

Hacking's 'Between Goffman and Foucault': A Theoretical Frame for Criminology

Authors : Tomás Speziale

Abstract : This paper aims to analyse how Ian Hacking states the theoretical basis of his research on the classification of people. Although all his early philosophical education had been based in Foucault, it is also true that Erving Goffman's perspective provided him with epistemological and methodological tools for understanding face-to-face relationships. Hence, all his works must be thought of as social science texts that combine the research on how the individuals are constituted 'top-down' (as in Foucault), with the inquiry into how people renegotiate 'bottom-up' the classifications about them. Thus, Hacking's proposal constitutes a middle ground between the French Philosopher and the American Sociologist. Placing himself between both authors allows Hacking to build a frame that is expected to adjust to Social Sciences' main particularity: the fact that they study interactive kinds. These are kinds of people, which imply that those who are classified can change in certain ways that prompt the need for changing previous classifications themselves. It is all about the interaction between the labelling of people and the people who are classified. Consequently, understanding the way in which Hacking uses Foucault's and Goffman's theories is essential to fully comprehend the social dynamic between individuals and concepts, what Bert Hansen had called dialectical realism. His theoretical proposal, therefore, is not only valuable because it combines diverse perspectives, but also because it constitutes an utterly original and relevant framework for Sociological theory and particularly for Criminology.

Keywords : classification of people, Foucault's archaeology, Goffman's interpersonal sociology, interactive kinds

Conference Title : ICSC 2017 : International Conference on Sociology and Criminology

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : July 24-25, 2017