What is the best book about society?

escrito por Ane López de Aguileta | 23 de julio de 2024



Several people have asked me to elaborate on a statement I made in **my previous article in PE**. Specifically, they want me to explain how I dare to say that «The Dialogic Society» is better than «Economy and Society» by Max Weber, «The Theory of Communicative Action» by Habermas, or «Distinction» by Bourdieu. I am going to do so, but as with any intellectual or scientific statement, everything I say is refutable by other arguments and evidence, and I would greatly appreciate it if you have any, to provide them in another article or any other appropriate means for intellectual debate.

I considered it a very solid argument to state that the best book is «Economy and Society» when the majority of teachers and professionals in sociology say so. For example, this is the book that ranked first in the survey conducted during the World Congress of Sociology held in Montreal in 1998. However, I then realized that **almost none of those who say it is the best book have actually read it**. I also noticed that, being a very long book, almost all the citations from it are from its first pages. Finally, I read a book by Marianne Weber and saw that she was the sociologist and analyzes society much better than he does, having only explicitly dedicated himself to sociology for a little over two years.

Something similar happened to me with «The Theory of Communicative Action.» **Almost none of those who talk and write about this book have read it**. This is undoubtedly a great intellectual work, very valuable, but it is impossible for a single individual to conduct an excellent analysis of today's society. This book contains **elementary errors** that would have been easily corrected with dialogue and co-creation. He claims to base his communicative action on Austin and Searle's speech act theory, and Searle says and proves that Habermas either did not read it or did not understand it. An email would have sufficed to correct this error, but more than forty years have passed, and this correction has not been made. An email to Parsons' best student (Merton) would also have sufficed to correct his elementary error on the concept of Parsons' societal community.

As a conservatory-trained clarinetist, **Bourdieu's statements about music** in «Distinction» seem scandalous to me. Of course, each individual can say whatever they want, even that Beethoven's music is reggaeton, but what they cannot do is try to **pass off their opinions as sociological analysis**. Later, I have seen that he also makes mediocre statements about other things and that **the entire book is based on an elementary statistical error: the confusion between correlation and causal relationship**. I also discovered that **no school has ever improved its results based on Bourdieu's analyses**. Unlike Weber and Habermas' books, which are great works, I consider «Distinction» to be an imposture.

Unlike the previous works, «The Dialogic Society» has been developed in **continuous dialogue** with personalities from all natural and social sciences, and with the very diverse voices of the citizenry. It does not speak of any theory that has not been **rigorously read and discussed**, nor of any

social practice that has not been directly **analyzed** and thoroughly dialogued with all involved parties. **Its reading and implementation improve society**. And an important detail: as the author only talks about what he knows, he does not need to hide any ignorance with cumbersome language that no one understands. On the contrary, it is written **in a language understandable by everyone** and very enjoyable.