



## The world of the weakened. The perversion of money.

El mundo de los debilitados. La perversión del dinero.

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### ABSTRACT

Money is very important to human civilization; it has different functions in contemporary societies those fundamentally define it as a medium and symbol. Sociological theories have tried to explain such functions and, join with philosophy, tried to reveal money's ontology. The offered paper here gives the thesis that money has a force function that determines social differences and inequalities. This function presents money as a figuration of force that acquires reality inside the social dynamics conceived by rich, middle class and poor. For that reason, the text exposes in first section the adoption and justification of money as a figuration of force, specifying the hermeneutical and heuristic approach. In second section, it describes the social functions acquired by the upper, middle and lower sectors of social sphere, that is, in categorical terms: the strengthened, tightrope-walkers and the weakened. At the end, some final considerations are offered about money's immanence according to its figuration of force and the property acquired from social functionalities' dynamism that makes social differences and inequalities.



**Key words:** Differences. Force. Function. Inequalities. Money.

## RESUMEN

No cabe duda de que el dinero es importante para la civilización humana; las diversas funciones que tiene en las sociedades contemporáneas lo definen cual medio y símbolo fundamentalmente. Las teorías sociológicas han tratado de explicar tales funciones y, junto a la filosofía, desvelar la ontología. El presente artículo aborda la tesis de que el dinero tiene una función de fuerza que determina las diferencias y desigualdades sociales. Esta función lo convierte en una figuración de fuerza que adquiere realidad en la dinámica social entre ricos, clase media y pobres. En favor de ello, el texto expone en un primer apartado la adopción y justificación del dinero como figuración de fuerza, puntualizando el método hermenéutico y heurístico empleado. En un segundo epígrafe describe las funciones sociales que adquieren los sectores alto, medio y bajo de la esfera social, categorizados como fortalecidos, funámbulos y debilitados respectivamente. Por último, se ofrecen algunas consideraciones finales sobre la inmanencia del dinero dada por su figuración de fuerza y la propiedad que él adquiera desde el dinamismo de las funcionalidades sociales que derivan en diferencias y desigualdades sociales.

**Palabras claves:** desigualdades, diferencias, dinero, fuerza, función.

## Introduction

When we ask: what is money?, we can have varied answers depending on the analytical position adopted. For example, Stuart Mill (2001) reaffirmed it as a unit of measurement and mediating commodity within the economy, while Polanyi (2001) revealed it as a fictitious commodity given in the social convention, typical of industry and the market. It is an institutional fact constitutive of social reality according to Searle (1997). For Parsons (1977) it is a symbolically generalized means of exchange functional in social action, for Habermas (1992) it is a systemic medium that exerts control



in the course of communicative actions, substitute for language; and Luhmann (2006) took this symbolic notion towards functional differentiation in the social system for which money represented one of the symbolically generalized means of communication.<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that money has been defined according to the understanding that has been had of its usefulness for human life in society, that is why it is a means and also constitutes a symbol [see *footnote* no. 1]. It could be said that these are its genetics and its transcendence; the first emanating from social gestation and the second from the transition from the social to the cultural. As Alarcón (2017) summarized, the theorization of money has been fundamentally based on its socioeconomic utility and its sociocultural representation. Being a sociocultural representation, it is loaded with meanings and endowed with formative, transformative and constitutive properties within societies. The gestation and transition of money flows in a practical way between the economic and the social, and, between the unity of both with the cultural, in the semiological.

Despite the numerous economic and sociological studies, within the sociology of money there are still several shortcomings, problematized by Alarcón (2017) as follows: 1) in formalist and psychoanalyst theories the social relevance of money is highlighted, but not its potentialities outside the capitalist system, 2) in religious studies there is a gap on the functionality of money beyond social collectivism, 3) phenomenological and culturalist approaches, while enhancing subjective-objective dualism, do not expose the processes that give rise to communicative bifurcations, and 4) functionalist notions focus on integration, not on consequent exclusion.

Also in the analyses, it is possible to find dissertations toned with the images of forces. For example, in studies of general economics, the importance of the force of value in currency to dominate the rules of exchange reaches special notions about the desire, sovereignty, intensity and

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<sup>1</sup> Luhmann (2006) made the significant clarification of the Parsonian terms auxiliary to 'media': symbolic and generalized. The first refers to the social dimension where *ego* y *Alter* they are positionally differentiated at the time of establishing a relationship of meaning, and the second, to the diversity of situations where the meaning of the proposals reaches progressive objectivity. It is because of this distinction that I choose to functionally differentiate the social ontology of money in 'medium' and 'symbol' based on the culturalist – and civilizational – approach of the latter. It is crudely said that the difference is that the 'symbol' provokes or produces civilization, while the 'medium' preserves and evolves it.



potential energy of money in the homogenization of heterogeneous values (Orléan, 2016 and Bataille, 1933 cited by Roig and Bontti, 2017).

For his part, Bueno (2011) alluded to the force in money from considering it socio-philosophically as an energy impulse analogous to electricity. Such strength is an ally from two special sources: the aforementioned energy and passion. In these two sources converges the harmony of the identity quartet that Bueno (2011) recognizes in money: substantiality, reverence, immortality and greed. In the end, the author reaffirms the mediating ontology of money over teleology.

Esposito (2013), similarly, highlighted money as a mediator of socioeconomic temporality, making it a force of assurance against future dangers and risks. Its function is to procrastinate time with ample capacity to take advantage of the uncertainty of civilized human life. With this functionality it is established as a means of postponement and search (Shackle 1972 cited by Esposito, 2013). Ergo, the author argued that the homogenizing faculties of money allow it a temporary return such that "its classical functions as a medium of exchange and provision of value are a consequence of this yield" (p. 30).

In short, Bueno (2011) and Esposito (2013) exposed other functions apart from the classics<sup>2</sup> and thus recognized, like most of the authors they cited, the multifunctionality of money; Moreover, in each function they discovered their reality of being, that is, the assumption of existence that we have of money according to its functions in and for human life — to this also Parsons, Habermas and Luhmann referred in the aforementioned texts. Thus, the ontological-social identification of money as an institutional fact with functions assigned by human use and collective agreement is validated (Searle, 1997). Therefore, all the functions that it has confer on it identities consummated in its abstract unity; to enunciate any of them is not to contradict their reality of being.

I will put in the opinion of the reader a situational exercise of everyday life where we can discover a function of money that is not very evident to the naked eye:

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<sup>2</sup> Araneda (2012) compiled several of the classic functions among which they appear: the function of change, payment and value. For his part, Habermas (1992) alluded to other classical functions in the social system, some rescued from Parsons and others contributed by himself. Two of the most relevant are: the function of coordinating action and controlling communication.



A hungry person goes down the street and decides to approach a food vending machine to get a snack. Insert a coin or banknote from the located country and the machine starts operating to deliver the food. When the person receives it, he leaves satisfied with the benefit.

If the situation were different and the person had no money, but had an iron tube in his hands, the result would be the same. She would approach the machine, give it repeated blunt blows to break the casing and access the interior where the food is. With the tightness broken, the machine also delivers its food and the beneficiary is equally satisfied.

In the first case, money is used to make the machine work and deliver food, and in the second, bodily force is used to subject the machine to the will of the person. Both show the submission of the machine to personal intentions and use a means to achieve it, be it coins or blows. If both fulfill the function of activating the supply function of the machine, the social allocation to money is not far from the coercive capacity of the human being. The action of money in the machine is similar to hitting it to access food; both actions imprint force on the machine so that it functions for human intent. In general, see that every force works so that the things influenced by them work accordingly or accordingly.

In this empirical situation, the function of force of money that it holds to make or subdue the machine stands out for the benefit of the individual possessing that force when he uses money for his own intention and satisfaction.

This raises the possibility of assuming money as a figuration of force that strengthens some and weakens others within the social system. The social sciences call them rich and poor respectively, but in this case they must be designated as enriched [strengthened] and impoverished [weakened], since the forces exerted from money in them do not erase their original conditions-of-being as human entities, but artificially transmute them into social-conditions-to-be produced by and for the monetization of societies.

Although even in the twenty-first century there is no "adequate sociological theory to understand the functions and specificities of money" (Esposito, 2012, p. 26), efforts do not cease and this article aims to contribute to this. The particular objective here is to bring to discussion the



weakening to which certain social groups are subjected as a result of the execution of money as a figuration of force within social dynamism.

First, the neoliberal economic machinery demands raw materials, produced goods and commercial values that plunder territories and countries with vast natural wealth but little money, leaving their population in extreme poverty. Second, thanks to this mechanism, the rich distance themselves, but do not avoid this poverty, but take advantage of it. Suffice it to mention that "the richest 10% have 85% of the world's capital, [while] half of the entire population of the planet only 1%" (Sen and Kliksberg, 2007, p. 8), something that persists to this day (Hope, 2018). Despite the multiple opportunities for financial solvency that capitalism seems to offer, Stiglitz (2012) statistically confirmed that the majority of those born into poverty do not leave it no matter how hard they try, while those born in wealth usually die rich; and even more so when we live in a social world that naturalizes poverty (Murillo, 2007).

Stiglitz (2012) asked: why are there more and more rich and the middle class is depopulating towards the increase of the poor? Their response was that the global market and the policies that adjust it are inefficient; opportunities for people are unequal and the distribution of wealth even more so. In this article, the hypothetical answer is that: the middle class, the rich and the poor reach such socioeconomic positions, decrease and increase in number, because each sector acquires or does not acquire social functions from money as a figuration of force that determines differentiation and social inequalities. The premise is that money as a figuration of force necessarily strengthens and weakens, and the weakening to which certain social groups are subjected is what puts them in vulnerable conditions of impoverishment. Therefore, weakening can be used as a form of differentiation and inequality, somatic in the vulnerabilities that the impoverished sector constantly shows.

This text presents an analysis of money in the social sphere of the social system exclusively, it does not reach the survey of systemic differentiations illustrated by Luhmann (2006) where the economy, organizations and monetary self-reference have money as a means of communication, despite agreeing that these play determining roles in the dynamization of the social system. Such an



undertaking could not be carried out in the few pages of this text and would open the field of analysis to limits unfathomable for the time being.

Therefore, to be concise, the present text exposes in a first section the adoption and justification of money as a figuration of force, pointing out the respective method of analysis used that combines hermeneutic and heuristic strategies by analogy to the physical forces of nature and metaphysics of human life. In a second section he describes the social functions acquired by the upper, middle and lower sectors of the social world, categorizing them as strengthened, funambulos and weakened respectively. Here the middle sector is criticized for being a spectator and participant in evil by omission according to bauman's postulates (2008). Finally, some final considerations are offered about the immanence of money given by its figuration of force and about the property that it has acquired in the dynamism of the derived social functionalities.

Although it is difficult to offer a resolute proposal for change for the current situation of differentiations and social inequalities, because the force of money seems relentless, it is possible to glimpse a faint hope.

### **Money as a figuration of force**

The socioeconomic analyses that have had money as the center have focused hermeneutics towards the processes of the monetized market and the social behavior given by the knowledge, decisions and financial choices of individuals (Araneda, 2012; Esposito, 2013). On the other hand, the sociocultural aspects have tried to interpret the subjective and intersubjective behaviors with interactive and communicative behaviors of the social actors in the conformation and transformation of relationships that results in formations of cultural elements (Zelizer, 1994; Araneda, 2012). And not negligible are the heuristic contributions by analytical parallelism that philosophy has given (Well, 2011; Simmel, 1977).

As you can see, the analytical approach to money has had varied strategies for the multiple dimensions in which it has a presence; some have been hermeneutic and others heuristic, and even money served Parsons (1977) as analogous support to reveal the other symbolically generalized



means of his sociological theory. Bueno (2011) resorted to analogy with the musical quartet to philosophize about the mundane and transcendental reality of money, and Esposito (2013) interpreted it in terms of time and the homogenizations it promotes for its performance. However, at the end of the twentieth century and Zelizer (1994) showed that money, as a sociocultural capacitor, has greater functions than the homogenizing extension exclusively given in its instrumental quantifications.

For the analysis of the function of force that competes here, I use heuristic approaches by association with the physical and metaphysical forces of human life, as well as hermeneutic looks towards the discursive effects derived from social actions and subjects. The sociohermeneutic approach, according to Alonso (2003), not only seeks to interpret genuinely without preconceptions, but also to understand the reality of social facts from interpreting what comes from the textual meaning of social/historical acts and common meanings. This method must make it possible to grasp the underlying senses in the social and symbolic interaction of human life in today's monetized societies, and, from this interpretative depth, to understand the socio-dynamic reality given by the force function of money. The associative heuristics will serve to nail the analytical points from notions or schemes external to the subject under analysis (Abbott, 2004) and thus discover, between the functionality of money and the physical and metaphysical forces, common epistemic features that allow to elucidate with greater successes the sociological complexity of differentiation and social inequality.

This approach to money as a figuration of incident force in social complexity could be described as functionalist, but I must clarify that unlike the functionalism developed in sociological analyses based on the functional changes of money in the economy —see what refers to the functionalist analytical axis in Araneda (2012)—, the current analysis welcomes the function of force as an emergency resulting from practical and semiotic social making, sustained in the recognition of the notion of force rather than in the applicability of money from economic dynamics. Likewise, symbolic approaches (Parsons, 1977; Habermas, 1992 and Luhmann, 2006), although they have consented to the determination of money from sociocultural processes, do not assume the



interactive functions, control and communication of money independent of economic genesis, which the present approach does. Therefore, the analysis of money from its function of force is not functionalist in these senses, but constructivist because it generates social formations from the social dynamics itself independent of the economic imperative.

I am not saying by this that the economy has disappeared in this constructivism; it cannot do such a thing because, inevitably, it is the one that provides the money circulating in societies. However, the force attributed to money is something of social genesis, not economic, and the results of holding such a force are social in the first order, not economic. Socioculturally speaking, money derives in certain interactions, controls and social communications after being held as a force.

The fact that money functions as a figuration of force does not invalidate its other mediating and symbolic functions pulsating in human societies, so that sometimes conjugations appear between the possession of force, mediation in exchange and symbolism in communication.

Let's start then from here! What are the forces we know so far? The fundamental physical forces at the atomic level are electromagnetic, strong nuclear, weak nuclear and gravitational, but there are also forces at the macro level such as: elastic, friction, thrust, electric, impulse, etc. Moreover, in common sense the reference to the strength of love, spirituality, morality, character, among others, persists. These metaphysical forces of human life, under the excuse of their metaphorism and re-semanticization, can be generalized as mobilizing, resisting, and reactive or repellent forces. Let it be said that the force of love mobilizes feelings, passions, and certain special behaviors toward one's neighbor, that the force of morality resists vices and repels perversions, and that the force of the human spirit keeps us free in life.

Colloquially we say that there are hearts immutable before the force of love and that our lives are moved by the force of optimism. At this level of abstraction, these forces are impulses that allow or force us to do something for which we are not totally willing, which leads us to remember the



famous paradox of the unstoppable force that interacts with an immovable object.<sup>3</sup> Does money exert such an unstoppable force?

In general, perceptible physical forces drive, attract, repel and deform; likewise, the forces that we metaphysically understand accumulate, intensify and condition the characteristics of being of human and social entities. We say that the force of the wind dragged us down the street, as much as that the family tradition drags their descendants along the marked path. We can also say that such a family is strong in the face of crises and that the strength of the market does not destroy it. As we understand the forces that have a presence in social life, the dictionary of the Spanish language includes meanings and meanings of the term.

However, although at the metaphorical level the impact of certain forces can be confused with the action of certain energies or powers, these are not the same thing. Physical science makes distinctions between them that are not always clear on a social level. We can argue that at the social level of human life the sources of energy are diverse, but I emphasize that, when it comes to holding the strength of money, these sources are two: the intentions and expectations of the agents. According to these energies and the forces held, they will be the changes of 'states of being or being' of the agents. Let it be said that in the intentions and expectations of an agent is the desire and the pretension of the 'state of being or being' in what they want to leave their counterpart and themselves; in this sense, money serves as persuasion, instigation, and domination.

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<sup>3</sup> The paradox goes like this: what happens if an unstoppable force interacts with an immovable object? The logical-scientific answers take away the problematic validity of the statement and let it be observed as a failure in the theories we have of reality and in the language that expresses them. For the physical theory of relativity, motion must be considered not as the displacement of an observed object, but as the change of position of the object relative to the observer; this discredits the paradox. Ergo, the dilemma seems to be in the understanding we have of real things and how we express them, for the thing we characterize as 'immovable' is rather inaccelerated; that is, there is no force capable of accelerating it within a predetermined frame of reference. However, for this to be true, the inaccelerated thing must have an infinite mass, which is not real. Therefore, it follows that the problem in question is subjective-linguistic. If thought believes in the existence of an object that cannot be moved even with the greatest acceleration that imprints a very powerful force on it, then the object is 'immovable' and the force is insufficient and paralyzable. Also, in an opposite situation, the force is sufficient and unstoppable if there is no object capable of resisting its accelerating impact.



For its part, interpersonal communication in social life produces metaphors and similes of the concept force to institute various figurations in language that enunciate the subjective and intersubjective experiences of social reality. For the force function of money it is not necessary to make specific distinctions, for what is communicated and understood of money as a force is both analogous to physical and metaphysical forces. For example, money has been understood as "spiritual energy [and] life force" (Simmel 2003 cited by Bueno, 2011, p. 233), as what moves needs through time (Esposito, 2013), and what gives power to those who possess it (Simmel, 1977).

In the philosophy of Simmel (1977) the power given by money is the power-to-do and the power-over exercised in a peer-to-peer relationship; on the other hand, for Habermas (1992) and Luhmann (2006), power is independent of money as a generalized symbolic means. This shows how from a socio-scientific perspective money is understood in a different way than it is understood in the common sense that unravels philosophy. The question of power as a sign of exerted force is metaphorical of wealth if, through the force function of money, interacting social entities are deterred, coerced or weakened—even destroyed.

The force of money has different figures: it can be driving, resistant friction, pushing, attraction or repulsion, mobilizing and deforming. Also, if we refer to its functionality, it can reach static or dynamic stage, cumulative or distributive and concentrated or extensible. For example, force can statically act as an attractor for buyers or investors from banking centers, since bankers know that the available monetary capital, the offers of credits and loans attract a large number of customers to a force that they exert from the guild. Individuals, families or companies that accumulate money, and thanks to this gain strength, are more efficient by taking advantage of the force of push in critical situations of 'sinking'. Likewise, those who extend their forces, gaining in prestige, also gain in resistance to the mobilizing and disturbing impact of other forces, that is, they build a greater friction surface with which to withstand the onslaught.

To consider money as a figuration of force is to take into account these various figures given in social dynamics. This indicates that it can be understood in the casuistic terms of impulsive,



attractive, repulsive and deforming forces, as well as nourishing or capacitive and strength-enabling forces.

I must clarify that, if we understand the cultural as the immanence of civilization, then money is a technology<sup>4</sup> and, socio-dynamically, it is a figuration of force. The socio-dynamic and cultural are genetically linked in the conception of human civilization as a structured, organized, functional and open system that is regulated or modified while incorporating external elements. Ergo, the technique of money represents the cultural and social device most directly connected to the materialization of money, but not the figuration of force that is protected by its immateriality.

The materialization of money in coins and banknotes is part of the homeostasis between the social system and the natural environment. Recall that the incorporation of precious metals into the social system led to their transformation into minted coins for internal use in commercial and economic affairs. If we understand such homeostasis as a process modifying the metabolism of the social system, then the emergencies that it raises become inferences of the system to the extent that it achieves the conservation of emerging functionalities, although the material expressions or supports of such emergencies vary, as has happened with the replacement of metals and paper money by digital currencies, preserving the functionality of money.

On the other hand, first we have money as a technology that gives condition to the emergence of power-to-do at the expense of nature and social peers, and then we have it as a figuration of force that gives condition to the emergence of power-over at the expense of social dynamics and social relations. This constituted a civilizational evolution by circulation between homeostasis and metabolism, whose circulation channel was human needs that, equally, changed during the process.

A part of the strength of money is linked to these changing needs that, within today's socioeconomic life, are extended to infinity against our limits of satisfaction. This shows the

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<sup>4</sup> I want to emphasize here that, although for the sociocultural perspective money has shown other ways of being that serve as formative cultural representations of social ties and ways of living – as demonstrated by Zelizer (1994) – when culture is assumed as a total emergent result of the human association that potentiates consciousness, intelligence and collective agency, and offers its artifices to continuously achieve human adaptation to the natural environment, then, much of what arises in it from human interaction is technology.



prolongation of power-doing beyond natural possibilities and the expansion of power-over to all members of societies through the spiral dynamism between needs and consumption from the functional conservation of money. It is said that the money collected today is an insurance to satisfy the possible needs that arise in the future, and this leads, as Esposito (2013) stated, to the fact that we are continuously navigating in a magnetic circle of consumption needs and money to satisfy them. With this the forces of money are imposed on its technical utility, transmuting into a rule of constant accumulation. 'Having much more today for what will be missing tomorrow' is the maxim of billionaires and the condemnation of the needy.

Having said all the above, it seems pertinent to analyze the presence of money in social life from its function of force that affects the changes of states of being and being of social entities.

Let us think of the role that money has today in social existence; and I will not go into easily recognizable or intuible details of the ways in which this occurs beginning with the divisions of social classes and the naturalization of poverty. From the economy to social life, money is the inertial force that mobilizes people along the path of life. This is the only force that I recognize to money from the economy to the social because, then there, it gains autonomy. That is, it is a fictitious force coming from the economic movement that becomes real by social adjudication and manifests itself in the social behaviors that have the force of money as a trigger. The epistemological restlessness then investigates the social phenomena consequent to such behaviors.

For this sociology, one of the elements of analysis is the socially established goals as points of strengthening that social entities want to achieve through the force of money. They are goals that do not represent the end of the road, but intermediate points located by the same social dynamics on the horizon of life. They are attractive and also repellent points endowed with the respective functional forces of money towards which social entities are driven with the previous inertial force. Whether in individuals, families or companies, this inertial force has endowed them with particular forces that serve them for the journey. Once each goal is reached, such particular forces can grow, be intensified, accumulated and disposed for the necessary social actions.



Verbigracia, the upper-class position represents a goal of attraction, but also, repulsive; the force of money pulls towards it, but the strengthening of the rich repels through the function of force of money itself. The strength gained by the rich allows to keep away other social actors equally encouraged by the force of money, and thus, the rich tend to be richer and the poor, to spend their lives in the effort to live within the capitalist promise of wealth.

The former class struggle today is a race in sections. In Marx's time classes were polar opposites in clash, but complementary in a systemic unity; today the middle and upper-middle classes are intermediate points towards the upper class. In a neoliberal capitalism that professes entrepreneurship and enrichment opportunities for people with 'winning' abilities and abilities, life can be nothing but a race for triumph; thus, competition is naturalized by the force of money. As you advance along the track and pass the aforementioned sections, the force of money 'feels' more intense. Those who reach the upper class do not stop running despite there being no other social line to reach, but they do so because there is a force to satisfy. In addition, with this they reject the latent setback and the social actors that approach them.

In various spheres of social life, money has been the driving force behind the 'race' and at the same time has been attractor by itself. In the Cold War period, the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. spent together more than \$50 million a day on the nuclear arms race. To get an idea, in the North American country the monetary cost to develop nuclear offensive systems was lower than that of defensive ones, so they turned to it. According to Nikalai Detinov, Soviet defense minister, the U.S.S.R. realized that, if it did not stop the arms race, then the U.S., which had a better economic situation, would easily overcome it (Fernandez, 2015). The monetary force thus determined the difference in war strength at that time.

The military career, for centuries, has been based on the strength provided by money. Suffice it to recall his role in the Battle of Waterloo which, more than a battle of a war, was a contest between the French and British financial systems. To achieve victory, the Rothschild family gave the necessary money to the Duke of Wellington to assemble an army capable of facing the troops of Napoleon Bonaparte. Family ties in different financial centers of Europe and the trust placed in the Rothschild



family were the energy poles that imprinted such financial strength on British military power (Diaz, 2014).

From these examples it is obvious how the function of money force endows the military power strengthened and ready for victory with an efficient war function. We can then say that, by attribution, money strengthens some and weakens others. The subjugation and subordination of the weak by the strong is what we can identify as social power caused by the force function of money in a specific *milieu* of human associations.

In this *milieu* of human associations that we now call capitalism, the production and reproduction of capital feeds the energetic core of individual and collective intentions and expectations. And, for its part, the movement of money allows to maintain those modern economic institutions that he, as a means, consolidated. Today's bonds, loans, mortgages and financial derivatives are economic strategies that diversify the inertial force in social life. From the market, such an inertial force becomes one of impulse and shock, and for wage labor, it becomes a force of attraction. In the social dimension, this force of attraction is crucial, but also decisive is the force of deformation that money holds, something that Marx and Engels (2014) had already intuited when they recognized money as a "force of destruction" (p. 60).

Money promotes the deformation of social compositions to the point that various forms of associations result from it. For example, in the market institution there are the traders, investors and owners of production who form special associations; at work are the employed and unemployed workers who make up others. Moreover, we can see associations of millionaires, entrepreneurs, and the impoverished who create social movements.

The explanation for this lies in the constructive processes of lived social reality. As Searle (1997) explained, human beings, consciously associated in social units, create institutional facts from the consensus we achieve of our intentions. Money is an institutional fact and also an element of institutionalizations. People have decided to use it as an exchange technology and that institutionalized it also as a communicative symbol. Now we can say that it has been used as a figuration of force in social differentiations and that has institutionalized it as a device of inequalities.



It is a device because it reaches the social dimension with an order given by the economy that does not depend exclusively on the social intentions and expectations of its own nature and implications, and yet it is then arranged to objectify the intentions and expectations of each independent and, therefore, unequal social part or entity.

The strength of the money is adjusted to the assigned functionality;<sup>5</sup> and if we consider that it was endowed anthropically, perhaps it can also be removed in that way. However, this does not seem to be possible today, because such forces, ascribed by functionality, are already inherent in money for a socio-economic system that we cannot dismantle without destroying contemporary civilization. If we recover the paradox of the unstoppable force, then today the function of force of money exerts almost 'unstoppable' on human society 'movable' or susceptible to alteration.

See that, in assigning function to money, we have positioned it in evaluative circumstances; whether the function fulfills the expected or not, then it will be good or bad money. Likewise, the strength of money has gained so much independence in its functionality that we can even talk about the bad and good effects it causes, and evaluate as such the entities that receive those effects. We can say that being poor is bad and being rich is good; the rich are strengthened and the poor weakened.

From this it can be said that the strength of money denotes a social functionality noticed after having established it as a functional fact; it is said that it works to differentiate social groups according to their purchasing powers or, rather, according to their strengthening and weakening. The strengthening is given by the extra endowment of capacities and functions to social entities that gain power-do and establish power-over relations with greater differentiation. It is inherent in the social system that money is in the forms of social differentiation as a generator or conservator of them, as well as being useful in conflict situations (Luhmann, 2006).

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<sup>5</sup> Since money is an epistemically objective fact given by the relationship with the observer (Searle, 1997), that is, with all human beings who recognize and use it as such, its strength is a variable result of the adjudication by common consciousness of natural phenomena brought to social reality, therefore, it is a figuration of force and not a natural force in itself.



In the Bourdieusian theory of the field the function of force of money attributing forces to its agents is elementary, since in the field money is used as capital in intrinsic relations and struggles. Here, every capital available by the agents to condition their positions confers power on each field constituted according to the particular active forces. The functions of the fields will then be more or less effective depending on the capital at stake (Bourdieu, 2005). Thus, it is identifiable that one of the functions of the rich class in capitalism is to keep the lower class impoverished; and, under these conditions, the weakening is given, above all, by the deprivation of capacities and functions.

### **Strengthened, weakened and funambulos**

A contemporary social scenario where this function of money force is identifiable is in disaster risk management where the level of poverty is associated with vulnerability. The logic is that: the contraction of the inertial force of money generated by the financial and commercial market weakens a part of the population that, faced with the impact of a natural threat, has no capacities or functions to face them satisfactorily.

Disasters are crises as is the fight against terrorism and the current Covid-19 pandemic; all of them have hit the impoverished sector of the world's population hardest. For example, in the fight against terrorism the US spends approximately \$1 billion per year (Sahadi, 2015), when the budget that would be needed annually to eradicate global poverty is \$75 billion (Lomborg, 2017); the force of money strengthens the military sector more than the human sector. Moreover, the Republic of the Sudan, which has 46.5% of its population living below the poverty level (IndexMundi, n.d.), being the main exporter of gum arabic for multimillion-dollar soft drink companies such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi, is deprived of capacities and functions of distribution and social equity as a result of the low relative price (UNCTAD, 2018) with which Coca-Cola, which increased its profits in 2018 to 6434 million dollars (Agencia EFE, 2019), buys the product.

The naturalization of poverty comes from the naturalness with which we inadvertently receive money as a force, just as we spontaneously assume the force of gravity or electromagnetism in our lives. Poverty is understood within the socioeconomic normality that neoliberal market policies mark,



naturalizing with it the inequality that, in the industrialized countries of the First World, has become excessive (Stiglitz, 2012). From this analytical perspective, poverty and inequality are homologous, validating the ontological inevitability of the latter and the unquestionable existence of the former in mutual connaturality: 'if we are not all equal, then there must be rich and poor'. At the political-discursive level this belongs to the "pedagogical hygiene of thought" (Murillo, 2007, p. 1).

Apart from the level of income, other dimensions have been considered to measure global poverty, such as: health, education and standard of living; and this multidimensionality calls into question the traditional conceptualization of poverty (UNDP, 2019). However, such dimensions do not represent the determining cause of poverty, but the experiences that impoverished people have as a result; or put in holistic terms, they are the transdimensional reverberations of the impact of the force of money and its endowment of force.

When we stick to the social effect of the force function of money, say: to social differentiations and inequalities, we can identify a high social sector composed of wealthy people or entities with a fortune greater than tens of millions of dollars whose social function seems to be to weaken other people, as well as to offer medium strengths to many others. Their presence in local, regional and global markets, in the stock exchange and other branches of the financial market that moves monetary capital, as well as their influences on political and legislative issues, show us the evident strengthening acquired by the accumulation of force of the money they own, while the impoverished and marginalized social sectors are left helpless.

It is said that 'money calls money', because social entities with capital and mechanisms to invest and receive benefits are those that amass large sums, own property monopolies and have direct influence in the social spheres of health, communication and government. These social entities, by their strengthening and functions they acquire, strengthen themselves, becoming more robust and powerful before other social sectors. I am talking here about banks, consortia, transnational corporations, billionaire entrepreneurs, etc.

If we assume that the function of force of money is not selective, but exercises for every human being attached to the current socioeconomic system and for every social entity in the same



condition of ascription, then a logical judgment is that that social sector that yesterday and today has gained strength through money, does not want to lose it tomorrow. With this strength gained, this sector exercises, to limit the strengthening, on the other social sectors that coexist and interact with it. Therefore, the function acquired from strengthening is to deprive other sectors of strengthening: the impoverished must remain poor, and the majority of workers or entrepreneurs must not be too strengthened.

The fundamental question here is to understand that, through the function of force of money, its possessors manage to strengthen themselves to a greater or lesser degree, gaining or lacking certain consequential social functions. Thus, the rich are getting stronger and stronger, keeping the impoverished in weakening. And within these weakened it is possible to distinguish two social sectors: the least and the very weakened; the former acquire a certain strength sufficient to maintain their social status, while the latter scrape a tiny force of money to the point of being unable to overcome their weaknesses – translated into vulnerabilities, dangers and greater risks of malnutrition and death.

This impoverished sector has been inhibited from free social functions given by money; they cannot access food, water and sanitation, sometimes they have no civic-legal presence and are excluded from the social life established by the working masses or middle-class entrepreneurs. All this simply because they have no money.

This middle class—so qualified because it is halfway to the extreme weakening of the poor by the relentless strengthening of the rich—is still weakened by the higher forces, but neither is it lacking in any strength to avoid falling into poverty. This is a social sector that gains some strength from money, but is susceptible to being weakened by the greater strength of the rich; it is positioned in a kind of tightrope where below are the poor and above, the wealthy. On that rope he walks upwards attracted by money and repelling famine; they go like tightrope walkers who counteract with their own forces the forces that attack them. I call them: social funambulos.

For these funambulos, money serves as an attractive force, of impulse and of repulsion. Money represents several attraction goals that workers, entrepreneurs and small entrepreneurs



intend to achieve: more money means gaining strength in better status. Moreover, money functions as a driving force for the survival, consumption and comforts of the middle class. If the next goal is reached and ascend in status, then survival will be assured, consumption will be select and of quality, and comforts will be greater.

Finally, in addition to this attraction, money is placed as a force of repulsion, or rather, the lack of money is assumed as the bottom of the rising path to which we must not fall, nor continue to look. Although the forces of the rich are imposing in their debilitating function, the resilient force of money in this middle sector prevents its despondency. Entities in this sector are strong enough to regularly prevent their weakening. This manifests itself in the rejection, marginalization and exclusion of the impoverished sector, and the funambulos limit themselves to 'looking' from their status without committing to the fight against extreme weakening; they believe that they have been allowed to strengthen themselves to a lesser or medium degree, and that with such strengths they can resist and advance. As Bauman (2008) said, in contemporary society there are criminals, victims and spectators. The funambulos are mostly spectators of impoverishment; they only take action when they are the victims.

Bauman (2008) offered a provocative critique of the participatory scheme of social evil where several actors appear: the victims, the authors of evil and the spectators. It calls spectators those who are witnesses or connoisseurs of the evil committed or to be committed without offering opposition to it. If we take into account the dire consequences of impoverishment brought about by the functional intentionality of the rich as an exercise in strength, then such weakening is clearly an evil.

For criminology and the penal code, the spectators are differentiated from the perpetrators and the victims, but in the socio-moral, the difference seems diffuse. The spectator acquires an evil if he remains frivolous in the face of the weakening of the impoverished. The intentions of the strengthened is to preserve their strengths at the expense of the non-strengthening of others, and the intentions of the spectators is to stay out of it, because if they are involved they can be weakened to the extreme of poverty. The intentions of the rich activate the use of the function of force of money ascribed to them to commit evil, while those of the funambulos sustain their self-resistance.



The refusal to know what is happening, despite contact with the sources of information, and to act decisively in reaction to evil are links that unite the intentions of the rich and the middle class. Bauman (2008) identified the denial that viewers welcome in passivity or abstention from reaction. The pillars that justify it are the following: "lack of knowledge and lack of opportunity to act on that knowledge" (p. 250).

Funambulos know about poverty, but they do not want to know about it in relation to themselves; they recognize it as a heterotopic place to the social status they occupy. The 'not knowing' in this case is the shadow of knowledge confident in the attractive force of money that, while it remains functioning, will pull them away from poverty towards higher goals. Moreover, they assume that action should not be taken to prevent the weakening of those already weakened, but in order to avoid their own weakening and in favour of gaining strengths from money; very much in line with the neoliberal recommendation to remain concerned and acting exclusively for an individual itinerary (Bauman, 2008). Being committed to the events of others and acting against evil are tasks that would put at risk the more or less balanced stabilities that the funambulos have achieved.

Bauman (2008, p. 253) asked: "Would the perpetrators—the real culprits—carry out their evil plans if they could not count on those around them to remain indifferent and not interfere?" Obviously it is a valid question that has greater foundation when considering the function of force of money and the functional determinations that derive from it. It could be said that the strengthened rich would perhaps not exercise their debilitating function in the lower class if there were no middle class that laboriously participated in the economic dynamism of reproduction and monetary production, that attended various jobs and asked for loans and mortgages to maintain their social status. If there were no such middle sector committed to its own strengthening and responsible for nurturing the strengths of the rich, perhaps, the upper class would not see in them perpetual accomplices. The middle class filters the strength held by the rich and conceals the weakening of the poor class by remaining as an example of opportunity and solvency in capitalism; the function it acquires is to mark the independence of sectoral strengthening in societies and with this contributes to social differentiation and inequality.



It is inferred that the rich and the funambulos bear the blame for the weakening of the impoverished because the intentions to stay strong through the function of force of money lead them to act for themselves and against others. In today's globalized world, this has extendable consequences to the impoverished sector and leads the middle sector to evade, as it denies, the evils of impoverishment. Usually, the funambulos decide to wait until they have enough strength to act in favor of the poor and thus avoid falling into poverty as well, but when that time comes, the higher attractive forces misplace such pretensions. Thus, "the shared capacity to cause harm seems infinitely greater than our shared capacity to do good" (Bauman, 2008, p. 262).

The construction of social differences and inequalities occurs today through the shared functions between the upper and middle sectors that serve in favor of their own differentiations and independences and mark the differences and inequalities for the lower sector. Thus, the strengthened strengthen their forces and the funambulos try to maintain their forces of balance while looking towards higher and not lower goals where the weakened underly. If the rich don't judge such strengthenings and weakenings, and middle-class people decide not to judge for their own sake, then where will the condemnation come from? Will this be the social function acquired by the weakened?

### **Final Considerations**

In addition to everything said about the function of force of money, I want to conclude with a detail of great importance: the immanence of money given by its figuration of force.

As has been tried to explain throughout the text, the figuration of force is the reflexivity that arises from the social allocation of functions to money and from socially assuming the force that this functionality holds in social dynamics; It should be said that the social entities inserted in this dynamic attribute and recognize the strength of money in the very forces that they can exercise. Having money means gaining strength because money at the social level serves as a force. Therefore, those who seek to have more and more money, also seek to gain in strength and with it subdue the other actors or social entities. It is not an explicit submission, although we sometimes witness objective manifestations of discrimination, marginalization and urban segregation, for example; it is a



submission by achievement given because of the intentionality and expectations of entities that seek to strengthen themselves even more at the expense of the weakening of others. With this, the figures of force that money holds at the social level are assumed as social functions of the entities that possess money, and thus, money is instituted as a figuration of force.

This institution is possible because in this process money acquires a special immanence. Such immanence arises from the fact that the function of money aims at the consistency of its functionality, offering itself as a functionalization of itself in the entities systematized to it, and for itself in the reflective conservation that this provides. I say with greater punctuality that the function of force awarded socially is consistent because it grants equal functional status to the social entities that use it for their benefit, but at the same time favors the preservation of such a function in money.

Since money is an institutional fact, it is the result of the transcendence of the social subject towards the socializing object that then, by exercising its functionality within the social system, gains autonomy and ownership. The social allocation of the function of force to money is also to keep it within the functionality of the social sphere; therefore, in each intersocial functional exercise, this function becomes autonomous to the point of ending up as an inherent property of money. Thus, the strength of money is not only recognized in the social sphere, but also in the economic and political sphere that constitute the social system as a whole; Consider the fact that several countries appeal to the strength of the rich class to compete in the world economy using fiscal strategies that attract foreign investment and thus increase GDP. For example, Sweden is committed to foreign investment that the government supports from fiscal facilities.

Much more than has been said here about the force function of money could be said, however, this would require adjusting the concept of force figuration to the new considerations. Assuming money as a figuration of force for this article has been a conceptual strategy of sociological analysis and the explanation of it offered was in that tonic; incorporating other variables, indicators or categories of analysis would force the concept to be readjusted.

Therefore, the final reflection here is to consider that, in these conditions of immanence and with the property that money has acquired, it acts as an almost unstoppable force before which social



efforts for counter-impact are few, usually coming from the weakened sector; the rich and the middle class are not interested, nor should they, confront such a force, so while some continue to exercise their domination by weakening the impoverished, others limit themselves to being spectators and making use of their own strengths.

To date there does not seem to be a reactive force of such magnitude and social call, nor do there seem to be adequate procedures to generate it; politics has been ineffective and the sciences have facilitated the opposite with their naturalistic, evolutionary and systemic utilitarian postulates — see Murillo (2007) for some data on the matter. Money seems unbeatable, firmly instituted by social institutions and the very modern life of human civilization. To think of an economy without the dynamism of finance capital is to fall into apocalyptic thinking, and more, to think of a society without it. Today's humanity cannot subsist if it annihilates money in order to avoid this function of force, because with it the other functions would disappear as well. So the proposal is: if we cannot have a physical force to counteract the harmful effects of money, we will have to look for a latent metaphysical force in human societies that achieves it. I would like to believe that love, morality and solidarity are carriers of such strength, but, as the contemporary world stands, they seem to lose more than gain intensity.

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