

TÖNNIES, SIMMEL, WEBER – EARLY GERMAN APPROACHES TO MODERNIZATION,
CURRENT CONCLUSIONS AND A CRITICAL OUTLOOK

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At first, I want to express my gratitude for being at this notable university. To a German sociologist it is a particular pleasure to participate in an academic jubilee which is remarkable in terms of time and space: The foundation of an Institute of Sociology at a time when Western Imperialism brought the hopes of sociological enlightenment to nothing, in a part of the world which most Westerners considered as an "Orientalistic despotism", as a "Byzantine maladministration", it was exactly this "Ill Man at the Bosphorus" who took over the banner of the social sciences and erected an institution which should help to steer social change by peace and rationality, not by war and suppression.

Today, after two atrocious wars and with forfeiture of valuable traditions, indigenous knowledge, cultural variety, and irretrievable lifes and ideas, we hopefully know better what social change and modernization really is about. The framework in which I want to contribute some specifically German sociological ideas is put up right here: Is social change taxable, is "modernization" manageable?

Speaking overrefined, my contribution is not new in particular. The "Great Three" of German sociology – Tönnies, Simmel, and Weber – are well studied, their works have been analyzed over decades. Most of it is translated and part of the basic textbooks of sociology throughout the world. The tiny little point I want to make and which might be "new" in the sense of fruitful for further discussion is centered around three categories. All three are not only the key terms in the works of the German sociologists I am talking about, they are also the cornerstones of a relationship which is mostly misunderstood and incriminated. The categories are progress, rationality, and individuality; the relationship is the one between Orient and Occident.

I.

When I studied the beginnings of sociology in Turkey, very mixed feelings came to my mind and my heart. I felt irritated by the fact that an Institute of sociology has been established earlier in your country than in mine. As a German sociologist, who reclames to descend from the founders of the discipline, this fact is felt as a hit against ones proudness. Nevertheless, it is true that the earliest German institute of sociology has been founded in Cologne in 1921; Leopold von Wiese was the first "Ordinarius". The famous "Institut für Sozialforschung", the cradle of the so-called Frankfurter Schule, followed in 1923. Irritated that way, the first course of reflections began. Why do we know

only very little about Turkish sociology in Germany? Is it caused by a false self awareness, perhaps by a feeling of superiority which lets us neglect the Turkish segment in the spectre of global sociology?

In the face of Millions of Turkish people who have worked and who are working in my country, a close co-operation and an intense exchange of empirical and theoretical findings seem to be as necessary as useful for a better understanding. Our history does evidence the fact that such an understanding is possible and fruitful for both sides and that our countries have more in common than laborforce and jobs. Decades ago, in 1923, Kemal Ataturk asked the Swiss paedagoge Albert Malche to reform the turkish system of education. The racism of Nazi-Germany and the close ties between Malche and the German professor Philipp Schwartz resulted in some sort of "Gastarbeiter"- stream from Germany to Turkey: Dr. Recit Galip, the minister of education of that time, supported the ideas of Malche and inaugurated dozens of German academics at Turkish universities. The "Mülkiye" in Ankara, for example, was very famous for its German touch. Among the more than hundred scientists who emigrated into Turkey were ten German sociologists and economists. Alexander Rüstow, Wolfram Eberhard, Ernst Reuter, Fritz Neumark, Wilhelm Röpke and Josef Dobretsberger may have been the best known - although most of them proved to be incapable to learn the new language. Thus, celebrity ungranted, their contracts were not prolonged, yet the academic influence has been tremendous. The value of the "intellectual imports" has been far beyond the value of a specific language.

Even today, the language barriere is still very high; nevertheless we should appreciate the role of language. The compulsion to use ones mother tongue is often combined with nationalistic impulses. After the historical experience of an extreme "Deutschtum", I may be justified in demanding a transnational language. The Medieval Ages have used Latin as universal intellectual language and I believe that a similar bi-linguality is necessary in the future: an every-day language of regional origin and a universal language of cosmopolitan communality. The simple fact that English has become the leading international language of sciences and therefore of sociology too, is, regrettably, no rationally planned step toward the "Latin" of a unified global community but the result of extreme irrationality: of nationalism and war. But facing reality, it is better to utilize an "extraneous" language with intend to carry on a cosmopolitan understanding, than to go "indigenous" by reanimating nationalism under the label of "cultural identity".

My second irritation arose from the date of the birthday we are celebrating together: 1914, the year when World War I broke out and when Turkey and the German Reich fought (and finally failed) together. But in contrast to your country, in mine nobody thought about founding an autonomous institute of sociology. Max Weber refused to be titeled a Sociologist; he identified himself with national economics, and, moreover, he criticezed those who longed for the academic establisment of sociology as a discipline of its own. Georg Simmel, who had to fight for his professorship over years, felt more as a philosopher than a sociologist, even when it was him who had the highest engagement in consolidating sociology as an academic discipline with international reputation. In fact, in Germany sociology was not needed – not in government, not in business, and not in academia. The reason why sociology has been strongly rejected by the German elites may explain the differences in the discipline's establishment and in the ways of defining the role sociology can play in society.

Thinking about these questions, the basic irritations turned into systematic analysis. There is some evidence that the rejection of sociology in Germany and the foundation of an Institute of Sociology in Turkey during the same period of time did less depend on structural differences but more on ideological perceptions and political intentions. Some of my colleagues may contradict, nevertheless I will try to prove that hypothesis. On doing so, the key words of my contribution – progress, rationality, and individuality – will be introduced.

II.

In my point of view – from a very high level of abstraction – the failure of sociology in Germany was not caused by those who supported its establishment, neither by those who actively fought against it. In fact, the upcoming of sociology coincided with the burst of the most important concept of Western civilization: the idea of progress. Progress, indeed, was the leading motive of the 19th century. Hand in hand, industrialization and democratization gave the masses the feeling to participate in a world which is turning toward the better. Progress lost its singularity, its limitation by single fields and developments; more and more, progress became a general principle which seemed to be active everywhere and always. The first time in history, most people verified Francis Bacon by personal experience: every practical progress in science and industry leads to a concrete progress of humankind. The Philosophy of the English and Scottish moralists argued in the same manner; they also identified progress in technology, sciences, and industry with the egeral socila and economical welfare of everybody. The harsh critique of those who insisted that progress and human welfare, or more general, progress and ethics are not necessarily identical, was contradicted by the French ideas of revolution. Condorcet believed that the new order of the revolution might bridge the gap between progress and ethics, reason and morality, selfish interests and communality. And it was Auguste Comte who totally intertwined the idea of progress with the development of society in its whole (see Medick 1973). Since Comte, progress and society belong together. In his theory, social progress was especially linked with the progress of the (positive) sciences. Thus, the societal development seemed to be open for rational planning, if the results of sciences will be applied properly.

In Germany, this absolute belief in progress broke to debris during the end of the century. Some explained the decay of the idea of progress in economical terms (see Rosenberg 1981), others in philosophical and sociological terms. Certainly, the "Great Depression" (1873-1896), the hazards of war (caused by the rivalries between Germany, England and France, see Pinon 1913), the Angst before the masses and the fears of revolution and individual deprivation, led altogether to a "Zeitgeist" which believed in the "Untergang des Abendlandes" (Spengler 1923). The German sociologists realized this climate of decay very sensitive; all of them tried to analyze the factors and motives which make societies possible and impossible. But on doing so, they did not create the harmonic marches into an optimistic "tomorrow-land". On the contrary, what the early sociologists delivered from their studies into the seminars and the public very often was the amunition for the "wrong" parties. Ferdinand Tönnies study of the strike of harbor workers in Hamburg (1897), Max Webers study of land workers (1896), and Georg Simmels study on the the role of the money in the

modern culture (1896) have been massive critiques of the capitalist economy and its ruling classes.

In Turkey, on the other hand, the same time period was characterized by very different developments and perceptions. The modernization of Turkey, which was partly a Westernization, demanded for appropriate techniques and instruments with which the reformation of the country might become a success. Due to the close ties of the Turkish elites with France, it was the contemporary French intellectual life which was perceived in the first place. But more important than that was the fact that it was the French sociology which promised exactly what the Turkish government was looking for: The harmony of progress and societal development, rational instruments to plan the society's change, and, last but not least, a complete set of theory and praxis to establish a new order in a new, europe-like society.

Assumed that the Turkish elites of the beginning of the century might have had more intense ties with Germany, and, therefore assumed, that the German way of sociological thinking might have been preferably perceived, we would probably find another, or even worse, no institute of sociology at the university of Istanbul that early. And moreover, we probably would find a different Turkish sociology today. Nobody could really know, of course, but all the problems of fortune-telling aside, the idea is nevertheless attractive: What subjects might have Tönnies, Weber and Simmel investigated in Turkey? And what sort of sociology might have been evolved out of their approach to sociology, social order, and social action?

Before running into the trap of false imaginations, we better focus on the empirical basis with which sociology has to deal. There is always a difference between the expectations of what sociology should be and should do and the way sociology has to act and to survive in the real world of power and politics and its ambivalent and contradictory structures.

III.

Apart from ideological overtones, it seems to be justified to ask for the specifics, the world's hemispheres of beliefs, values, ideologies or "systems" have implemented in "their" sociologies. To me, for example, the sociology of the eastern part of Germany is almost hardly to understand: The prefaces of every publication are talking about "socialist sociology" and the specific role this sort of sociology has to play in establishing socialism. But in the facts-and-figure parts nothing else is to be found than the common empirical sociology which is in use from Berlin to Chicago, from Sidney to Tokyo. So what is ment with "socialist sociology"?

In my point of view, the question can be answered more easily in an unfair than in a fair manner. The names of Tönnies, Weber, and Simmel are standing for three possible answers and they are far away from present-day polemics, over-simplification or prejudice. They also demonstrate that a specific domestication of sociology into "socialistic", "etatistic", "modernistic" or even "islamistic" sociology may be based on a severe misunderstanding of what sociology really is.

An example of such a misinterpretation I have found in the work of Jean-Paul Charnay (1977), who

hypothesized that Western sociology and the Islam are antagonistic per se. The unity of the "umma", the unification of all individuals in the community of Allah, so his words, is based on the religious belief, on the Islam. Thus, a religious, islamic sociology is necessary to avoid the results of Western sociology which enables people to individualize in a negative way, i.e. in competition, deviance and egoism, and which will lead consequently to the decay of community and solidarity. Right here, the starting flag of my contribution is waved: What is the fabric of Western sociology? Is it in fact an instrument that helps to break societies in pieces; which is able to create and separate the individual beings from community and which is useful to rationalize the means and ends competing wolves? Assumed that Western sociology is such alike, how might this discipline be helpful in other, non-western societies? (Disregarding the logical aspect at this moment, whether sociology, if it is really like this, may be helpful anyhow.) And if another sociology is possible - let us say: a socialist or, in the case right here, an Islamic or an "Oriental" one - what might the fabric of such a sociology be alike?

Asking these questions, nobody should expect me to give you another Western lesson about the ways in which sociology should or has to be utilized in your country. But we all have to recognize the fact that we live in an interdependent world with endless space and endless resources. We should not waste our time with exploded ideas and antiquated confrontations. The Christian/Islamic confrontation has led to a mutual negation of the Other, but what we all need is the transformation of adversaries into mutual "significant others". This is the way, "modernization" should be defined and handled and I hope that my contribution will fit into this ambition.

IV.

In fact, the relationship between "Orient" and "Occident" is an intimate interdependency, some sort of a kinship, perhaps alike those of the two brothers who became adversaries, even enemies, but also allies, traders, and partners. Despite temporary romantic affections the European upper classes have projected into the Orient, especially into the arts and gender (see Syndram 1989; Thornton 1989), the images both sides have created of each other were dominated by brutalization, horror and cruelty (see Baltrusaitis 1955). Since the conquest of Jerusalem in 1070 and the following crusades, the relationship between Orient and Occident was characterized by the struggle for imperial predominance. Wrapped in religious dogma, the rising Ottoman Empire and the European powers (including papacy) which tried to maintain their influence, became involved for centuries into (religious) wars (see Schwarz 1989).

The "holy battles" between believers and unbelievers, between Islam and Christianity, have impressed on the perception of each other until today. In a recent article, Mona Abaza and Georg Stauth (1988) have summarized the standard arguments concerning the basic differences between Islam and Christianity. They argue right that most arguments are ideological in terms of rationalizing the struggle for superiority.

Nevertheless, the "blood and flesh" of both, the heritage in common, is our antique tradition, to

which the roots of Arabic, Islamic, and European scientists are going back in the same manner (see Crombie 1989; Wilderottter 1989). But it was not only the antique Greece that has been our heir; the ancient India has been our testator just as much, and, trying to deal with all aspects, we should ask for additional important influences. In the last resort, we are all standing on the shoulders of giants, including the ingenious cultures like Byzantine, Egypt, Mesopotamia or China (see Bayer 1989; Syndram 1989).

To me, it is one of the most ironic caprioles of human history that the richest sources of intellectual evolution became exploited and ruined in the most crucial sense. Of course, the term "ironic" is inadequate for analytical purposes, nevertheless our moral bewilderment will be quickly uptaken: It is not the rise of great cultures that has to be explained, it is their fall, their failure in utilizing their "greatness" for realizing their own pretensions, their moral, religious, ethical imperatives. Sociology is trying to find explanations and it was especially Max Weber who compared the rise of the West with the fall of the East.

Weber and most European sociologists of that era analyzed the processes of social change toward modernization. Over periods of time, the differences in development, culture and economic power have been explained with the key categories, the early French and German sociologist have conceptualized. Our perception of reality is necessarily influenced by these categories and their theoretical context. Thus, the sociological imagery of mutual East/West explanations has more in common than the societal reality of our two countries. It is the overlap in the sociological theories of both hemispheres and the contrast of the social and economic development which has to be considered.

Ferdinand Tönnies, most of us know, has explained social development and change as transformation from community to society (1887). "Gemeinschaft" and "Gesellschaft" are two different principles of social organization. Whereas community is based on blood and body, on kinship and family, society is based on mechanical exchange and rational calculations. Is community regulated and conducted by religion, customs and morals, so is society steered by money, commodities and contracts. Social development, in Tönnies perspective, turns communities into societies - a process which always destroys the given homogenous equilibrium until a new equilibrium, society, is reached. The process of transformation, which will be finished not before the whole world has become one society, has no stillstand, no rest, no refugium. The individuals have to cope with this overwhelming, unevadable change - otherwise they will be rubbed out and perish. Consequently, the process of transformation will be paralleled by social pathologies, by deviance and brutality. The only chance to withstand the forces of the "Vergesellschaftung" saw Tönnies in specific counter- strategies, in applied forms of "Vergemeinschaftung": Unions, associations ("Genossenschaften") and co-operation based partnerships.

Similar to Tönnies, also Georg Simmel started his analyses with the effects of the division of labor. But in contrast to Tönnies, Simmel was much more ambivalent. To him, the division of labor appeared as negative as positive. On the one hand, modernization causes the effects that have been described by Tönnies, but on the other hand, the same development will led to personal freedom at the same time. Theoretically, Simmel distinguished between a "good" and a "bad" way of division of labor. The good, functional way frees the individual from his traditional bondages of kinship,

village, morals, and feudal restrictions and enables differentiation, mobility, variability, and creativity. In the system of Simmel, progress is consequently defined by the quantity of the social circles in which every individual is capable and allowed to act. The more social roles and styles a person can apply, the more individuality is at hand. The dark sides of freedom and individuality are loneliness and anonymity. The individual, as Simmel puts it, is endangered to lose control, insight and sense. The complexity of society, the numerous social circles and the extended chains of action and control enforce discipline, self-control, patience, and many competences in organizing the very limited means the average individual can utilize to reach the end he is longing for. In the last resort, the interests of the individuals will conflict with the functional dynamic of the society: Modern societies need the human beings not as individuals but only as a function, as a bio-cybernetic transmission in the process of reproduction. In contrast, the individuals want to be accepted as "somebody", as worthy parts of human relationships. Thus, the interest of the society in its whole and the interests of its individual members are intransigent. This is, in Simmel's terms, the "tragedy" of modernization.

To Weber, modernization was the result of connecting one's spiritual fate with practical attitudes in everyday life, especially with wealth and success. The modern man, in Weber's point of view, relates his inner, eternal fate to pragmatic, calculable ends in the world. With this essential internal attitude he transforms, as Abaza and Stauth (1988:351) have put it, "the drudgery of this world into a sacred existence in the Beyond". World domination appeared as self-restraint, both were directed against evil, sex and nature. Science and technology became the instruments to control the forces of nature and the animalistic impulses of man. In opposition to the inner-worldly asceticism of Christianity, for Weber, Islam is the religion of accommodation, obligation and ritual, and not of understanding and reason. Consequently, Weber's comparison of West and East, which is based on his concept of "economic ethics", was leading to the conclusion that the West appears to be secular, while the East seems to continue to be religiously inspired.

Today, backed by the findings of a persevering East-West dialogue (see Laroui 1987; Rodinson 1968; Waardenburg 1963), many misconceptions and prejudice have been surmounted, others have been left. Incited by this dialogue, one aspect of our Western concepts of modernity should be reconsidered. The revolutionary act of Protestantism, the (self-)constitution of the modern man, consisted in the appropriation of worship. The clergy's "service" to bridge between God and congregation (the community of believing laymen) became obsolete because – and that was Luther's merit – due to God's grace, everybody might come into contact with God directly. The effects have been radical. Religion became democratized and individualized; but in leaving church, the unifying frame of values, which have been revealed and confirmed by the clergy, broke into pieces, or in other words, devolved upon individual disposition.

Parallely, the sciences usurped religious revelation. From then on, the secrets of the universe (before: "creation") became discovered by scientific inquiry; the holy inquisition was superseded by experiments. But in contrast to the confessions of truly pitiable creatures, the scientific inquiry into the animated and inanimated nature produced knowledge for everybody, not exclusively for the church's thirst for power. The natural laws, derived from scientific experiments, became ideal means for individual ends. Properly used, the forces of nature could be subjugated and domesticated; combined with capital, they aroused the dynamic change which is mostly called "industrial

revolution".

Modernization and industrialization are going hand in hand, but they are not identical. Max Weber himself made a clear distinction in his model of "christianized modernity". There, the calculation of means and ends, – "Zweckrationalität" –, is the central mode of decision-making, and rationality is seen as the central frame of reference. Although included in the process of "means-and-ends-analyses", the determination of ends is an act of volition. In his essay on "Objectivity", Max Weber (1968) emphasized this point: It is not the part of scientific counselling to tell people what they should do. The aims people are fighting for cannot be the object of science, although the losses can be assessed when limited resources are devastated for antagonistic aims. Thus, the individual has to decide for the means and the ends he will follow up. Since religion did not manifest the rules of conduct any longer, only the state gave some general orientations. The law and the common weal defined the framework within the individual might operate. Albeit, as figures in the game, even the state and his rules could be maneuvered out. In the last resort, the definition of aims did not depend upon moral or ethics but only upon power. (Perhaps, those countries are "less developed" which enforce strict ethics?)

Max Weber's analyses of modernization and rationalization started with the transformation of feudalist agriculture into industrialized modes of production. But in contrast to Tönnies and Simmel, he interpreted history as an endless process of turn-overs, of winning and losing, of superiority and inferiority. Consequently, power and competition became the key categories of his political sociology. Social change appears as fight between nations, groups, and individuals; an existence without struggle seems impossible. Seen like this, progress cannot be linear and durable, because the struggle for superiority is open, undecided in principle.

Thus, the social actors are permanently forced to fight or to perish. In this context, rationalization always is the organization of individual means to reach one's ends. The correctness of one's action is, in Weber's system, "rational progress". Such an interpretation necessarily identifies progress with technical capabilities. Are the aims attained, the means are justified. Max Weber was aware of the moral dimension of this concept. His principle of "Werfreiheit" should solve the problem. In praxis, however, the demon of a means-and-end-rationality has shown its true face. The wars of humankind demonstrate the standard of the rationality behind.

V.

Is any conclusion possible? Yes, of course, but from an occidental point of view a pessimistic one is more likely than an optimistic one. Apart from their different philosophical backgrounds and their different theoretical and political orientations, Tönnies, Simmel and Weber seem to harmonize in the most essential estimation about modern society: The ineluctability of rationalization. From the moment on when people have learned to differentiate between ego and alter, "la fraternité est perdue" – in other words: the discovery of the self is automatically the decline of community. Insofar, the process of modernization is paradox in its effects, because community falls to

pieces - i.e. into individuals - in the moment of its highest success. It is only the wealthiest, best nurtured and equipped communal body which is able to release some of its members for special and later on: specialized occupations. This division of functions, of labor in the broadest meaning, analyzes the unique body of community. Being functionally separated from the community, the single member is scared by his social birth but simultaneously excited by the new social distance which constitutes at least an ego in relation to an opposite alter. Now, the individual becomes able to analyze his specific function, his value for the community. Now, the individual is able to calculate his engagement, his activities, his "price". Poor, hungry and threatened communities need every member very badly; nobody can be renounced, nobody can risk any distance to the protecting body of collective survival. In reverse, of course, when nobody is dispensable, nobody knows individual freedom. Without freedom, a difference between individual and collective interests does not exist. The price of freedom, of course, is the disappearance of collective values, of a uniting belief system. Without some sort of a general ethical orientation, individuals and societies are in danger to fight with "immoral" means for "evil" ends. That is the demon, Max Weber was talking about. Societies that want ban this demon are forced to expel their members from the experience of freedom: Szylla and Charybdis.

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