Durkheim's description of anomic suicide is therefore emblematic: its causes are to be found in the partial or total lack of regulation within the social groups, which creates disorientation in the individuals. This type of suicide is found to a greater extent in periods of economic disruption that mimic the state of society and of the individual himself, who is no longer able to discern what is possible from what is not. Times of crisis (both in their positive and negative outcomes) lead to an increase in suicide rates. This statistical variation is justified by the change in social living conditions, which change the scale of social values that govern individual needs. This creates an imbalance between what is possible and what is not possible. Materialism leads the individual to think that there are no insurmountable limits to his desires. These

are thus unlimited so far as they depend on the individual alone. Irrespective of any external regulatory force, our capacity for feeling is in itself an insatiable and bottomless abyss. [...] It has been claimed, indeed, that human activity naturally aspires beyond assignable limits and sets itself unattainable goals (2005, p. 208).

To reduce this phenomenon and/or the effects of crises, Durkheim does not believe in the repression of individual desires, nor coercive actions, but points to the necessity to rethink the forms of organization of social groups.

In summary, it can be said that Durkheim's theory of suicide is all based on a balance of two pairs of opposing social moral forces: egoism-altruism and anomie-fatalism³. In turn, these find their explanation on two other variables: integration and regulation, respectively – the main pillars of the central theme of Durkheim's

values are no longer effective, they lose their references. Therefore, suffering is generated both if the norms are no longer effective and if they are formally present but meaningless.

³ *Fatalistic suicide* is considered of *second order*: its analysis is relegated to a note at the end of the chapter on anomic suicide. The scant relevance of this type of suicide in French literature is most likely due to the similarity of theoretical concepts between altruistic and fatalistic suicide.

sociology. The latter aims to reach the social order that is subordinate to integration, which is, in turn, based on sharing and consensus around factors (beliefs, rules, values, etc.) that are, for this purpose, consolidated and transmitted to become common (collective consciousness). This allows Durkheim to oppose all forms of individualism in favour of asocial solidarity that sees transformed from mechanical solidarity of communities to organic solidarity of modern society.

Durkheim's methodological innovation is therefore substantial: he separates the individual from the social. This approach will then become the paradigm of reference of sociology with Parson's functionalism (Parsons, 1949). The social takes precedence over the individual, the organic solidarity over the mechanical one, the collective representations over the individual ones. Collective representations acquire meaning through the institutions: the constant against the variability of individuals. Society cannot be explained through individual actions and motivations, but through external and constricting social facts that creep into individual consciousness (substratum of individual representation) constituting collective consciousness (substratum of collective representations). For Durkheim – as mentioned above – even phenomena typically considered individual, such as suicide, have a social determinant.

Among the many commentators on Durkheim's work on suicide, Talcott Parsons (1949) tries to reconstruct Durkheim's typology in another of his works: *The Division of Labor in Society* (1960). Parsons starts addressing Durkheim's typology by considering altruistic suicide as a direct consequence of *mechanical solidarity* due not to the similarity between individuals but their subordination to the group:

Altruistic suicide is a manifestation of a conscience collective which is strong in the sense of subordinating individual to group interests, and which has the particular content of a low valuation of individual life relative to group values (Parsons, p. 330).

Egoistic suicide, on the other hand, is characterised by *organic solidarity*, which tends to enhance the value of individual personalities. For Parsons, egoism is the reflected representation of the cult of the individual, rather than stemming from

collective or common conscience defined as “The totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society forms a determinate system which has its own life” (Durkheim, 1960, p. 79). From this simple definition, it can be deduced that collective consciousness and representation are independent of the rest of social life but constituted and reproduced in it. Not believing that egoism can stem from the transformation of collective consciousness, Parson disagrees with Durkheim and criticizes his position. He claims, instead, that egoism results from the reflection of the consciousness of individuals that almost contrasts with the collective one. The American scholar emphasizes the fact that the various types of suicide were not born simultaneously. More specifically, he believes that the concept of anomy, which has evolved during the development of Durkheim’s other works, was developed after those of egoism and altruism. In summary, the principle of Durkheim’s theory of suicide, as reconstructed by Parsons, separates anomic suicide from the other two types: the former is characterized by the absence of rules, while the others see the pre-eminence of the group over the individual and differ from each other in the content of the rules.

The emphasis is therefore on the origin of the regulatory power. In the context of altruistic and egoistic suicide, this is internal to the individual, originating from the process of socialization and mainly in the phase of the internalization of the rules. It then splits between collective content (*collective consciousness*) in the first case (altruistic suicide) and individual content (*individual consciousness*) in the second case (egoistic suicide), while for fatalistic suicide this regulatory power is to be considered external to the individual. Anomic suicide, on the other hand, is characterized by the total absence of rules and, therefore, of regulatory power.

It follows that the collective consciousness has a life completely independent from the individuals, it is almost an external coercion for the subjects, to the point of attributing negative definition to the action contrasting with the integrity of the consciousness of a given collectivity.

For Durkheim there is no doubt, that the *collective consciousness*

has not a specific organ as a substratum; it is, by definition, diffuse in every reach of society. Nevertheless, it has specific characteristics

which make it a distinct reality. It is, in effect, independent of the particular conditions in which individuals are placed; they pass on and it remains. [...] it does not change with each generation, but, on the contrary, it connects successive generations with one another. It is, thus, an entirely different thing from particular consciences, although it can be realized only through them. It is the psychical type of society, a type which has its properties, its conditions of existence, its mode of development, just as individual types, although in a different way (Durkheim, 1960, pp. 79-80).

And yet collective consciousness cannot be confused with social consciousness:

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 more than the psychic life of society, although, particularly in advanced societies, it is only a very restricted part (Ibidem, p. 80).

The collective consciousness represents the vital force of a community, therefore everything that tends to weaken or diminish this factor disturbs the individuals.

In *The Division of Labor in Society* (Durkheim, 1960), the French sociologist uses the term *representation*. While its definition is similar to that of *collective consciousness*, it will not replace this idea. On the one hand, he continues to consider collective consciousness as the main form of bonding of individuals within society, as well as the primary explaining element of social cohesion (the element that produces integration). So much so as to characterize the *mechanical solidarity* typical of traditional societies, in which individuals are similar to each other and share common rules and values. On the other hand, and at least in this work, representations are considered as a negative element because they often contrast with the conscience, or they are underestimated against the problem of meaning in social life.

Together with the principle of division of labour, instead, we see the development of a new type of solidarity (*organic solidarity*), based on the recognition of differences and less focused on norms and values.

As the division of labour progresses, the collective consciousness becomes weaker and, because of this progress, the division of labour becomes the source of solidarity. Although we should consider this as Durkheim's juvenile position, in *The Division of Labor in Society* he already raises the question that the division of labour may not even be a normal social phenomenon when the relations between organs are not regulated because they are in a state of anomie. After all, the historical period in which Durkheim elaborated his theories was rich in social changes. The fall of the *Ancien Regime* and the consequent loss of traditional institutions had brought collective life to two extremes: on the one hand, the individual with his needs that, if not satisfied, cause suffering; on the other hand, a centralized state unable to stop the selfish impulses of individual citizens. Individuals do not inherently possess a sense of the limit which, therefore, must be put in place by an external force. The latter can be only society, whose moral power is such to be respected by individuals.

These are the reasons why he later changed his position and pointed out that even those systems that had developed a high degree of organic solidarity, nevertheless needed a common faith, a *collective consciousness*, if they wanted to avoid their disintegration into a cluster of mutually antagonistic individuals, aimed only at self-assertion (Coser, 1977). Durkheim's sociology, therefore, envisages the primacy of society over the individual. The scholar opposes any form of individualism through the concept of the social order understood as the moral balance of society resulting from the combination of two variables: integration and regulation. By stating that society has a higher value than the individual, Durkheim wants to make it understood that society can only be explained through social facts and that man becomes an integral part of the social – the organ of an organism – only after overcoming his egocentric nature. The collective consciousness as it is conceived by Durkheim transcends social divisions to form the main bond of the community and ensure its continuity over time. Although it is spiritual, it imposes modes of thought and action on individuals, and it is actualized in institutions through social,

moral, juridical or political rules, as well as in religious visions, through collective beliefs or rituals. The collective conscience arouses representations, again collective, which constitute the basis of all human judgments underpinning individual actions. And it is through the latter – the collective representations – that the primacy of the social over the individual is affirmed once again.

Durkheim's first true conceptualization of *collective representations* can be found in the appendix to *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1982). However, it is possible to date, with a wide margin of certainty, the birth of collective representations as a tool for explaining social phenomena, especially those of cohesion and integration, with the publication of the essay *Individual and collective representations* (Durkheim, 1953), which wants to be a comparative study through the process of analogy between the laws of sociology and psychology. In its opening pages, Durkheim states that collective life – like the mental life of the individual – is made up of representations. We can therefore presume that individual and social representations are somehow comparable, as they are both in the same relationship with their respective substrates. In this way, the representations are seen as phenomena. And as such, the scholar cannot pretend that they do not exist, since the observation reveals the existence of an order of phenomena called representations that are distinguished by specific characteristics from other phenomena of nature. It is contrary to any method to consider them as if they did not exist.

In this much-neglected essay, Durkheim highlights the autonomy of sociology from psychology and shows how representations are a novel and untried object of study, completely original also given the historical period. Individual representations are considered a psychic phenomenon based on memory and the re-enactment of memories (where the latter shares with the former only the physiological state). Collective representations, instead, are independent from organic connections. They are psychic facts with their persistent reality, and as representations, they can act on each other. Individual and collective representations do not lack similarities, if only for the simple fact that both are representations. Just as the substratum of individual representations is the consciousness of each individual, so that of collective representations is the whole

of society. In the same way as the collective consciousness, therefore, collective representations (made explicit as the constitutive dimension of social life) are stable elaborations that repeat themselves over time, are internalized by individuals, but exist independently of them. These representations are to be understood as “collective” in the sense that they are shared by all the members of a social group and are coercively handed down from generation to generation. In other words, the existence of collective representations is deduced from the reality of individual representations to which the social fact is added.

The most significant examples of this phenomenon are found in the evolution of religions. It is not by chance that Durkheim, in one of his best-known texts, *The elementary forms of Religious Life* (1995), offers an accurate analysis starting with an examination of the totemic system of the Australian warramunga tribe, together with a look at the possible paths for the social sciences and the possible future of modern Western societies. In this text, we find all the concepts of Durkheim’s theory, as well as references to collective representations. Indeed, from the introductory pages, in which he describes the object of his study and his theory of knowledge, he states that the basis of all systems of beliefs and all cults must necessarily be some fundamental representations and ritual attitudes that, despite their different forms, have the same objective meaning and perform the same functions everywhere. This stems from the fact that the first systems of representations that man has made of the world and himself are religious. Religious representations are collective representations that express collective realities. Rituals are ways of acting that arise in groups and are intended to arouse, maintain, or reproduce certain mental states of these groups.

The individual ranges between two modes of behaviour (*homo duplex*): on the one hand, the individuality of each subject, on the other hand, everything in the human being expresses other than himself. These two types of states of consciousness are not only different in their origin and their properties: there is real antagonism between them, they contradict and deny each other. Men cannot devote themselves to moral ends without depending on themselves, without crushing the instincts and propensities most deeply rooted in their bodies. The first is the “profane” nature of the individual: everything that depends on the body in mental

life (sensations and appetites) is to be considered profane and inferior forms of human activity because they favour particular ends. The second is his social or “sacred” nature, through which man expresses reason and carries out the moral activities privileging collective ends – thus considered at the top of the hierarchical scale of activities. According to Durkheim, human duality is only one form of the division between sacred and profane that is found at the base of all religions and also characterizes the distinction between individual and collective representations.

In the field of study of social representations, Durkheim deserves the great merit of having conceptualized them, defining them as forces (and at the same time as phenomena) that can prompt us to act, although he does not care about the dynamics connected to them except as regards the spiritual life, since he considers them natural phenomena. Critics of the French scholar (chiefly individualists) claim that he ignored the issue of the meaning that individuals attribute to their lives, as he has long underestimated the concept of representation and neglected the phenomenon of collective representations. Consequently, he did not give due importance to the role those collective representations – as expressions of social reality – play within a community and its cohesion and integration. This has led to Durkheim being given the label of determinist, perhaps rather approximately, since in his analyses he has completely excluded the influence that individuals can exert on each other and, taken together, on society. In Durkheim’s sociology, representations (even though they present themselves as novelties) are not a specific object of study; rather, they represent a tool through which to explain society. The French scholar was not sufficiently far-sighted in understanding the importance that collective representations, as he had originally conceptualized them, once they had lost their static nature, would later assume: a paramount role in the processes of construction of social reality and consequently on the integration of individuals within the society.

In conclusion, if in the 19th century the prevailing approach to the study of society was the hard Positivism of moral statistics, with Durkheim, considered one of the founding fathers of sociology, there is a renewal on the assumption that the individual is subordinate to society as the latter is a superior organism. Only if they are integrated into a system or belong to a structure, and depending on their degree

of integration, do human beings also become social beings (“social actors”). Consequently, the structure (or system) always comes before the individuals since it precedes and can explain them. This idea will then become dominant in the United States with Parsons’ and Merton’s structural functionalism, which will influence all Western sociological thought for the explanations of socio-cultural phenomena and the dynamics of change in society, including those related to its integration and cohesion. The social order is the essential prerequisite for individual and collective action.

To underline this difference between individual and social, Durkheim in all his works thinks through opposing dichotomies (organic solidarity *vs.* mechanical solidarity, altruism *vs.* egoism, social fact *vs.* psychic fact, collective representation *vs.* individual representation, sacred *vs.* profane, social order *vs.* anomie), each of which aims to assume fundamental importance in the explanations of many socio-cultural phenomena and society in general but also, and above all, to bring out the clear distinction between individual and social.

5.3. Marcel Mauss and the “gift”

Studies on altruism must combine the system with individuals. They must be able to combine objective and subjective aspects, taking into account all the dimensions, levels and factors involved in the expression of altruism. This suggests that its analysis must consider the multidimensionality and multifactoriality that characterizes it. In this perspective, we propose a reflection on a specific aspect of society, and especially of the relationships between individuals, that, while recalling altruism, enjoys its own definition: the gift. We will refer to Marcel Mauss’ classic work *The Gift* (2002). In this work, Mauss, citing Boas’ studies on the *potlatch*⁴

⁴ The *Potlatch* is a ceremony that takes place between Native American tribes on the Pacific Northwest Coast of the United States and Canada. It is a ritual ceremony, which traditionally includes a seal or salmon banquet, where the hosts show their wealth and importance through the distribution of their possessions, thus prompting the participants to reciprocate when they hold their own potlatch.

ritual (1897) and Malinowski's on the *kula*⁵ ritual (1922), describes the sociality of gift in archaic societies.

Steiner (2016) pointed out that Mauss' contribution extends Durkheim's thought while promoting the passage from the stark altruism-egoism opposition to that of gifts and counter-gifts. Gifting is no longer just for archaic society: it happens also in modern society with forms and ways usually linked to organizations, which makes these exchanges more complex and not too far from those taking place in the market. The gift produces exchanges that are not governed by a contract and thus it not only allows greater initiative by encouraging creativity, but it also strengthens social ties. There are at least three differences between a gift and a contract: *i*) the gift is free; it is done by choice. There is no obligation for individuals to donate or reciprocate (lacking any form of sanction, the constraint is merely moral); *ii*) there is no guarantee of restitution and therefore the exchange is based on trust and the evaluation of the receiver of the gift. But if in general terms trust and mistrust can be considered an expectation of experiences by the individual (with a positive and negative value, respectively), the former entails a cognitive and/or emotional burden such as to allow to overcome the threshold of mere hope (Mutti, 2007) and consider a relationship positively; *iii*) the gift requires reciprocity, there is no abolition of debt (as in contracts of purchase/sale). It is exactly the opposite, the gift induces indebtedness towards the other and the longer the period of repayment, the more active the link between the two parties is. In this way, there is a shift from an approach reducing individual action to mere exchange (*do ut des*) to an approach focused on the overall interactions between the aspects of exchange and all other relevant social and cultural variables. The paradigm of gift, therefore, underlines

⁵ The *kula* is a symbolic exchange of gifts between the people of the Trobriand Islands in Papua Nuova Guinea. Its participants underwent trips of hundreds of miles by canoe to exchange gifts consisting of red shells necklaces (*soulava*), exchanged in a northerly direction (the trip is in a clockwise circle) and white shell bracelets (*mwali*), exchanged instead in a southerly direction. The exchange takes place between different objects: necklaces for bracelets and vice versa. Its characteristic was that the objects had to change hands continuously and the exchange was accompanied by a rigid ritualization.

the importance, positive and normative, sociological, economic, ethical, political and philosophical, of this type of action.

Speaking of gift in modern society seems like an oxymoron, given the clash between the idea of a sympathetic and supportive society (solidarity) and that of a society in which everyone pursues only their self-interest. This binary idea of society determined also a sort of geographical bipartition: the utilitarian and rational western society that shuns the use of gifts as a way of building social cohesion or ties, unlike the other so-called “exotic” societies that are still based on this type of action. This has prevented scholars from recontextualizing the phenomenology of the gift and updating it to modern society (Caillé, 1988).

But what were Mauss’ considerations? His essay exposes some fundamental aspects of the nature of the gift that can also be generally transposed to Western societies.

The first of these aspects is the “obligatory sociality” of the gift, represented by the cycle “give/receive/reciprocate”, strongly present in the primitive societies studied: one must “give” to show one’s power and wealth. The obligation to give is induced by community and honour bonds: those who cannot find and own objects to introduce into this circle are excluded from the community. Furthermore, one must “receive” to guarantee a peaceful relationship (refusing the gift is an offence to the giver); and, finally, one must “reciprocate” by reciprocating the gift with an equivalent or better one or again risk offending the giver. But what determines the last form of obligation (reciprocation)?

According to Mauss, the objects donated and received have symbolic, mythical and religious characteristics that bind and influence the individual who gives or receives them. In particular, he referred to the Maoris’ “*hau*”, that designates, as does the Latin *spiritus*, both the wind and the soul—more precisely, at least in certain cases, the soul and the power in inanimate and vegetal things, the word *mana* being reserved for men and spirits. When the received object has a soul and incorporates the *hau*, this tends to return to its place of origin; therefore, the receiver must get rid of it, reciprocating the gift. If this does not happen, the spirit contained in the object becomes evil.

Mauss also stresses how in primitive and ancient communities the “thing” (*res*) had a higher value than in modern society. The difference with the past is that for primitive societies the “give/receive/reciprocate” cycle was useful, not in the utilitarian economic sense, but in the sense that giving and receiving was in the interest of both giver and receiver. The individual who shuns the gift is marginalised from society, just like the receiver who does not accept, or who does not correspond, offends and undermines the ties with the community of the giver. The gift described by Mauss in primitive societies is therefore not gratuitous and disinterested: it establishes a cycle of goods so that everyone has an interest in engaging in its closure. Not only does the gift determine a form of “credit”, an expectation of replacement of the gift, but it also determines the “power” of the giver towards the receiver.

A further aspect is that the gift strengthens and preserves social and community bonds between individuals, between individuals and the community, and between communities. The obligation to close the “give/receive/reciprocate” cycle promotes and strengthens a dense network of social and community relations within primitive tribes. Gifting is a social ritual that strengthens cohesion as it reinforces the relationships of all parts of society.

Finally, Mauss defines the gift as a “total social fact”.

That is to say, in certain cases they involve the totality of society and its institutions (potlatch, clans confronting one another, tribes visiting one another, etc.), and in other cases only a very large number of institutions, particularly when these exchanges and contracts rather concern the individual. All these phenomena are at the same time juridical, economic, religious, and even aesthetic and morphological, etc. (2002, pp. 100-101).

The “total social fact” is the theoretical object defined by Marcel Mauss that most influenced the anthropology of the last century. For Mauss, the “total social fact” was a powerful tool for the scholar: a basic structure through which it was

possible to settle and interpret distant dynamics of a different and complex nature, such as that of the gift.

For Mauss, studying “total social facts” entails several advantages for researchers:

Firstly, there is the advantage of generality. Those facts that relate to the general functioning of society are likely to be more universal than the various institutions, or the various themes that relate to these institutions, which are always more or less accidentally tinged with local colour. But above all such a study has the advantage of reality. Thus one succeeds in seeing the social ‘things’ themselves, in concrete form and as they are. In societies one grasps more than ideas or rules, one takes in men, groups, and their different forms of behaviour. One sees them moving, as one does masses and systems in mechanics, or as in the sea we notice the octopuses and the anemones (Mauss, 2002, p. 102).

The gift is therefore part of what Mauss calls the “*system of total services*” that, involving all social classes and all forms of community life, is both a social and an economic system. This shows that in archaic societies, unlike modern ones, there is no separation between the economic and the social-emotional sphere. Mauss, in line with his demonstration that all sociality based on gifting relies on the search for interest and profit, concludes his essay with an interesting interpretation of *Homo oeconomicus*. According to Mauss, the distinctive character of modern *Homo oeconomicus*, compared to those of the archaic man is to be found not in the search for profit and interest (already existing in primitive societies), but in the rationalization and technicalization of this research.

Mauss’ work attempts to overcome two widespread paradigms of the social sciences: utilitarianism (methodological individualism) with *Homo oeconomicus* and holism with Durkheimian collectivism. This attempt will then be taken up again by updating Mauss’ work through a modern interpretation of his study by the

scholars who founded the MAUSS⁶ (Mouvement Anti-utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales). The acronym is not accidental: these scholars wanted to highlight their esteem of the French scholar (and the strong ideal link with his thought).

The third paradigm is proposed by Alain Caillé (2007) who asks the following question: what if the gift was the instrument with which men create society? The gift becomes a promoter of relationships and social bonds because man is not content to just live in society and reproduce it, but he must actively produce a society in order to live. Thus, we make a great leap forward in reading the “value” of goods and services: no longer only “use value” and “exchange value”, but also “bond value” because the bond becomes more important than the good itself. This also defines the difference between primary and secondary sociality (Caillé, 1995) in which the former refers to personalized relationships built over time, while the latter refers to the relationships developed between functions and not between individuals. It is easy to find and understand the gift in a primary sociality. In a secondary one, instead, it becomes more difficult, unless we define the three dimensions of analysis of sociology: the *micro* (of the alliance between individuals), the *meso* (of the alliance of individuals with groups and groups between them), and, finally, the *macro* (of the relationship of individuals and groups, and groups of groups, with the symbolic totality that they form). The first level is the gift, with its face-to-face relationship, the second we can ascribe to associations and the third level is that of politics.

5.4. The Altruistic Creative Love of Pitirim A. Sorokin

At the present juncture of human history, a notable increase of an unselfish, creative love (goodness) in the superorganic world is the paramount need of humanity (Sorokin, 1958a, p. 184).

⁶ Among the main promoters of the MAUSS are Gérard Berthoud, Alin Caillé, Jaques T. Godbout, Jean-Louis Laville, Serge Latouche and Guy Nicholas.

This is the endpoint of Sorokin's strenuous work. Beyond any form of "prophetic vision" and all the controversies that followed the above statement, the Russian American sociologist had an "intuition" synthesizable in the idea that humanity itself must act for its salvation. Hyper-individualism has led to conflicts between individuals and groups, whose negative effects reverberate on these same individuals and groups:

In the twentieth century interhuman strife assumed the catastrophic proportions of two world wars and many other wars, of endless bloody revolutions and revolts, not to mention crimes and milder forms of the "struggle for existence". At present, due to the discovery of the intra-atomic secrets and to the invention of Apocalyptic means of destruction, this moral anarchy begins to threaten the survival of mankind and especially the continuation of its creative mission. The situation explains why a notable increase of unselfish, creative love in the total human universe is the paramount present need of humanity" (Sorokin, 1958b, p. 185).

Sorokin's attention never deviates from what he described as the indivisible sociocultural trinity (personality, society, and culture). At this point in his studies, however, his attention focuses on the individual and her mentality. Moreover, Sorokin never departs from his idea of sociology as a science engaged in the study of meaningful interactions between all the elements of superorganic phenomena. Sociology should light the way to improve the living conditions of individuals. And here are the origins of another of Sorokin's criticisms towards the *modus operandi* of some social sciences (particularly sociology and psychology), *i.e.*, being "negativistic". These disciplines reveal only negative or pathological phenomena, without ever pointing to positive and healthy ones.

According to Sorokin, altruistic love is not just a feeling, but a positively vital force that can push phenomena towards the highest levels of solidarity (social interaction). Considering this, the terms used by Sorokin since the book *Contemporary Sociological Theories* (1928) to qualify the conduct of human beings

are not “conflicting” and “cooperative”: with a telling choice, he adopts the terms “antagonistic” (or “compulsory”) and “solidaristic”. The latter term is not by chance: it is precisely the social responsibility of solidarity that is entrusted with guaranteeing the safeguard of social vulnerabilities, thus presupposing reciprocity. The main problem of a constantly changing society is the lack of mechanical solidarity ties – as *per* Durkheim. The person’s action emerges as a causal dependence between her physical involvement and the pressure exerted on her by the environment. The term “solidarity” therefore presupposes a greater involvement of all the interacting parties in the social system. In this way, not only do we avoid neglecting social protections for the more vulnerable people, but we also stimulate individual energies and autonomous initiatives to strengthen the protection and safeguard for all people. Applying a solidarity model, therefore, leads to two important transformations: on the one hand, institutions must assume a control function by guaranteeing individual freedoms and offering minimum universalistic protection; on the other hand, there is the multiplication and differentiation of the individuals involved in the decision-making processes related to collective well-being goals.

The solidarity form of human conduct, however, will then be replaced by the “love relationship”, that love considered by Sorokin as “the supreme and vital form of human relations” which, before reaching this conceptual maturity with the works produced in the years in to which the activities of the *Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism*⁷ were raging, had already made its appearance in previous writings through which the genesis of this concept can be delineated.

A premise is necessary before focusing attention on altruistic creative love: in Sorokin's theorizations, the idea that individual development is in close relationship with the socio-cultural organizations of society is never abandoned. The personality is not merely the result of the conflict between conscious and unconscious (as in

⁷ This centre was established in 1949 thanks to funding from Mr Eli Lilly and the Lilly Endowment and aimed at studying – in an interdisciplinary way, through the promotion of research and symposia – the theme of altruism, analysing its various types, aspects, and dimensions, as well as the effects on the individual, social, and biological life.

Freud's theory), but instead the result of a more complex negotiation between several aspects. In this regard, Sorokin describes, in general terms, four levels whose combination leads to the development of the acting personality: (1) the *biological unconscious*, *unconscious*, which is the lowest level and represents instincts; (2) the *biological conscious* or the *bioconscious*, the level in which the energy of the person's body becomes conscious and can control instincts; (3) the *sociocultural conscious* or *socioconscious*, which is formed by the ways of interacting with others, by the personal experiences that are realized together with others through collective life and that are transmitted from individual to individual, from group to group, and from generation to generation; and (4) "The *supraconscious* level represents the fourth and highest level of psychic activities, mental energies, and personality. It is the level of inspiration for spontaneity, originality, and creativity of genius. In the writings of all civilizations it is designated by numerous expressions, such as 'the divine element in man', 'the manifestation of divinity', 'the sublime energy of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness', 'creative genius'" (Vexliard, 1963, p. 167).

The idea of love fits into this theoretical framework as "the supreme and vital form of human relationship" (love relationship) and as such the ways, forms, and power of this energy (love energy) are to be studied. This force is likened, for their similarities, to an iceberg:

Love is like an iceberg: only a small part of it is visible, and even this visible part is little known. Still less known is love's transempirical part, its religious and ontological forms. For the reasons subsequently given, love appears to be a universe inexhaustible qualitatively and quantitatively. Of its many forms of being the following can be differentiated: religious, ethical, ontological, physical, biological, psychological, and social (Sorokin, 1954, p. 3).

These forms refer to the very aspects of love:

a) religious love, refers to the experience of love for God or the Absolute;

- b) ethical love, “*is identified with goodness itself*. Love is viewed as the essence of goodness inseparable from truth and beauty” (*ibidem*, p. 6);
- c) ontological love, is considered the highest form of unifying, integrating, and harmonizing creative power or energy. This is the “core” of love that makes the world go round. Without it, we would witness the collapse of the physical, biological, and social world (D’Ambrosio, Faul, & Research Fellow, 2014);
- d) physical love, refers to love expressed through the unifying, integrative, and ordinating energies of the universe;
- e) in the very nature and basic processes of life the biological counterpart of love energy manifests itself.

This energy, still little known, and often called the ‘vital energy’ that mysteriously unites various inorganic energies into a startling unity of a living – unicellular or multicellular – organism [...] without the operation of a biological counterpart of love energy, life itself is not possible, nor its continuity, nor the preservation and survival of species, nor life evolution, nor life evolution, nor the emergence and evolution of Homo sapiens» (Sorokin, 1954, p. 9);

- f) psychological love includes all the intellectual aspects of emotional, affective and desire experiences. For its very nature, psychological love is an “altruistic” experience;
- g) social love is the last of the forms identified by Sorokin “on the social plane love is meaningful interaction – or relationship – between two or more persons where the aspirations and aims of one person are shared and helped in their realization by other persons” (*ibidem*, p. 13).

It emerges that love not only has multiple aspects and forms but also different dimensions. Sorokin identifies five for which he does not promote a psychometric analysis in consideration of the fact that these have both scalar and non-scalar characteristics, however believing that it is possible empirically to find evidence or testimonies. The five dimensions are now described through the words used by Sorokin himself: (i) *The Intensity of Love*:

In the intensity love ranges between zero and the highest possible point, arbitrarily denoted as infinity. The zero point is neither love nor hate” (Sorokin 1954, 15);

(ii) *The Extensity of Love:*

The extensity of love ranges from the zero point of love of oneself only, up to the love of all mankind, all living creatures, and the whole universe. Between these minimal and maximal degrees lies a vast scale of extensities (ibidem, 16);

(iii) *The Duration of Love:*

may range from the shortest possible moment to years or throughout the whole life of an individual or of a group” (ivi);

(iv) *The Purity of Love:*

ranges from the love motivated by love alone – without the taint of a ‘soiling motive’ of utility, pleasure, advantage, or profit, down to the ‘soiled love’ where love is but a means to a utilitarian or hedonistic or other end, where love is only the thinnest trickle in a muddy current of selfish aspirations and purposes (ibidem, 17);

and, finally, (v) *The Adequacy of Love:*

The adequacy of the subjective goal of love to its objective manifestation ranges from a complete discrepancy between the subjective goal of love actions and its objective consequences, up to their identity. Inadequacy may have two different forms: (a) love experience may be subjectively genuine in the loving person, but the objective consequences of his love actions may be very different from,

even opposite to, the love goal; (b) a person may have no love experience or intentions subjectively, yet the objective consequences of his actions, though motivated by something else than love, may be most beneficial for others, similar to the effects of genuine love. The first sort of love experience and activity is altruistic subjectively but not objectively. The second sort of experience and action is not altruistic subjectively but is altruistic objectively (*ivi*).

Although Sorokin referred to the ways and power of love, he made the words “love” and “altruism” interchangeable during all the activities of the *Harvard Research Centre*, as shown in his book *The Reconstruction of Humanity* (1948), which accurately describes the different types of altruism.

However, Sorokin does not just describe aspects and dimensions of altruistic creative love, but considering it as energy, he hypothesizes that it can be produced, accumulated, and distributed by individuals and institutions.

The Russian-American sociologist identifies five steps through which he can produce and improve love energy: (1) The Increase of Creative Heroes of Love, here he refers to the great creators and thinkers (for example, Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, Mozart, etc.) and the heroes or apostles of love (for example, Buddha, Christ, Francis of Assisi, Gandhi, etc.) - remember that in the book *Altruistic Love* (1950), which is the first work published by starting the activities of the Harvard Center, Sorokin applies his ability as a social analyst to a study of the characteristic traits of people who are sensitive to the needs of others and who respond freely with kind help: the American “good neighbors” and “saints” Christian-Catholic.

(2) The Increase of Creative Heroes of Truth and Beauty, the thinkers and creators of different fields of science and the arts are great forges for the generation of some of the components (truth and beauty) of the highest value (love energy). According to Sorokin, “Among all the meaningful values of the superorganic world there is the supreme interal value – the veritable *summum bonum*. It is the indivisible unity of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. Though each member of this supreme

Trinity has distinct individually, all three are inseparable from one another [...]. These greatest values are not only inseparable from one another, but they are transformable into one another” (Sorokin, 1958b, p. 180).

What is needed is a growth in the love of parts of society: (3) *The Increase of Love by the Rank and File*, (4) *An Increase in the Production of Love by Groups and Institutions*, and finally (5) *The Increase Love-Production by Culture and the Total Culture*.

If these are how to generate or increase love energy, it is not a utopia to think that this can also be accumulated and distributed (King, 2004).

Love acted as an antidote. Its force created little islands of health amid great sickness. It is this that gives me hope for today [...]. Some day – perhaps soon – mankind will learn what individuals have always known: that love is the only truly creative force in the world (Sorokin, 1958b, p. 17).

In the text *The mysterious energy of love* (1959) - the year in which the Harvard Center activities end - Sorokin maintains that although they have little knowledge of this energy and the methods of production and use of it, they are sufficient to justify the hypothesis that the “grace of love saints” is one of the three highest energies known to man (together with those of truth and beauty). These are the peculiarities that make creative altruistic love a powerful tool for the reconstruction of humanity, which was falling into a marked sensualism due to the transformations of its cultural mentality.

The activities of the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism allowed Sorokin to bring to the attention of researchers - albeit with few proselytes - issues that were snubbed by the social sciences (love and altruism) who were too busy researching the negative values instead of positive ones. According to Sorokin, change must start from the rediscovery of the positive values of man and science acts as a guide also through the overcoming of strictly sensory knowledge models.

In about ten years of study and research activities at the centre, Sorokin defines a triadic typology of altruism that is based on self-identification and is distinguished in *early-fortunate*, *late-matured* or *late-catastrophic*, and *intermediary*. *The early-fortunate* is the type of altruist who self-identifies from early childhood with the value system. They develop loving behaviour because they were born in or belong to environments that favour altruistic growth. *The late-matured*, or *late-catastrophic*, is instead quite different from the former: the behaviour change is due to a sudden turning point in their life (an event that divides life into pre-altruistic and altruistic) which consists in the reintegration of the value system. Finally, *the intermediary* lies in between the two previous types by accentuating the characteristics of one or the other. Obviously, not all forms of self-identification help in transforming individuals' behaviour towards altruism.

Regarding the Centre's activities, three reports have been published (in English and French), all signed by Sorokin (1955; 1963 chap. 15, 1995), but each of these has a different ending but all attributable to the basic idea of Sorokin according to which social scientists must take a leading role in the social transformations necessary to “rebuild humanity”. The report published in the French magazine *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* ends with the following statement: “L’humanité se meurt par disette d’amour. Les vastes champs de l’univers humain demandent des jardiniers de cette fleur merveilleuse. *Vivos voco!*” (Sorokin, 1955, p. 103). It is interesting to note that this “call” had not the same terms in the two English versions. In the one published after Sorokin’s death on the concession of his son Sergei (Sorokin, 1995) and derived from private documents there is no “call” at all. An exhortation is present – in less categorical terms, but equally clear and always in Latin – in the account that appeared in the autobiography:

I have devoted some ten years of my life to the study of the ‘mysterious energy of love’. This study has seemingly added something to the extant knowledge of this energy. If the results are more modest than I might have wished, my excuse can be expressed by an old adage *Feci quod potui faciant meliora potentes* (Sorokin, 1963, p. 292).

These different endings do nothing but confirm Sorokin's firm belief in the potential of the social sciences as a guide for humanity. He even hypothesized a new applied science that would deal with the promotion of friendship, unconditional love, and mutual help. The first task of this new discipline is an accurate analysis of the main aspects, properties and basic forms of altruistic relationships and love energy, which means that amitology starts from the study of social relationships and interactions. The application of these assumptions implies an understanding of the mechanisms by which human beings make their decisions based on their degree of knowledge of a certain situation. This brings the discourse back to the problem that Sorokin raised in his essay *Integralism is My Philosophy* (1958b) on the construction of an integrated system of knowledge that may hold together the three forms: empirical-sensory, reason, and intuition. He argues for a knowledge system able to provide as many elements as possible to understand superorganic phenomena, to have the opportunity, whenever possible, to foresee their transformation.

According to Sorokin, transformations must start from the rediscovery of man's positive values and science is also a guide through the overcoming of strictly sensory knowledge models. In the case of sociology, it is not only a sociology of crisis, but a “critical sociology” that does not stop analyzing the degeneration processes of society but searches for its deep roots by denouncing the negative factors that determine it.

At the time when Sorokin expressed his “foolish” ideas – as they were then defined by some of his colleagues (Sorokin, 1955) – and still today while this work is coming into being, no solution has yet been found for the devastations and wars. This is because individuals tried to act from the outside, thinking of changing political and economic institutions without directly intervening on them. These attempts are destined to fail because, to change institutions and the economic system, it is necessary to change the individuals acting in these very institutions and systems. Or, rather, it is necessary to transform people's way of interacting by orienting them towards the love relationship that characterizes a free, harmonious, humanistic, and creative society.

Sorokin's cannot however be termed “sociological humanism”; instead, we could speak of a committed “humanistic sociology”. It does not analyse and study only social phenomena but is a science that, with its peculiarities, contributes to the analysis and study of the most human part of individuals and society (living man). The purpose is to contribute to the discovery of human beings as creative and responsible social actors.

5.5. Serge Moscovici and the elementary forms of altruism

The path we have taken to highlight how the concept of altruism, or similar concepts, have been addressed by social scientists began with the precursor of this discipline: Auguste Comte, who coined the term. It is fit that it should end with another scholar of the European school, precisely the French school: Serge Moscovici. In his essay *Les formes élémentaires de l'altruisme* (2000a), he argues that both altruism and egoism can be considered problematic behaviours depending on their interpretation which, in turn, is based on the social and cultural expectations of the society of reference. Moscovici did not try to explain altruism, but rather to highlight the lack of interest, especially among European scholars, in this sociocultural phenomenon. His attempt is based on the social representations⁸ that shape many of the social explanations used by individuals to justify their actions and those of others.

As shown by the extensive literature (Duveen and Lloyd, 2005; Jodelet, 1984; Moscovici, 1984), to study social representations, it is necessary to analyse the relationship between the systems of symbolic relationships held by social actors (individuals and groups) and the complex cognitive systems of each individual. In

⁸ In this work we will refer exclusively to “social representations” as forms of elaborated and interpreted knowledge. However, it should be made clear that there are other strands of study related to representations: that of “cultural representations” (Levy-Bruhl, 1970), based on what is defined as the “law of participation” that involves constant mystical participation with the world by individuals, and that of “mental representations” (Vygotskij, 1978; Kozulin, 2015) that are tools created by cultures that guide and transform the cognitive work of individuals.

the flow of daily experience, social actors try to articulate the dialogue between the individual and society in the concrete context of the existing symbolic relationships between subjects, groups, and institutions. The process is influenced by “stereotypes”, “prejudices” and, more generally, “beliefs” (Moscovici and Markova, 2006). The common feature of all these psychosocial phenomena is that they express a social representation that individuals and groups build to act and communicate. Representations, as symbolic constructions influenced by the social position of the individuals who produce them (Jodelet, 1984), perform the fundamental function of “conventionalizing” objects, individuals, events, giving them a precise form, assigning them to a given category and defining them in a model, distinct and shared by a group of individuals. Furthermore, they are prescriptive, that is, they impose themselves on us. Representations are widely shared cognitive elaborations of reality that guide the individual processes of sense-making. The systems of representations existing in any culture are transmitted and stem from a long sequence of elaborations and changes occurring over time (Laszlo, 2002).

One of the prerogatives of social representations is that they allow ideas to be transformed into collective experiences and interactions into behaviours. They correspond to the “consensual” universe and re-establish collective awareness by giving it form, explaining objects and events in such a way as to make them accessible to all and to make them coincide with the interests of individuals. Then, *“the purpose of all representations is to make something unfamiliar, or unfamiliarity itself, familiar”* (Moscovici, 1984, p. 37). The unfamiliar attracts and intrigues the community, alerts individuals, forces them to make explicit the implicit assumptions that are the basis of consensus. The fear of losing the usual points of reference, of losing contact with what provides a sense of continuity, of mutual understanding, is unbearable. When diversity imposes itself in the form of something that is not “enough” as it should be, individuals instinctively reject it because it threatens the given order.

The act of representing (*representation*) is a means of transferring what disturbs us, what threatens the universe of individuals, from the outside to the inside, from distant to close. The transfer is made by separating concepts and perceptions

normally connected and placing them in a context where the unusual becomes usual, where the unknown can be included in a recognized category. When theories, information, and events multiply, they must be reproduced at a closer and more accessible level, transferred to the consensual universe, defined and re-presented. To give something a familiar aspect, it is necessary to activate two mechanisms of thought. The first mechanism (*anchoring*) strives to anchor unusual ideas, to reduce them to ordinary categories and images, to place them in a familiar context. Anchoring, therefore, is a process that brings something foreign and disturbing that concerns us into our system of categories and compares it with the model of a category that we consider suitable. Anchoring means classifying and naming something, it is the rooting of representation in society.

The aim of the second mechanism (*objectification*) is, instead, to objectify these ideas, *i.e.* to transform something abstract into something almost concrete. This mechanism turns the unusual into usual so that it becomes manifest, accessible, concrete and, consequently, more controllable. In this way, we shift from the abstraction of the idea to the concreteness of the image. When an idea enters everyday knowledge, it is materialised.

As Moscovici (1961; 2000b) has shown, the image of the concept ceases to be an indication and becomes a replica of reality. Then the notion or entity from which it is derived loses its immaterial character and acquires an almost physical, independent existence. What is perceived takes the place of what is thought, and images become real factors, rather than factors of thought. Thus, the distance between the representation and what is represented is compensated.

It is ontologically and epistemologically correct to argue, then, that social representations shape many social explanations, which is why individuals try to know what is real before wondering why something happens in the way it happens; they must reduce ambiguity and make the information unequivocal. Social representations allow the transformation of something unknown, or little known, into something “familiar”, shifting from the *reified universe* (characterized by scientific causality) to the *consensual universe* (characterized by social causality)⁹.

⁹ It is necessary to clarify these two concepts. For “scientific causality” the effect is explained *a posteriori*, attributing the cause based on theories or explanatory models legitimate and shared by

Social representations, therefore, have specific content and meaning that differs from one sphere to another (public and private), from one society to another (different cultures) and within the same society because of the variety of experiences and biographies among the members of the community, and as such, they are paramount for the creation and transformation of content. The processes that generate the representations are processes of “construction of reality”, understood as that process that allows individuals to continuously create, through their actions and interactions, a common reality experienced as objectively factual and subjectively significant. Everyday reality is a socially constructed system to which people accord a certain order and sequence in phenomena, that is, a reality that contains both subjective and objective elements, where the former bear witness to the significant reality of individuals and the latter refer to the social order or the institutional world as a human product (Wallace and Wolf, 1980). From Durkheim’s idea of “collective representations” as determined and independent from individuals, we conceive “social representations” as historical phenomena constituted and re/produced by individuals who interact and who continuously build and re/construct daily social reality through processes of signification.

Social representations, therefore, shape many of the social explanations used by individuals to justify their actions and those of others. This process also makes the individual-society dynamic understandable: each individual lives within one or more social structures and knows what they are, but if they have to provide explanations about them or about the activity of the structures within which they act, they will certainly refer to their social, mental, and cultural representations, since they are an expression of reality. It is the idea that the individual has built himself of society and that persists in time by reproducing itself. In other words, it is a privileged knowledge that the individual, as part of society, has managed to acquire through experiences and analyses of his behaviour and attitudes and those of others.

the scientific community, while for “social causality” both the effects and the causes are directly related to our social representations that allow to identify and recognize the specific context and the reality of the situation.

The theories presented allow us to include Moscovici's reflections on altruism in the appropriate reference framework. In his essay *Les formes élémentaires de l'altruisme* (2000a), not by chance published in a book titled *Psychologie sociale des relations à autrui*, edited by Moscovici himself, he considers altruism not in its biological or moral aspects – as many authors had previously done, especially in sociobiology – but as a relationship of individuals and, above all, as a relationship between individuals and society. And it is precisely on the relationship between the individual and society that he claims that both altruism and egoism can be considered as problematic behaviours, depending on their interpretation, which in turn is based on the social and cultural expectations of the society of reference. The scholar presents himself as a cultural relativist, not in its negative meaning, which refers to ethnocentrism, but in its application as a methodological principle according to which, to escape ethnocentrism, a culture must be studied without preconceptions and without comparing it with other cultures. Any cultural element, such as customs, can only be explained in its cultural environment, just as altruism and egoism can only be studied in the cultures and societies where they occur. In a society where altruistic behaviours prevail, those departing from this “normality” are deviant (egoistic behaviour), while the opposite happens in a society where egoistic behaviour prevails (altruistic behaviour will be considered deviant). And it is precisely on this principle that Moscovici affirms that altruism can be considered neither a characteristic of human nature nor an instinct.

He distinguishes the three elementary forms of altruism (participatory altruism, fiduciary altruism, and normative altruism) based on two orders of principles: *a*) all definitions converge on the fact that altruistic behaviour presupposes a non-egocentric position (self-sacrifice). The problem of finding a definition is typical of the concept of altruism; Moscovici does not propose his version but refers to Macaulay and Berkowitz's (1970) as very close to his own: “as behavior carried out to benefit another without anticipation of rewards from external sources.” (p. 3). This definition implies that behaviours of this type are universally present and that they are all independent from external sources, and that those who decide to act altruistically do so voluntarily. Therefore, there is agreement on the fact that those who perform altruistic actions do so through a sacrifice of themselves and

because their interests are directed towards others; *b*) there is no altruistic personality because individuals behave differently along the temporal dimension even in the presence of the same situation. Moscovici comes to this conclusion when he wonders whether there are “true altruists” or rather whether there is an “altruistic personality” such as the “introverted” or “authoritarian personality”. There is no scientific evidence to sustain the existence of an “altruistic personality”, but only similar conditions that unite individuals (Rusthon, 1980; Futz and Cialdini, 1990), that can be summarized as follows: i) individuals help others only in certain situations; ii) individuals are not always in a position to help others; and iii) the same individuals who in certain circumstances give help may not do so in other circumstances.

Considering the above, someone cannot be defined as “altruistic” compared to someone else, nor it can be said that if an individual has behaved altruistically in a given situation he will always do so or he will do so in other situations. It depends on the context, therefore there are no constants in altruistic behaviour. What is constant, instead, is the fact that altruistic and prosocial behaviour takes place within a relationship. Hence the three forms of altruism proposed by Moscovici, which we will try to describe with the help of examples.

The first form is “participatory altruism” (*altruisme participatif*), characterized by a strong integration of the members of society and a high degree of division of labour. The example we will use to better describe this form, however, comes from the animal world and is that of ants and bees. This is because no community like that of an anthill or a beehive can best describe the idea of participation in the community by implementing cohesion and stability. Transposing this image to the human world, the strong participation in common life remains what causes individuals (individual or collectives) to sacrifice all their time and energy, and more rarely their lives for all those involved. For example, altruism towards family members, the religious community, one’s country, or unknown comrades or individuals (much more rarely) who find themselves in a difficult situation. Although Moscovici affirms that there is no “free altruism”, in the case of participatory altruism he states that exists without the others (*altruisme sans autrui*) because it is not addressed to a precise identified subject but the whole community.

In participatory altruism what emerges is the “us” that binds together the members of the group, the community or society, and it is for this “us” that individuals are ready to sacrifice themselves. In this case, altruism is directed at supporting that bond that cannot be broken for the survival of the group of which one is part, regardless of the form that the latter may take. In a way, the self is joined with the other in the “us”, they become almost interchangeable, so much so that we can no longer distinguish when we are doing something for the other or the good of the “us”.

The second form is “fiduciary altruism” (*altruisme fiduciaire*). Starting from the idea that some animal species also help beings of other species, Moscovici wonders what human beings seek in a relation of help between them. The answer is sufficiently obvious: they seek trust. And since the relationship of trust is based on the relationship in which each party acts in full independence from the other, they could also be disappointed for lack of gratification. Here is involved another factor: empathy. The more empathic one is with the suffering and misery of others and the more fiduciary altruism seems to increase since the sense of responsibility and guilt often increases positive actions towards others. The fiduciary relationship (relationship of trust) reduces the distance between *ego* and *alter*, and through empathy, it smooths out the harshness of one’s interests and the feelings that separate the individual from the social environment of which he is part. In other words, fiduciary altruism makes it possible to create an intersubjective world and promotes intersubjectivity.

The last form identified by Moscovici is “normative altruism” (*altruisme normatif*) which, if it cannot be understood as altruism in the subjective sense, is certainly altruistic in the objective sense of action. Moscovici claims this because he wonders whether it is possible to consider an act of pure altruism one in which a third factor, *i.e.*, a norm, intervenes. As he then explains, every society and culture have their system of classification of altruism and egoism, together with a repertoire of who should or should not be helped in certain circumstances. And this brings the reflection back to the theory of social representations. Based on the latter, Moscovici distinguishes two macro representations of altruism. The first considers it from the point of view of the relationship between individuals (responsibility);

the second considers it in collectivity in an impersonal way (solidarity). Although he is aware that this may not be the correct way to study altruism, Moscovici believes that this is a logically inevitable approach in social psychology. Moreover, one of the advantages of this approach is to acknowledge that many of our institutions – social security, insurance, pension funds, mutual societies, etc. – are institutions of normative altruism. Both are therefore representations centred on responsibility or solidarity that must be balanced so that the institutions can function satisfactorily for the social system as a whole. The normative prescription (social or cultural) to provide help and assistance to those in need is linked to the sense of responsibility but also to the fact that those who are suffering are not responsible for their condition and do not take advantage of the circumstance. In other words, the saying “God helps those who help themselves” turns into “others will have to help those who help themselves”, and this is seen as an obligation. These processes offer an idea of this form of altruism that religious beliefs or education have instilled as a “duty” in the conduct towards others: helping one’s neighbour or defending someone who is in danger. The expectations prescribe altruistic behaviours and distinguish those who adhere from those that disobey the rules.

After he describes the forms of altruism, Moscovici tries to draw general conclusions. Firstly, he believes that forms of pure altruism (an attitude or behaviour caused only by the motivations of those who act in a disinterested manner) are unlikely to exist. This is because, according to Moscovici, the economic principle according to which “we have nothing for nothing” is forgotten in the analyses, thus believing that we can receive without giving because there is an obligation of altruism: an individual must do his duty through the sacrifice of his time and energy in the name of moral rules and social imperatives. Given this, Moscovici maintains that society holds mixed forms of altruism that can be further divided into two types: “egoistic altruism” and “altruistic egoism”. The former concerns those who use their sacrifices and generosity towards others for their benefit (receiving gratitude or other material/immaterial goods); it cannot be considered pure altruism because it is based on a selfish principle (that of receiving something in return and making others feel obliged to repay). The latter is practised by those who give themselves to others to satisfy their feelings of guilt or

responsibility (for example, that of a parent who does not spend for himself but his child). Secondly – stemming from the idea that altruism is linked to the relationship between individuals and between them and society – Moscovici claims that in society there are mostly mixed forms of altruism, depending substantially on the intensity and duration of the relationship and the situation.

However, Moscovici did not try to explain altruism for two basic reasons: first, because he did not believe that there was an explanation both coherent and based on observations and, second, because the existing explanations, particularly those by sociobiology or psychoanalysis, cannot be used without strongly criticising their assumptions. Rather, he wanted to unearth the disinterest of scholars of social sciences, particularly French ones, in this sociocultural phenomenon. His attempt is based on the social representations that shape many of the social explanations used by individuals to justify their actions and those of others, and it is precisely on the social representations that his typology of forms of altruism rests.

CHAPTER VI

BEYOND THE DICHOTOMY EGOISM/ALTRUISM: “ALTRUISTIC RELATIONSHIPS”

6.1. Altruism and egoism as symbolic-cultural realities

In a scenario as complex as the contemporary society, relationships are paramount for social phenomena and, therefore, in the processes of *social construal*—*i.e.*, in the socio-psychological processes by which individuals perceive, understand, and interpret the world around them to give it meaning and determine their actions and judgments. It is necessary – particularly for sociology – to distinguish between the different levels of analysis (Collins, 1988): the *macro*, *micro* and *meso* dimensions. The first pertains to social systems and their organization forms (the object of study are the structure and its systems). The second deals with social actions and the relationship between individual and society (the object of study are the individuals and their actions). The third focuses on the relations between the social system and the life-world, understood as the set of meanings and representations of culture. It is this dimension that will characterize our path from this point on.

The representations of altruism and egoism in contemporary society are constantly changing, in parallel with the transformations of society itself. The factors causing altruism or egoism are no longer ascribed to human nature but people’s conduct, freedom, relationships, and associative forms. The attention is now on two elements of the daily life of individuals: culture and social relations. With the support of recently developed meso-range theories, I will try to describe the links between altruism, egoism, culture, and social relations.

Culture is a fundamental dimension of everyday life; it is necessary to understand it as such in the various situations of the social world. Its study allows

for sketching paths to improve the relationships and forms of the interactions between individuals, and between these and other elements of the system.

Culture is far from a static element. On the contrary, it is built and reconstructed based on a continuous definition process allowing for the identification of shared values and attitudes that support both structure and actions. And yet, we cannot forget that human actions are culturally determined and filtered through the approval of the group of belonging. Culture contains the tools (language, symbols, signs, etc.) that give [it] meaning, being shared within a context that must then validate the action, including those in situations considered “altruistic” or “egoistic”. It contains both the rules that govern the group and the characteristics that distinguish it, and it is thus crucial for individual action. Culture allows legitimacy but its intrinsic value does not depend on its usability or applicability. These peculiarities define the functions of the cultural system, allowing individuals to “survive” the external environment, promoting integration within the community of belonging and reducing the anxiety that can arise in individuals for unforeseen situations or changes.

The symbolic systems used by individuals to exchange meanings and knowledge are, in fact, a constitutive element of the social context of reference because they are rooted within the culture and the specific linguistic codes. The development of further knowledge can only stem from a system of symbols and meanings shared by a culturally determined community, which, inevitably, thinks about itself and the surrounding world through such symbols and meanings. Symbolic-cultural systems are therefore an inexhaustible source of wealth for acquiring and building the knowledge that allows us to form an interpretative space for the meanings of the reality that we experience with others. There are no meanings beyond those that can be traced back to the knowledge shared and consolidated in a specific social group. Nor, obviously, outside those found in the text or words used by those who communicate within it. This first reading of the relationship between altruism/egoism and culture draws a complex scenario. The world and the individuals are an endless network of relationships based on events that intersect, overlap, are mutually determined and often contrasting. Defining and processing the daily chain of events allows the reproduction of “meaning” through “symbolic

mediation". In turn, this allows the interpretation as well as the construction of reality. The dynamics connected to communicative processes are particularly relevant since it is through them that knowledge is transformed into models of reality, that is, into symbolic mediation between the intimate aspects of private life and the aspects of the public life of human beings in their everyday lives. Social reality, including therefore the construction and identification of what is altruistic or egoistic, arises not only from the social meanings attributed to a certain phenomenon (cultural object) but also from the products of the subjective world of individuals. Patterns of action and human relationships are built according to the meaning attributed to daily existence; individuals find a world of meanings and events that become real for them because they are "social beings".

On these premises, Mary Douglas (1985) states that culture is a "mnemonic system" that helps individuals calculate the risks and consequences of their actions, thus shifting the barycentre from the individual to the collective idea. A community uses its accumulated shared experience to determine which losses are likely to be most harmful, and which damage can be avoided, by establishing the scale of values by which the consequences are judged (serious or trivial). Douglas' general cultural theory should be seen in the broader context of her studies on primitive thought and taboos (Douglas, 1966), which are related to the behaviour of modern man in situations of risk and danger. At the basis of her interpretation is the principle that "in all places at all times the universe is moralized and politicized" (Douglas, 1992, p. 4). The concepts of altruism and egoism become key terms to this end.

In modern societies, however, altruism and egoism do not perform the same function as in pre-modern ones: the replacement of "altruism" with "egoism" is typical of contemporary society, since the globalization process has established cultural systems capable of integrating ever-larger communities, within which individuality and attention to oneself have increased precisely because of (and in reaction to) the advent of the "world system" (Wallerstein, 1976). In their daily actions, individuals try to avoid harmful events. To do so, they do not base their reasoning on precise economic or probabilistic calculations, but rather on conditions that allow them to overcome the crisis by identifying objectives at the same time tangible and flexible, often delegating this function to social

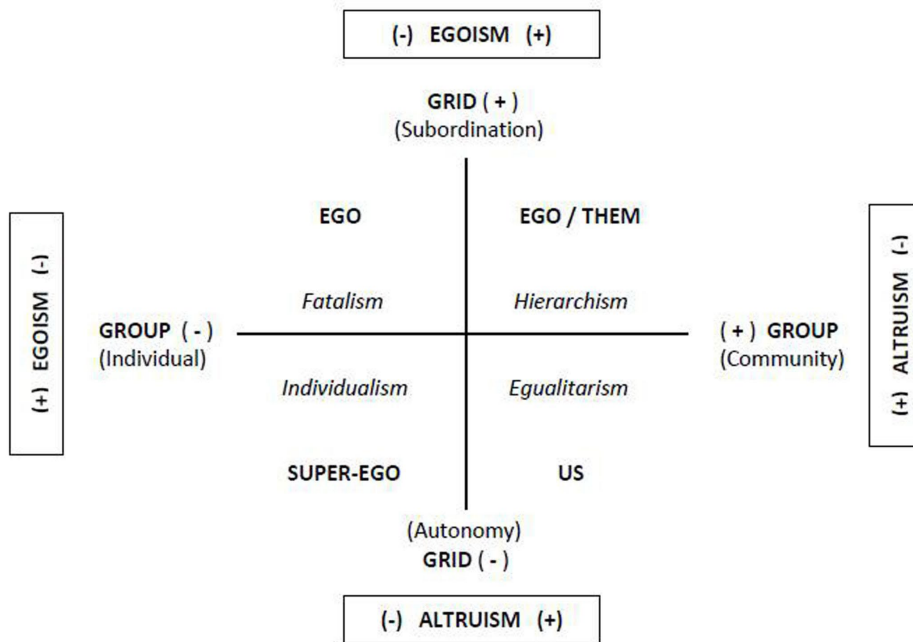
organizations, including the institutions. On these considerations, I will apply the grid-group model (Douglas, 1970) on two dimensions – precisely those of grid and group. Although it was created to order and organize the risk-related rationales adopted by social groups and organizations (Douglas and Wildavsky, 1983; Schwarz and Thompson, 1990; Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky, 1990), it shows potential also for the dichotomy of altruism/egoism.

This model hypothesizes that all societies can be compared by evaluating the degree of separation between insiders and outsiders and by considering the border between each individual and the rest of the world. The *group* can have a strong sense of belonging - and cohesion - or vice versa. The two extremes of this continuum are group and individual, respectively. The *grid*, instead, is the system of rules that connects each to the others. It refers to all the other social distinctions and delegations of authority that individuals adopt to limit the interference of others. The two extremes are autonomy and subordination. Groups are distinguished between those with a strong adherence to the rules (heavy cultural constraints) and those with a low degree of adherence to the rules and high cultural autonomy. By crossing group and grid, we obtain four forms of social and cultural organization, matched by as many individual attitudes.

The model (*Fig. 1*) produces along the grid axis – autonomy (-) / subordination (+) – a continuum of positive actions (altruistic, + / -), ranging from a maximum to a minimum value. In the social organizations characterized by egalitarianism, what prevails is the concept of “Us” – the same “Us” identified by Moscovici (2000a) in the form of participatory altruism – which allows recognizing Alter based on the similarity between individuals. Conversely, in the hierarchical ones there is a dichotomy “Ego/Them” in which the Ego is sufficiently integrated to produce positive actions, but in a limited form, since individuality is privileged and there is a strong distinction of roles. On the opposite front, in individualist organizations, the “Super-Ego” prevails, projecting all actions onto itself. Therefore, there are no positive actions towards others, but only self-beneficial ones. The entity of these self-oriented actions is gradually reduced in the case of fatalist organizations because the “Ego” prevails and there is a sort of reliance on “luck” or “fate”. Further analysis also reveals a reading along the group axis – individual (-) / community

(+) – in which the transition from “Ego” to “Ego/Them” and from “Super-Ego” to “Us” tend to produce an increase in positive actions.

Fig. 1 – Application of the grid-group model to altruism/egoism



Source: Mangone (2020, p. 157)

This being but a model, we will obviously not find such distinct situations in real life. Nevertheless, it contributes to the understanding of the complex process of representation of altruism and egoism – which so far continue to be considered within a dichotomy. Different social organizations produce different ideas of the world and, therefore, different cultural systems of reference, which become the frames within which to interpret attitudes towards the other.

Although static, the symbolic-cultural approach allows us to define, through the general cultural theory, the conceptual boundaries within which we can then review and redefine the processes of social construal to add more tiles in the composed mosaic of description and interpretation of the reality of social dynamics related to altruism and egoism. However, there still are some preeminent issues that must be taken into account: *a)* the influence of actions on the objectives of the individual; *b)* the community of reference as an integral part (or not) of the objectives of the

individual; *c*) the influence on the individual or collective good depending on the type of community; and, finally, *d*) the type of community that is based on support, commitment, organization and boundaries defined by its members.

In summary, it can be said that the cultural approach can help to understand the way in which actions are perceived, offering a systematic view of the very wide range of objectives that individuals seek to achieve. In other words, altruism and egoism cannot be considered a problem linked to the nature of human beings, but rather a problem of everyday life, for which we should consider the political implications and positions of individuals against individual and collective objectives.

6.2. The “altruistic” and “egoistic” relationships

The attitudes and actions of individuals towards each other are therefore influenced on the one hand, by culture, and on the other, by the indissoluble link with context and everyday life. Thus, we move away from the search for the *cause* of a phenomenon (principle of causality) to focus instead on those overall interactions (relationality) that Sorokin (1948) had defined as the indivisible sociocultural trinity (Society, Culture, and Personality).

Having identified the elements constituting the everyday life of individuals, that is, culture and social relations, we will now turn our attention to the latter. We will pay attention to the relationality of individuals, in an attempt to overcome the dichotomy of altruism/egoism by addressing aspects that, in previous studies, have been little, indirectly or marginally considered.

Our starting hypothesis is the idea that there are no altruism or egoism understood in a behavioural sense, as argued by sociobiologists or behaviourists, but that there are “altruistic relationships” and “egoistic relationships”. We will, therefore, turn to the relationship, particularly to the “relationship in action”: a relational process that is an interaction between individuals placed in a sociocultural context. The influence is reciprocal and circular: the context partially influences the processes and *vice versa*.

The passage from the principle of causality to relationality outlines the reciprocal relationship between the life-world and the social system and represents the pivotal moment in which attention is paid not only to the individual as the recipient of decisions but to the individual as a “subject” and active part in relational processes (Donati and Archer, 2015). Relationships are influenced by the cultural system and the everyday life and biography of the individual. These aspects were examined by both Mauss (2002) and Moscovici (2000a): the former referred to the need to close (exit) the “give/receive/reciprocate” cycle of the gift, while the latter discussed the elementary forms of altruism. Both point out that these actions are based on the relationality of individuals. Sorokin focused his concluding studies at *The Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism* on the transformation of human solidarity. He claimed its replacement by the “love relationship” – that iceberg-looking feeling (“Love is like an iceberg: only a small part of it is visible, and even this visible part is little known”; Sorokin, 1954, p. 3) that he considered “the supreme and vital form of human relationship”.

This way privileges the spaces of the Ego/Alter relationships within societal processes, since all social phenomena, attitudes, and actions, are built in an environment that has its places, times, and symbols, which are fundamental in the cognitive processes of self-signification activated by individuals for the construction of social realities in their daily relational experience. In his essay *Les formes élémentaires de l'altruisme* (2000a), Moscovici argues that the study of altruism is linked to the relationship between individuals (intensity and duration), as well as to the situation that they experience. This suggests that the renewed interest of the social sciences in altruism – or similar forms of relationships – can be read as an attempt to reconfigure the Ego/Alter relationship starting from the transformations of society and the “doings and beings” of human beings.

The relationship is therefore the process here analysed. It is this method that overcomes the altruism/egoism dichotomy, since static forms and terms are replaced by processes: “altruistic relations”, such as relations in favour of society (pro-social or hetero-directed), and “egoistic relations”, such as relations in favour of oneself (anti-social or self-directed).

For this procedural and methodological order, we chose not to address the problem of defining the concept of altruism, taking for granted that, although differentiated, all its definitions agree on some aspects, synthesized by Simmons as follows:

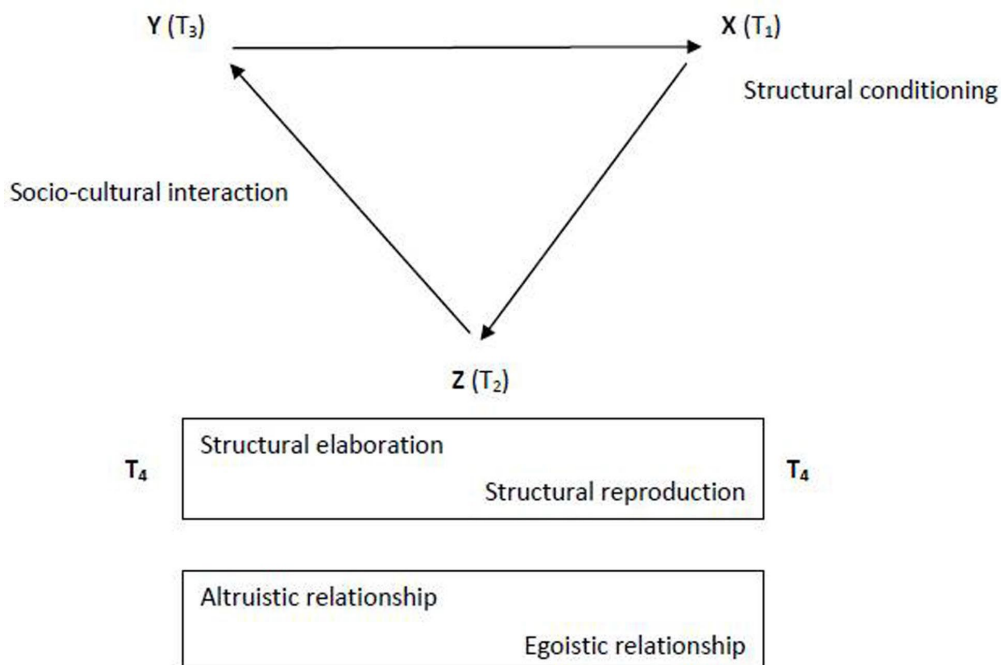
(1) seeks to increase another's welfare, not one's own; (2) is voluntary; (3) is intentional, meant to help someone else; and (4) expects no external reward" (1991, p. 3), and previously inherent in Macaulay and Berkowitz's definition according to which altruism was to be considered "as behavior carried out to benefit another without anticipation of rewards from external sources (1970, p. 3).

Once again, we see here an implicit reference to the relationships between individuals. Simmons' items are no less than the basic elements of human relationality: (1) the presence of an "other", be it generalized or not; (2) the will to interact and enter into a relationship; (3) a precise sense and meaning, and finally (4) the absence of expectations on the other.

In this direction, we will start our reflection from Archer's morphogenetic theory (1995). The scholar first gave concrete impulse – despite vast criticism – to overcome some key dichotomies in the history of sociology (individualism/holism, structure/agency, micro/macro). Archer claimed the simultaneous presence of several factors and levels in the process defining the aims and characteristics of the social systems that implement them. In this way, the relationship between individual and society is multidimensional and must be read from the point of view of the *morphogenetic theory*: *macro* stems from *micro* and conditions it by retro-acting on it (cycle) through certain processes (social or structural conditioning, socio-cultural interaction and structural elaboration and reproduction). Micro and macro cannot be studied separately, nor one can be given precedence over the other since structure and action are different levels of a stratified social reality, each with specific and non-reducible characteristics. In morphogenetic theory, processes are dependent on interaction with the real world, so society must be studied for how it is (the morphogenetic cycle represents a time sequence because the structure always

precedes action and its outcomes in the form of reproduction or innovation) and not for how we wish it to be. Starting from the assumption that cultural systems result from human action and that, once they reach their autonomy, they influence future generations, the importance of interactions between subjects within the morphogenetic cycle is clear. These are interconnected with both the cultural conditioning (structure of the cultural system) and with the resulting processing aimed at either confirming or changing it (reproduction and innovation, respectively). This shows that the outcomes of a process, in the case of relationships, can lead to pro-social or anti-social outcomes, and the processes of interaction – not going in one direction only – produce emerging effects in several directions. Applying this multidimensional vision to altruism and egoism means observing cultural and social systems, individuals, but above all the relationships that are formed between them, overcoming the traditional visions that kept these levels and the various elements involved in the *social construal* processes separate.

Fig. 2 – Application of the morphogenetic cycle



Source: Elaboration of the Author

If we try to draw (*Fig. 2*) the relationship referring to the morphogenetic cycle, we can hypothesize that the starting point is the subject (X) who acts towards the subject (Y) through relational modalities (Z); this characterizes what is defined as structural conditioning and represents the first moment (T₁). The altruistic or egoistic relationship (Z) is the second moment of the cycle (T₂), aimed at the subject (Y) – the third moment of the cycle (T₃) – and it is in this passage, from T₂ to T₃, that socio-cultural integration is revealed. All the interacting elements reach T₄, which represents the moment in which the three elements structurally elaborate and reproduce the significant interactions linked to a condition that produces or can produce “altruistic relationships” or “egoistic relationships”.

In reality, therefore, studies on altruism must combine the system (objective dimension) with the individuals (subjective dimension), that is, they must be able to combine objective and subjective aspects, taking into account all the dimensions, levels and factors involved in the social relation. The relationship with reality is never given and at every subsequent moment (T₁-T_n) some possibilities beg to be explored. This way privileges the spaces of social relations within the processes developing in society: all social phenomena and attitudes and actions towards others are built in an environment with its places, times, and symbols. These features are fundamental in the cognitive processes of self-signification activated by individuals for constructing social realities in their daily life experience.

After all, the ground on which individuals manifest “who they are” and “who the others are” is precisely the relationship with the others. On this issue, Dubar (2003) distinguishes between a biographical identity process (identity for oneself, “who the individual would like to be” – belonging) and a relational one (identity for others, “who the individual is for others” – attribution). This dualism must flow into an identity negotiation (complex communicative process) between who asks for identity and who offers it. It can be said, therefore, that the dynamics, in the relationship between those who express pro-sociality and those who receive the effects of this expression, produces benefits to both parties involved in the relationship.

This, however, requires individuals to re-compose their identity in a specific context (social relation). Again, its places, times, and symbols are paramount for

the processes of self-recognition and hetero-recognition. This way privileges the spaces of relationships, which become important for the recognition of identity through and within the relational investments of each individual. This process implies an “objective transaction” between attributed and assumed identities, which can lead to a conflict between the stakeholders and the social organizations offering status, roles, categories and other forms of recognition. The “objective transaction” involves main *identification spaces* – places where the “main status”, in Goffman’s sense (1981), is recognized – within which individuals consider themselves sufficiently recognized and valued. Being able to “play” with different spaces and to “negotiate” one’s investments and “manage” one’s belongings is a basic element of the objective transition. Compared to Mauss’ “give/receive/reciprocate” relationship (2002) for the gift, which would hypothetically imply an obligation to reciprocate, we can argue that the exercise of negotiation eliminates the supremacy (power relations between the giver and the receiver) arising within the relationship. Negotiation is seen, therefore, as a form of regulation of the social relation and ensures that the aim to be achieved is not prearranged, but is built during the process and, even where it is fixed, is never definitive, but subject to further modification and discussion.

The key point is that ‘giver’ and ‘receiver’ are in a very complex relationship, which is located in a relational network characterized by increasing changes in all its elements; moreover, it is too often believed that any asymmetry in this type of relationship is due to the communicative behavior of the ‘giver’, who highlights his dominance. Actually, the differences are more due to cultural factors and identity construction than to factors intrinsic to the relationship: the distance between ‘giver’ and ‘receiver’ forms a model of rational organization, which codifies and finalizes the relationship and that could be defined as Taylorist-utilitarian (Mangone, 2019a, p. 37).

For this reason, we propose to overcome the altruism/egoism dichotomy in a relational key: the “altruistic relations” as pro-social or hetero-direct relations, and

the “egoistic relations” as anti-social or self-directed relations. The social relation is not a constraint for the individual, rather, it is what promotes the self-determination of the subject based on reflexivity (May and Perry, 2017). If these are the general elements of social relations, the “altruistic relationships” and the “egoistic relationships” present some peculiarities: in everyday life, they are not “neutral categories” and their results will depend on the type of balance established between “goals and means”. To clarify, we will transpose for the “altruistic and egoistic relationships” what Merton (1968) said about *anomie*: the “altruistic relationships” and the “egoistic relationships” are a “normal” fact, a consequence of the pressures of the social structure on its members.

Each society sets limits, through legal and/or cultural norms, to the satisfaction of individual and collective aspirations, also establishing the legitimate means that can be used to satisfy them. These limits are perceived as necessary in a stably structured society, but in an ever-evolving society, there are oscillations of the limits that create dissonance (Festinger, 1962), a condition that often determines attitudes the outcomes of which are neither always predictable nor always positive for all parties involved.

If we recall the two elements that, according to Merton’s theory, constitute the social system, we can better understand the origin and the directions of these pressures: the first is the structure (in this case, the cultural system), the second is the social structure formed by the statuses and the related role functions. For both these structures there are institutionalized values: the “goals”, aspirations, and interests of the members of society, prioritized according to the social system of reference; and the “means” or norms that establish how to achieve the goals. There is not always the same emphasis between goals and norms, let alone a constant relationship, despite the efforts of social institutions to maintain a balance between these two institutionalized values.

People assume individual adaptation patterns (Merton himself proposes a typology) that vary according to their position in the social structure, as social status is what sets the opportunities to reach a goal through legitimate means. It follows that the possibility of an “altruistic relationship” is greater where there are greater legitimate opportunities to reach the proposed goal. The adaptations used take

different forms according to how the antinomy between the “goals” set by culture and the “means” used to achieve them is resolved, or, taking up again the elements of the symbolic-cultural theory, between the poles of the grid-group model (autonomy/subordination, and individual/community).

In other words, interacting individuals often find it difficult to grasp the “meaning” of what happens or is about to happen and this goes together with the feeling that the attitude to be taken is hazy or unclear because it is impossible to explain the whole interweaving of the social relation. To simplify, we can divide the “altruistic relationships” and the “egoistic relationships” into macro-areas. The first is the area of *needs*, in which these correspond to the “goals”, while all that concerns their satisfaction is linked to the “means”. For this area, we must distinguish the goals of a material and primary nature – Maslow’s scale of needs (1954) – from the secondary and relational ones: for the former, the resources or means are well defined, while for the latter the combinations can be multiple given the numerous elements involved. The second is the area of the *transaction*, characterized by a situation of “exchange” between individuals through the relationship and the mutual expectations of demand and capability to respond. Finally, there is the area of the *transition*, which includes all those situations particularly significant for the life cycle of individuals, where each transition is a goal to be achieved by using means of the primary network of relationships to find a new balance.

6.3. A proposal for a new model

To sum things up, we can say that altruism, in contemporary society, detached from the elements that linked it only or almost exclusively to human nature or to purely economic aspects, plays a role in the daily life of individuals and their subjectivity that needs further investigation to better explain and understand both its dynamics and its results. Nevertheless, neither individuals nor communities always activate the ability to respond to (reflect on) situations that require “altruistic relationships”. If the term activation indicates a series of processes that emphasize

the active role of the subject in determining the causes or premises of events and effects affecting his behaviour, talking of pro-action means recognizing that even the possibilities of action offered by the social context fall under individual responsibility. Individuals, therefore, seldom adopt a pro-active position, preferring a re-active one, which is typical of a situation with little or no social relations from which descend the processes of reflexivity that allow a conscious and responsible decision making.

To clarify once again, however, that, we do not believe we should talk of altruism or egoism, but rather of “egoistic” or “altruistic” relationships, we will try to build a model based on the elements already mentioned and which characterize both the symbolic-cultural approach and the morphogenetic cycle. This attempt to deconstruct or, rather, to break down the relationship is fundamental because it is impossible to study altruism based only on aspects related to the personality of the individual. Together with personality, we must consider also the social and cultural aspects because every form of action that has positive effects, not only on those who act but also on those who receive it, is nothing more than a form of interaction and therefore of social relations between two or more parties.

This model is articulating the existing connections between the different and multiple conceptual categories that allow the construction of “altruistic” or “egoistic” relations that allow individuals to improve their and others’ well-being, or only theirs. The reference to the symbolic-cultural approach is mainly due to the connection between lifeworld and social system – as seen when considering altruism as a cultural product – favouring the interaction between communities and individuals starting from relationality.

The social relation produces added value as a reciprocal action of subjects (individual or collective), from which the order of reality develops (shared social space). The latter requires mediation between human subjectivity and social systems or, better said, between the different “means” that the social organization provides for the achievement of the cultural system’s “goals”. Related to the order of reality of the social relationship there is the reflectivity, placed as a guide (May and Perry, 2017), to close then the morphogenetic cycle with processing and structural reproduction. I will use the term reflexivity without distinguishing it into

social and relational (Donati, 2011b) because I believe that social reflection is neither subjective nor structural – nor is it sufficient to produce knowledge about what we do, think, and experience in a relational context. This latter knowledge is an emerging effect of the interaction between specific forms of doing and being of individuals and allows for the consolidation of trust to achieve the construction of a relationship between individuals in a perspective of hetero-directionality. This form of reflexivity needs to be articulated in relational reflexivity, which allows individuals to reflect on themselves and the reality emerging from their interactions since it goes beyond the powers of individuals or the collective. Hence the use of the concept of socio-relational reflexivity that keeps together the two aspects of reflexivity necessary for structural and symbolic mediation between means and goals, and between the beings and doings of individuals by combining self- and hetero-perception. This also considers that in the process of social relations it is necessary to remember the grid-group model's elements of autonomy/subordination and individual/collective, that determine different forms of social organization, with corresponding different forms of recognition.

Socio-relational reflexivity constitutes the T₄ time of the morphogenetic cycle, in which all the interacting elements elaborate and structurally reproduce the significant interactions linked to a condition that produces or can produce “altruistic relationships” or “egoistic relationships” based on the production of conditions of “trust” (Gambetta 1988; Fukuyama 1996) or “distrust” (Mutti, 2007). In general, trust and mistrust can be considered an expectation of experiences of the individual (with a positive and negative value, respectively). For the first one, we are in the presence of a cognitive and/or emotional load that allows overcoming the threshold of mere hope. Specifically, the relationship of trust is closely linked to the experiences, positive or negative (aspects related to the “value”), the “conditions of uncertainty” and the “cognitive and/or emotional load” of individuals. For the process of building conditions of trust, the relevant aspects mainly involve the social and individual dimensions. On the one hand, we must highlight the cultural and ethical changes that increasingly alienate individuals from common and shared goals and objectives, generated by individualistic and markedly competitive approaches. On the other hand, individuals experience continuous changes of which

they often bear the consequence without being their main architects – see Beck when he underlines the aspects characterizing the individualisation of human life.

This concept implies a group of social developments and experiences characterized, above all, by two meanings. In intellectual debate as in reality these meanings constantly intersect and overlap (which, hardly surprisingly, has given rise to a whole series of misunderstandings and controversies). On the one hand, individualization means the disintegration of previously existing social forms [...] the second aspect of individualization. It is, simply, that in modern societies new demands, controls and constraints are being imposed on individuals (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002/1994, p. 2).

Moreover, individuals tend to look for ways to reduce uncertainty for their preservation and reproduction. And yet it seems almost paradoxical how uncertainty is reduced, since it presupposes the existence of trusting relationships, which, in turn, carry with them the obligation to run a risk. Engaging with others is, above all, betting on their positive action to be able to trust – or mistrust - them. From the first outcome, the “altruistic relationship” will then take shape (Altruism, Solidarity, Cooperation, Gratitude, Gift, etc.), from the second, the “egoistic relationships” (Egoism, Utility, Competition, Ingratitude, etc.).

But is it possible to have conditions that favour trust and therefore “altruistic relationships”?

These conditions can be guaranteed only through the mobilisation of resources, relations, and opportunities that the social player can express; in other words, it can only be achieved through social capital in the social context. The term social capital was introduced by Loury (1977; 1987), who understood it as the set of resources that are found within family relationships and in the social organization of the community and that are useful for the development of individuals. Bourdieu (1979) considered it under the same perspective. Nevertheless, we must point out that the most influential contribution to the definition of the concept of social capital is Coleman’s (1990), who argues that it is created when the relationships between

individuals change to facilitate action. It is not tangible since it is inherent in relations between individuals. These relationships can be considered as forms of capital because, like other capitals, they produce material and symbolic value. The value of social capital is inherent in the fact that it identifies certain value aspects of the social structure that can be considered useful resources for individuals in realizing their interests.

The concept of social capital has no set boundaries: it consists of relationships of trust (strong and weak, variously extended and interconnected) that promote the ability to recognize and understand each other, exchange information, help each other and cooperate for common purposes. These formal and informal reciprocal processes are regulated by norms that define the form, content, and boundaries of exchanges. These relationships are the product (whether intentional or unintentional) of social investment strategies aimed at the establishment and reproduction of lasting and usable social relations that can provide material and symbolic profits.

What happens with these processes? The idea that the market is what creates stable relationships within a community is dropped. Social capital implies an idea of holistic development that does not stop at economic aspects but depend on the degree of *civiness* (Putnam, 1992) and freedom of the community and, above all, the adoption of correct behaviour based on trust, elements that lead back to belonging and reciprocity. Social capital, involving individuals directly, stimulates protagonism through actions that lead to sharing a path aimed at achieving a common goal.

This leads us to conclude that “altruistic relationships” have value only when they are oriented towards a path aimed at the continuous search for well-being in a situation of “conscience” and “responsibility”. In everyday reality, the social, value, cultural, and relational components can represent the multiplier of well-being, without which any work, good, structure or service can be sterile or perceived as unimportant.

In this way, “altruistic relationships” are no longer an abstract concept but become the “social place” that re/generates the reciprocity between individuals. Social relations include both those with the other and with social organisations, and,

as we said, individuals are conditioned by self- and hetero-directed perception. Individuals are not always positively oriented towards each other. Differences are considered not a resource but a constraint to everyday life and a threat to the future. This situation reinforces the degree of “distrust” and influences attitudes and actions. These conditions of “mistrust”, affecting not only situations characterized by a lack of information, but also those with a surplus of it that makes it difficult to reduce complexity, are central in the process of building social representations of “trust” or “mistrust” and therefore of the future life plan of individuals. Expectations of trust must replace the lack or excess of information (reduction of mistrust), else there is no positive reassurance about their idea of a future dimension of their lives in reciprocity with others.

If we try to combine the above reflections and the individuals’ idea of the future with their actions aimed at finding a balance between “goals” and “means”, two orders of questions emerge. a) in contemporary society, the proliferation of images and information leads us to think that to avoid saturation (Maffesoli, 1988) we need to create an ethics of image and information that not only promotes individual critical choice but does not limit creativity, which has a significant part in the choices to determine the balance between “goals” and “means”. Contemporary culture, based on immanence and aesthetics, combined with the speed with which images and information are replaced, does not allow individuals to create their symbology to elaborate and build those symbolic mediations necessary to deal with everyday events in reciprocity and prefer “altruistic relationships” over the “egoistic” ones; b) if perceptions are the direct product of the interactions between the individual and his environment (physical, mental and social), then this product is also the reality translated into its representation, a story that has developed and continues to act in individuals beyond any form of conditioning.

In conclusion, the proposed model, through which we tried to interpret the dynamics of *social construal* or *collective construct* of altruism and egoism – with the final aim of leaving this dichotomy behind – overcomes the economic and naturalistic logics that have always characterized the study of these phenomena. However, such a model can only be applied if we believe that individual intervention can be incisive (doing something!) and responsible (choice and

attribution of guilt). In other words, to avoid too rigid an interpretative model, there must be a structure that guarantees responsibility, evidence-based practice and long-term action that ensures the balance between “goals” and “means”. These are fundamental since “altruistic relationships” are based on the trust and consensus that the community, often in opposition to the political system, can still claim within society.

6.4. Time and “altruistic relationships”

In light of the continuous transformations of contemporary society, which increasingly sees solidarity wearing away in favour of intense individualism, is it still possible to think of the future of humanity as a group founding its existence on what Sorokin defined as “marginal altruism”?

To try and answer this question, we will refer to some basic concepts in the human and social sciences. The reflections presented so far, which find their epistemological roots in sociology, have highlighted that we must consider the integrated study of the three elements that define socio-cultural phenomena (society, culture, and personality) along a space-time dimension. We wanted to overcome the egoism/altruism dichotomy by highlighting how these should be considered processes, rather than mere facts *sui generis*. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse the “altruistic relationships” and the “egoistic relationships”, which also produces a direct experience of individuals with their current social context, or *umwelt* (Schütz, 1932), in their everyday activities. The meaning attributed to these relations varies together with the *umwelt*. If this dynamic is applied to the individual in a relationship, it assumes different meanings depending on the time frame in which it is placed (temporal perspective). Time and space are constitutive of social interaction processes and, therefore, characterise individual relationality. Everyday experiences can be perceived – and studied – in their continuous development, their flow within the unity of the single experience and the situation. Transposing to the relation – understood as a relation in action – what Schütz said for actions, we can affirm that this has a meaning and a representation before it takes place (*sense of production*), while it takes place (*sense of produced*), and finally after it has taken

place (*self-understanding* and *hetero-understanding*). In simpler terms and following Schütz's theory, we can state that the attribution of meaning to a relationship is arbitrary as it is linked to a project constructed by the actor and as such susceptible to modification. Indeed, the relationship planned and the one implemented often do not coincide, and therefore we must distinguish between final and causal reasons, or, better, between sense as an end (project) and sense as a cause (implementation). In the case of "altruistic relations", this implies that they can be understood in their entirety and their sense only if we can understand the purpose placed in them and the time frame to which they refer. Time is no longer uniform. This awareness means that the temporal and spatial dimensions (social and historical context) guide individual actions/interactions.

In the case of "altruistic relationships", the temporal dimension is crucial – particularly the idea of the future. These relationships rely on the expectations that arise between the parties involved and that, therefore, concern the future perspective. A few years ago, anthropologist Marc Augé published a pamphlet entitled *Où est passé l'avenir ?* (2008), in which he wondered what happened to the future, highlighting the main paradoxes of the issue. The question posed by the French scholar had no reference to "altruistic relationships", trying instead to find an answer to the prevailing idea of contemporary society living on immanence. This chapter starts from the paradox that every individual exists in a time following his birth and preceding his death (finite and infinite) to culminate in the idea that, despite their finitude, individuals can still imagine a future dimension of time and consequently act – or not act – consequently.

Time is a polysemic concept and is inseparable from individual actions. And yet, for many years it has been considered an unproblematic aspect of everyday life (Adam, 1995, 2004). The scientific traditions that addressed time are, on the one hand, philosophy, with the idea of the linear or circular time (individual times), and, on the other hand, the physical and natural sciences, up to Einstein's relativity and quantum physics (natural times). Between these two lies the sociological research, that tried to mediate between the minuteness of the first and the magnitude of the second (Ricoeur, 1991) by focusing the attention on "social or collective time", which is linked to all aspects of everyday life (psychological, social and cultural

ones). However, a social reading of time in the global society requires the analysis of temporal cultures. According to philosophical tradition, there is a chronological time (*Chrónos*), consisting of a measurable triad that represents its quantitative aspect: past (yesterday), present (today) and future (tomorrow); and a time of action (*Kairós*) consisting instead in the opportunity that can happen at any given time, the so-called “right time, opportune time, time for”. *Chrónos* represents the “time of truth” and quantitative dimension (measurability and duration); *Kairós* represents the qualitative dimension of time, related to the search for meaning in human action (“time of action”). *Kairós* allows us to state that, in both individual and collective experience, time is not uniform: it does not have the same value at different moments and junctures, nor over the same day. This affects everyday activities and the forms that individuals adopt to communicate. If we can imagine a future dimension of “altruistic relationships”, these two perspectives and temporal cultures (*Chrónos* and *Kairós*) merge. *Chrónos* refers to the present, a “forced culture of immanence”, which brings individuals back to the ancient idea of *Kairós* that bound them to fate. While it is true that individuals base their future actions on instrumental rationality, they very often give in to fatalism. Beyond common aspects, such as measuring, individuals experience time differently in everyday life. Temporal cultures differ because they are a symbolic mediation between society and individual subjectivity, outlining, time after time, new time horizons on which to base the decisions for future projects.

Attitudes towards the future do not appear dominated by purpose-oriented rationality (action based on the rational evaluation of purposes, means, and consequences). Rather, they seem ruled by the search for balance between “goals” and “means”, starting with the very the selection of the “goals” on a hierarchical scale akin to Maslow’s (1954), which motivates actions with the universal tendency to satisfy certain orders of needs, differing in nature and complexity.

Individuals base their decisions on temporal cultures and their degree of knowledge about a given situation – but *how* they decide is not clear yet. Their choices entail two paradoxes. The first is that – being forced to choose – they are bound to a responsibility proportionate to their abilities and rights (or to those that they believe they have), as well as to their degrees of freedom. The second is that

the individual is obliged to select in that specific time (since in the future they could change) the range of possible alternatives to which she will devote her energies to achieve her goal.

Considering these two paradoxes, individuals decide whether and how to engage with others by constructing a scale of importance (priority) based on their knowledge of the situations. The conjugation of the specific interest of the individual with her wishes and desires passes through a series of elements that promote both the change and the conservation of these conditions. We are faced with that inevitable human condition that is uncertainty. When analysing the relationship between individuals and the future, this makes it necessary to understand the mechanisms that prompt individuals to choose change over stability – and vice-versa. We could claim that individuals face a sort of “uncertainty about values” because in everyday life choice happens in a condition of uncertainty and concerns the way in which the *future self* of the individual will evaluate a situation happening as a consequence of the choice made today. In other words, uncertainty does not concern the future conditions of the world *per se* but those of the choosers, who must imagine their future and possible conditions to direct themselves in a situation in which the emotional, psychological, and social involvement is all but residual.

Individuals now live in complex societies characterized by delicate adjustments and multiple interdependencies. The propensity to reflexivity prompts individuals to weigh the imponderable: they strive to consider even the *lowest* probabilities and are concerned about the long-term consequences of ongoing processes, even those in which they are not directly involved. Individuals process and interpret information to build their idea of a world on which to base their daily positioning towards themselves and others.

But what prompts human beings towards “marginal altruism” – as Sorokin called it – or “altruistic relationships” (pro-social relationships) – as we call them – thinking of their *future self* that is not the same as that of today?

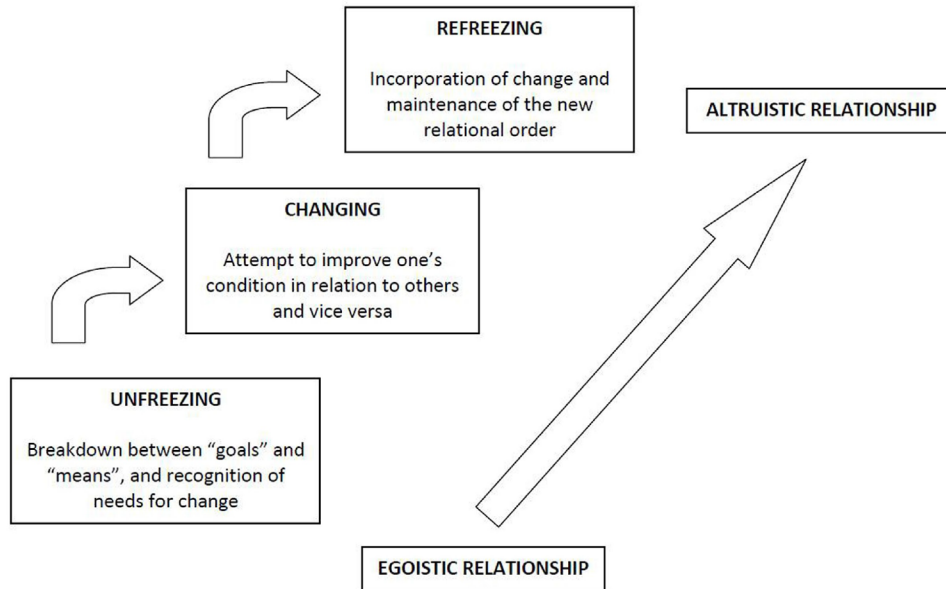
The necessary condition is a situation in which the interactions between individuals are based on trust. From it, a hetero-directionality of the attitudes of human beings emerges, supported by the conservation and promotion of social

capital as a “common good” for the welfare of the whole community. This implies rethinking the position in society of each individual vs others. It also begs to reconsider “goals” and “means” to transform the “Super-Ego” and the “Ego” into “Us” or “Them”. The aim is to trigger forms of change that partially abandon the individualism typical of contemporary society to finally recognise the other as an integral part of our lives and the greater human community. However, change has always sparked fear in individuals because it closely links cultural change with their changing attitudes and perceptions. In support, we propose Kurt Lewin’s *unfreezing-refreezing* model (1951; 1952), originally conceived for organizational change, here re-elaborated and applied to relational change. The re-elaboration of this model (*Fig. 3*) was possible because, unlike other models on organizational change, it is based on aspects related to culture and interaction between individuals. Its three characterizing phases are divided into *unfreezing*, *changing*, and *refreezing*. In the first phase, *unfreezing*, the balance between “goals” and “means” is disrupted. This process generates forces favouring change or overcoming the opposition to change that exists within individuals (who discover that they must change). In the second phase, *changing*, individuals try to balance conservative forces (stability and balance) and innovative forces (change), thus needing to redefine their goals. Finally, in the *refreezing* phase, they institutionalize or achieve stability after change by re-establishing goals.

Comparing individuals to an ice cube that melts whenever placed near a heat source may seem excessively simplifying and reductive, yet this is what happens in everyday life. They experience discomfort every time they are faced with a choice (*unfreezing*), resulting in a breakdown of the internal balances, which leads to a redefinition of the “cultural goals” (*changing*) and then to a new equilibrium (*refreezing*). This cycle is dependent on its context since individuals are pro-active rather than reactive towards their environment – both social and natural. Individuals try to maintain their identity based on assumptions and values by implementing strategies that are both instrumental and expressive. Instrumental strategies allow managing problems of context adaptation and internal integration; they are mainly operational, *i.e.*, aimed at pursuing specific and measurable objectives. Expressive strategies, instead, operate in the symbolic field and aim at protecting the stability

and coherence of shared meanings. In addition, they allow individuals to keep alive the awareness of their individual and collective identity.

Fig. 3 – Adaptation of the *unfreezing-refreezing* model



Source: Mangone (2020, p. 180)

If such is the situation of the individual who tries to modify his way of relating to others, then the theory of rational choice does not apply to the dynamics of "altruistic relationships". Rather, they could embrace a model of choice closer to that of bounded rationality (Simon, 1983). The bounded rationality model works under the following general principles: *a)* individual decisions do not concern the whole of human life, but consider only limited areas of it; *b)* when individuals make a choice, even a very important one, they do not consider future scenarios but look at the present and at most to possible perspectives; *c)* the very fact that the individual is seeking the solution to a problem, causes her to focus on certain aspects of her life rather than others; *d)* a major part of the individual's efforts in a choice is absorbed by frantically collecting information and facts about the decision in question (problem of knowledge).

In the bounded rationality model, individuals do not project themselves in time indefinitely (the future time horizon may be longer or shorter). In everyday reality,

the environment in which individuals live is divided into separate and distinct problems, and attention goes to the factors that deserve it from time to time. The ability to acquire knowledge of the situations and environment in which individuals live is a double necessity – to facilitate the creation of alternatives and estimate the possible consequences. This allows individuals to preserve the image of that part of the world involved in their decisions and to set them (relationship-in-action) based on that same image.

6.5. Values and “altruistic relationships”

To promote change and hope that in the future pro-social actions – in their various “altruistic” manifestations – will become most forms of relationship/interaction between human beings, we should focus not on behaviours, but the motives and objectives of individuals (Bateson, 2011) and their underlying values.

Focusing on values puts researchers in a quandary, as the analysis is complicated by the fact that, although values are sufficiently explicit, they present aspects of latency that are often difficult to identify. Parsons (1951) attributed the function of latency to culture since it provides individuals with the motivation to act through the values and norms internalized during the socialization process. In other words, values guide from the outside the “relation in action” of individuals, since culture “does not act”, it exists but is not “active”, and its operation is not evident in social interaction. In a lexical sense, and according to conventional wisdom, the term “value” holds two meanings. The first refers to anything (material or not) that is considered important and coveted if not possessed, or, conversely, if it is possessed, whose loss is feared. The second, almost always declined in the plural, refers to the ideals to which human beings aspire and to which they refer when they must make judgments or choices. In line with the present work, we can consider Kluckhohn’s definition, for whom value is “a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the *desirable* which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of action” (Kluckhohn, 1951, p.

395). Values outline social principles, the objectives to which a culture attributes an intrinsic value; they define what is relevant to the members of a social organization and form the basis of judgments about what is right or wrong (moral or ethical codes). These defining aspects allow us to pinpoint three fundamental dimensions of values (without prejudice to the normative dimension for which values indicate “what individuals should want”, the desirable): *a) the emotional dimension*, representing what one wants and what individuals are most attached to. In this case, conforming to the values is an indication of “good behaviour” regardless of the advantage that the individual may gain from it. If we consider values in this dimension, they allow the development of feelings of shame and/or guilt that lead to avoiding any punishment linked to “bad behaviour”. On this basis, all individuals should be led to develop “altruistic relationships” and not “egoistic relationships”; *b) the cognitive dimension*, which allows social actors to be aware of their action, which presupposes an inherent capacity for reflection on the part of individuals; *c) the selective dimension*, which refers to the ability of values to direct social action and motivate individuals.

We should, therefore, consider values as all those cultural components accepted and shared by everyone who participates in the social organization. Their function is paramount – indeed, they are often circulated by political institutions to strengthen the sense of belonging, since consensus is also a dimension of solidarity within groups.

At the dawn of mankind, the influence of the environment prevailed over that of men. Today, we see the opposite: men prevail over the environment and modify it through techniques and technologies that may affect it negatively. The principle of responsibility (Jonas, 1984) wants to be the ethical foundation of actions aimed at preserving both man (in the physical, social, and psychological sense) and the integrity of his world for future generations.

Ethics – those objective and rational foundations that distinguish human behaviour in good, just, or morally lawful, vs. bad or morally inappropriate – has since ancient times characterized the lives of human beings. Ethical principles, or the search for them, usually distinguished between secular and religious dimensions, allow individuals to manage their freedom, especially about its limits,

the delineation and application of which preserve the right to exist of other human beings. Today, when we talk about ethics, we risk repeating what is already said and done. However, we cannot avoid this danger in addressing the problems highlighted so far, all related to relationships. There is usually a contrast between the two classic dimensions of ethics (secular and religious), but we should add another one: the public dimension or that of responsibility. It would be superficial to contrast secular and religious ethics on the issues connected with “altruistic relationships”. I will avoid any speculation and conjecture based on the opposition between these two dimensions of ethics, as they would produce a vague and valueless framework. Hence the need for a public ethic and, specifically, an “ethic of responsibility”. This ethic should rely on neither individual morality nor collective ethics (secular or religious) but represent the vision of the changing world. For example, the use of technology to enslave nature made the latter vulnerable to irreparable damage, with negative influences on the future well-being of individuals. Hence the persistent validity of the ancient rules of the ethics of “fellow man” (or “neighbour”: righteousness, mercy, honesty, solidarity, etc.). However, they must be reconsidered and rethought, given the development of the sphere of collective action in which the actor, the action and the effects are no longer the same. The strength of this collective action imposes on ethics a new dimension of responsibility never imagined before. In the age of technology, man (Gehlen, 1984), has changed the meanings of actions and of the objects on which these are reflected, with all the consequences that this entails. Past ethics had to consider neither the global condition of human life nor the distant future – indeed the survival – of the species. For this reason, a new conception of rights and duties is necessary, for which neither ethics nor traditional metaphysics offer principles and/or a completed doctrine (Jonas, 1984).

Far from both hyper-subjectivism and objectivism, the ethics of responsibility seek intersubjective and intercultural values to bridge the various positions aimed at the collective good. “An imperative responding to the new type of human action and addressed to the new type of agency that operates it might run thus ‘Act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life’; or expressed negatively: ‘Act so that the effects of your action are not

destructive of the future possibility of such life’; or simply: ‘Do not compromise the conditions for an indefinite continuation of humanity on earth’; or, again turned positive: ‘In your present choices, include the future wholeness of Man among the objects of your will’” (Jonas, 1984, p. 11).

In light of this imperative, individuals – beyond their religious faith and/or political affiliation – can move towards an “ethic of responsibility” to guarantee the collective good. Indeed, since the real problem is that any moral rule has exceptions, it is necessary to identify the main imperative among the many conflicting ones.

New contrast would thus emerge between the Kantian principle of ‘never to use other people merely as means to an end, but always *also* as ends’, and the utilitarian idea spurring people to always choose ‘actions that maximize their utility and happiness’” (Mangone, 2018a, p. 78).

Therefore, ascribing the conduct of human beings to a single general principle is a flawed approach. In many cases and situations (individual and collective) the arguments must consider the specific circumstances. In modern society, the idea of the responsibility for choices has been delegated to law, in the form not of “ethics of responsibility” but public ethics reduced to a simple procedure. Leaving aside the ethical and jurisprudential aspects, the question of “altruistic relationships” could be posed in terms of a conflict between individual freedoms and social responsibilities. The debates about this conflict are affected by both the disciplines addressing it and the cultural context of reference.

Weber well interpreted this aspect in two of his writings: *Political writings* (Lassman & Speirs, 1994) and *Science as a Vocation* (Lassman, Velody & Martins, 1989). Both clarify that the plurality of values takes the form of dualism between the ethics of principles (*Gesinnungsethik*, also called of intentions or convictions) and the ethics of responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik*). The first refers to absolute principles, assumed regardless of their consequences (e.g., religious ethics); the second concerns those cases in which particular attention is paid both to the relationship between “goals” and “means” and to the consequences of the action.

In short, following the “ethics of responsibility” means that each must bear the consequences of his actions towards himself and others, even beyond temporal and spatial proximity. Human beings are aware that their life has an “expiration date”, but the boundary between life and death is no longer clearly defined as in ancient times. This is not because death has taken over life, but rather because both have lost their positive meaning as values. Contemporary society witnesses an ever-increasing contradiction: on the one hand, there are investments in human and financial resources to improve the material conditions of existence, while, on the other hand, there are difficulties in making sense of the very lives of individuals. “Altruistic relationships” are clearly relevant precisely in the search for the meaning to existence, in the re-appropriation of one’s subjectivity, in the construction of identities. In its broadest sense, human action must be understood as the most appropriate way of acting towards oneself and others in various situations. It mirrors the relevant aspects found within the social context to which the situations refer.

One’s conception of the present and vision of the future are linked to the *adaptation of the conception of self*, which consists in resolving the dualism between “doing” and “being” and, therefore, the discordances often resulting from social relations. The contrast between *doing* and *being* determines dissonances (Festinger, 1962) that generate pressure and conflict in individuals. This tension must be correctly canalized, *i.e.*, aimed at searching for new positive elements within the complex network of relationships that individuals experience in their everyday activities. If it is not, it can become a determining factor for choosing “egoistic relationships” rather than “altruistic” ones.

“Egoistic relationships”, therefore, must be considered as an action that fits into a specific social context, in which many factors influence the “construction” and “formation” of the self of individuals and the construction of their “defences” against dissonant situations. Relationality is fundamental for actions deemed necessary to address problematic situations. It is especially true of relationships of trust, expressed in the role-playing between the individual and the social organization. By triggering symbolic mediation (reflexivity) between human subjectivity and social systems, social relations define and promote needs, rights, and duties in a logic founded on the “ethics of responsibility”. This logic can trigger

positive changes in individual attitudes, reducing or eliminating discordances in the social relationship, thus directing them towards “altruistic relationships”.

This configures the construction of a new humanity, or the reconstruction of the existing one, in terms of negotiation between individual liberties and responsible liberties, in which the drives for self-realization cannot exist without the commitment to the other and the community in the broadest sense. The individual is a *social animal*, a subject that produces meaningful interactions and that is linked to his fellow human beings in a context of norms, values, and meanings. The “ethics of responsibility” allow individuals to recognize themselves in the concept of “common good”: a good that individuals experience as members of a community and that they can only pursue from the solidarity that can give meaning to human action and its development. Sorokin closes *The Ways and power of Love* (1954) with the dilemma that humanity must face for its future survival and advancement. Humankind can continue to follow egoistical and predatory rationales (individual and collective), leading to extinction, or embrace universal solidarity that leads to salvation and earthly happiness. Everyone has the choice to follow one of the two paths.

CHAPTER VII

THE ROLE OF DICHOTOMY EGOISM / ALTRUISM DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE CASE OF ITALY

Following the theoretical model presented in the previous chapter, which attempts to overcome the economic and naturalistic ideas that always permeated the study of altruism and egoism, in this chapter – through autoethnography and empirical research on Italian newspapers and Twitter – some concrete cases of “altruistic and egoistic relationships” will be described. All cases in point occurred in Italy but also in the rest of the world at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic (Guigoni & Ferrari, 2020; Gaynor & Wilson, 2020). My core assumptions are as follows. First, “altruistic relations” rely on trust and consensus within the community and society (they are positive and favour the whole society, pro-social or hetero-directed), vice versa “egoistic relationships” are negative and favour just the actor/individual (anti-social or self-directed). Second, the model’s applicability presupposes the idea that individuals must act (do something) and be responsible (problem of choice).

From this starting point, the following pages present some possible ways of acting ascribable both to “altruistic relationships” and “egoistic relationships” that emerged in Italy during the first lockdown.

7.1. Social vulnerability, social capital, and resilience

A world free of disasters is not conceivable, but we can conceive a world in which the negative consequences of these events are minimized or even avoided (such as wars or terrorist attacks). As Sorokin argued, the future of mankind and its development are in the hands of mankind itself (1958a). neither law nor education, nor religion, the economy, or science – even though the latter has a specific role in accompanying the processes of improving the lives of individuals and communities – are enough for this task. It is, instead, assigned to the whole of mankind, and,

therefore, to its communities. However, communities can exist only under certain conditions:

A peaceful, harmonious, and creative society can exist only when its members possess at least a minimum of love, sympathy, and compassion ensuring mutual aid, co-operation, and fair treatment. Under these conditions its members are united in one collective 'we' in which the joys and sorrows of one member are shared by others (Sorokin, 1948, p. 57).

Acting on the community means acting on multiple levels: individual, family, institutional, and social. The object of the action is the whole community: a normalization process requires reinforcing the existing networks and structures, reestablishing the previous ones, and creating new ones.

The chain of emergencies in recent decades has shown that social vulnerability (Phillips *et al.*, 2010) is increasing due to both socio-cultural and natural transformations. Taking into account the definition provided by the United Nations, vulnerability is to be understood as

a state of high exposure to certain risks and uncertainties, in combination with a reduced ability to protect or defend oneself against those risks and uncertainties and cope with their negative consequences. It exists at all levels and dimensions of society and forms an integral part of the human condition, affecting both individuals and society as whole (UN, 2003: 3),

it can also be argued that in certain historical periods certain population groups already considered vulnerable (the poor, disabled, immigrants, children, the elderly and the young) are more so.

A recent example of this dynamic was the Covid-19 pandemic (De Marchi, 2020; Gaynor & Wilson, 2020). The pandemic caused millions of victims and jeopardized all productive sectors due to prolonged closures, staff shortages and supply chain issues, further aggravating the existing crisis in almost all countries. Hence the necessity for emergency prevention and response actions at the local, national, and

international levels. Such actions should involve territories by promoting resilient actions (Bonanno *et al.*, 2006; Manyena 2006; Norris *et al.*, 2008). The effects are not the same for all individuals and groups, not only because of their direct or indirect involvement but also because of individual and collective capacities to promptly activate processes that generate resilience (Lombardi, Pina e Cunha & Giustiniano, 2021; Wright, 2022). Reactions depend on the ability or inability of the individual and society (inherent in social interactions, institutions, and cultural value systems) to resist their negative effects (social vulnerability). It is because of this multidimensionality that the study of the consequences of emergencies and the related interventions must rely on an integrated (Lebel *et al.*, 2006) interdisciplinary approach. It follows that collective damage requires collective strategies (Mangone and Zyuzev, 2020) and “altruistic relationships” promote just such strategies. Indeed,

whether altruism is a kind of “group egoism” or a genuine social impulse, from the perspective of social action and its effects on society, beyond the moral principles or underlying interests that sustain them, it seems that an action designed to benefit the others, the community, could potentially have more valuable effects globally than an action aimed at an individual benefit. In times of historical crisis, as is the case currently posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, altruist actions could be decisive for the future of Humanity (Gualda, 2021, p. 3).

But what happens in an emergency? What transformations prompt individual and collective dynamics towards resilience – and, therefore, towards building and strengthening “altruistic relationships” through social capital rather than “egoistic relationships”?

The crisis caused by these emergencies is not *sui generis* but an ordinary moment in the flow of life. It allows for pinpointing some features of the social systems that might not otherwise be recognised since disasters affect life, socio-psychological regulatory mechanisms, and social change processes (Sorokin, 1942). It follows that thinking about the future during or after an emergency must involve the community,

understood as one of the many declinations of social space and, therefore, an expression and resource of a territory (Mangone, 2008). This concept refers to a set of relationships that should in themselves be positive (altruistic relationships). The community relies on individuals considered in their entirety, rather than one of their many social roles. The community is also a set of experiences and thought, tradition and commitment, participation and will. At the same time, it enhances the social dimension of existence and, above all, the sense of belonging to a common destiny.

Emergencies (be they natural and/or industrial disasters, epidemics, etc.) fracture the network of relations, making the definition of the social structure chaotic. This process, in turn, becomes decisive for socio-cultural change. The same happened with the Covid-19 pandemic in Italy but also in all the countries of the world when people followed shelter-in-place orders to reduce the spread of the virus and its harmful effects (Gaynor & Wilson, 2020; Mangone, 2021a). Changes occur in both individuals and the social structure, engendering the need to start again, reconnect the lives of individuals and the community, and try to imagine a possible future (Mangone, 2021b). Hence the search for a project that can get the whole community out of a crisis (imbalance) and channel it towards new balances. We thus find, once again, the concept of balance between “goals” and “means”.

In recent decades, when reflecting on coping with disasters, the focus expanded from just lack and loss to the ability of individuals and communities to adapt and thrive despite critical conditions (Wright, 2022). The key concept is that of “resilience” (Manyena, 2006; Hoggett, 2014), generally defined as the ability of an individual or group to return to normality after catastrophic events (Bonanno, 2004; Bonanno *et al.*, 2006). It consists of a personal and a situational component. The former relates to how the individual is and how he/she responds to events; the latter brings attention to the community, particularly to the concept of resilient communities (Norris *et al.*, 2008; Wright, 2021). This concept, in turn, is linked to that of social capital (Coleman, 1990; Lin, 2001; 2005) and its meaning and significance in building up resilience (Glaeser, 2022), together with other components that contribute to adapting to disruption. A new form of community is configured, understood as collective intelligence (Levy, 1994), whose foundation is the mutual enrichment of individuals and not the cult of the community *per se*.

Multidisciplinary knowledge contributes to understanding socio-territorial structures and dynamics, and it is a tool at the service of individuals.

Thinking about the future means thinking about the community based on the individual expressed in his unity and completeness rather than its social roles. It is the set of daily experiences and, therefore, it enhances the social and cultural dimension of existence. The community is the social structure that recognises individual dignity, protecting freedom with civic duty and respect for oneself and others (safeguarding rights and complying with duties). This attention to the community goes hand-in-hand with a renewed idea of collective identity. The *Communitarian Network* group (Etzioni, 1995) claimed that man is a *social animal* and based their arguments on the possibility of a moral rebirth through a “strong participatory democracy” in which the highest socio-political principle is that of subsidiarity¹. The community promotes the growth of the individuals, who are part of it as active and productive subjects of a “living organism”, in Tönnies’ words (1887). But what makes resilient communities? According to Norris (Norris *et al.*, 2008), resilience arises from resources within the community itself and can be distinguished into *a)* economic development; *b)* social capital; *c)* information and communication; *d)* community competence.

In the following pages, in the first part, I will address social capital in the form of proximity relationships – and, therefore, “altruistic relationships” which, with the Covid-19 pandemic, have had a perhaps unexpected twist, having included economic aspects. The narratives of the pandemic-induced self-isolation highlighted the value of proximity relations. In Italy, this led to the rediscovery of “neighbourhood trade” (Zanderighi & Orsi, 2020) and, more generally, a classic relationship of proximity such as the “neighbourhood” (Boccacin, 1998; Manzo,

¹ The principle of subsidiarity relies on the idea that what the lower-level body (or organ) can do independently, as a rule, and by its competence, falls upon the upper-level body (or organ) only in exceptional cases. It is not an expression of modern civilisation, even if it finds its first explicit affirmation in the social doctrine of the Church as a cardinal principle of the way of being and acting of the institutions of civil society (Pius XI and John Paul II). Its introduction brought about serious innovations since it represents the concrete possibility of giving citizens – in the new configurations of civil society – an active role in the implementation of the collective good that translates into solidarity and social justice.

2013). These are the cases that emerged through the analytical autoethnography method. In a second part, however, other cases of “egoistic relationships” will be given, which is based precisely on the pandemic narrative. And these are the cases emerged through the empirical research on Italian newspapers and Twitter.

7.2. The relationships in times of emergency

To understand the real consequences of an emergency on a territory, beyond the victims and/or material damage, one should go beyond the immediate emergency and observe what happens in the aftermath (that is, the following years). Experts in the sociology of disasters know very well that they: *a*) cause crises in the social systems (Quarantelli, 1998; Rodríguez, Quarantelli & Dynes, 2007) and *b*) are a cycle consisting of three phases: preparation, response, and reconstruction. Epidemics and pandemics, which fall within the conceptual macro-category of disasters, provoke crises that disrupt the normal flow of individual and collective everyday life.

To address the role of the egoism/altruism dichotomy, I will focus on the phases of response and reconstruction. In these phases, relationships and social capital are fundamental since the top-down approach, normally adopted, fails to explain the dynamics happening within the territories (Gaynor & Wilson, 2020; Lombardi, Pina e Cunha & Giustiniano, 2021); in fact, the relationship between disasters and social capital can be summarised as follows

risk perception, local vulnerability assessment, social resilience, community-building, are all fundamental elements to study the impact of a disaster on the local community. The social dimension of disaster is not new, and the importance of social networks, mutual aid, and trust existed in the literature even before the notion of social capital took shape (Mugnano, 2017, p. 142).

Given the complexity of these phenomena, they must be observed through different paradigms and disciplines, and in this case, also taking into account what was the

risk perception during the pandemic phase (Padilla et al., 2022). Suffice it to mention the population's persistent perception of a sense of uncertainty about the future, widespread fear, regret for lost loved ones and possessions, the disorientation due to the forced detachment from daily habits (Sultana, Dhillon & Oliveira, 2023), and the impossibility of recognising oneself in one's historical-cultural context (Mangone, 2019b). An example of such a condition was confinement within one's home or physical distancing due to the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (Affuso, Parini & Santambrogio, 2020). The crisis caused by the pandemic has produced deep social changes. Although many states already show signs of rapid recovery (re-establishing at least partially their balance, unity, institutions, and system of social relations), these are not the same as before. In communities that have experienced major health emergencies, there is always a "before" and an "after" (van den Eynde & Veno, 1999). It becomes a priority to address the issue of how to resurface from the emergency – *i.e.*, "response" and "reconstruction".

From this point of view, social capital must be understood as "a characteristic of social relationships, which can represent a resource, *i.e.*, capital, for those who implement them" (Di Nicola, Tronca & Stanzani, 2008, p. 8, personal translation). Its study must consider "the differences (including morphological differences) that exist between different relational contexts" (*Ibidem*). Deep and radical changes affected community relations in contemporary society,

Now that the unity of blood, place and spirit has disappeared, community relations (including neighbourhood relations) are largely elective, often based on affinity and homophily, and therefore more oriented towards recognition than instrumental aid, more towards the confirmation of identity than the exchange of tangible goods and services, even though goods of this nature may circulate within the structure. It is a relational structure that, insofar as it is de-contextualised, is based on strategies of proximity that are the daughters of a policy of everyday life that is distinctive of social groups and subjects and not of a territory, a sphere, or a social context (*Ivi.*, p. 40).

I will look at the micro and meso-relational sphere, as those dimensions – often neglected in the empirical survey on social capital – best highlight the support functions performed by proximity networks. Proximity networks can be differentiated according to the formal qualities of the relationships representing the social capital: *bonding* or *bridging*. Bonding social capital refers to proximity relations within a given social circle, characterised by mutual trust and support; bridging social capital refers to trust relations between a member of a certain social group and an external subject. In the following section, I will consider two specific cases of proximity relations: the neighbourhood and the neighbourhood trade. Through “altruistic relationships”, both can generate mutual support, trust, and closeness – and, therefore, a social capital useful to individuals and communities to cope with crises (such as the one resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic). This capital may pre-exist the crisis or, conversely, result from it. The starting point is that this resource is not inexhaustible but can be eroded and depleted. When this happens, areas of social deprivation grow and expand. It will be essential to consider how a social system, through its institutions, will manage to exploit it and channel it as a permanent resource for individual and collective well-being. We cannot but recall Sorokin’s idea that altruistic love – like all other forms of energy – can be produced, accumulated, and distributed by individuals and institutions:

If love can be viewed as one of the highest energies known, then theoretically, at least, we can talk about the production or generation, the accumulation (or loss), the channeling, transmission, and distribution of this particular energy (Sorokin, 1954, p. 36).

Or, at least, they can be produced, accumulated, and distributed insofar as the social capital originated during the pandemic from the relational spheres of the private social sector is also capable of birthing broader generalised trust and civic commitment.

7.3. The “neighbourhood” and “neighbourhood trade” as cases of “altruistic relationships” during the Covid-19 pandemic in Italy

The reflections presented so far assume that crises – including those caused by a pandemic – highlight some features of the social systems that are not always recognised (such as altruistic and egoistic relationships). It follows that thinking about the future during or after the pandemic cannot disregard the existence of a community or group of individuals, since it is from these positive proximity relationships that the planning and reconstruction of identity kits and the new system of needs and values must arise (Mangone, 2018b). The overall transformation and reconstruction of the system of needs entail valorising the community as a resource by activating resilience processes (resilient communities) counteracting vulnerability factors further accentuated by the pandemic (Tomelleri & Ziglio, 2022). With the development of the pandemic, everyone, no one excluded, has experienced the dynamics and also the challenges posed by certain elements characteristic of the cultural system when individuals impact with situations that disrupt their daily lives, as the pandemic may have been, the effects of which on society will take several studies and even several years to definitively emerge, but the same experience made by a researcher inevitably takes the form of an autoethnographic technique (see Chapter III on methodology). I embarked on a path of reflection on symbolic-cultural aspects that allowed me to explore the processes that occur at different levels (individual, social and cultural) whenever individuals experience an emergency or face a risk, which correspond to micro, meso and macro analysis of realities. This autoethnographic research allowed me to observe the activation of communities that put the subjects in contact with the formal and informal support networks existing in on the territory.

In the case of Covid-19 and Italy, we can advance as examples health workers (formal support network) and neighbours (informal support network). Activating a community also means supporting and promoting all the spontaneously created solidarity (Zoll, 2000) and reciprocity networks (Volterrani, 2022).

Proximity relationships take various forms and perform many functions. I will refer to “neighbourhood trade” and “neighbourhoods” as forms of social

organisation that are attentive to individual needs and can guarantee better living conditions, especially for disadvantaged categories. Thus, they allow for an integrated development even for depopulated areas, such as the small mountain or rural municipalities that make up a large part of Italy.

Among the many forms and functions of proximity relationships, I will refer to the neighbourhood as a set of relations that can grant mutual help to respond to the complexities of everyday life, whether in an emergency (*e.g.*, a pandemic) or for generalised social distress and vulnerability (Santosa et al., 2020). Generally speaking, “neighbours” are those who reside in mutual proximity. As Hannerz (1980) explains, such a relationship differs from that with a stranger: neighbours usually become aware of their mutual and recurrent presence in the surrounding public space and, consequently, of their relationships with it. They are also likely to manifest this awareness through friendly gestures that they exchange upon meeting, such as nodding to greet the other and acknowledge their presence. Living proximity implies an analysis that inevitably considers the individual’s perception of their closest relations since it reflects their current or potential social relations. There are different “subjectively” meaningful definitions: a neighbourhood can include both those who live next door, in the same block or adjoining houses, or the same district or area. As Cordini (2012) argues, the house not only guarantees the intimate and private life of the family nucleus but is also paramount for sociability practices, indispensable for the emergence of relations with the outside space and for generating proximity interactions (*e.g.*, precisely, neighbourhood interactions).

For Boccacin (1998), the neighbourhood is an expression of sociality, understood as “the ability to create networks in which social relations are expressed both individually and intersubjectively” (Boccacin, p. 295). The assumption is that modernisation processes eroded the foundations of community, since

It enhances individuals, freeing them from ascriptive conditioning, from compulsory and obligatory ties [...] it breaks the link between identity and belonging and links identity to conformity with social roles acquired and internalised in the course of socialisation (Di Nicola, 2008, p. 14).

Liquid modernity translates into the transience of affective and friendship ties, no longer conveyed by ascriptive factors such as gender, age, social class, but the expression of the multiple interests and identities of the subjects. Indeed, unlike in the past, contemporary subjects act in several social circles (Simmel, 1977) with various and differentiated characteristics. It is no coincidence that sociologists nowadays use the concept of network, rather than community, to depict the complex web of social relations encompassing contemporary subjects. This representation best expresses its heuristic capacity when addressing the ties between people in large cities and/or metropolises, characterised by faster social exchanges, anonymity, and individualistic and materialistic values.

Traditionally considered as the very core of the concept of community (Tonnies, 1887), the neighbourhood has gradually waned as a sociological category in contemporary reflections, particularly those that, in pursuing the society/community antinomy, have exalted processes such as individualism, self-determination, and liberation from controlling institutions. This situation is essentially due to two processes: Beck's individualisation and Giddens' (1992) transformations of intimacy. With the self-isolation imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the value of neighbourly relations has been (re)discovered (Pasqualini & Introini, 2021; Zetterberg et al., 2021). Spontaneously born as forms of material, symbolic, and welfare support, they became essential to vulnerable people, particularly when the distance of their relatives and friends (and, in some cases, the lack of services) could not ensure the satisfaction of their most basic needs (shopping, cooking, paying bills, etc.).

The neighbourhood has always been a place that expresses both "proximity" and "distance", in which two different pushes find an unstable balance. On the one hand are proximity relations based on friendly behaviour and willingness to help; on the other, social distancing and the need to protect one's privacy. The contemporary family has closed in on itself and its distinctive character, envisaging the domestic walls are a shelter from external threats and systemic uncertainties.

In one of the latest research projects on neighbourhoods carried out in Italy (Manzo, 2013), before the pandemic, the author identifies the relationship between certain socio-demographic characteristics and the propensity to establish

neighbourly relationships. The same elements can explain the development of altruistic actions. Age strongly influences the density of the relationships with neighbours. Adults with children are the most active subjects in neighbourly relationships, followed by the elderly, particularly those with mobility issues. Like age, the social class also predicts the extent of people's networks,

the reasons for this difference can be found in the specific social contexts pertaining to the working class (segregated environments, relationships that take place mainly in the home or the workplace) vs. the middle and upper classes (wider range of resources and choice) (Manzo, 2013, p. 20).

Among the other factors, education affects the personal network the most. Highly educated individuals usually show greater sociability – precisely because their diversified interests lead them to establish relationships outside the perimeter of their home. Finally, when individuals enjoy a higher income (and thus more resources),

[they] can count on better and more consistent practical support than the poorest: increasing the size and resources of the network intensifies selective strategies (*Ibid.*).

During the Covid-19 emergency, social distancing (Gualda et al., 2021) and self-isolation reduced the selective possibility of subjects to form relationships beyond the walls of their home unit or pursue those already existing (Gutin et al., 2021). In this situation, the factors above proved doubly effective in explaining the propensity of some categories (such as elderly people and families with young children) to establish neighbourly relationships. During the emergency, these categories seem to have benefited the most from the social support (material and/or moral) provided by the neighbourhood (Pasqualini & Introini, 2021). However, self-isolation experiences made it possible to trace transversal links to the game played by the structural variables mentioned above. The experience lived during the first phase of the emergency brought together subjects who, due to their psychological and social

characteristics, would probably never have known each other. What Santambrogio (2020) described as a 'state of social exception' has occurred in the sense of

a de facto situation, in which, due to one of the most heterogeneous circumstances, the conditions for a life completely different from the ordinary one are created. That is, a dimension of exceptionality becomes concrete, but it is not decided, but rather it is created by itself, within society itself and in a way not causally determined by external factors, as could be natural, political and economic ones (Santambrogio, 2020, p. 17).

Here the social living space is deconstructed and redefined as a result of a lockdown that is divided between the “state of exception” - as defined by Agamben (2020a; 2020b) - and the “social state of exception” (Martini, Picarella & Mangone, 2022).

This made it possible to build (through frequent contacts, relations of mutual aid, and exchange of information) a new sociality. In turn, this new sociality established collectively significant “social spaces”, generating the premise for the formation of what Appadurai (1996) calls “locality”, a context for conscious practices and elaborated representations, performance and action. It is in the *locality*, in the new sense assumed by the surrounding space, the space around one’s home, that the pandemic moment could constitute an important opportunity for the formation of potential collective identities directed towards helping others (altruism and solidarity). There was no lack of moments of “collective effervescence” expressed through songs, choirs, practices of exchange and mutual aid. All these rituals expressed the need for individuals to find in the other (the previously unknown neighbour) a shared dimension of meaning. It was especially true during the first lockdown when the lack of definitions for the ongoing situation could not provide general guidance and orientation.

Unfortunately, there is still no literature or research on the subject that endorse and support the hypothesis of an increase in the level of the sociality of neighbourhood networks during the COVID-19 emergency. However, I wish to emphasize here not the possibility that these forms of sociality have come into

being, but whether these spontaneous bottom-up ties can continue over time, leading to greater “cooperative solidarity” (Mangone, 2022a) or that “solidarity-based sociality” that

recalls a pluralised, singularised idea of solidarity, deduced from possible collective responses to social pathologies, rather than being a reflection of abstract moral principles, codified political identities or ideological power structures. It is reconstructed in an immanent manner, finding lifeblood in a renewed involved relationship with others and with the world, rather than in reference to a 'strong', abstract and universal criterion of its definition (Bruni 2021, p. 304).

The good living conditions of citizens are the objective of any intervention on the territory. The community (an expression of the territory) should be considered as a social space in which networks (social, cultural, and environmental) find their closest interconnection following the logic that sustainable initiatives must combine environment, society, and economy (Chaigneau, 2022; Winston, 2022). Global society has strengthened territorial differentiation and social morphology. On the one hand are the cities, large metropolitan areas hosting around half the world’s population. on the other hand is the countryside, depleted by constant emigration flows (Véron, 2008) and the deterioration of its strong social and identity ties that allowed people to survive wars, natural disasters, epidemics, and famine.

During the Covid-19 pandemic that sent Italy into lockdown, the Italians’ consumption of food and other goods transformed (Corposanto & Fotini, 2020; Bartoletti, Paltrinieri, & Parmiggiani, 2022), changing the so-called “shopping basket”. At the same time, this led to changes in purchasing patterns (Mazzette, 2022). Alongside a strong increase in online purchases, there was a rediscovery of the “proximity shop” and, therefore, “neighbourhood trade” (Zanderighi & Orsi, 2020) especially in the agri-food sector:

small grocery stores – on the verge of extinction due to the overwhelming power of large retail outlets, for years frequented only for small, quick

emergency purchases – are once again becoming reference points for neighbourhoods, neighbours, and small towns. Travel restrictions, together with the fear of crowded places and queues, have led to the rediscovery of the social, communitarian value of the deli shop as symbolically representing what professional jargon defines as “free services”, *i.e.*, small shops (Corposanto & Fotini, 2020, p. 57).

With the pandemic, citizens-consumers seem to have acquired a new and greater awareness of the characteristics of what is on offer and, above all, of the “places” where it is offered.

For years, the retail sector had witnessed the continuous emergence of large-scale distribution centres (shopping and outlet centres, supermarkets), reducing more and more the number of small shops, especially in the big cities, because of the transformation of lifestyles (Tamini & Zanderighi, 2017). Small retail shops remained as “outposts” only in small municipalities, mostly in the hills and mountains. The pandemic led to the rediscovery of the primary role played by the local “superette” not only as a service – and, often, a delivery service – but also as human support. At the peak of the lockdown, the local shopkeeper was the only person outside the family nucleus, with whom to exchange a few words, albeit separated by safety devices such as face masks or till screens.

The small neighbourhood shops in municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants – around 69.98% of Italian municipalities based on ISTAT² data as of 1 January 2022 – and in medium-sized and large cities have been a fundamental resource when travel was limited, expanding the concept of “zero-kilometre”. From being synonymous with “farm-to-table”, referring to agri-food products grown and sold in the same area, the label “zero-kilometre” has taken on a broader meaning, incorporating the idea of the “neighbourhood shop”, understood as the shop “at hand”, “on the doorstep” and always reachable. In some cases, these shops have re-organised, also relying on new communication technologies, to meet the customers’

² ISTAT is the Italian National Institute of Statistics. It is the public research body responsible for general censuses of population, services and industry, and agriculture, sample surveys of families and households, and general economic surveys at the national level.

needs (e.g., applications for compiling shopping lists and booking products and home delivery or click-and-collect). The “neighbourhood trade” offered that extra *je ne sais quoi* to consumers as it went beyond the mere exchange of goods offering a proximity service (Vitillo, 2022), keeping at bay the socio-psychological discomforts of those who were self-isolating by providing personalised and home-based service. Between these shopkeepers and buyers emerged a “social relationship” – albeit in a very limited form – that never occurs with large-scale distribution or online trading.

The economic theory identifies the perfect competition market as the distributive mechanism that can best lead the system to an optimal condition. In it, the exchanges take place until no one can improve their condition without diminishing the well-being of others – Pareto optimality. Consumers maximise their well-being by purchasing goods and/or services; producers achieve maximum efficiency and profits, but no extra profits of any kind. The pandemic caused a departure from this model, although we cannot yet say if these dynamics will continue when the emergency is finally over. The same model holds also under specific forms of solidarity and positive relations (Bartoletti, Paltrinieri, & Parmiggiani, 2022). We are witnessing the emergence of the same “quasi-market” concept that applies to the health sector. Naturally, because of its peculiarities, this sector cannot abide entirely by market laws. The concept of “quasi-market” means those mechanisms of allocation and organisation that make it possible to maintain and increase the social character of the distribution by using the market mechanism for production. In other words, the market is not entrusted with the social responsibility of solidarity, nor with the protection of social weaknesses, but with the task of expanding the use of mechanisms that can make the responses to social needs more adequate. The “neighbourhood trade”, similarly to the “quasi-market” model in health care, has favoured the integration of supply and demand. Rather than occurring through bureaucratic arbitrariness, such integration privileged, on the one hand, the of consumers’ safety and health choices and, on the other, the compliance with rules and restrictions, as well as the satisfaction of primary – and, in some cases, secondary – needs.

The rediscovery of “neighbourhood commerce” has enhanced the community as a resource (Mangone & Zyuzev, 2020; Mangone & Masullo, 2021). Activating community work means, therefore, not only granting citizens “access rights” (Dahrendorf, 1989) to the surrounding formal and informal support network but also supporting and promoting all those community networks of solidarity and reciprocity that spontaneously take place in a community. A good example is the “suspended shopping”³ that started right from the “neighbourhood shops” to extend, in some cases, to medium and large-scale outlets through third sector and civil protection organisations. During the pandemic, in fact, it was common to see images like those in Fig. 4 and 5 in the large-scale distribution and scenes like those in Fig. 6 in the alleys of a metropolis like Naples.

This appears to be a “good practice” allows not only supply to meet demand in a strictly economic sense and, at the same time, the satisfaction of a common good: the well-being of the community, often embodied in altruistic actions/relationships such as “suspended shopping”.

³ The “suspended shopping” derives from an age-old custom of the Naples area of anonymously leaving a coffee paid for (suspended) at the bar to give indigent people the opportunity to also enjoy Neapolitan espresso. The practice has then “transferred” within the agri-food sector.

Fig. 4 – “Dona la tua spesa” [Donate your shopping]



Source: “Terra Nuova.it” (02/04/2020) - Retrieved April 7, 2022 from:
<https://www.terranuova.it/News/Attualita/Coronavirus-e-solidarieta-e-boom-de-la-spesa-sospesa>

Fig. 5 – “Aiutaci ad aiutare chi ha bisogno” [Help us help those in need]



Source: “Il Riformista” (31/03/2020) - Retrieved April 7, 2022 from:
<https://www.ilriformista.it/parte-la-spesa-sospesa-le-municipalita-di-napoli-in-campo-contro-la-crisi-nessuno-e-solo-73021/>

Fig. 6 – “Chi può metta – Chi non può prenda”
[Those who can put - Those who cannot take]



Source: “ANSA” (30/03/2020) - Retrieved April 7, 2022 from:
https://www.ansa.it/campania/notizie/2020/03/30/panaro-solidale-per-i-bisognosi_2680ac26-8714-4f58-baf0-139c6e7ae2bb.html

7.4. The Covid-19 pandemic narrative of newspapers and Twitter in Italy as a tool to promote “egoistic relationships”

If these cases given above can be traced back to “altruistic relationships”, there was no lack of examples in Italy (but also in the rest of the world), in the same period as the spread of Covid-19 disease, of phenomena or attitudes traceable to “egoistic relationships”. These all fall within the sphere of communication carried out both through the old media and the new media. In the following, some examples of these dynamics are given, starting with the narrative that has been made of the spread of the virus (Boccia Artieri & Farci, 2021).

The question posed is: What happened with the narrative of the pandemic? And what happened with the narrative of the Covid-19 pandemic in Italy?

While narrative has a very high degree of rhetoric inherent in it (Phelan, 1996) - certainly accentuated by the forms of communication adopted - it does promote debate, but not on all issues concerning the pandemic and certainly not in all places. Storytelling is part of social life and this is an inescapable fact. Another inescapable element is its conceptual ambiguity, which often produces 'perverse effects' (Boudon, 1977): there is conflict in it. In the case of the “pandemic”, the narrative mobilises globally but this has a local appropriation: “The globalization of communication has not eliminated the localized character of appropriation but rather has created a new kind of symbolic axis in the modern world” (Thompson, 1995, p. 174).

Narrative thus comes in two forms: knowledge and communication (Mangone, 2022b). As a *mode of knowledge*, since the “cognitive” process does not consist in the purely mechanical recording of information but it reorganises, reworks, represents and interprets, knowledge. It is the result of an active process of construction, and as a *mode of communication*, since it develops a system of symbols and meanings shared by a community or a certain part of it that thinks and acts on the basis of these symbols and meanings. And since knowledge enables the development of systems of ideas and communication their dissemination, one can well understand how narrative takes on a central role in promoting social change and thus also in promoting “altruistic relationships” or “egoistic relationships”. In

particular, two illustrative cases are presented, that of newspapers (old media) and that of the social network Twitter (new media).

The reality that emerged in the first months of the spread of the virus in Italy led to the hypothesis that in the action taken (by institutions and individuals) there was no operating and clear awareness of the problem in terms of the pandemic emergency (Donato, 2020) and of the health risk (Mangone, 2021c) that entire populations were running (and in fact did run). Only after the first cases in Europe was it confirmed that there was a strong need to tackle the problem decisively by orienting communication and forms of narrative towards containing the contagion, but in the early months communication went in the opposite direction.

In light of this, it was only natural that an infodemic (Debanjan & Meena, 2021) or sensationalist information (at best) was produced by the media regarding the pandemic, which tended firstly to blame the Chinese population and then the patients who were considered “untors” (Villa et al., 2020). This brings us back to the reflection on the narrative which, in a situation of high involvement of emotions, values and sociocultural resources, must assume a function such that it does not create moral panic (Cohen, 2002) but tends to modify attitudes and useful lifestyles (in this case to reduce the risk of contagion).

The media narrative has also reflexively become the narrative of the pandemic of individuals outlining a scenario that has taken on the character of a real clash, referring back to the semantic and metaphorical sphere of the enemy to be fought and of war (Martinez-Brawley & Gualda, 2020). As Ricœur (1984) makes clear, metaphor is a mimesis, i.e. it is the imitation of an action (a metaphor for reality) and - in particular what he refers to as *mimesis*₂ - concerns the narrative function of integrating information acquired from the external world by transforming it into the world of the text or the verb through the composition of different and multiple events. Add to this that, as De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2008) state, understanding narrative as social practice always implies a great deal of attention to the different levels of analysis that start from the local level of interaction (community) as the place of articulation of phenomena that, however, can find their explanation and understanding beyond it.

7.4.1. Newspapers narratives: the metaphor of the enemy and war

The emergency due to the pandemic has appeared as the expression of a problem of social order and control, but also the testimony of a dramatic human condition experienced both by health workers and by the population (obviously in a differentiated manner) which, once inserted in the circuit of the media narrative or not, can have the capacity to arouse emotional reactions in public opinion with the consequent positively (altruism) or negatively (egoism) oriented actions. This emergency is thus framed and interpreted in a twofold frame (Goffman, 1974): on the one hand, there is the daily narrative of the evolution that refers to the theme of individual and collective (public) health, to the virus capable of affecting everyone indiscriminately, producing in public opinion a greater recognition and perception of themselves as being at risk; on the other hand, the use of expressions such as siege, truce, enemy and war may have helped to promote a key reading suggesting the idea that the emergency could be recognised as a “war” against an invisible enemy.

This is what emerged from the analysis of the front pages of Italian newspapers using the methodology described in Chapter III (*Research steps and methodology*), which takes into consideration – in brief – these three aspects: 1) the way in which the front pages of the newspapers are constructed: space dedicated to the news (centre page, side, bottom), the presence of photographs and any in-depth analysis; 2) the time factor, the diachronic analysis of the media treatment allows us to identify any variations in interest or in the way the news is represented; 3) the way in which the headlines are constructed.

As already mentioned in the Chapter III, the newspapers examined are representative of both the national territory and the different political orientations (in alphabetical order: *Corriere del Mezzogiorno edizione della Campania*, *Corriere della Sera*, *il Fatto Quotidiano*, *il manifesto*, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, *L’Osservatore Romano*, *la Repubblica*, e *Liberio*) and the time frame considered was the so-called Phase 1 (21 February-3 May 2020). This is the period from the identification of the first infected person to the day when the real first lockdown is called (Mangone, 2021a), while the entire subsequent period was named Phase2 and saw the focus

mainly on political aspects (i.e., how to definitively exit the emergency and relaunch the economy and tourism) and those of a health nature concerned the vaccination campaign.

To give an idea of these newspapers, as an illustration, all the front pages of the newspapers examined are reproduced on the following pages of the thesis (Fig. 7-14). To be precise, these are the front pages of 22 February 2020, the day after the official detection of the first infection, which in fact also coincides with the first SARS-CoV-2 infected victim. The headlines are in red and with the exception of the Vatican City newspaper (*L'Osservatore Romano*) all open the front page with news about the spread of the virus and some with full-page photos.

Fig. 7 – Front page, *Corriere del Mezzogiorno*
 “Coronavirus, la grande paura «assedia» anche Napoli”
 [Coronavirus, the great fear «besieges» Naples too]

SABATO 22 FEBBRAIO 2020 - ANNO XXIII - N. 45 | REDAZIONE PUBLIQUER - AMMINISTRAZIONE: Via H. Nicolini (Ingresso 3) - 80123 Napoli - Tel. 081 - 7622001 - Fax 081 - 5807779 | Edizione con il servizio di stampa e distribuzione

Aforismo con arcata
 di Antonio Fiore
 Napoli: stentati a legna un milione e 500 mila euro per salciare i resti dell'acquedotto romano che si stanno sbriciolando, ma i lavori non sono mai iniziati. Dai Ponti Rossi ai Ponti Blu.

Il critico
 Ceravamo tanto ri-amati
 di Antonio Fiore
 a pagina 19

UNA POLTRONA PER DUE
 Lo spettatore
 «Mezza porzione» di Scola
 di Roberto Barbieri
 a pagina 19

OGGI 16°C
 Sereno
 (Vento: NE a 13 km/h)
 Umidità: 50%

DOM LUN MAR MER
 ☀ ☁ ☀ ☀
 9/17° 11/17° 11/17° 11/17°
 Oronzelli Italia - City

CORRIERE DEL MEZZOGIORNO
 CAMPANIA
 redaz.na@corriere-delmezzogiorno.it | corriere-delmezzogiorno.it

Il saluto al San Carlo
PARTITURA SBAGLIATA PER MACRON
 di Francesco Canessa

Coronavirus, la grande paura «assedia» anche Napoli
 La paura per il virus che ha contagiato e sta diffondendo anche a Napoli. Dalle insegnanti delle scuole dove ci sono bambini di nazionalità cinese («disinfestano giochi e banchi») alle mamme che, al contrario, hanno figli alle scuole internazionali. Albergatori monitorati dalla polizia per i turisti stranieri e imprenditori che hanno annullato i viaggi in Cina.
 a pagina 4 | **Merone**

ESAURITE LE SCORTE DI AMUCHINA
Convoca l'unità di crisi
Bimbo di 3 anni al Cotugno
 di Angelo Agrippa
 a pagina 6

3 LA LETTERA
Ecco perché quel presidio fisso di polizia non è utile
 di Alessandro Giuliano

Politica Regionali. De Luca attacca. Manfredi: Costa uomo di valore ma il governatore ha lavorato bene

Al voto nell'indifferenza
 Senato, domani le suppletive: 14 quartieri alle urne. Incubo astensionismo
 a pagina 2 e 3 | **Russo**

A Brescia Cori razzisti sull'epidemia e i napoletani
Sesta vittoria su sette partite
E ora il Barça
 di Monica Scozzafava

IL PROGETTO «RESTART»
Uffici pubblici e aree verdi per la rinascita di Scampia
 di Paolo Cuzzo
 a pagina 7

ACQUISTATI SU DELEGA DEI PIACONTABILI
Consulenze esterne, la finanza in Anm
 di Titti Beneduce
 a pagina 7

L'ISTITUTO DI PIAZZA CAVOUR
Raid nella scuola Casanova
Porte sradicate, rubati i pc
 di Walter Medolla
 a pagina 9

3 NAPOLI SVEILATA
 di Rolo Ferraro

La Casa Professa che anticipa il Settecento
 Nel 1470 Roberto Sanseverino principe di Salerno cedette di fronte a Santa Chiara, nei pressi di uno spiazzo di proprietà del monastero, un palazzo rettangolare con i fronti bugnati su tre lati. Il palazzo, opera di Norello da San Luciano, aveva giardini a ridosso di San Sebastiano, dal lato occidentale. In continuità con il fronte del palazzo, furono costruite le stalle.
 Questa situazione è registrata nella veduta l'abate del 1696, nella quale ad ovest vi è an-

1584 acquistano il palazzo, confiscato al Sanseverino perché si erano schierati contro l'Inquisizione spagnola, poi il palazzo Feltrè della Rovere e l'annessa proprietà con giardino su via San Sebastiano, subito adattati come Casa Professa con comunicazioni interne e alloggi. Nel cortile del palazzo San Severino viene costruita una chiesa provvisoria (poi distrutta da un incendio nel 1699) al centro di quattro grandi pilastri.
 continua a pagina 13

neafit
 di maglieria
 Perdi almeno una taglia per il tuo evento!
FINO A 5KG IN SOLI 5 GIORNI
DETOX
 CINQUE-CINQUE-CINQUE
 INFO E PRENOTAZIONI ☎ 800 58 77 17
 Via Vittoria Colonna 14, Napoli | neafit.com

Source: *Corriere del Mezzogiorno* (February 22, 2020).

Retrieved April 7, 2022 from: <https://www.dire.it/22-02-2020/425131-prime-pagine-quotidiani-22-febbraio-2020/>

Fig. 8 – Front page, *Corriere della Sera*
 “Il virus in Italia: un morto in Veneto”
 [The virus in Italy: one death in Veneto]

SABATO 22 FEBBRAIO 2020 www.corriere.it in Italia lire 3000 con € EURO 2,00 | ANNO 145 N. 43

CORRIERE DELLA SERA

FONDATA NEL 1876

Milano, Via Solferino 28 • Tel. 02 65921
 Roma, Via Campana 20 • Tel. 06 98581

PIANETA 20
Domani gratis
 Clima, smog, sostenibilità
 Debutterà «Pianeta 2020»
 Un inserto di 36 pagine
 Chiedete all'edicola la prima uscita

In edicola
 Opporsi all'autorità:
 Rimbaud il rivoluzionario
 e Baudelaire il rivoltoso
 di **Alessandro Piperno**
 nel settimanale **la Lettura**

SCARPA
 MOJITO THE ORIGINAL

- Nel Lodigiano grave. «Senne che aveva cenato con un manager tornato dalla Cina, positiva anche la moglie incinta. Restrizioni per 50 mila persone
Il virus in Italia: un morto in Veneto
È un uomo di 78 anni. In Lombardia 15 casi. Nei Comuni chiusi scuole, uffici, bar e stazioni. Conto: attenzione alta

UNA SFIDA PER TUTTI

di **Luigi Ripamonti**

I casi di trasmissione locale di infezione da nuovo coronavirus in Lombardia e il decesso di un uomo in Veneto hanno le carte in regola per produrre un enorme salto di qualità nell'azione, medica e non, verso l'epidemia di Covid-19. Ma questo non dev'essere il momento del panico, al contatto ravvicinato tutti dobbiamo mantenere, e mostrare, i nervi saldi. A livello individuale quanto è stato finora, oggettivamente, predicato va messo in pratica, a cominciare dall'adozione delle misure utili per proteggersi e proteggere gli altri, fino ad arrivare al mantenimento di comportamenti nazionali a livello locale. In caso contrario non si può escludere che, a breve, il rischio analogo diventi, ancor più dell'Influenza, la polmonite, la pertosse, il morbillo che l'epidemiologia ha selezionato per aiutarci a sopravvivere, ma che quando è sconosciuto il suo controllo può fare più danni della polmonite, minaccia che la influenza.

Altrettanto vale al livello politico. Chi ci rappresenta è chiamato ad adottare senza reticenze misure preventive, per esempio attraverso le vaccinazioni, e al comando di emergenza come queste, senza dimenticare il ruolo della Protezione civile.

continua a pagina 38



Ieri i pazienti con sintomi sospetti portati agli ospedali di Codogno, nel Lodigiano, e al Sacco di Milano (Massimo Albertini/Fotogramma)

Prima vittima per il coronavirus. In Veneto è morto un uomo di 78 anni. In Lombardia sono 15 i casi. Nei Comuni interessati chiusi scuole, uffici, bar e stazioni. da pagina 2 a pag. 15

L'ORDINANZA, LE MISURE
 Le cinque cose che è bene sapere
 di **Alessandra Arachi** a pag. 14

LA RICOSTRUZIONE LA VITA E I CONTATTI
Lavoro, gare, corsi
Quei 19 giorni del paziente uno
 di **Simona Ravizza**

GIANNELLI


SETTEGIORNI
 di **Francesco Verderami**

La politica si autosospende
a pagina 17

ERA STATO A SHANGHAI
Il «diffusore» prelevato di notte
 di **Giulio Fasano**

I paziente zero arrivato da Shanghai. Il padre: «Svegliati nel cuore della notte per gli esami».
a pagina 10

NEI PAESI DELLA BASSA PADANA
«Noi come Wuhan
Qui sembra un set»
 di **Andrea Nicastro**

Dar chinesi, scuole deserte e il padre: «Svegliati nel cuore della notte per gli esami».
a pagina 9

OPPOSTI ESTREMISMI
Quando va in pezzi l'idea di modernità
 di **Antonio Scurati**

I «separare dell'epidemia di polarizza agli estremi: o la scollata di spalle o la disperazione paranoide».
a pagina 11

IL CAFFÈ
 di **Massimo Gramellini**

Rimango sempre affascinato dal modo di ragionare del Trump, ieri se l'è presa con chi ha assegnato l'Oscar a «Parasite». «Da proprio il caso di darlo a un film coreano, con tutti i problemi che abbiamo avuto con la Corea del Sud riguardo al coronavirus». I suoi avversari sostengono che ad averlo inflastato siano stati i sottotitoli, dato che non sa leggere. Ma lo vorrei prendere sul serio le sue parole. Per quest'uomo d'affari, anche l'arte e i premi fanno parte di una partita di giro. Che «Parasite» sia un bel film è secondario. Conta di più il fatto che il Paese da cui proviene non abbia buoni rapporti commerciali con gli Usa. Seguendo la logica del Trump, Hollywood non può premiare neanche un film svedese, finché l'area continua a rompere le scatole agli americani sul riscaldamento globale. Temo gli sfugga che il ritto degli Oscar non appartiene agli Stati Uniti, ma al mondo intero. E che è proprio la convinzione, o almeno l'illusione, che tutto quanto è americano appartenga al mondo intero ad averne garantito il primato culturale agli Stati Uniti nell'ultimo secolo. Ma al Trump di questo primato culturale non importa un fico. A lui interessa solo quello economico, senza capire che l'uno è il riflesso dell'altro.

Il critico cinematografico della Casa Bianca ha espresso nostalgia per «Via col vento». Forse di quel capolavoro ricorda solo la battuta di Clark Gable: «Praticamente me ne infischio». Sembra scritta per lui.

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PASQUALE BRUNI



ALELUJA COLLECTION

Milano - Via Montenapoleone, 5 | Roma - Via del Babuino, 196 C

Source: *Corriere della Sera* (February 22, 2020).

Retrieved April 7, 2022 from: <https://www.dire.it/22-02-2020/425131-prime-pagine-quotidiani-22-febbraio-2020/>

Fig. 9 – Front page, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*

“Il virus è in Italia: 17 infettati, paesi deserti e rissa politica”

[The virus is in Italy: 17 infected, deserted villages and political brawl]

Prosegue il tour dell'imputato Descalzi per il terzo mandato all'Eni. È persino salito dal suo sponsor Mattarella. C'erano una volta i "requisiti di onorabilità"

CRASTAN
1870
100% ORZO ITALIANO

ristora
INSTANT DRINKS

Sabato 22 febbraio 2020 - Anno 12 - n° 52
Edizione: via di Sant'Elia n° 2 - 00184 Roma
Tel. +39 06 739831 - Fax +39 06 73983290

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Aut. Min. 1/80000 Roma del 14/05/09

Zimbabwe, Italia
Dici anni fa il premier Robert Mugabe si era mosso all'Agcom, Giancarlo Innocenzi, perché trasformasse l'Autorità garante delle comunicazioni in un Tribunale Politico della Verità (classico multiscelta Rai per Arnaldo di Santoro, Gallo di gloria e Forca con me della Dandini fino a provocarne la chiusura. Non sapeva che Innocenzi era indagato e intercettato a Trani. Così, il 14 novembre 2009, fu sentito ordinare a "Lino": "Bisogna concentrare che l'azione vostra consista... sia di stimolo alla Rai per dire 'chialla-mattetta' ma non al caso. Santoro: aperte il fuoco su tutte le trasmissioni di questo tipo". L'Agcom, non avendo quel potere, non si mosse. E persino Mauro Mezzadiga berlusconiano della Rai, definì le pretese censorie del premier sui contenuti del programma giornalistici "roba che non merita lo Zimbabwe". Il 14, ovviamente, negli eleganti. Ma ora, tramite la stessa Agcom, peraltro scaduta da mesi e in prorogatio in attesa delle nomine, è riuscito là dove il, aveva fallito: uno di diffondere una multa da 1,5 milioni alla Rai per una serie di vizi e/o presunte violazioni di par condicio, contraddittorio, imparzialità, correttezza, completezza ecc. Con 36 pagine di motivazioni che, se non si offendesse il simpatico Stato africano, definiremmo sicuramente "roba da Zimbabwe". O da Minculpop. Infatti l'unico commissario serio, il professor Mario Morecchini, s'è rifiutato di votare. Tantopiù che la sanzione arriva proprio mentre il Pd&Renzi, una volta tanto uniti, tentano di riprendere la Rai togliendo il dg troppo indipendente Fabrizio Salini e liberando un te per Mario Orfeo, uomo per tutti i gusti e le stagioni. Ergo l'autoproclamato Tribunale Politico della Verità picchia duro sul Pd&Renzi per cecce e per tutti i guasti e le stagioni. Ergo l'autoproclamato Tribunale Politico della Verità picchia duro sul Pd&Renzi per cecce e per tutti i guasti e le stagioni. Ergo l'autoproclamato Tribunale Politico della Verità picchia duro sul Pd&Renzi per cecce e per tutti i guasti e le stagioni. Ergo l'autoproclamato Tribunale Politico della Verità picchia duro sul Pd&Renzi per cecce e per tutti i guasti e le stagioni.

Il virus è in Italia: 17 infettati, paesi deserti e rissa politica
FOTO: L'ESPRESSO
Il malato di ritorno dalla Cina potrebbe averne contagiate molte altre

NESSUN ACCORDO
Vertice Ue: grande flop su pochi spicci Nord contro Sud
Al primo summit dopo la Brexit, l'Europa unita mostra tutta la sua debolezza. Mandato al governo italiano per una nuova proposta

SE VIVI IN STRAPARLA COME UN UMARELL A BORDO CANTIERE
FOTO: L'ESPRESSO
L'ospedale di Codogno Ansa

MANTOVANI E MILOSA A PAG. 8-9
ANTONIO PADELLARO A PAG. 8
CANNARO A PAG. 11

CIRCO ORFEO PD E IV USANO L'AGCOM PER RIPRENDERSI LA RAI
È TORNATO IL MINCULPOP
CENSURE A UNA NOTIZIA VERA DEL TG2, ALLA BERLINGUER PER UNA BATTUTA DI CORONA E A LERNER PER UN SERVIZIO SUI LAGER LIBICI
GIARELLI PASCIUTI E ROSELLI A PAG. 2-3

LA MESA DEI CONTI
Ora Conte attende Renzi e lo sfida in Aula il 4 marzo
DE CAROLIS A PAG. 4

UN BEL NARCISISTA CON LA SINDROME DI HYBRIS (E ALTRE)
DANIELA RANIERI A PAG. 13

LA MATTIOSKA

La cattiveria
L'ELIMFORA. Matteo Renzi querela il Coronavirus perché adesso tutti parlano solo di lui
WWW.FORUM.SPINOZZI.IT

IL FILM DI DIRITTI
La favola triste e folle di Ligabue: era uno di noi
PASETTI A PAG. 22

PESIME ACQUE
Pessina, ennesimo guaio: Sangemini senza più liquidità
ROTUNNO A PAG. 16

AZZARDO BOOM
110 miliardi l'anno tra bische e web aggirando la legge
RONCHETTI A PAG. 17

A 1 ANNO DAL GOLPE
"Caracas, Guaidó in declino": parola dell'ambasciatore
GROSSI A PAG. 20

"BASTA ABUSARLE"
Armani e le donne: non è rivoluzione, ma lezione di stile
SELVIA TRUZZI

Lo sfogo di Re Giorgio è benvenuto per più d'una ragione. Perché lo stilista ha voluto includere se stesso in questo meccanismo e quindi non lo si può tacitare di opportunismo. A PAGINA 12

Segue a pagina 24

Source: *il Fatto Quotidiano* (February 22, 2020).

Retrieved April 7, 2022 from: <https://www.dire.it/22-02-2020/425131-primipagine-quotidiani-22-febbraio-2020/>

Fig. 10 – Front page, *il Manifesto*

“Fermi tutti”

[All stop]

Domani Alias
DOMENICA Incontro con Marija Stepanova; Agee-Evans, l'Alabama dei diseredati; Leone all'Ara Pacis; MAXXI, l'architettura di Louis Khan

Culture
SCAVI AL FORO ROMANO I risultati delle prime indagini. Non è la tomba di Romolo, ma un luogo di culto
Aniama Di Genova pagina 76

L'ultima
VALERIO VERBANO 19 anni, militante dell'Autonomia Operaia fu ucciso dai fascisti 40anni fa
Saverio Ferrari pagina 76

quotidiano comunista **il manifesto** **oggi con ALIAS**

SABATO 22 FEBBRAIO 2020 - ANNO L - N° 46 www.ilmanifesto.it euro 2,50

Fermi tutti

in Lombardia 14 casi, in Veneto due: il coronavirus crea il panico a Codogno e nel nord Italia. Ordinanza del ministero della Salute, chiuse scuole e attività commerciali, quarantena domiciliare per chi ha avuto contatti con contagiati. Dieci comuni del lodigiano chiusi, in isolamento 50mila persone. Speranza: «Siamo il paese Ue con le misure più severe» pagine 2,3

all'interno

Oggi Alias
La Pantera. L'eredità del movimento del '90
Come i linguaggi e le culture emersi tra facoltà occupate e centri sociali hanno lasciato il segno fino a oggi

Tip
Sciopero del venerdì contro l'alleanza «Trump-Bellanova»
Un carrello della spesa pieno di veleni, è stato il simbolo della protesta al ministero dell'Agricoltura contro il Ttip. In piazza i giovani del Fridays for future e decine di associazioni

MONICA DI SISTO
PAGINA 5

Palermo
Cinghiale pestato a sangue: 11 arresti per odio razziale
Un raid a sfondo razziale contro un gruppo di cinghiali pesa i colpi di spumiglio. La banda di ragazzini è stata arrestata con l'accusa di rapina e lesioni aggravate dall'odio razziale

ALFREDO MARSALA
PAGINA 6

FUMATA NERA A BRUXELLES
Bilancio Ue bocciato, no alla proposta Michel

Televisione
Il triste finale di partita dell'Agcom
VINCENZO VITA
L'Autorità per le garanzie nelle comunicazioni ha reso finalmente pubblica la delibera con cui più di una settimana fa decise a maggioranza (con l'adesione di Francesco Praderero) il voto contrario di Mario Morecoulaj di indagine alla Rai una sanzione di un milione e mezzo di euro. — segue a pagina 15 —

Pubblico e Privato
Ilva, Eni, Kuka per la sinistra tre casi di scuola
LUGI AGOSTINI
La crisi significa rischio, il rischio è chiama protezione, la protezione chiama Stato, la più alla forma di organizzazione sociale. La crisi del 2007 non fa eccezione. La destra cambia rapidamente e spalla al facile dal mercato che si autoregola allo Stato interventista (Trump). — segue a pagina 15 —

Rivoluzione
Un anno non basta: l'Algeria vuole la caduta del regime
GIULIANA SGRINA
Il 122 febbraio è stato proclamato festa nazionale dal presidente algerino Abdelmadjid Tebboune. È l'anniversario dell'inizio della rivoluzione popolare (hirak) che in un anno ha portato in piazza ogni martedì gli studenti e il venerdì milioni di persone in tutti gli angoli del paese. — segue a pagina 9 —

STRAGE DI HANAU
Estrema destra, rafforzati i controlli in Germania
Rafforzati i controlli in moschee, aeroporti e stazioni. Per il ministro dell'Interno Horst Seehofer: «Sussiste il pericolo di attentati nella galassia ideologica dell'ultra-destra cui è inattuabile, senza alcun dubbio, il terzo attacco in pochi mesi». L'Alternative für Deutschland è l'unico partito politico a sostenere la tesi del gesto di un folle. CANETTA & PAGINA 7

Source: *il manifesto* (February 22, 2020).

Retrieved April 7, 2022 from: <https://www.dire.it/22-02-2020/425131-prim-pagine-quotidiani-22-febbraio-2020/>

Fig. 11 – Front page, *Il Sole 24 Ore*
 “Virus in Italia, quarantena per 50mila”
 [Virus in Italy, quarantine for 50,000]



Source: *Il Sole 24 Ore* (February 22, 2020).

Retrieved April 7, 2022 from: <https://www.dire.it/22-02-2020/425131-prim-pagine-quotidiani-22-febbraio-2020/>

Fig. 12 – Front page, *L'Osservatore Romano*

Al Pontificio consiglio per i testi legislativi il Papa ricorda che la norma giuridica è un baluardo a difesa di ultimi e poveri

Se manca il diritto nascono guerre e dittature

Nell'ottavo settimana di guerra mondiale a palestinesi, vietati come sempre c'è la mancanza del diritto, scritto. Perché solo dittatore nascono e crescono senza diritto. Che cosa poche parole aggiunte a braccio al loro impetuoso Papa Francesco ha voluto rimarcare con forza che anche Chiesa non può succedere di abolire i problemi senza il diritto. Il Pontefice ha la sua tradizione rivoluzionaria di paragonare la sessione plenaria del Pontificio consiglio per i testi legislativi, stavolta in salotto nel Vaticano, a un'assemblea di legislatori di un paese.



Il papa ricorda che la norma giuridica è un baluardo a difesa di ultimi e poveri. Il Pontefice ha la sua tradizione rivoluzionaria di paragonare la sessione plenaria del Pontificio consiglio per i testi legislativi, stavolta in salotto nel Vaticano, a un'assemblea di legislatori di un paese. Il papa ricorda che la norma giuridica è un baluardo a difesa di ultimi e poveri.

Il punto sui provvedimenti voluti da Francesco

Lotta agli abusi, un anno di riforme concrete

di ALDO MORINO DI CARLUCCI

D'ufficio pensa della prima pagina del nuovo pontificato. Il bilancio peggiore a sua domanda gli amministratori, pensano solo ai costi per il papa. Ma è indubbio che l'edificio scandito negli ultimi mesi nella Chiesa per il momento il momento degli abusi, con il papa che si è mosso in modo originale del lavoro di "aggiornamento" dei testi legislativi nella sessione plenaria del Pontificio consiglio per i testi legislativi, per il Pontefice, per il Pontefice, per il Pontefice.

segnalare gli abusi e chiedere a ogni livello di essere di un anno facilmente accessibile al pubblico per ricevere le segnalazioni. Per questo il papa ha voluto un anno proprio viene indicato un anno particolare da nominare Filippo Innocenzo, presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per i Testi Legislativi, al quale saranno rappresentati della Segreteria di Stato e delle Congregazioni per la Dottrina della Fede, per le Chiese orientali, per i Vocati, per l'Investitura dei popoli, per il Clero, per gli Istituti di Vita Consuetudinaria. Alla fine dello scorso anno, il papa compie un passo ulteriore. Il 15 dicembre vengono affidati due decreti a firma del cardinale segretario di Stato, Pietro Parolin. Il primo, che modifica il regolamento della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede, emanato da papa Francesco nel 2013, è il "regolamento" vuole dare un'occhiata sul modo di comportarsi di un anno di lavoro di un anno di lavoro di un anno di lavoro.

Nella zona di Idlib si sta delineando una vera e propria catastrofe umanitaria per quasi un milione di persone

Infuriano i combattimenti nella Siria nord-occidentale

DAMASCUS. Al sempre più acuti i combattimenti nella zona di Idlib, nella Siria nord-occidentale, dove si sta delineando una vera e propria catastrofe umanitaria, con quasi un milione di persone, in tempo per la fine di ottobre, in fuga dalla zona offensiva russa e governativa.

Secondo l'Ora, sono circa 100 mila i civili siriani che si stanno ammassando alla frontiera. Di questi, il 60 per cento sono rifugiati e il 40 per cento sono siriani. Il conflitto in Siria è ormai paralizzato per i danni causati dalla guerra. Secondo i dati pubblicati dai media occidentali, i combattimenti sono in corso in tutta la zona. I siriani sono in fuga dalla zona offensiva russa e governativa.



Militari siriani a nord di Idlib (Ansa)

Intesa raggiunta in Qatar tra i talebani e Stati Uniti

Per una settimana meno violenza in Afghanistan

KABUL. «A partire da domani, sabato 22 febbraio, per una settimana, in Afghanistan entrerà in vigore una riduzione della violenza, un'attesa frutto dei negoziati in Qatar fra i talebani e gli Stati Uniti». Lo hanno annunciato i funzionari del Governo di Kabul. «È un'opportunità per dimostrare di voler la pace nel paese», aveva dichiarato nei giorni scorsi da Doha, dove si svolgono i colloqui, il ministro per gli Affari esteri, Abdullah Abdullah.

Da più di un anno e mezzo, funzionari statunitensi ed emiratiti dei talebani discutono nella capitale afghana dei dettagli per porre fine al sanguinoso conflitto in Afghanistan. Dopo vari anni di guerra, i talebani, che hanno provocato finora oltre 100 mila morti, hanno accettato di negoziare con il Governo afgano, e si è così alzata la speranza di una pace duratura.

L'apertura degli archivi della Santa Sede per il pontificato di Pio XII (1959-1963)

di JONATHAN MARSHALL. Per l'Archivio Apostolico Vaticano e per gli altri archivi della Santa Sede, l'apertura all'accesso della documentazione del pontificato di Pio XII è stata, effettivamente, di un momento storico e solenne. Dopo anni di lunga preparazione, i documenti del pontificato di Pio XII sono stati aperti al pubblico.

Santa Sede conferma, in questo modo, la linea inaugurata da Leone XIII e perseguita indefessamente dai suoi successori, senza ripensamenti, sino a Papa Francesco. La Chiesa non ha paura della verità, ma affronta con fiducia i lavori di studio e di ricerca, e non si lascia influenzare da parte dei ricercatori, sicuri che sono convinti di verità e di giustizia.

ALL'INTERNO

Il Pontefice e gli abusi sessuali e sessuali della Chiesa

Semi di speranza in regioni segnate da violenza e conflitti

Per dire no alla sciofobia

Diminuiscono in Italia i reati minori

La pace nel Mediterraneo è compito di tutti

quattro pagine

NOSTRE INFORMAZIONI

Source: L'Osservatore Romano (February 22, 2020).

Retrieved April 7, 2022 from: https://www.ilpost.it/2020/02/22/le-prime-pagine-di-oggi-2427/osservatore_romano-1714/

Fig. 13 – Front page, *la Repubblica*
 “Virus, il Nord nella paura”
 [Virus, the North in fear]

BORBONESE **la Repubblica** **BORBONESE**

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L'EMERGENZA

Virus, il Nord nella paura

L'allarme Guai per i contagiati in Lombardia, tra cui medici e infermieri a Codogno. Un focolaio anche a Padova

Il blocco Dieci Comuni isolati, 50 mila abitanti. Scuole chiuse, no messe e partite di calcio

Il piano Il ministro Speranza: una settimana di blocco per chi arriva dalla Cina. Salvini: confini blindati. Conte: non serve

In Veneto muore anziano contagiato: è la prima vittima in Italia

Il commento **Il fantasma del contrappasso**
di Gabriele Romagnoli

L'ospedale L'arrivo di un caso sospetto al Sacco di Milano dove sono ricoverati alcuni dei contagiati da coronavirus

La cittadina Codogno (Lodi) e altri Comuni sono isolati. Chiusi uffici, scuole e negozi. Abitanti invitati a restare a casa

L'esperto **Ma la scienza può fermarlo**
di Alberto Mantovani

Domande & risposte **Dieci cose da sapere per evitare rischi**
di Elena Dusi

BORBONESE **La strage razzista in Germania** **L'intervista** **Armani: la moda fa del male alle donne**
di Serena Tibaldi

Quell'incubo venuto da lontano: una sconfitta per la Merkel
di Paolo Berizzi e Tonia Mastrobuoni

Redazione: 00187 Roma, via Delfico-Columbo, 10. Tel. 06/49812. Fax 06/4981222. E-mail: info@repubblica.it. Pagine: 40. L'edizione abboni: 00187 Roma.

Commissione di pubblica istruzione: A. Mancini & C. Milano - via Venezia, 21 - Tel. 02/379961. e-mail: publicistadirezione@com.it

Punti di vendita all'estero: Parigi, Francoforte, Berlino, Londra, New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Mosca, Pechino, Singapore, Sydney, Toronto, Washington. Distribuzione: 00187 Roma. E-mail: distribuzione@com.it. Spese di spedizione: 00187 Roma.

Source: *la Repubblica* (February 22, 2020).

Retrieved April 7, 2022 from: <https://www.dire.it/22-02-2020/425131-prime-pagine-quotidiani-22-febbraio-2020/>

Fig. 14 – Fron page, *Libero*

“Vade retro virus”

[Vade retro virus]

ISSN 1120-3462 e online 2237-618X

Stampa: 22 febbraio 2020 | € 1,50

Anno LV Numero 52

OPERAZIONE: PIRELLA GÖTTSCHE LOWE

DEL: 02/20000000 - 02/20000000 - 02/20000000 - 02/20000000

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Primo morto: un 77enne a Padova
VADE RETRO VIRUS

● **Lodi, grave un 38enne: contagia** ● **Coprifuoco in mezzo Nord: 50 mila** ● **Dopo aver preso in giro la Lega**
15 persone. E la lista si allungherà **isolati. Infetti anche nel Veneto** **il governo raddoppia le quarantene**

Lorenzo Mottola
 Mezza Italia si era scandalizzata all'idea di far saltare qualche giorno di scuola ai bambini in arrivo dalla Cina per precauzione. Ora in quarantena ci sono finite 10 città della provincia di Lodi. Lezioni sospese, messe vietate, imprese ferme, carnevale annullato. E soprattutto è arrivato il primo morto: Adriano Trevisan, un settantasettenne di Monselice. Stop perfino ai mezzi pubblici. (...) segue → a pagina 2

BOLLONI - CALESSI - CAVALLI - FACCI - OSMETTI - RAPISARDA → da pagina 2 a 9

Francesco Facchinetti si racconta
Sì, ho i capelli nuovi... Mai stato così felice

42 milioni di bimbi mai nati
Aborto prima causa di morte nel pianeta

MELANIA RIZZOLI
 La prima causa di morte a livello globale non è il cancro e non sono nemmeno le malattie cardiovascolari come si è propensi a credere, perché il triste primato va senza ombra di dubbio all'aborto volontario. Una pratica medica e chirurgica che soltanto lo scorso anno è costata la vita a 42,4 milioni di bambini mai nati, un numero enorme di vittime inconsapevoli, anche se i dati ufficiali pubblicati di tali morti prenatali appaiono verosimilmente sottostimati, non considerando gli aborti "invisibili", quelli per intenderci riconducibili alle interruzioni clandestine di gravidanza e alla cosiddetta "pillola del giorno dopo" in uso comune già da qualche anno. L'elaborazione statistica è stata fatta e pubblicata da *Worldometers*. (...) segue → a pagina 14

Ci vorrebbe un vaccino anti-politici
Chiudersi in casa e recitare un bel rosario

VITTORIO FELTRI
 Era scontato che il Coronavirus facesse irruzione anche in Italia, sapevano tutti che non avrebbe rispettato i nostri confini. Le infezioni sono come i clandestini, arrivano dovunque senza passaporto e in qualche modo si insediano. Solo il governo si illudeva che ci avrebbe risparmiato per una forma di riguardo nei confronti di Palazzo Chigi. E ancora adesso che siamo infestati esso invita il popolo a non farsi cogliere dal panico e a comportarsi con calma, in virtù dei fatti. Intanto però le televisioni di ogni tipo e dimensione non trattano altro che non sia il terribile morbo, con accenti terroristici che contrastano con la razionalità. Ovviamente non sbagliano i signori dell'informazione: il loro dovere è fornire le notizie e non quello di nascerle come piacerebbe ai politici. I quali fino ad alcuni giorni fa, intralciati di ottimismo ingenuo, predicavano di non chiudere le scuole ai cinesi. (...) segue → a pagina 3

Se il premier sfida l'infezione sarà sconfitto

RENATO FARINA
 Il premier Conte dichiara guerra al coronavirus. Era ora. Ma ci ha infilato parole e parolone che sono una garanzia sicura che la perderà. Il problema è che mette a rischio non se stesso, ma noi e i nostri figli e nipoti. L'unica speranza è che la sua vana inconsistenza, dove la sola cosa sicura è la pochezza, sia surrogata dalle competenze e da forti decisioni dei governatori. Intanto il bollettino dal fronte è questo. Un uomo di 77 anni, di Monselice (Padova), risultato positivo al Coronavirus, è morto ieri sera. Due popolose comunità della bassa Lombardia sono state messe in quarantena con decisione inattesa dall'autorità regionale, che si pone così come presidio di garanzia dei cittadini. La giunta del governatore Fontana ha mostrato che l'unico modo di combattere il virus non sono i messaggi contro la paura, perché l'infezione se ne frega degli appelli alla calma, ma è contenibile - in attesa (...). segue → a pagina 3

FRANCESCO FACCHINETTI
 Sono Francesco Facchinetti. Sì, sono io, quello del *Capitano Urrano*. Il figlio dei Pirelli. Sì, di tutti e 4. Nella mia vita ho avuto tante fortune. Io ammetto. Ma anche qualche sfiga. Mio padre non mi ha tramandato la sua splendida voce ma mi sono crucciato la parte del suo Dio che dice: "A 20 anni ti cadranno tutti i capelli". (...) segue → a pagina 16

BUONA TV A TUTTI
Pantani merita uno show

MAURIZIO COSTANZO
 → a pagina 26

Cittadini spinti a tutto spiano
Peggior del Trojan c'è solo chi lo usa

ZEUS
 «Big brother is watching you» è il monito che i nostri governanti lanciano con la riforma delle intercettazioni in attesa della definitiva approvazione da parte della seconda Camera. Simbolo di questa riforma (...). segue → a pagina 10

DOPO L'INFLUENZA NON RIESCI A RIPARTIRE?
SUSTENIUM PLUS
LA SPINTA CHE TI SERVE

Re Giorgio: «Sono stufo di sentir parlare di tendenze, non sono niente»
Armani: troppi stilisti violentano le donne

DANIELA MASTROMATTEI
 «Gli stilisti non rispettano le donne». Parola di Giorgio Armani. «Non le rispettano quando mostrano spot pubblicitari con le modelle seminude». Sentira quasi un invito a imitarle per quel mondo femminile (...). segue → a pagina 19

A UN ORSETTO HANNO TOLTO FAMIGLIA E AMICI
Non rompeteci i procioni

AZZURRA BARBUTO
 C'era chi giurava di avere scoperto la signora e il procone a cena in un ristorante, seduti uno accanto all'altra. (...) segue → a pagina 17

Libero **Quotidiano** ogni giorno notizie video sondaggi dossier e tanto altro...

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Source: *Libero* (February 22, 2020). Retrieved April 7, 2022 from: <https://edicola.liberoquotidiano.it/newsstand/index.php>

This way of narrating the pandemic in Phase 1 fuelled a climate of fear and insecurity and, more generally, a sense of mistrust towards others already present due to “conspiracy” theories (Gualda & Rúas, 2019; Gualda et al., 2021; Douglas, 2021) fuelled by fake news (Orso et al., 2020; Rocha, 2021) that the virus was built in a laboratory in Wuham the Chinese city in Hubei province from where it then spread.

This has proved to be the case in various places around the world, in fact, it has been observed

clear commonalities among different countries and political leaders when resorting to the war metaphor to serve their respective causes. Political leaders all became concerned about infodemic, as an expression of a globalized culture. While disinformation and disinformation have been around in all wars, the ease with which they can be spread now is unmatched. There is a fundamental challenge for all leaders to control this harmful new development. Most people were familiar with the disinformation of the old wartime of human spies, but this new menace of ‘fake news’ is more ubiquitous and elusive to combat (Martinez-Brawley & Gualda, 2020, pp. 269-270).

The media representation (Páez & Pérez, 2020) of the emergency by the print media, in particular, relates to a more general issue, that of uncertainty, which in this case may have contributed to accelerating a generalised sense of insecurity and alarm (Cohen, 2002) by widening the socio-cultural distances between individuals who were all seen as “potential untors” - think of the hate attacks on runners or dog owners who necessarily had to leave their homes. If, in fact, the nature of the emergency is considered neutral, neutral was not the narrative. Rather, the impossibility of physically identifying an “enemy” to fight against appears evident, but on the contrary, precisely because of its invisibility, it manifests itself in a pervasive and for that reason everywhere and is not perceivable.

The narrative of the press thus focuses on attributing the label of 'enemy' to something (in this case, the virus), recalling that aspect of the social irrationality of

the scapegoat (Girard, 1986) that certainly does not generate positive or altruistic relations, but rather generates a hunt for the “potential untors” (scapegoat) that inevitably produces selfish relations. In this type of interpretative dynamic there is the ambiguity that drives individuals to give irrational social explanations for their attitudes. The attribution of a false guilt to a subject or a group defined as 'enemies' falls fully within this logic, one thinks of the discriminatory actions against individuals of Chinese origin who, at the beginning of the spread of the virus, were considered 'anointers' and, that is, spreaders of the virus. The ritual procedures adopted are an indicator of the social and political structures of a community and the narratives were the tool through which to construct the 'invisible enemy' to be fought: “Claiming to be bolstering safety yet feeding fear, politicians cite a vast threat from an invisible enemy. As in actual war, they deem collateral damage to be unfortunate but inevitable” (Tisdall, 2020). Crisis situations are above all crises of the social and, therefore, one is driven to explain and interpret them through social causes as a war to be fought against an enemy. Crisis situations are above all social crises and, therefore, one is driven to explain and interpret them through social causes as a war to be fought against an enemy. As the Italian newspapers did, as shown by some of their front pages (Fig. 15-17) published during the Phase 1 that used terms typical of a conflict condition (e.g. siege, truce, etc.), in red in the figures.

This example documents how the narratives constructed around the Covid-19 pandemic (not only by the media but also by individuals) are descriptive tools for understanding the processuality and mechanisms of functioning and construction of the category of the “invisible enemy” (Sowden, Borgstrom & Selman, 2021). Words, images, videos and anything else used for storytelling influenced the construction of shared representations as they produced a symbolic mediation that provided identification models on which to base social interactions and actions.

Fig. 15 - il Fatto Quotidiano, Febraury 23, 2020

“Virus, nord Italia in stato d’assedio”

[Virus, Northern Italy under siege]

Mentre Renzi insulta Bonafede, pure l'Anm passa all'opposizione disertando il tavolo sulla giustizia. Così il ministro impara ad assumere giudici e ausiliari






Domenica 23 febbraio 2020 - Anno 12 - n° 53
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Risiko Nomine
 Palermo ha paura di perdere la Cdp e tenta di salvarsi con le elemosine
 • TECCE A PAG. 6

DESCALZALI ENI: ORA IL GOVERNO RISPONDA IN AULA
 • STEFANO FELTRI A PAG. 7

I nostri pareri
 Il bavaglio Agcom alla Rai: tanti no da cronisti, autori e conduttori tivù
 • GIARELLI A PAG. 9

Giovanni Galli
 “Mio figlio ucciso dal guard rail: nessuno paga, è tutto prescritto”
 • SALVINI A PAG. 10

Condono Regione
 Raggi vs sanatoria a chi occupa case: “Offesa agli onesti e favore ai clan”
 • BISIGNIA A PAG. 15

2 MORTI, ANCORA CACCIA AL PAZIENTE O

VIRUS, NORD ITALIA IN STATO D'ASSEDIO

IL GOVERNO (E LE OPPOSIZIONI) MANDA IN LASCIA L'ESERCITO IMPOSTA LA QUARANTENA. OLTRE 60 CASI, FINO A MILANO

• MILOSA E PALOMBI DA PAG. 2 A PAG. 5



Manzelli
 «...spero il carnevale...
 ...tutti impazziti...
 ...senza un partito»

NEL REGNO DI ZAVI
Veneto, test bloccati sui tornati dalla Cina
 • PIETROBELLI A PAG. 3

IL COMANDANTE ITALIANO
“Non voglio contagiare nessuno, resto in Cina”
 • PASQUATI A PAG. 4-5

SALVINI SPECULA, MELONI NO: BUON SEGNO A DESTRA
 • ANTONIO PADELLARO A PAG. 12

L'Innominato
 di MARCO TRAVAGLIO

L'altra sera, facendo zapping, mi imbattono nel programma di Barbara Lombardi su Rete 4. Tanto per cambiare c'è l'Innominato (scusatelo chiamo così, ma appena lo nomino mi fa causa, ritenendo comprensibilmente offensivo il suo nome e soprattutto il suo cognome) che, con l'aria solenne di chi sta svelando il terzo segreto di Fatima, annuncia: “Nel piano c'è l'Innominato”. Bisogna a sapersi, mi appunto subito la preziosa informazione per non scordarmela. E immagino il sollievo che costoro annunciano deve aver suscitato nel Lombardo-Veneto terrorizzato dal coronavirus. Dal Padova a Codogno e Casalpusterleno è tutto un passaparola: abbiamo una fifa brava, però l'Innominato ha un piano choc autostradale, il che è già incoraggiante, e per giunta contempla pure la Pontina, quindi siamo a cavallo. Mentre prendo buona nota, un amico mi informa che il tizio ha appena ricordato che il su babbo ha già vinto due cause civili contro di me (una perché ho piazzato un conflitto d'interessi del padre del premier che s'interessa di appalti Consip, l'altra perché defluisce bancarotta il fallimento di una società del medesimo genitore, ora imputato per tre bancarotte fraudolente); e ha svelato di averne presentate altre due in un colpo solo (Jan. 14 e Jan. 15 in due mesi, stracciando il record precedentemente detenuto da B.). Dell'Ucris Freccia, però, non c'è (insieme) per le mie ultime critiche. Che lui, bontà sua, stima in 100 mila euro di danni.

La tecnica delle denunce a strascico serve a intimidire (quindi non me) e a moltiplicare le possibilità di imbattersi negli stessi giudici che chiedono ragione al babbo che aveva torto. Ma è anche un'arma a doppio taglio. Lo sa bene l'altro Matteo, che mi denunciò (ma penalmente è più sportivo) per “cazzate verdi”: il giudice sentenziò la licità dell'epiteto per la sua straordinaria aderenza al soggetto in questione. Così ora tutti possono chiamarlo Cazzaro Verde quando vogliono, prima e dopo i pasti. Figurarsi se ora un altro giudice stabilisse che è lecito chiamare l'Innominato “intomante” o “caso umano”. Milioni di persone che non aspettano altro potrebbero approfittarne per sbagarsi un po'. Ma c'è pure il caso di essere condannati da un giudice poco avvezzo all'articolo 21 della Costituzione, covando la libertà di parola in concessa per eleggere i potenti anziché per criticarli, dunque portato a confondere i giornalisti con i cortigiani (e con qualche ragione, visto com'è ridotta la prima categoria). In attesa di apprendere fra una dozzina d'anni qual'è il risultato e quale no, meglio andarci coi piedi di piombo.

SEGLUE A PAGINA 24

ENDRIZZI (M5S)
 “Così nelle regioni leghiste si aiuta la lobby d'azzardo”
 • RONCHETTI A PAG. 6

CANADA
 Gli indiani contro il gasdott: Trudeau diventa cattivo
 • GRAMAGLIA A PAG. 19

GIORGIO LOCATELLI Tra cucina, tv e Brexit
 “Masterchef è la mia rivincita contro gli inglesi razzisti”
 • ALESSANDRO FERRUCCI

Io e pentole erano i Lusoi Lego, “le mani nell'impasto il mio pongo; con i mestoli magari fingevo di suonare una musica non ben precisata”; la cucina del ristorante di famiglia, nella campagna varesina, il Luna Park.

Giorgio Locatelli è il vero frutto della sua storia: è sapore per la vita e gusto per la scoperta, e quando parla mette la giusta sapidità a un piatto “personale” che cucina da sempre, che dosa da trenta e passa anni.

A PAGINA 20 - 21

La cattiveria
 Tenamo un uomo perde il portafogli, un bimbo nigeriano lo ritrova e lo dà agli agenti. In un'antica rata, anziché in ottanta anni
 WWW.FORUM.SPINOZA.IT

IL LAVORO NON C'È PIÙ: ECCO CHI SONO I SUOI VERI NEMICI
 • FURIO COLOMBO A PAG. 13

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Fig. 16 - la Repubblica, March 13, 2020

“Non c’è tregua”

[There is no respite]



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Non c'è tregua

Disastro in Borsa. Mattarella: da Ue aiuti, non ostacoli

Il virus Ormai più di mille morti, quasi 13 mila contagiati. Francia, Macron si arrende: chiuse le scuole e le università

La crisi Lagarde frena la Bce e delude i mercati. Piazza Affari a -16,9%, mai così male. Su lo spread, stop Iva-Irpef

Gli operai Rivolta in fabbrica: “Non siamo carne da macello”. Landini: prima la salute Oggi Conte incontra sindacati e industriali

di Bocci, Bonanni, Cuzzocrea, Dazzi, D'Argenio, De Giorgio, Di Feo, Dusi, Ginori, Giovara, Lombardi, Longhin, Mania, Mastrobuoni, Petrini, Pisa, Puledda Rampini, Romagnoli, Vecchio, Viscetti, Ziniti e Zunino con un commento di Bernardo Valli da pagina 2 a pagina 21

L'editoriale

La coda del diavolo

di Carlo Verdelli

A Brescello hanno esposto il crocifisso di don Camillo. Una sarta di Gallipoli ha lavorato tutta la notte per cucire mille mascherine. Controordine, non c'è il divieto di passeggiare ma Fluvio a non uscire. Gli operai che di casa devono uscire, altrimenti rischiano il posto, improvvisano scoperi spontanei: non siamo carne da macello. Dopo il gol all'Inter, Dybala corre ad abbracciare i compagni, tra i quali c'è Rugani, che risulterà positivo. Roma, hotel a 5 stelle al tracollo, c'è chi resiste con un solo ospite. Calano le donazioni di sangue per paura, immollata, del contagio.

● continua a pagina 31

L'editoriale

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● continua a pagina 31



▲ Lo spogliatoio della Juventus La squadra dopo la vittoria contro l'Inter domenica a porte chiuse. In alto a destra Daniele Rugani, positivo al virus

L'analisi

I clandestini della malattia

di Ezio Mauro



Poi ci sono i morti. Poi, appunto. Li contiamo alla fine, dopo aver controllato ogni giorno i nuovi numeri del contagio, confinandoli in un calcolo residuale. Su quelle cifre non ci soffermiamo, come se non riguardassero noi. E una difesa psicologica ingenua anche se naturale.

● continua a pagina 35

Domani Robinson



**Ritorno a Troia
150 anni dopo**

GIOVANNI FORNERO

INDISPONIBILITÀ
E DISPONIBILITÀ
DELLA VITA

UNA DIFESA
FILOSOFICO
GIURIDICA
DEL SUICIDIO
ASSISTITO
E DELL'EUTANASIA
VOLONTARIA

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L'immagine

Dal calcio alla Nba stop e quarantene Lo sport chiude

di Fabrizio Bocca

Il Titanic affonda e l'orchestra suona. Rugani e Cacciari sono l'avanguardia dei primi sportivi contagiati da Covid-19, si contano anche le prime squadre in quarantena: Juve, Inter, Samp, Verona, Arsenal, Leicester e Real Madrid: l'elenco s'aggiorna di continuo.

● a pagina 46
di Crosetti, Pinci e Vanni
● alle pagine 46 e 47

**Viaggio nel Paese
che non avevamo
mai visto**

di Concita De Gregorio

Elenco di cose belle, c'è scritto attaccato alla porta della palazzina D, «Le luci accese nelle case degli altri di sera, come un presepe. Le finestre aperte e le voci che si dicono cose, ma non sento bene cosa. La signora del quinto che non avevo mai visto, coi capelli bianchi, seduta in balcone, che mi saluta.

● alle pagine 2 e 3

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“L’assedio”

[The siege]

Le Monde diplomatique
IN EDICOLA Carbone per il digitale, Walmart “socialista”, piano di guerra di Israele, comunismo dei popoli dell’est

Politica&pandemia
Emanuele Macaluso «La nostra sanità, eredità oggi preziosa anche per chi sputa sulla Prima Repubblica»
Deniela Preziosi pagina 11

Culture
Eduard Limonov È morto a 77 anni lo scrittore e politico russo che ispirò il romanzo di Carrère
Yuri Colombo sulmanifesto.it

il manifesto

MERCOLEDÌ 18 MARZO 2020 - ANNO L - N° 67 www.ilmanifesto.it euro 1,50



L’assedio

35 nuove vittime e circa 3.500 nuovi contagi nelle ultime 24 ore. La curva epidemica cresce ma non accelera. Bergamo, epicentro del virus, è al collasso. Non ci sono più posti letto. Crisi anche in altre città. Gli Ordini dei medici: ora sono chiari i danni dei tagli alla sanità pubblica **pagine 2, 3**

Cambiare rotta Eurobond e mutualizzazione del debito

LAURICA PINNAVACCHI

Mentre il paese si mobilita per scongiurare l'epidemia da coronavirus in uno sforzo collettivo trainato dalla riscoperta del valore dei sistemi sanitari pubblici e del loro eroico personale medico e infermieristico, bisogna già pensare al dopo, a come far ripartire l'economia e la società fermata la forzata immobilità di queste settimane. Le priorità sono gli investimenti pubblici e la creazione diretta di lavoro, in infrastrutture, salute, scuola, università, ricerca, innovazione sociale.

— segue a pagina 19 —

Virus e memoria Labo Giorgio, senza fissa dimora

ASCANIO CRISTINI

Il nome di uno studente che un paio di mesi dopo avrebbe compiuto 25 anni sta scritto nel manifesto che gli attaccini del comune incollano sui muri romani all'inizio di marzo del 1994. Il padre Mario era sceso da Genova il primo del mese di marzo alla ricerca del figlio. Certamente era stato arrestato. Fu tappa prima a Pisa, poi a Firenze, poi a Reggio Emilia, poi a Bergamo, il professore di Giorgio, che lo ospita nella sua casa a Roma.

— segue a pagina 11 —

I SINDACATI: RIDURRE DRASTICAMENTE IL SERVIZIO A Bergamo muoiono due postini

Arrivano fatalmente i primi morti sul lavoro per il Covid-19 al di fuori della sanità. Si tratta di due dipendenti di Poste italiane deceduti nei giorni scorsi. La notizia è stata resa pubblica dalla Sisl Cgil assieme alla denuncia per la mancanza di sicurezza e alla richiesta di una drastica riduzione del servizio. I due decessi sono un pontale e un dipendente di un

centro di smistamento - di due paesi della provincia di Bergamo che hanno lavorato fino a pochi giorni fa. Altri casi di contagio sono stati denunciati nella zona.

La richiesta dei sindacati sarà al centro oggi di un consiglio straordinario dell'Agcom, l'autorità sulle comunicazioni che ha competenza sul servizio postale.

RICHIESTA DI SICUREZZA Sciopero al magazzino Amazon

2 mila lavoratori del magazzino Amazon di Castel San Giovanni (Piacenza) sono in sciopero a oltranza. L'azienda non garantisce l'applicazione del Protocollo sulla sicurezza firmato sabato. La protesta è stata proclamata da Cgil, Cisl, Uil e Ugl. Agitazioni e scioperi anche in altri stabilimenti italiani del gigante dell'e-commerce: a Torrazza Piemonte e Passo Coronese (Rieti). In tutta la logistica sciopero dei magazzini proclamato dai sindacati. Si Cobas e Adl-Cobas. **LOMBARDI A PAGINA 5**

all'interno

Ue Ok «aiuti di stato» Alitalia nazionalizzata
ROBERTO CICCARELLI PAGINA 6

Calcio Gli Europei si fanno l'anno prossimo
NICOLA SBLITTI PAGINA 6

Rojava «Solidarietà fa paura» L'idi in sorveglianza speciale
CHIARA CRUCIATI PAGINA 13

GOVERNO I decreti non bastano, Conte: «Un fondo Ue»



Il decreto da 25 miliardi è in Gazzetta ufficiale. Ma non basterà come non basterà il prossimo. Conte si appella ai capi di Stato Ue: «Nessun Paese uscirà indenne da questo tsunami e se procederemo divisi la risposta sarà inefficace. Servono Coronavirus Bond o un fondo di garanzia europeo». **COLOMBO A PAGINA 7**

AGRICOLTURA La filiera alimentare «spolpata» dalla crisi



Dalla chiusura dei bar e dei ristoranti fino alla blocco delle esportazioni alle frontiere, la filiera alimentare rischia il collasso. I danni calcolati sono ingenti. Agricoltori in ginocchio. La resistenza dei produttori a «chilometro zero». Appello Coldivetti: «Comprate e mangiate prodotti Made in Italy». **MARTINELLI A PAGINA 4**

LE MISURE Il blocco delle merci fa paura all'Europa



Gli Stati europei cominciano a prendere provvedimenti per fermare il coronavirus. Il governo spagnolo stanca 200 miliardi di euro, il premier inglese Johnson annuncia misure per 330 miliardi di sterline. Cresce la paura per il blocco delle merci. Bruxelles preme per salvare il mercato unico. **MERLO, BARONE, CLAUSSI ALLE PAGINE 8, 9**

Medio Oriente La guerra non si chiude in casa

ALBERTO NIGRI

Dovremo imparare a raccontare le violenze permissibili, frodi di un libro ironico e illuminante dello scrittore e giornalista libanese Mazen Maarouf. Sono i milioni, come avviene da decenni, i co-protagonisti irrinunciabili delle partite belliche e geopolitiche.

— segue a pagina 13 —

00318 Noni Milano Sped. in a. b. - D.L. 352/2005 (conv. L. 46/2006 art. 1, § 1) Sped. in abb. post. 2/2005

7.4.2. The ambivalence of narratives in Twitter

What happened, however, with a social media such as Twitter requires a broader analysis from a temporal point of view, which cannot be limited to Phase 1, but must also include Phase 2. The methodology described in Chapter III was used to analyse the tweets collected for the time period 1 January 2020-31 December 2022 (Phase 1 and Phase 2) and unlike the print media, Twitter users, as will be seen in the description that follows, promoted a narrative that was ambivalent with a propensity towards building positive relationships in Phase 1 that we can also identify as "altruistic relationships" such as responsibility and solidarity, while in Phase 2 it proposed a conflictual narrative favouring conflicting and, therefore, negative relationships that can be traced back to "egoistic relationships".

The analysis of the tweets was subdivided by calendar year (2020-2022) with a focus on the time period that coincides with Phase1 (21 February-3 May 2020) and starts by considering the occurrence of four hashtags among those selected for the query (Tab. 1): two of positive orientation (#andratuttobene [#everythingwillbefine] and #iorestoacasa [#stayathome]) and two of negative orientation (#novaccino [#novax] and #nomascherina [#nomask]).

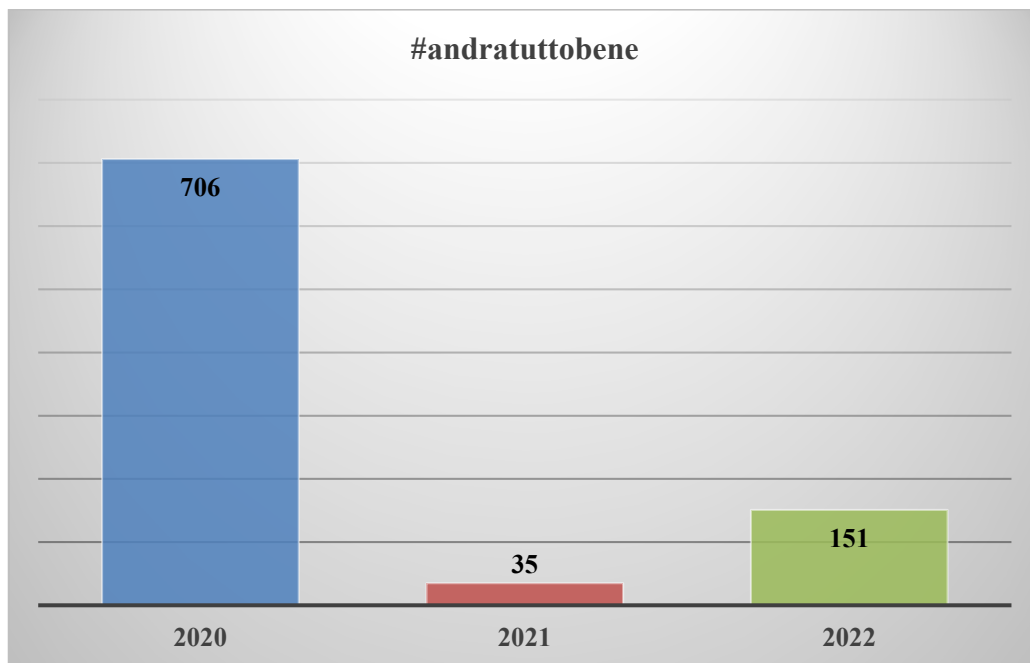
Tab. 1 - Occurrences of the selected hashtags
(years 2020-2022 and period February, 1 – May, 3)

HASHTAG	year 2020	year 2021	year 2022	Period February, 1 – May, 3 2020
#andratuttobene [#everythingwillbefine]	706	35	151	636
#iorestoacasa + (#stayathome)	4,560	82	93	3,706
#novaccino + (#novax)	149	8,625	64,675	34
#nomascherina + (#nomask)	42	35	395	0
Total hashtag	7,206	17,544	125,681	5,832

The first thing that is evident is the exponential growth of the overall total of tweets with the passage of years containing the hashtags of the query, but it is also noticeable how their orientation actually changes regardless of the analysis of their content (which is not the subject of this thesis, but of subsequent project phases) and their graphical representation shows this trend very well.

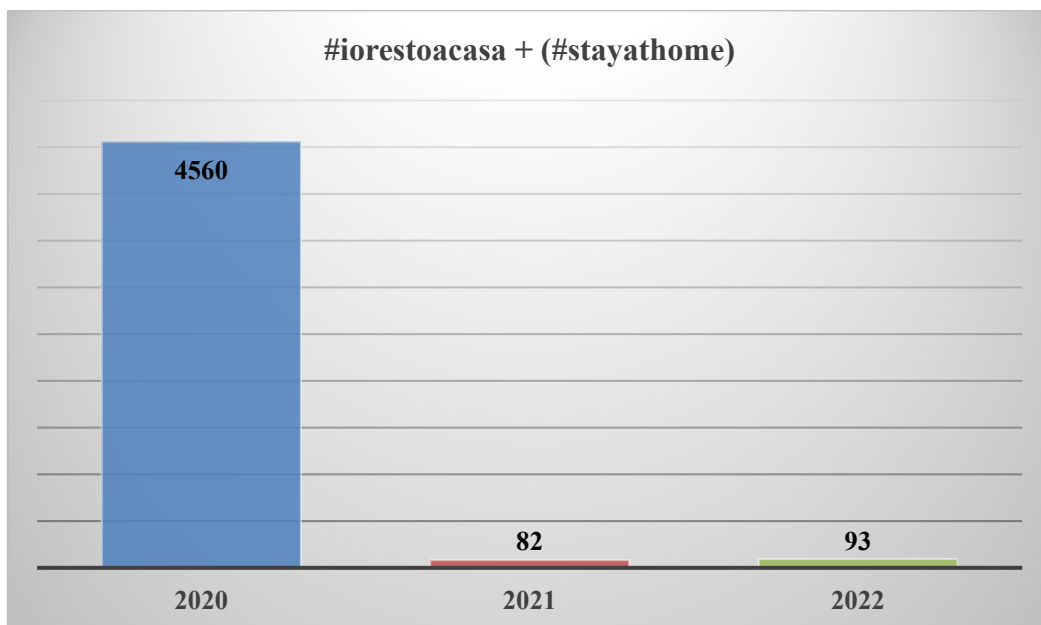
In the first year of the pandemic, the most recurring hashtags were #andratuttobene [#everythingwillbefine] and #iorestoacasa [#stayathome] (Graph. 1 and 2), with hashtag #iorestoacasa [#stayathome] preponderant in the Phase 1 period (February, 1 - May, 3 2020).

Graph 1 - Occurrences of the hashtag #andratuttobene - Years 2020-2022



In particular, the hashtag #iorestoacasa seems to be accompanied by the promotion of a sense of responsibility that fosters the development of attitudes aimed at reducing contagion.

Graph 2 - Occurrences of the hashtag #iorestoacasa - Years 2020-2022



Only two tweets among many are reported to exemplify this orientation:

Pasini, F. [@FiorenzaPasini]. (2020, 9 March). Con la nostra #responsabilità oltre a salvare noi stessi possiamo salvare molti altri dal rischio concreto di ammalarsi e non avere accesso alle cure mediche.

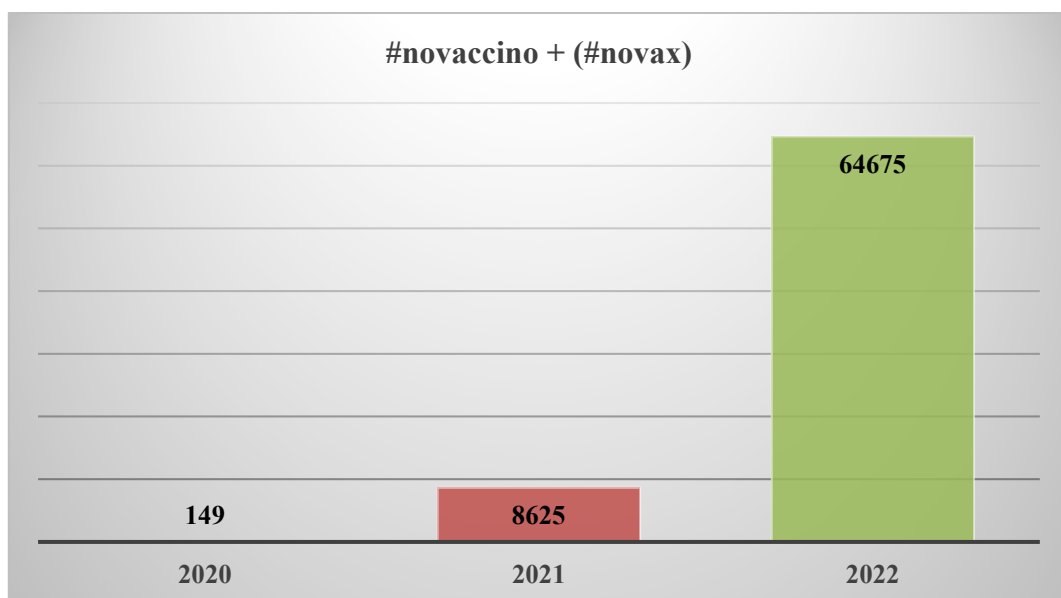
#COVID2019 #COVID2019italia #iorestoacasa #restiamoacasa #RestoAcasa #coronavirus #9marzo [Tweet]. Twitter.
<https://twitter.com/FiorenzaPasini/status/1237048570764767234>

Galassi Immobiliare – San Vincenzo [@Galassi_Immobil]. (2020, 13 March). #RT @Fiaip: Rimaniamo a casa, con responsabilità, per tutelare la salute di tutti! ☞ Fai la tua parte, contro il #Coronavirus, facciamo diventare contagiose le buone prassi!!

#Iorestoacasa #unitisivince #AgentiImmobiliari [Tweet]. Twitter.
https://twitter.com/Galassi_Immobil/status/1238462457888354304

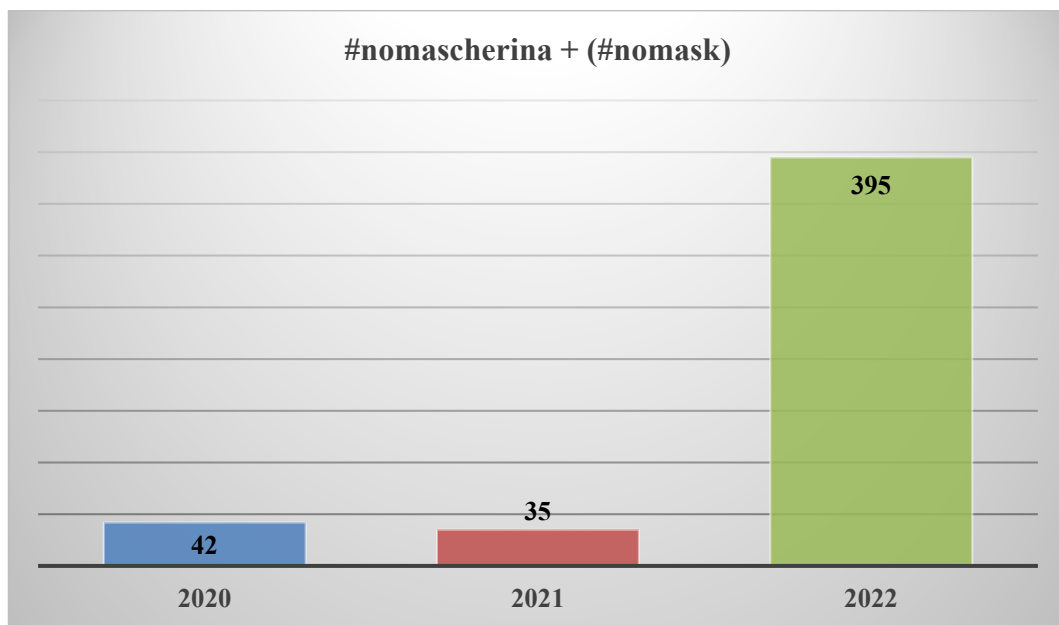
In Phase 2, on the other hand, as mentioned above, there is a general increase in the number of tweets that have the coronavirus as their subject, but for the year 2021 (the year in which the vaccination campaign begins), the hashtag that predominates is #novaccino [#novax] (8,625), which becomes dominant in 2022 (Graph. 3). The hashtag #nomascherina (Graph. 4), on the other hand, seems not to have found much interest from Twitter users except in 2022, the year in which people wanted to get out of the emergency for good and get rid of their individual protection devices.

Graph 3 - Occurrences of the hashtag #novaccino + (#novax) - Years 2020-2022



This was accompanied by the construction of an anti-vaccine narrative that translated into a “conspiracy” and “health dictatorship” narrative (Garzonio & Nuvoli, 2022), effectively leading to two negative attitudes: on the one hand, the establishment of a conflict between those in favour of the vaccine and those against it, and on the other hand, the assumption of attitudes not oriented towards reducing the spread of the virus by putting the health of others at risk, but also their own.

Graph 4 - Occurrences of the hashtag #nomascherina + (#nomask)
Years 2020-2022



Here again I give two examples:

Puente, D. [@DavidPuente]. (2021, 21 October). Forza Nuova e i NoVax? Di sicuro fanno amicizia con complottisti che diffondono bufale. Un esempio? Nicola Franzoni: durante la pandemia aveva alimentato le teorie del complotto che vedevano i pazienti Covid uccisi per espantare i loro organi. [Tweet].

Twitter. <https://twitter.com/DavidPuente/status/1451293167429591047>

Carlyssa [@KarlyKleyn]. (2022, 4 January). #Inghilterra Diritti e libertà non si toccano, basta restrizioni. Bisogna convivere con il #COVID In Italia, se non ora, quando???

#NoMoreLockdowns #NoGreenPass #DittaturaNazisanitaria
#DittaturaSanitaria #Draghistan #Draghila #Speranza [Tweet].

Twitter. <https://twitter.com/KarlyKleyn/status/1478328582665654273>

The general picture evoked suggests a scenario in which the perception of a state of continuous tension is very strong and the effects of narratives influence the perception of reality and of a social problem such as health risk. The spread of contagion is considered first and foremost a threat to health (Phase1 twitters show this), but also to personal freedom and freedom of choice given the restrictions on movement for each individual (from children to the elderly, no one excluded) and the issue of compulsory vaccination. Undoubtedly, the Twitter narrative of Phase2 in Italy has led to the spread of orientations that in the logic of this thesis can be defined as “egoistic relationships”.

7.5. Some concluding remarks

The cases that emerged from the three research segments and presented here highlighted how social conditions contextual to and following an emergency phase, such as those experienced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, can be both promoters of unprecedented forms of social solidarity and social support. In this case, the example is that of the neighbourhood and neighbourhood shops that have produced even unheard of relationships between individuals (social capital of proximity characterised by trust) contributing to the construction of relationships that can be identified in the case I have defined as “altruistic relationships”, as well as being promoters of forms of conflict and hostility. In this case, the narrative of the newspapers (the metaphor of war against an invisible enemy) and the narrative that Twitter users made that took on a positive orientation towards others in Phase 1 and a negative orientation in Phase 2 are concrete cases of how systems of ideas can reproduce themselves. They, in the case of the pandemic, pushed towards the drift of denialism and conspiracy, leading to the conflict between individuals for and against the vaccine (climate of distrust in science). The type of relationship produced, in the latter case, can be identified in the case I have defined as “egoistic relationship”.

In this logic, it would be desirable, on the one hand to build models of best practices deriving from these forms of positive experiences (in this case the

proximity relations). These models should be replicated in different territories and for different targets of the most fragile sectors of the population that can support the interventions of institutions from below. The replication of successful models would reduce the many ineffectiveness of local welfare interventions, which are often limited to material aspects only, and the establishment of community governance (in cities the reference can be the neighbourhood) oriented towards the common good; on the other hand, the reduction of conditions (such as forms of narratives that produce conflict) that can then promote selfish-oriented attitudes.

In other words, in order to foster the development of “altruistic relationships” as opposed to “egoistic relationships”, it is necessary to act on all those aspects of society that are generators of relationships, starting with relations with neighbours and ending with media communication (the examples presented are clear in this regard). To overcome this dichotomy, it is necessary to foster the growth of trust in order to minimise the conditions that can generate conflict and hatred, let us recall the 'hunt' against Chinese or runners who are considered “untors”.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

Hatred is still one of the most powerful emotions of man and one of the most efficient “motors” of human behavior. In an overwhelming majority of human beings it cannot be quickly eliminated or even greatly weakened. It can, however, be rechanneled for serving different “works” and “operations.” Hitherto it has “powered” mainly interindividual and intergroup conflicts. Instead of this function, its power can be used for extension of love and for binding mankind into one solidary body. How? *By redirecting the power of hatred from its present channels of interindividual and intertribal conflicts into a new “ pipe line ” serving the sacred war of humanity against the most terrible, most implacable, eternal, and common enemies of every human being, every group, and of the whole of mankind: against death, physical and mental disease, gravest criminality, stupidity, ignorance, interhuman strife, ugliness, poverty, fruitless suffering, nature’s calamities, interhuman hatred itself, and a host of other forces inimical to every man’s creative growth and everybody’s vital, mental, and moral well-being* (Sorokin, 1954, pp. 464-465).

The statement above seems to bear today’s date stamp – instead, it is more than half a century old. Its topicality value, nevertheless, remains dizzyingly high. Using a medical metaphor, Sorokin stated that sick humanity can find an effective cure in the affirmation of “universal altruism”, which is an “antidote” (Sorokin, 1958b). In his essay *The Mysterious Energy of Love* (1959), he argued that, although he had little knowledge of this energy and how it is produced and used, such glimpse was enough to claim that the “*grace of love*” is one of the three strongest energies known to man (along with *truth* and *beauty*).

In the light of this and the information collected in this thesis, contemporary society challenges researchers and humanity as a whole to shed new light on

positive phenomena (gratitude, altruism, solidarity, cooperation, etc.). The revitalisation of the research into positive phenomena cannot remain bound within the limits of “humanism”. It must tend towards a new way of doing research, privileging positive aspects.

Wanting to draw some conclusions based on the general objectives of this thesis (**GO1** and **GO2**) I can state that with respect to General Objective1, i.e. the aim of broadening knowledge around affirmative action is to try to elaborate a new process-based idea of these two socio-cultural phenomena, this objective has been achieved and not only through the application of the meta-theorisation method which has made it possible to outline a new model that redefines egoism and altruism as altruistic and selfish relationships, but also above all through the cases presented in Chapter VII. This last chapter in fact represented the practical application of what was expressed theoretically in the previous chapters: the development of positive or negative actions depends on many factors that may be more or less contingent (as in the case of the pandemic), but all of which can be positively oriented starting with communication (we have seen the examples of the pandemic narrative of Italian newspapers and tweets). And it is on these factors that action must be taken to ensure that they are increasingly positively oriented to influence individual and collective actions.

In this direction is what was the General Objective2 (**GO2**) of this thesis. With regard to it, as far as my role as a researcher is concerned, I will continue to promote studies that have as their object the different forms in which positive actions present themselves and not only in the form of “altruistic relationships” (solidarity, cooperation, etc.).

Studies must be promoted that are not limited to analysing social phenomena in their negative effects. These studies must contribute to the development of a new paradigm that can be identified in what has been called: positive sociology or positive psychology (Nichols, 2012; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Yogan, 2015). In turn, this new positive science can enrich the studies on the more human part of the individual and the social (positive actions or pro-social actions).

Globalisation processes hindered the *humanitarian ethos* aimed at that communicative interaction tending towards “understanding” between two subjects

in action (relationship) who refer to each other and act considering their reciprocal intentions, motivations, and expectations. Nor this ethos has found any support in the social and human sciences – especially sociology and psychology – which, since their very inception, have adopted a “negativistic” *modus operandi*. This way of doing research brings out only negative or pathological phenomena (Sorokin, 1966) without ever highlighting positive and healthy ones, with the justification that they are not a problematic (negative) aspect of society but a regular aspect of human and social events.

In conclusion, to study “altruistic relationships” and their effects we must consider two necessary premises. First, we cannot neglect the dimensions of time and space (social environment), crucial for social analysis (we have seen this, for example, with Phase1 and Phase2 of the pandemic narrative). They are also distinctive and constitutive elements of the phenomenologies related to individual relationships and daily experiences; in the second case, the past action is grasped as something distinct from the experience: time is no longer unitary. Becoming aware of this means that individuals are guided, in their actions/interactions, by the temporal and spatial dimension (social and historical context). Second, we must consider all three analytical levels of the social sciences (macro, meso, and micro). However, since the object is the relationship, we should privilege the *meso* level: interactions between the social system and the life-world understood as the set of meanings and representations of culture. Bringing together these three analytical levels entails an intellectual activity that goes beyond specialistic and “discipline-related” points of view and methods of investigation (qualitative and quantitative). The study of the forms of altruistic relationships (i.e., altruism, solidarity, cooperation, gratitude, etc.) and egoistic relationships (i.e., hate speech, xenophobia, etc.), and the related methodologies adopted must aim at integrating the subjective and objective dimensions. What binds them together is the interpretation and construction of reality through relationships between individuals – and between individuals, society, and culture. Since individuals are agents of interaction (in the world of everyday life and institutions), all these aspects must be read as a *correlation of interpretations* instead of a mere response to a trigger.

In the 21st century, social relations have become much more complex than in the last century, hence the following conclusive reflections: 1) the study of altruism and egoism cannot be penned within the boundaries of individual disciplines (sociology, psychology, economics, etc.). These boundaries must be overcome to make room for interdisciplinary approaches in a perspective of strong intersection between the political, social, and psychological sciences, starting from meta-theoretical analyses; 2) the categories “altruism” and “egoism” must be considered virtual, thus scraped and replaced by “altruistic relationship” and “egoistic relationship”, which encompass all those forms of expression of the relationship.

Human action must be understood as the most appropriate way to behave in different situations and represents the mirror of relevant aspects found within the context in which the situations take place. It resolves the dualism between “doing” and “being” and the discords and frictions often resulting from social relations. The relationality expressed through role-playing between the individual and the system is essential against negative actions (see what happened in Italy during the most critical phase of the pandemic). In such a context, the social sciences take on a leading role. First, they redefine the paradigms connecting the life-world (subjectivity and intersubjectivity) and the social system (organisational and subjective structure). Second, they help the individual-social system relationship by orienting the definition of needs, rights, and duties towards an “ethics of responsibility” that could foster more conditions for justice and social cohesion.

CAPÍTULO VIII

CONCLUSIONES

El odio sigue siendo una de las emociones más poderosas del hombre y uno de los «motores» más eficaces del comportamiento humano. En la inmensa mayoría de los seres humanos no puede eliminarse rápidamente, ni siquiera debilitarse en gran medida. Sin embargo, puede reconducirse para servir a diferentes “tareas” y “operaciones”. Hasta ahora, ha “alimentado” principalmente los conflictos interindividuales e intergrupales. En lugar de esta función, puede utilizarse su poder para extender el amor y unir a la humanidad en un conjunto solidario. *¿Cómo? Redirigiendo el poder del odio desde sus canales de conflictos interindividuales e intertribales actuales hacia una nueva «canalización» que sirva a la guerra sagrada de la humanidad contra los enemigos más terribles, más implacables, eternos y comunes de cada ser humano, de cada grupo y de toda la humanidad: contra la muerte, las enfermedades físicas y mentales, la criminalidad más grave, la estupidez, la ignorancia, las luchas interpersonales, la fealdad, la pobreza, el sufrimiento infructuoso, las calamidades de la naturaleza, el propio odio interpersonal y un sinfín de otras fuerzas contrarias al crecimiento creativo de cada hombre y al bienestar vital, mental y moral de todos* (Sorokin, 1954, pp. 464-465).

La afirmación anterior parece llevar fecha de hoy, pero tiene más de medio siglo. Su actualidad, sin embargo, sigue siendo vertiginosamente significativa. Utilizando una metáfora médica, Sorokin afirmó que la humanidad enferma puede encontrar una cura eficaz en la afirmación del “altruismo universal”, que es un “antídoto” (Sorokin, 1958b). En su ensayo *The Mysterious Energy of Love* [La misteriosa

energía del amor] (1959), sostenía que, aunque tenía escasos conocimientos sobre esta energía y sobre cómo se produce y utiliza, tal atisbo era suficiente para afirmar que la “*grace of love*” [“gracia del amor”] es una de las tres energías más fuertes que el hombre conoce (junto con la verdad [*truth*] y la belleza [*beauty*]).

A la luz de esto y de la información recogida en esta tesis, la sociedad contemporánea reta a los investigadores y a la humanidad en su conjunto a arrojar nueva luz sobre los fenómenos positivos (gratitud, altruismo, solidaridad, cooperación, etc.). La revitalización de la investigación sobre los fenómenos positivos no puede permanecer dentro de los límites del “humanismo”. Debe tender hacia una nueva forma de investigar, privilegiando los aspectos positivos.

Para los fines de plantear conclusiones a partir de lo que fueron los objetivos generales trazados al inicio de esta tesis (**OG1** y **OG2**) puedo afirmar que con respecto al Objetivo General 1, es decir, el objetivo de ampliar los conocimientos en torno a la discriminación positiva es intentar elaborar una nueva idea procesual de estos dos fenómenos socioculturales, este objetivo se ha alcanzado y no sólo mediante la aplicación del método de metateorización que ha permitido esbozar un nuevo modelo que redefine el egoísmo y el altruismo como relaciones altruistas y egoístas, sino también sobre todo a través de los ejemplos presentados en el Capítulo VII. Este último capítulo representaba de hecho la aplicación práctica de lo expresado teóricamente en los capítulos anteriores: el desarrollo de acciones positivas o negativas depende de muchos factores que pueden ser más o menos contingentes (como en el caso de la pandemia), pero todos pueden orientarse positivamente empezando por la comunicación (hemos visto los ejemplos de la narrativa de la pandemia de los periódicos y tuits italianos). Y es sobre estos factores sobre los que debemos actuar para que se orienten cada vez más positivamente para influir en las acciones individuales y colectivas.

En esta dirección se sitúa el Objetivo General 2 (**OG2**). En referencia al mismo, para lo que se refiere a mi papel de investigador, seguiré promoviendo estudios enfocados sobre las diferentes formas mediante las cuales las acciones positivas se presentan no solo en la forma de “relaciones altruistas” (solidaridad, cooperación, etc.).

Hay que promover estudios que no se limiten a analizar los fenómenos sociales en sus efectos negativos. Estos estudios deben contribuir al desarrollo de un nuevo paradigma que puede identificarse en lo que se ha denominado: sociología positiva o psicología positiva (Nichols, 2012; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Yogan, 2015). A su vez, esta nueva ciencia positiva puede enriquecer los estudios sobre la parte más humana de lo individual y lo social (acciones positivas o acciones prosociales).

Los procesos de globalización obstaculizaron el ethos humanitario orientado a esa interacción comunicativa tendente al “entendimiento” entre dos sujetos en acción (relación) que se refieren el uno al otro y actúan considerando sus intenciones, motivaciones y expectativas recíprocas. Este *ethos* tampoco ha encontrado apoyo en las ciencias sociales y humanas -especialmente la sociología y la psicología- que, desde sus inicios, han adoptado un *modus operandi* “negativista”. Esta forma de hacer investigación pone de relieve únicamente los fenómenos negativos o patológicos (Sorokin, 1966) sin destacar nunca los positivos y saludables, con la justificación de que no son un aspecto problemático (negativo) de la sociedad, sino un aspecto habitual de los acontecimientos humanos y sociales.

En conclusión, para estudiar las “relaciones altruistas” y sus efectos debemos tener en cuenta dos premisas necesarias. En primer lugar, no podemos descuidar las dimensiones de tiempo y espacio (entorno social), cruciales para el análisis social (como por ejemplo se ha evidenciado en la Etapa 1 y Etapa 2 de la narración de la pandemia). También son elementos distintivos y constitutivos de las fenomenologías conectadas con las relaciones individuales y las experiencias cotidianas; en el segundo caso, la acción pasada se capta como algo distinto de la experiencia: el tiempo ya no es unitario. Tomar conciencia de ello significa que los individuos están guiados, en sus acciones/interacciones, por la dimensión temporal y espacial (contexto social e histórico). En segundo lugar, debemos considerar los tres niveles analíticos de las ciencias sociales (macro, meso y micro). Sin embargo, dado que el objeto es la relación, debemos privilegiar el nivel meso: las interacciones entre el sistema social y el mundo de la vida entendido como el conjunto de significados y representaciones de la cultura. Reunir estos tres niveles analíticos supone una actividad intelectual que va más allá de los puntos de vista y

métodos de investigación (cualitativos y cuantitativos) especializados y “disciplinarios”. El estudio de las formas de relación altruista (altruismo, solidaridad, cooperación, gratitud, etc.) y egoísta (discurso del odio, xenofobia, etc.), así como las metodologías que se adopten al respecto, deben aspirar a integrar las dimensiones subjetiva y objetiva. Lo que las une es la interpretación y construcción de la realidad a través de las relaciones entre individuos, y entre individuos, sociedad y cultura. Dado que los individuos son agentes de interacción (en el mundo de la vida cotidiana y las instituciones), todos estos aspectos deben leerse como una *correlación de interpretaciones* en lugar de una mera respuesta a un desencadenante.

En el siglo XXI, las relaciones sociales se han vuelto mucho más complejas que en el siglo pasado, de ahí las siguientes reflexiones concluyentes: 1) el estudio del altruismo y el egoísmo no puede encerrarse dentro de los límites de disciplinas individuales (sociología, psicología, economía, etc.). Estas fronteras deben superarse para dar cabida a enfoques interdisciplinarios en una perspectiva de fuerte intersección entre las ciencias políticas, sociales y psicológicas, a partir de análisis metateóricos; 2) las categorías “altruismo” y “egoísmo” deben considerarse virtuales, por lo que deben desecharse y sustituirse por “relación altruista” y “relación egoísta”, que engloban todas aquellas formas de expresión de la relación.

La acción humana debe entenderse como la forma más adecuada de comportarse en diferentes situaciones y representa el espejo de los aspectos relevantes que se encuentran en el contexto en el que se producen las situaciones. Resuelve el dualismo entre “hacer” y “ser” y las discordias y fricciones que a menudo se derivan de las relaciones sociales. La relacionalidad expresada a través del juego de roles entre el individuo y el sistema es esencial contra las acciones negativas (véase lo ocurrido en Italia durante la fase más crítica de la pandemia). En tal contexto, las ciencias sociales asumen un papel protagonista. En primer lugar, redefinen los paradigmas que conectan el mundo de la vida (subjetividad e intersubjetividad) y el sistema social (estructura organizativa y subjetiva). En segundo lugar, ayudan a la relación individuo-sistema social orientando la definición de necesidades, derechos y deberes hacia una “ética de la responsabilidad” que podrían fomentar más condiciones para la justicia y la cohesión social.

CHAPTER IX

FUTURE LINES OF RESEARCH

The new research designs on “altruistic and egoistic relationships” are a laboratory for methodological experimentation. Analytical activities should not be limited to scientific research on the topics but should also constitute a mechanism for facilitating and accompanying social change. Social science methods do not merely reproduce the phenomena they study. They contribute, to a greater or lesser extent, to their construction. Due to the very nature of the object of study (as we cannot reduce relationships to numbers or tests), research activities must be able to identify the “altruistic and egoistic relationship” in terms of behaviour, lifestyles, and cultural models (the examples given in Chapter VII amply demonstrated this).

One cannot understand the life of individuals without understanding society (and *vice versa*). Individuals need a quality of mind that helps them use information to synthesize – unambiguously – what *is happening* or *can happen* to themselves and the world. For researchers, the same is true; among other things, they find themselves in a dual role (Valsiner, 2017), that of citizens and researchers, so it is no longer sufficient to possess that quality of mind which helps them use information to synthesise – unambiguously – what *is happening* and *can happen* to the individual and the world (the *sociological imagination*, see Mills, 1959). The challenge of the continuous changes in society, increasingly moving towards globalisation, calls for a “reinvention” – particularly of sociology – in the form of a “new sociological imagination” (Fuller, 2006; Solis-Gadea, 2005) to contribute to the discovery of the human being as an interacting being. Methodologically grounded observation can lay the foundations for an integrated system of knowledge derived from an integral social science: “redefine the paradigms of sociology and other social sciences in a direction that keeps together the different dimensions (macro, meso, and micro)” (Mangone, 2018a, p. 86). The door to free and autonomous scientific reflection must be kept open.

In the light of what has been clarified in this thesis and for the cases given, some lines of research can be explored, but it should, however, be made clear that the general design of the research must necessarily frame the cultural and political context, not disdaining aspects linked to intragenerational and intergenerational processes that can, in situations of crisis or normal conditions, support forms of relationships oriented towards altruism rather than egoism.

Below we briefly describe two lines of research that can be planned and implemented in the near future:

Line of Research 1: one tending to identify the factors that, through the different forms of proximity relationships (here we have seen two of them: neighbourhood and proximity trades), can influence the attitudes and actions of individuals towards both positive and negative actions in order to build tools tending to strengthen the factors that most influence positive actions. In this thesis, relationship and communication are factors that certainly influence the actions of individuals and, therefore, research paths should be set in motion to investigate the dynamics that these generate in contemporary society;

Line of Research 2: a second line of research, consequent on the first, relates to the construction of a repertoire of best practices to be replicated in different socio-cultural contexts.

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APPENDIX A

SELECTION OF SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION

Selection of my scientific production with content related to the object of study of this thesis from just the year I started doctoral school.

Books

Mangone, E. (2022). *Solidarietà sociale*. Milano: Mondadori Education (ISBN: 979-12-206-0015-6).

Articles

Gili, G. & **Mangone, E.** (2022). Is a Sociology of Hope Possible? An Attempt to Recompose a Theoretical Framework and a Research Programme. *The American Sociologist* (ISSN: 0003-1232; ISSNc: 1936-4784; <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12108-022-09539-y>). First online: 19 August 2022 – **(Scopus e WoS)**

Mangone, E. (2022). A New Sociality for a Solidarity-based Society: The Altruistic Relationships. *Derecho y Realidad*, 20(40), 15-32 (ISSN: 1692-3936; ISSNc: 2619-5607; <https://doi.org/10.19053/16923936.v18.n40.2022.13917>)

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Mangone E. (2021). Dalla dicotomia altruismo/egoismo alle relazioni “altruistiche” ed “egoistiche”. *Quaderni di Teoria Sociale*, 2, 159-181 (ISSN: 1824-4750)

Mangone, E. (2020). De la solidaridad social de Émile Durkheim a la socialidad del don de Marcel Mauss. *Soft Power*, 7(2), 267-291 (ISSNe: 2539-2239; ISSN: 2389-8232)

Mangone, E. (2020). Towards a New Configuration of the Ego / Alter Relationship: The Rediscovery of Altruism. *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios sobre Cuerpos, Emociones y Sociedad*, 34(12), 75-84. (ISSN: 1852-8759) – **(WoS)**

Mangone, E. (2020). Sorokin, il “profeta anticonformista” dell’“altruismo universale”. *Religioni e Società*, 97(2), 94-100. (ISSN: 0394-9397; <http://dx.medra.org/10.19272/202031302010>) – **(WoS)**

Mangone, E. (2020). Pitirim A. Sorokin’s Contribution to the Theory and Practice of Altruism. *Revue européenne des sciences sociales/European Journal of Social Sciences*, 58(1), pp. 149-175 (ISSN: 0048-8046; ISSNe: 1663-4446; DOI: 10.4000/ress.6497) – **(Scopus e WoS)**

Mangone, E. & Dolgov, A. (2020). Sorokin’s “Altruistic Creative Love”: Genesis, Methodological Issues, and Applied Aspects. *Human Arenas*, 3(1), 6-22 (ISSN: 2522-5790; ISSNe: 2522-5804; <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-019-00058-w>) – **(Scopus e WoS)**

Mangone, E. (2019). Pitirim A. Sorokin e la “sociologia positiva”: l’amtologia. *La Critica Sociologica*, LIII, 212(4), 25-37 (ISSN: 0011-1546; ISSNe: 1972-5914; <https://doi.org/10.19272/201901204003>)

Mangone, E. (2019). Gratitude and the Relational Theory of Society. *Human Arenas*, 2(1), 34-44. (ISSN: 2522-5790; ISSNe: 2522-5804; <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-018-0040-8>) – **(Scopus e WoS)**

Chapters in book

Mangone, E. (2022). El principio de subsidiariedad de la “Rerum Novarum” a “Fratelli tutti”: ¿hacia una nueva forma de sociedad civil para la solidaridad y la justicia social?. In P. Guadarrama González & L. Picarella (eds), *Libertad y justicia social para el cambio social. Perspectivas y problemas* (pp. 109-134). Fisciano: NaSC Free Press (ISBN: 979-12-80285-04-1; ISBNe: 979-12-80285-05-8)

Mangone, E. (2020). The future of individuals: uncertainty, action, and non-action. In T. Valério, A.C. Bastos & L. Tateo (eds), *From Dream to Action: Imagination and (im)Possible Futures* (pp. 25-40). Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Publishing Inc. (ISBN: 978-1-64802-279-1; ISBN: 978-1-64802-280-7; ISBNe: 978-1-64802-281-4).

APPENDIX B

BIBLIOGRAPHIC PRIMARY SOURCES

To construct the bibliographic primary sources on which I then relied to retrieve further literature, I started from the classics of sociology and other social sciences that had directly or indirectly dealt with altruism. This led to the first texts referring to Comte, Durkheim, Mauss, Sorokin and Moscovici, which are listed below:

The classics

Auguste Comte (1798-1857)

Reference to this author is due to the fact that he was the first to use the term altruism at work in works written between 1851 and 1854, but also because he was the one who hypothesised the birth of the religion of mankind, which was based precisely on altruistic principles. These are the reference works:

- Comte A. (1851-1854). *Système de politique positive, ou Traité de sociologie* (Voll. 4). Paris: L. Mathias, & Caeilian-Goeuey and V^{of} Dalmont.
- Comte A. (1852). *Catéchisme positiviste*. Paris: Chez l'Auteur...et chez Carilian-Goeury et Vor Dalmont.

Émile Durkheim (1858-1917)

The reference to Durkheim is not only because he is acknowledged to be the founding father of sociology as a scientific discipline, but also because he addressed the issue of solidarity, altruism and egoism in his study of suicide and also values. These are the main reference works:

- Durkheim, É. (1960). *The Division of Labor in Society* (G. Simpson, Trans.). Glencoe: The Free Press of Glencoe (Original work published 1893).

- Durkheim, É. (1995). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (K.E. Fields, Trans.). New York, NY-London, UK-Toronto, Canada-Sydney, Australia-Tokio, Japan-Singapore, Republic of Singapore: The Free Press. (Original work published 1912).
- Durkheim, É. (2005). *Suicide. A Study in Sociology*. (J.A. Spaulding and G. Simpson, Trans.). London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge (Original work published 1897).

Marcel Mauss (1872-1950)

Marcell Mauss as Durkheim's pupil and also grandson in some respects followed his master's ideas even though his main discipline of reference was not sociology but anthropology. And in his now world-famous essay on the gift, one finds interesting aspects concerning relationships and, therefore, fundamental to the economy of this thesis. The reference work is as follows:

- Mauss, M. (2002). *The Gift. The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*. London: Routledge. (Original work published 1923-1924).

Serge Moscovici (1925-2014)

The social psychologist Moscovici was considered among the primary references because he not only dynamically translated Durkheim's concept of collective representation in social representation, but was also the last scholar of the last century who tried to bring altruism to light as an object of study. The reference work is as follows:

- Moscovici, S. (2000a). Les formes élémentaires de l'altruisme. In S. Moscovici (ed.), *Psychologie sociale des relations à autrui* (pp. 71-86). Paris, France: Nathan.

Pitirim A. Sorokin (1889-1968)

Pitrim A. Sorokin with the founding in 1949 of the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism at Harvard University produced a decade of research activities and studies precisely on altruism. The works that can actually be considered primary sources on this topic are the following:

- Sorokin, P.A. (1951). Amitology as an Applied Science of Amity and Unselfish Love. In K.G. Specht (ed.), *Soziologische Forschung in Unserer Zeit* (pp. 277-279). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften,
- Sorokin, P.A. (1954). *The Ways and power of Love. Types, Factors and Techniques of Moral Transformation*, Boston: Beacon Press (*The Ways and power of Love*, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1967 – Gateway Edition consists of the first fifteen chapters of the original work).

Contemporary literature

Next, wishing to try to bring positive actions to the attention of social scientists, a number of more recent bibliographical references were selected that had altruism as their subject. The references are as follows:

- Batson, Ch.D. (2011). *Altruism in Humans*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bykov, A. (2017). Altruism: New perspectives of research on a classical theme in sociology of morality. *Current Sociology*, 65(6), pp. 797-813.
- Gualda, E. (2021). Altruism, Solidarity and Responsibility from a Committed Sociology: Contributions to Society. *The American Sociologist*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12108-021-09504-1>.
- Habito, R.L.F. & Inaba, K. (2006). *The Practice of Altruism: Caring and Religion in Global Perspective*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press.
- Jeffrey, V. (2014) (Ed.). *The Palgrave Handbook of Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity: formulating a field of study*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jeffries, V., Johnston, B.V., Nichols, L.T., Oliner, S.P., Tiryakian, E. & Weinstein, J. (2006). Altruism and social solidarity: Envisioning a field of specialization. *The American Sociologist*, 37(3): 67-83. doi.org/10.1007/s12108-006-1023-7.
- Macaulay, M.R. & Berkowitz, L. (1970) (eds.). *Altruism and Helping Behaviour*. New York: Academic Press.
- Piliavin, J.A., & Charng, H.W. (1990). Altruism: A Review of Recent Theory and Research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 16(1), pp. 27-65.

- Rusthon, J.L. (1980). *Altruism, Socialization and Society*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall
- Simmons, R.G. (1991). Presidential Address on Altruism and Sociology. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 32 (1): 1-22
- Steiner, P. (2016). *Donner...Une histoire de l'altruisme*. Paris, France: PUF.
- Wuthnow, R. (1993). Altruism and Sociological Theory. *Social Service Review*, 67(3): 344-357.

Primary sources for the research methodology

Since the research project was theoretical in nature, the methodology obviously had to follow this line and, therefore, the references mainly concerned meta-theorising. Below are those considered fundamental:

- Ritzer, G. (1990). Metatheorizing in Sociology. *Sociological Forum*, 5(1), pp. 3-15.
- Ritzer, G. (ed.) (1992). *Metatheorizing. Key Issues in Sociological Theory*. New York: SAGE Publications.
- Zhao, S. (2004). Metatheory. In G. Ritzer (ed.), *Encyclopedia of social theory* (pp. 500-501). Thousand Oaks-London- New Delhi: Sage Publications.

