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Marc JOLY, *La Révolution sociologique : de la naissance d'un régime de pensée scientifique à la crise de la philosophie (XIX<sup>e</sup>- XX<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris, Éditions la Découverte, 2017)

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The history of sociology can be a daunting field in which to write a new book. With high quality texts published in the last decade or so, such as Fournier's *Emile Durkheim: A Biography* (2006), Heilbron's *French Sociology* (2015), Huebner's *Becoming Mead* (2014), Morris' *The Scholar Denied* (2017), and Mosbah-Natanson's *Une "mode" de la sociologie* (2017)<sup>1</sup>, one might wonder if there is room in this relatively small market for another book. Joly's text not only well complements existing histories of sociology (and the social sciences more generally), but will also undoubtedly become a classic.

### Overview

Joly opens by presaging the theoretical argument he will make and his analytical approach. Over the course of 19th and into the 20th century (accelerating especially in the last 20 years of the 19th century), a fundamental change in the study of social phenomena occurred: discourse and intellectual organization moved from being centered around the individual-society dichotomy and based largely on philosophical discourse (from both academics and non-academics) to a desacralization of *the* individual (read: human) that invoked multiple causal determination. Increasingly professionalized, biology, psychology, and sociology became the three principal domains to which recourse must be made if one seeks to comprehend the individual and society.

The argument is clearly built upon a Bourdieusian field theoretic approach to cultural production and symbolic revolutions, though—as

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Fournier, 2006, *Marcel Mauss: A Biography* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press). Johan Heilbron, 2015, *French Sociology* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press); Daniel Hueber, 2014, *Becoming Mead: The Social Process of Academic Knowledge* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press); Aldon Morris, 2017, *The Scholar Denied: W. E. DuBois and the Birth of Modern Sociology* (Oakland, University of California Press); Sébastien Mosbah-Natanson, 2017, *Une "Mode" de la sociologie. Publications et vocations sociologiques en France en 1900* (Paris, Classiques Garnier).

the author mentions—it takes inspiration from *Begriffsgeschichte* and the Cambridge School, as well. As indicated by the title, the book is most centrally about the sociological revolution; that is, the transnational emergence of a discourse and discipline focused upon the social aspect of human existence, which must be understood in relation (at least primarily) to philosophy, biology, and psychology. It is important to note that what was at stake during this revolutionary period was what the terms sociology, psychology, philosophy, etc. actually signified. Given this theoretical infrastructure, Joly recounts the history of the emergence of sociology by continually putting in relation to each other institutional factors, sociodemographic traits of thinkers, and the cognitive and institutional categories that were at play.

The data and explanatory strategy marshalled to make this argument are truly impressive. In order to proffer an argument concerning this triadic (i.e., cognitive-individual-institutional) evolution, it is necessary to have detailed information about the individuals involved, their organizational locations, and the content of their position takings. Joly, in order to meet this evidentiary burden, turns to personal letters between thinkers, dossiers on their careers, book reviews, unpublished texts and lecture notes, and of course primary texts written by the people involved. Particularly novel is the extent to which Joly relies upon written communications. Referencing this variety of sources and even including text analyses, the chapters each buttress certain aspects of Joly's central argument concerning the rise of a new "conceptual regime."

This notion of a "conceptual regime" is intended to convey the idea that intellectual categories circulating throughout intellectual milieus largely govern the social practices in which individuals engage: "les mots, eux, peuvent exercer une pression convergente en faveur de certaines idées [...] au bénéfice d'une reconsidération générale de la condition humaine en un sens objectiviste, historiciste et immanent" [12]. This book is an account of the emergence and institutionalization of the conceptual regime that reimagined humanity and for which sociology served as the culmination. This book uses data on the

individuals involved and the events in which they participated to map this general process operating at the (inter-)field level.

Part one, “La tentation française de la psychologie sociale,” discusses the emergence of this sociological revolution within France.<sup>2</sup> The first two chapters discuss Gabriel Tarde, in particular how his unique background enabled him to deftly pursue a sociological research agenda and why he chose to define imitation in the way that he did as a central concept. The next chapter focuses upon Gaston Richard. Joly here discusses why Richard, an ardent supporter of Tarde, differed in non-arbitrary ways that are likely related to his Protestant faith and how this influenced his relationships with the various disciplines. Paul Lapie, the subject of chapter 4, also adhered to a large extent to the Tardian doctrine, though Lapie sought to further elucidate the social logic of desires. Relying upon logic and conscious reflection muddied the waters too much for an intellectual market that sought clear disciplinary definitions and, unlike Tarde, Lapie managed to please very few people. The final chapter of this section treats Daniel Essertier who, like Lapie, made too many reconciliation attempts between sociology, psychology, and philosophy to garner much success.

The second part, “Une exception allemande”, crosses the Rhine. Joly now recounts the first meeting of the German Sociological Society in 1910 in which the very definition of sociology and who should be able to claim the title was at stake. Chapter 6 illustrates that, from the beginning, this meeting was polarized by two personalities: Simmel and Tönnies. They disagreed sharply over how to delineate sociology from philosophical practices, and Weber eventually attempted to mediate this disagreement. Underlying all of this contention, one finds unique visions of the scientific enterprise, which are related to their position within various fields. Chapter 7 shows how sociology created a rift not only among these three figures but also among intellectual currents more generally in Germany because it sought to dethrone the neo-Kantian self who was not historically and socially determined. Chapter 8 presents Norbert Elias as a sort of ideal culmination of the rising conceptual regime constituted by biology, psychology, and sociology in the face of the traditional German

<sup>2</sup> One should note, however, that factors outside of France certainly pertain to the discussion herein. Joly is quick to note that the symbolic revolution effected during the 19th century (and into the 20th century) was

*transnational*. Nonetheless, such influences interacted with professional and intellectual factors within France in a unique manner that can only be understood by taking into account this national context.

individual-society opposition, grounded in philosophy. Elias forges an empirical research program that takes into account these multiple forms of determination.

Part three, “Naissance d’un régime conceptuel scientifique et crise du référentiel philosophique”, takes as its point of departure the institutionalization of this new conceptual regime. Whereas the previous chapters investigated the conditions of its emergence and the extended negotiation in which several intellectuals engaged, the remaining chapters survey the individual and professional ramifications of this new order. Chapter 9 illustrates how this new tripartite “langue scientifique du connaissable” [298] rejected religious and philosophical limitations on what one has the ability to know. Humans and social phenomena are determined in multiple ways by biological, psychological, and sociological factors; an increasingly institutionalized division of scientific labor would provide the organizational basis to investigate these specialized domains. Chapter 10 notes how this new conceptual regime responded to ambiguities in the traditional (during the 19th century) individual-society problematic. This couple provided only vague, general concepts and underdetermined approaches with which to view (and study) human life. Joly argues that the emergence of the term sociology carved out space for a subset of more specific problems, and that the further conceptual development and professional differentiation of the sciences mutually benefitted from a collective revoking of the hegemony of the individual-society problematic. This increasingly clarified conceptual regime, as chapter 11 shows, not only diffused among intellectuals, but also carried real sanctions. The social, psychological, and biological—as categories that signified an increasingly clarified domain of problems and practices—affected the professional trajectories of individuals who invoked the terms in non-standard ways. The cases of Raoul de la Grasserie and Georges Palante attest to the consequences of contravening definitional rules of division within the newly ascendant conceptual regime. The next chapter poses the question of why social psychology did not become the crown jewel of this new conceptual regime. Joly responds that professional considerations within sociology and psychology led each to strengthen its organizational and cognitive base and allied them against philosophy; all of this eroded the necessary support to sustain social psychology as a viable “coordinating” enterprise. The book concludes with a discussion of philosophy’s attempt at redefinition after having much of its traditional foundation annexed by the now dominant conceptual regime.

*Critical appraisal*

As I mentioned in the introduction, this text is impressive and warrants a detailed read by anyone interested in intellectual history. Nevertheless, there are certain points upon which the author might have expanded.<sup>3</sup> In this section, I offer reflections on (some of) the unique aspects of this book, including areas where its arguments appear to be more ambitious than the empirical evidence would support.

First, the historical description of French sociology is likely unrivaled. While one might argue—in terms of the number of occurrences or of the proportion of text—that Tarde receives too much attention, that Durkheim is woefully absent, or that Worms, Fouillée, and others demand more real estate, this objection would clearly neglect their place in relation to Joly's theoretical argument. Never does Joly deny these individuals' importance. Regarding Durkheim, one finds scattered throughout the text mentions of his actions or those of his *Année Sociologique* group. For example, one sees such a mention in the description of Gaston Richard becoming the leader of an opposing camp within French sociology to Durkheim's successors. Further, sociologists who followed both Tarde and Durkheim frequently tried to negotiate a balance between the two versions of sociology. Tarde himself was eminently important—perhaps more so than Durkheim—for opening the space of possibles to what might be sociology; Tarde's background and professional trajectory equipped him with a profile of capitals that enabled him to secure sufficient positive reception from individuals engaged in neighboring domains that his project was not immediately rejected (see for example the sections on Paul Lapie, who was unsuccessful in this type of balancing act). If Tarde was more successful in opening the door to a sociological enterprise, Durkheim was more successful at institutionalizing sociology within university circles. Those sociological thinkers who followed in the wake of Durkheim and Tarde dealt with the substantive elaboration of the increasingly solidifying sociological program and navigated the institutional landscape in which it was finding a home. Thus, rather than an exegetical account of each individual who partook in founding sociology *per se*, this text explains the theoretical evolution of the activities that defining sociology as a concept and as a discipline entailed.

Second, and stemming from the previous point, this investigation is most evidently founded upon Bourdieu's conception of symbolic

<sup>3</sup> I leave to the reader's judgement whether the inclusion of this additional material would have unnecessarily extended the

book. After all, much of my critique applies *only because* Joly made such a sustained and comprehensive argument.

revolutions. Joly illustrates how certain types of individuals sought to define and study the “social” in unique ways, how successive accounts of what were sociology, psychology, biology, and philosophy might have altered the range of possible positions for future thinkers, and how the locations of these arguments and their authors mediated their success among various audiences. A key characteristic of symbolic revolutions is that they begin through the establishment of ambiguity; thinkers release a “symbolic bomb”<sup>4</sup> [Bourdieu 2013: 63] upon the intellectual landscape that generates confusion about existing categories (and potential new ones). When Bourdieu says that no one could, after Manet, clearly define painting or identify who was a painter, he refers to the loss of specificity in the signification that such terms carry. Part three of *La Révolution sociologique* demonstrates how philosophers collectively responded to the emergence of this new conceptual regime by redefining—with new clarity—those practices which philosophy signifies. However, Joly does not seem to limit himself to an orthodox mapping of that which Bourdieu did onto his case at hand. For example, Bourdieu states in clear terms that a symbolic revolution is a charismatic revolution in Weber’s sense,<sup>5</sup> yet one does not find any such figure in Joly’s text. One the one hand, Tarde, who receives the most attention, was far from the charismatic heresiarch and did not organize a following similar to Durkheim’s. On the other hand, Durkheim, who might fulfill this personage within his particular institutional and substantive domain, did not alone institute the sociological revolution. And Joly does not treat him as such, going so far as to describe how his followers not infrequently drew upon Tarde’s writings or defected. Bourdieu’s oeuvre contains a bit of a contradiction: even though he explicitly rejects the idea of heroic individuals who singularly alter history<sup>6</sup> [Bourdieu 1971: 3; 1991: 34; Bourdieu and Chartier 2015: 71], the charismatic prophet model undergirding his conception of symbolic revolutions presupposes it. Joly provides an example of how an empirical investigation into such upheavals may move past this misstep while retaining the utility of the general framework. This approach, being inspired by Bourdieu but

<sup>4</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, 2013, “L’effet Manet : cours au Collège de France (1998-2000),” in P. Casanova, P. Champagne, C. Charle, F. Poupeau and M.-C. Rivière, eds, *Manet: une révolution symbolique* (Paris: Raisons d’Agir/Seuil: 11-559).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, 1971, “Une interprétation de la théorie de la religion selon Max

Weber,” *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 12(1): 3-21; P. Bourdieu, 1991, “Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field,” *Comparative Social Research*, 13: 1-44; Pierre Bourdieu and Roger Chartier, 2015, *The Sociologist & The Historian* (Malden, MA, Polity).

not forcing an inhibitory orthodoxy, clearly produces a superior product.

The narrative, however, occasionally insufficiently relates biographical details to the broad theoretical argument about the sociological revolution. As an instance of this, one may refer to the “Du protestantisme en sociologie” chapter, which discusses Gaston Richard’s Protestantism and its relationship to Tarde’s writings. While this information should certainly interest the reader, the chapter is a bit light on linking explicitly these “micro” details to the “macro” argument about a nascent revolution within and between multiple fields. I was waiting for a discussion of sociology in relation to the religious field. It is important to note, though, that the data are present and that Joly does not omit *per se* this part of the argument from the text body; rather, the reader must do a bit of the legwork. If I had a question about the theoretical import of a single point, I usually had to do no more than return to the section title or chapter introduction.

The type of explanation in which Joly engages might not please everyone. In general, he states his argument and then provides supporting evidence without devoting too much space to counter-arguments. This latter point undoubtedly stems from the breadth of his claims and the impressive amount of fine-grained data from which he argues. However, the content of his chapters may nevertheless come across as slightly disconnected if the reader does not consciously link them back to the overarching argument. The second section provides such an example. Moving from France to Germany, the reader now learns about the first meeting (1910) of the German Sociological Society and the social/intellectual dynamics between Weber, Tönnies, and Simmel. Unfortunately, this information is found rather infrequently in the last section of the book, and the transition to and from this part may appear slightly jarring. It is nonetheless necessary because Joly claims that the sociological revolution is transnational. The German sociology section thus establishes an international presence of sociology, but I was still left expecting more. Joly could have further discussed the international presence of this revolutionary movement, noting for example Franklin Giddings’ effusive letters to Tarde in which the former asks the latter to serve as an editor for the *International Monthly* and for permission for a female doctoral student at Columbia University (likely Elsie Clews Parsons) to translate Tarde’s writings into English. This information on Tarde’s early 20th century American reception is present within the

archives Joly consulted (at the Sciences Po's Centre d'Histoire). Joly could also have mentioned the interest within the *American Journal of Sociology* concerning the work of Durkheim and his *Année Sociologique* team.<sup>7</sup> As such, the German sociology section buttresses one part of Joly's argument, even if it neither replicates the theoretical attention and development given to French sociology nor exhausts the international presence of the symbolic revolution under investigation.

Another important example of how Joly's explanatory style might polarize reception concerns the use of example cases to support claims about trends. When discussing how the conceptual regime of the social and human sciences constrained positions that scholars could successfully take began around 1900 by exercising very real sanctions, Joly references Raoul de la Grasserie and Georges Palante. Both individuals contravened newly stabilized rules of signification for sociological (and psychological, in the case of de la Grasserie) research, for which they faced intense criticism in journals and reviews. Joly concludes: "Il existait des règles d'usage à respecter sous peine d'être sanctionné, et même une conduite à suivre en matière d'investigation scientifique [...] Car le nouveau régime conceptuel avait partie liée avec un processus de spécialisation" [365]. Again, this point—that tastes regarding intellectual work invoking the sociology-psychology-biology triad began to exercise tangible effects on individuals' careers—is crucial to Joly's argument, yet the reader does not encounter a systematic survey of every researcher at the time along with their actions and degree of success. I find the cleverly selected cases convincing, even though not logically definitive, but others might disagree.

The final critical point on which I will touch concerns a practical tension involved in writing a book that makes such a grand argument using such rich data. Joly's book simultaneously undertakes an investigation of the founding of sociology and the emergence of a conceptual regime governing the disciplines that attempt to explain social phenomena, and the reader undoubtedly is presented with a stunning amount of information on sociology, particularly vis-à-vis other key disciplines. However, if this conceptual regime governs multidisciplinary investigations, I would expect its history to include more information about the non-sociological disciplines. Biology is a constant specter, but how much did this symbolic revolution actually

<sup>7</sup> This does not mean that Joly never mentions American sociology. One finds, for example, a brief discussion of the reference to

de la Grasserie in the *American Journal of Sociology* (page 363).



alter its internal dynamics? How exactly did sociology influence the interpolation of psychology between biology and sociology? The professional dynamics of these two disciplines surely impacted the ascendance of this conceptual regime, but they never receive a treatment comparable, for example, to that of philosophy in the third section.

### *Relevant audiences*

Joly's book will be useful to scholars in multiple areas. First and most obviously, historians of sociology and the social sciences will find *La révolution sociologique* to be a necessary complement to their bookshelves; rather than focusing on sociology in a more restricted sense,<sup>8</sup> individual founding thinkers,<sup>9</sup> or particular approaches<sup>10</sup> (with bibliometry), Joly tells the story of the emergence of sociology *vis-à-vis* philosophy, psychology, and biology (with other disciplines making less frequent appearances). In addition to Durkheim and Tarde (the latter of whom has achieved—again—relative popularity), the reader comes across figures, such as Gaston Richard, Paul Lapie, and Daniel Essertier, who receive only infrequent mention and even more infrequent discussion. Such an atypical and detailed foray into sociological history not only brings to light new information but may also serve to reinvigorate theoretical debates that have not found their place within standard history.

The second, and perhaps least obvious, audience for Joly's book is made up of scholars in the sociology of organizations and institutions who research categories and categorization practices (see Vergne and Wry 2014 for an overview).<sup>11</sup> Scholars in this field do not typically concern themselves with the academic field but, as Frickel and Gross<sup>12</sup> have shown, theoretical approaches from other parts of sociology enrich the study of sociological history while being further developed in their own right. A key concern within the sociology of

<sup>8</sup> Johan Heilbron, 2015, *cf. supra*.

<sup>9</sup> Marcel Fournier, 2006, *cf. supra*; M. Fournier, 2013, *Émile Durkheim: A Biography* (Malden, MA, Polity); Maurizio Lazzarato, 2002, *Puissance de l'invention: la psychologie économique de Gabriel Tarde contre l'économie politique* (Paris, Les Empêcheurs de Penser en Rond); Steven Lukes, 1972, *Émile Durkheim: His Life and Work: A Historical and Critical Study* (New York, Harper and Row).

<sup>10</sup> Sébastien Mosbah-Natanson, 2017, *cf. supra*.

<sup>11</sup> J.P. Vergne and Tyler Wry, 2014, "Categorizing Categorization Research: Review, Integration, and Future Directions," *Journal of Management Studies*, 51(1): 56-94.

<sup>12</sup> Scott Frickel and Neil Gross, 2005, "A General Theory of Scientific/Intellectual Movements," *American Sociological Review*, 70(2): 204-232.

categorization practices pertains to how the classification of products within multiple categories impacts product success. This issue is a persistent theme throughout the book. Tarde succeeded in his navigation of several intellectual and professional product categories and even in helping define a new one (i.e., sociology), but Lapie, de la Grasserie, and Palante all failed. However, Tarde's conceptualization of sociology never achieved the level of institutionalization that Durkheim's did. The case presented in this book might thus be further enriched with recourse to this theoretical literature. Likewise one might advance categorization research by studying this and similar cases, for example multiple classification during times of change.<sup>13</sup>

The last audience I will mention concerns researchers interested in Bourdieu's field theory, particularly symbolic revolutions. While too few researchers have employed Bourdieu's framework to study social change,<sup>14</sup> perhaps his writings and course lectures on symbolic revolutions that have recently been made available in English and French<sup>15</sup> will inspire a reorientation. As I noted in the previous section, there are real issues within the symbolic revolutions framework as elaborated by Bourdieu, and Joly's text provides an excellent example of how to remain faithful to this approach while avoiding its pitfalls. Finally, even though Bourdieu wrote a considerable amount on the sociology of science, few contemporary authors have applied his model of cultural production to the sciences. *La Révolution sociologique* remedies this lack in a spectacular way.

B R A N D O N S E P U L V A D O

<sup>13</sup> Martin Ruef and Kelly Patterson, 2009, "Credit and Classification: The Impact of Industry," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 54: 486-520.

<sup>14</sup> Philip S. Gorski, 2013, "Bourdieu as a Theorist of Change," in P.S. Gorski, ed., *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press: 1-18).

<sup>15</sup> Bourdieu 2013, cf. *infra*; P. Bourdieu, 2015, *Sociologie générale: cours au Collège de France (1981-1983)*, vol. 1 (Paris, Raisons

d'Agir/Seuil); P. Bourdieu, 2016, *Sociologie générale: cours au Collège de France (1983-1986)*, vol. 2 (Paris, Seuil); P. Bourdieu, 2017, *Manet: A Symbolic Revolution* (London, Polity); P. Bourdieu and Marie-Claire Bourdieu, 2013, "Manet l'hérésiarque: genèse des champs artistique et critique (unfinished manuscript)," in P. Casanova, P. Champagne, C. Charle, F. Poupeau and M.-C. Rivière, eds, *Manet: une révolution symbolique* (Paris, Raisons d'Agir/Seuil: 581-797).