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**Title of Session:** The Relevance of the Classics for Post-1989-Transformations

**Name of Session Convener(s):** Sven Eliaeson

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**Chair:** Sven Eliaeson

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**I) Title of Selected Paper:** Has the Cultural Studies Critique of Classical Sociology Run its Course?

**Name/s of Author/s:** Thomas Acton

**University/Organization incl. City:** University of Greenwich, UK

**Abstract:** There exists a strand within Cultural Studies which proclaims the irrelevance of the dead white men of Classical Sociology. Turning on its head Parsons' assertion that Weber had incorporated all that was worthwhile from Marx, they write as if neo-Marxism had incorporated all that was worthwhile in classical sociology, post-structuralism all that was worthwhile in neo-Marxism, and together they had brought sociology to the point where it is a science ready to forget its founders, or at least to cease to teach them except to specialists in the history of sociology. The two decades after 1989 have seen, therefore the flowering of an almost anti-theoretical, experiential cultural studies challenged only by an aggressively a-political "middle way" which sought to synthesize previously competing sociologies. The writer will suggest that sociologists studying the resistance of oppressed minorities have been forced to re-discover the classical sociologists from whom they ultimately derive their ability to ask effective critical questions about and against the consensual syntheses which merely describe the operations of society and culture; and that the credit crunch may make the relevance of these questions more apparent.

**II) Title of Selected Paper:** Thinking in Systems: Parsons and the Physiocrats.

**Name/s of Author/s:** Christopher Schlembach

**University/Organization incl. City:** University of Vienna, Wien

**Abstract:** Gerhard Wagner's (2007) recent and insightful history of sociology strongly emphasizes Sociology's roots in Western enlightenment. His reading highlights the polemic and political aspects of social theory rather than the destructive and instrumental as did Horkheimer and Adorno. In this paper I want to read some of Talcott Parsons' concepts about the theory of social action in a historical perspective with one strand of 18th century French enlightenment represented by the physiocratic movement and the writings of Anne-Robert Turgot. The abstractions of the physiocratic economists allow the conceptualization of a new kind of theory of social action that classifies actors in terms of functions. Physiocratic thought is based in a normative concept of nature that shall govern society (l'ordre naturel). Parsons intellectual edifices have much in common with this systemic style of reasoning. They are also a distant echo of the American revolution and its interpretation of natural law. Parsons invented his sociology in a moment of economical and historical crisis that can be compared to the crisis of mid 18th century France. A systematic comparison of Parsons' later work in the 1960s with early writings of Turgot reveals the continuing strive to interpret social order and economical crisis under the conditions of world history.

**III) Title of Selected Paper:** Theoretical and Methodological Basis for Studying Social-Psychological Transformations in Post-Soviet Countries.

**Name/s of Author/s:** Gohar Shahnazaryan

**University/Organization incl. City:** Yerevan State University, Yerevan

**Abstract:** Macro transformations, taking place in Armenian society inevitably reflect on the level of micro transformations, such as transformations of hierarchy of values, social attitudes and needs, as well as changes in the interpersonal relationships and group dynamics. In this context it's becoming very important to identify the indicators of social-psychological transformations and analyze positive and negative outcomes of these transformations. There is also a great need to find out theoretical and methodological basis of social-psychological transformations and application of different theoretical concepts to the multi analyses of transformations.

Problem of the interconnections of macro and micro levels is widely discussed in the contemporary sociological theories. One of the example is British sociologist Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration, which is focusing on the interdependence and interinfluence of agent (individuals and groups) and the structure. Another attempt to analyze the dynamics of social-psychological transformations could be done through the concept of French sociologist Pier Bourdieu, where social-psychological transformations are considering as a result of interrelations between "field" and "habitus".

Structural transformations and changes that are taking place on the individual and group level are also widely discussed in the “sociology of everyday life” and theory of social construction of reality.

From the recently developed sociological theories which could be relevant for the study of social-psychological transformations are morphogenetic social theory of Margaret Archer and Derek Layder’s theory of social domain, which are bringing some metatheoretical approach to the analyzes of levels and spheres of social processes.

In my opinion, the comparative analyzes and discussion of different sociological concepts and approaches could help scholars to identify the core theoretical and methodological framework for the studying of social and psychological transformations on macro, mezo and micro levels.

**IV) Title of Selected Paper:** The Classic Nation and Family (1941) by Alva Myrdal:

Transformation, sexuality, family and population policies.

**Name/s of Author/s:** Hedvig Ekerwald

**University/Organization incl. City:** Uppsala University, Uppsala

**Abstract:** In 1934 Alva and Gunnar Myrdal wrote their manifesto for the transformation of agricultural Sweden into a modern nation, *Crisis in the Population Question* (in Swedish). Within the few next years there was a feverish governmental investigation activity in which the couple was involved and reforms implemented. In *Nation and family*, written from a distance in United States of America, she evaluates the investigations, the reforms and some of their immediate results. She writes in this book on modernisation in a way that makes widely divergent elements merge describing how population policies are reshaping bases for marrying, homemaking and childbearing. She is still influenced by the 1930's where very few children were born, a tendency prevalent in many countries today in 2009. She even speaks about the ageing society: "the most obvious effect of population decline /.../ is the change in age composition of the people, the ageing of society" (p.86). (The book is published two years before the general baby boom of 1943-1948.) She writes about the transitional family ideology "that it was the duty of the husband to support the family" and she argues for a family in which both husband and wife are working on the labour market, the argument being that only such a family could stimulate women to have children in an industrialized modern society. In many ways mikro and macro levels are brought together in Alva Myrdal's analysis, making its thoughts relevant for today's reflections on the post-1989 transformation processes.

**V) Title of Selected Paper:** Gunnar Myrdal’s Relevance for Post-1989-transformations

**Name/s of Author/s:** Sven Eliaeson

**University/Organization incl. City:** Uppsala University, Uppsala

**Abstract:** Gunnar Myrdal (1898-1987) pursued parallel careers as a scholar and a public servant on three continents.

Myrdal as a sociologist is “made in the USA”. His methodological tools from *An American Dilemma* (1944), such as vicious and virtuous circles, explicit value premises, cumulative causation, etc, reappear also in *Asian Drama* (1967), and have considerable relevance for the study of transformation processes, possibly also for policy formation, how to overcome obstacles to economic growth.

He gathered considerable first hand experience about stimulating growth and international trade during his tenure as director of the UN’s ECE (Economic Commission for Europe) 1947-57.

Myrdal is relevant for the pan-European problem agenda in many ways, also the ageing society and the sustainability of the welfare state.

The notion of the “soft state” (Myrdal 1968) in underdeveloped countries applies also to newly independent states after *Die Wende* and the implosion of the Soviet empire.

As an institutionalist economist Myrdal belongs to the same anti-liberal tradition as Friedrich (Freddy) List and today Douglass North. The approach is still virulent.

#### **VI) Title of Selected Paper:** Site and Space: Heidegger and Globalization

**Name/s of Author/s:** Jon Wittrock

**University/Organization incl. City:** EUI, Florence

**Abstract:** This paper attempts to trace the political aspect of Heidegger’s understanding of globalization – or what he called, in accordance with the conventions of conservative German critics, a planetary development. In so doing, however, it adopts a classical, Aristotelian understanding of politics as pertaining, eminently, to human communities. Thereafter, it analyzes globalization in Heidegger’s terms as a set of processes entailing, ultimately, the consummation of nihilism. Hence, it asks: what does the consummation of nihilism entail for human communities? Importantly, I venture to show that Heidegger adopts a classical understanding of community, while simultaneously rejecting what he perceived to be the general tendency of Greek classical philosophy – e.g. Plato – towards fixation. Heidegger’s rejection of Plato, however, is historically situated. The classics remain relevant, but their relevance is ambiguous, and situated in relation to Heidegger’s own *Seynsgeschichte*, or “history of being”.

**Key words:** globalization, nihilism, site, space, empire

#### **VII) Title of Selected Paper:** Toward a New Sociology of Postmodern Societies: World

Crisis since 9.15.2008 and Sociological Challenge

**Name/s of Author/s:** Shoji Ishitsuka

**University/Organization incl. City:** Tokyo University of Information Sciences, Chiba

**Abstract:** I would like to provide all participants as well as contributors with a sociologically, socio-philosophically open-minded comprehensive perspective toward and insight into the presently evolving contemporary societies giving birth to the highly informatized cultural society, well based upon, though critically, sociological as well as socio-philosophical classics such as Hobbes, Locke, Comte, Hegel, Marx, Durkheim, Simmel, Max Weber, Lukacs,

Mannheim, Parsons, et al., with their modifications. On the other hand, in order to theorize our contemporaneity, characterized principally by the three postmodern situations, the everyday postmodern caused by highly dense informatization & consumerization, the intellectual postmodern represented by the Paris based postmodernism spreading so far until the domain of sociology, the works of Shoji Ishitsuka, Zygmunt Bauman, and Antonio Negri, and thirdly by the international postmodern situation caused by the fall of real socialism, we should refer to our contemporary social theorists, such as Elias, Luhmann, Habermas, Bourdieu, Goffmann, Scheff, Giddens, Wallerstein, Ishitsuka, Bauman, Negri, Bellah, Etzioni, Charles Taylor, et al.. In sum, I will deal with the topically postmodern as well as contemporary problematics such as feminism, ethnicity, and ecology ; desire, alterity, and nature : a pair of categorial investigation, such as communitarianism, multiculturalism, network and web communications, enlightening those newly emerging qualities and features which characterize postmodern societies in view of social philosophy and sociological theorizing. I earnestly hope to cristalize all participants' sociological imagination into a New Sociology of Postmodernity. Lastly, I will present the thesis that the fall of a set of modernities, the real socialism and the real capitalism, respectively since 11.9 1989 and since 9.15 2008, shall challenge, and require a renewal to, sociological thinking.