

REGULAR SESSION INFORMATION

Title of Session: The Significance of Classics to Understand Transformation Processes in the New Global Context

Name of Session Convener(s): *Sven Eliaeson*, Uppsala University and Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw; *Larissa Titarenko*, Belarus State University, Minsk

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Otreshko Natalia, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kiev

II) The Classics of Russian Sociology on Interethnic Problems

Svetlana A. Tatunts, Moscow State University

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Myrdalian and Popperian Light

Carl Marklund, Södertörn University

Session description:

Session is based on the assumption that both history and theoretical foundations are essential for the theoretical analysis of contemporary social processes, increasingly complicated under conditions of uncertainty, financial crisis, and misunderstandings between scholars from the “West and the rest” respectively.

We are curious about how works of classic authors may be useful for analyses of the contemporary world, including its different models of societal development, global processes of migration, terrorism, social inequality and military conflicts, civic culture and rule of law. There is increasingly one complex world system, still fragmented, with many path dependent cases.

We expect that the contributions in this session will analyze the classics from different vantage points. The variety of approaches will contribute to the understanding of the role of social science in a global world, which legacies are most appropriate to learn from, and whether some new theoretical narratives can be expected, in order to cope with globalism, cosmopolitanism, activism, and other -isms.

To mention one example: there is a growing phenomenon with a huge strata of the population not being meaningfully defined in relation to the forces of production, today scattered and un-organized but possibly with a potential for forming popular movements.

Until now contexts and experiences in sociology varied depending on sociological tradition or paradigm. It is questionable if any single approach would be effective in embracing interdependent global problems. Classic authors such as Parsons, Rokkan, Schumpeter, Max Weber and Sorokin may still be useful for elaborating a proper understanding of the current contexts and promoting renewal of social sciences.

Abstracts:*1) Interpretations of the Concept of “Subject”: From Classical Traditions to Postmodern Theories*

Otreshko Natalia, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kiev

The opportunity and ability to act, rationality and the autonomy of action in the social space can be defined as essential characteristics of the subject in the project of Western humanism. In classical sociology the subject was the author of his own programs and goals. The act of the activity was the subject's action which is directed toward the object.

Postmodern sociologists pay great attention to new interpretations of the concept of “subject”. The concept of the subject can be some alternative to the concept of personality or individual in the postmodern theories. The “subject” is the process of becoming; the “person” is the result of the socialization process. People become subjects in the process of socialization. But if the “personality” of classic conceptions was seen as a result of socialization, the “subject” never becomes truly

complete. In modern theories the consciousness of the subject is ordered internal world, which opposed to the objective reality of the external world. In postmodern theories the consciousness of the subject is the thin shell which hides chaos rash desires and impulses. This chaos can temporarily become an image of the personality as a specific individual by the power of internal will or by the influence of external social or cultural power.

The role of the internal practices of the “subject” who made him / herself is rising in postmodern conceptions of the new global world. “Subject” is not an existing reality of thinking. “Subject” is a specific technique of understanding one's identity, a way to oneself, which anyone can do, but only a few actually do. The subject is generated by the discourse of global power. At the same time the subject opposes to the influence of power. The subject has needs for subordination to the power. But at the same time the subject has needs for self-expression and the freedom of action. Power becomes vulnerable when the subject begins to recognize mechanisms of power influence.

II) *The Classics of Russian Sociology on Interethnic Problems*

Svetlana A. Tatunts, Moscow State University

The roots of modern ethnosociological research in Russia go back to M. Lomonosov, A. Radishchev, S. Remezov, V. Tatishchev, who analyzed problems of “narodnost” (national character) and “nation” in their works, understanding the Russian Empire as a multiethnic and multiconfessional entity. Pavel Pestel said as far back as the 1820s, that any political question in Russia is first of all an ethnic issue.

The paper is devoted to the analysis of the roots of modern Russian ethnosociology in the works of such outstanding researchers as A. Gradovsky, N. Danilevsky, M. Kovalevsky, P. Sorokin, S. Shirokogoroff, and attempts to highlight the role of ethnosociology in Russia today.

Gradovsky can be considered the first Russian scholar interested in the “national character” as a result of historical development of mankind, not of biology or race. He denied any superiority of one ethnic group over another and rejected the right of the Western world to spread its “universal” values to other nations. While Danilevsky in the 1860-s opposed the evolutionary model of history and proposed his “historical-cultural types” using biological and morphological metaphors to compare cultures (later developed into F. Graebner’s “Kulturkreise”), Kovalevsky, who can be regarded as the researcher of Russian ethnosociology, combined comparative analysis, sociological and ethnographic methods in his research on Slavonic and other ethnic groups. His findings concerning solidarity patterns within non-orthodox ethnic groups, based on empiric field studies within these groups in the Volga and Caucasus Region and in Turkestan, are of enormous value to Russian sociology to explain the nature of their social and economic relations and cultural identity. Kovalevsky’s follower Pitirim Sorokin strongly supported the national and cultural autonomy for ethnic groups and minorities in Russia and warned that a “one state - one nation” policy will eventually lead to Russia’s (that is to say the Soviet Union’s) collapse and disintegration. Smaller nations always need protection and resources and prefer to stay in bigger “empires”, said Sorokin. He

also criticized the “purity of race” concept, which has been misused for nationalism, ethnocentrism and racism in many countries. Shirokogoroff left us as a legacy his criteria for determining ethnic groups which he worked out based on their biological nature including endogamy.

This entire legacy fell into oblivion during the first Soviet decades, when many social problems and systemic transformations were based on ethnicity – and settled by ideology. Lenin considered autonomy in a nation state just as a principle of any nation’s democratic political system at a “certain” stage of capitalism to be replaced by the supernational “Soviet people”. Stalin in theory recognised the nations’ rights of cultural autonomy, self-determination and even segregation, but in practice his voluminous writings about ethnicity and minority issues were the main obstacle to the development of a modern ethnosociology in the world of dialectical materialism, where the leading party strongly encouraged internationalism instead of ethnic identity. Gorbachev’s ignorance of the importance of interethnic relations finally led to what Sorokin predicted almost a century ago. What can be learnt from the fatal 1990-s is that no socio-economic, political or cultural processes should be separated from ethnic issues and that ethnicity and ethnic group solidarity are powerful driving forces to overcome identity crises and to achieve political, economic and geopolitical goals.

III) Nation-building and Path Dependency: The Case of Max Weber

Sven Eliaeson, Uppsala University and Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw

The interpretation of social science classics calls for a more contextualist procedure, approaching the classic authors on their home turf, rather than merely exploring their utility for our present day disciplinary identity crises.

In the case of Weber he took part in German nation-building and his context could be characterized as *deutscher Sonderweg*. This is an opaque concept with many connotations and denotations. It was launched by H-U Wehler in his work on Bismarck. However, several authors have touched upon the concept before it was formulated, only to mention Veblen, Plessner, Sheehan, Barkin and Stern.

Any conception of a peculiar historical route somehow assumes the existence of a normal route from which the special case deviates. This nomothetic bias would call for a different formulation of the concept, which however seems reasonable to connect with, for reasons of “discursive cumulativity” (the concept exists already). Most political cultures conceive of their own path as special, only to mention American exceptionalism and the so called Swedish model.

German *Sonderweg* could refer to the following – partly – overlapping – elements:

1. Culture vs Civilization: Germany as a third way between Western civilization and Russian Barbarianism. “Reification” of the concept of culture involved. Germany defined itself as “other” in relation to French and British Enlightenment rationalism, with its anarchy and individualism and calculated self-interest.
2. Delayed nation-building (Plessner), because of 1648 and 1806. Richelieu and Napoleon (Nipperdey) appear as momentous figures, and in particular Napoleon has an ambiguous

role, in simultaneously destroying the representational infrastructure, stimulating German patriotism, and initiating liberal constitutionalism. The Germans were left in a bad position having to start their nation-building from scratch, no basis for successfully pouring new wine in old bottles.

3. Anti-Enlightenment Romanticism, with historicism as a nation building movement (“historical school”) with some irrational romantic elements, appearing as a tacit dimension in Methodenstreit.

4. Il-liberalism. The unhappy experience of Paulskirche in Frankfurt am Main back in 1848. The intellectuals who did not leave for the USA and other places accommodated with the Bismarckian route to Modernity. Rational calculus of utilitarian kind is not well attuned to German state idealism, which is also reflected on the scholarly level, for instance Friedrich (Freddy) List’s “anti-British” or “early institutionalist” political economy.

5. Rapid industrialization without a matching development of political maturity, creating an apolitical bourgeoisie with weak constitutional ambitions. A lot of ink has been spilled on this topic, but Veblen’s Imperial Germany is a main classic.

6. The legacy of Bismarck: a) His “three stage rocket” to limited national unity, 1864, 1866 and 1870-71, so called kleindeutsche Lösung, and b) the power vacuum ensuing his sudden retirement in the early 1890s, so explicit in Weber’s work 1895 and 1917-19.

c) apolitical Bildungsbürgertum. But it would be highly exaggerated to invoke Der Hauptmann from Köpenick as a manifestation of Prussian “virtues”, since Wilhelmine Germany was a pluralist and open society, after all (Randall Collins; Göran Therborn).

7. Role of LIMES, still the main cultural divide in Germany; high explanatory “clout”.

8. German “big brother-little brother”-complex vis-à-vis the British. Partly hidden admiration turns into almost hatred 1915 (Händler und Helden). Clear ambiguity in German way of relating to the British, also reflected in Weber’s case. The Webers traveled the UK and this is not much reflected in Marianne Weber’s biography, while Guenther Roth in recent works makes a whole lot of it, for instance “kosmopolitanisches Bürgertum”; Weber’s global extended family as a manifestation of inherent multi-ethnicity in capitalism.

And(above does not exhaust the topic, there might be more points that deserves to be listed).

Weber for instance dedicates a lot of space in GPS to German regionalism and the lack of correspondence between power and accountability in the constitution of the German Bund. This is hard stuff to digest for foreign student consumers; yet crucial parts of Weber’s constitutional writings.

All these elements affect Weber and are important if we wish to bring about the best possible interpretation. That would require more empathy for a context lost and gone forever than one can realistically accomplish, yet we have to try, in order to avoid the presentist or retrospectivist myths and fallacies which Quentin Skinner warns against in a number of essays from the mid-1960s. Some presentist element seems to be indispensable and we have in reality a meeting between past and present. It does not quite make sense to suggest that a classic author contributed to something he was unaware of, yet one cannot exclude that actually being the case either. Most scholars write in a

tradition and are standing on the shoulders of forerunners. The present day vantage point is not predictable and our concerns for retrieval may vary.

IV) Organized Hypocrisy – Disorganized Technocracy: The Utopian Vision of the Open Society in Myrdalian and Popperian Light

Carl Marklund, Södertörn University

Today, it is widely assumed that a power shift has taken place over the past few decades – a shift away from politics and in favour of the market. According to this view, “neo-liberalism” has since the 1970s and onwards reduced the scope of “the political” further, limiting the exercise of public power in general and planning in particular. Despite this assumed retreat of politics, politics is still, at least medially and rhetorically, tasked with providing some guidance for the future, based in scientific evidence, and to generate tangible results in a logic of input and output legitimacy (Scharpf 1999).

However, politics is not supposed to make explicit use “planning” to achieve these ends. Indeed, it is often faulted on account of its inability to achieve the desired ends, further confirming the incapacity of politics. Instead, accountability, auditing, and transparency are increasingly tasked with the roles once ascribed to planning in democratizing and effectivizing politics, thereby generating an intriguing paradox: On the one hand, the demand for accountability of politics in controlling the present has increased while the belief in the capacity of politics (and science) to control the future has decreased on the other. Public power is still held accountable *as if* it possessed the power which is by now to have been lost. Political control is still to achieve results *as if* it would be possible to exercise public power without the use of planning, raising the question: Why do we expect *more* from politics at a time when it is supposedly able to do *less*?

This paper proposes that this ultimately ontological conundrum – which could be seen as an organized form of hypocrisy (openness) coexisting with an increasingly disorganized form of technocracy (transparency), to paraphrase Nils Brunsson (2002) – can be analyzed by confronting Karl Popper’s (1945) concept of “open society” with Gunnar Myrdal’s (1944) notion of “constructive social engineering” generated in the context of pitted conflict between laissez-faire liberalism, totalitarianism, and democratic socialism of the 1930s and 1940s which in some ways resemble the contemporary contest between neoliberalism, progressivism, and traditionalist backlash but also provide some instructive contrast.

While Popper’s open society rests upon a paradoxical combination of institutionalized distrust which is to check the proceedings in the experimental laboratory that is the open society and the belief in accumulated scientific knowledge, Myrdal’s notion of social engineering is grounded in a basic acknowledgement that every form of social, political or economic organization (including laissez faire liberalism) has social effects and that these effects should be valued with regard to

whether they correlate to or contradict widely held and commonly accepted values. The paper argues that while both these positions are equally utopian, both can substantially inform the critical analysis of contemporary “post-political governance”, “neoliberal hegemony”, and “open government” which at present tends to evade positive judgement.