

DEBATE ON INTERNATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

Another Sociological Utopia

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These volumes put together the results of the conference of the International Sociological Association (ISA) held at Taipei in 2008, co-sponsored by the Taiwanese Sociological Association and the Academia Sinica. It was convened at the initiative of the ISA Vice-President at that time, and present ISA President Michael Burawoy. There were 60 participants from 43 countries, and the volumes include 53 articles they presented in the course of three day proceedings.

The structure of this set strikes one as strange for books about sociology: the only visible criterion is geographic. We have parts titled "Latin America," "Africa," "Western Asia," "Asia Pacific," "Western, Northern and Southern Europe," "Eastern and Central Europe." Within these long parts the order of chapters seems entirely haphazard, with no thematic arrangement. Even within geography there are some strange omissions. In Western Europe we do not find Germany, the cradle of classical sociology, nor Italy, Sweden or Norway. But even more amazing is the omission of North America. And this is strange in a book about "global sociology," given the undoubted strength of sociology in the United States and Canada. Yes, there is the American Michael Burawoy, but he offers only an introductory, editorial chapter (Vol. I, pp. 3–27), and treats three pages of "concluding reflections" by Jan Marie Fritz, another American (Vol. III, pp. 279–282), as representative of American sociology. The recognition of all continents excluding North America suggests that there exists in the world an inter-continental coalition of sociologists ignoring or rejecting American sociology and developing alternative methods, concepts, models and theories—not only

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different, but fundamentally better. A paradigm shift, a true revolution is supposed to be in the making—if not in the global society, at least in sociology.

This impression is fully confirmed by the content of almost 1,000 pages of conference proceedings. This is the most extensive elaboration and summary of the ideology which has pervaded the International Sociological Association (ISA) for quite a long time and now has found its most inspired and persuasive champion in Michael Burawoy. The ideology comes down to three evaluative and normative judgements. First, sociology in the world is dominated by Western (North American and European, or in short "Euroamerican") sociology, which in itself is bad for the discipline. Second, there are some alternative, indigenous sociologies outside of the United States and Europe, which are highly valuable, and suppressed or entirely excluded by the American and European hegemony. And third, the normative imperative derived from these two claims is the struggle for global sociology, which would safeguard

the egalitarian representation of many sociologies actually existing in the world today, achieving a balanced unity of the discipline and eliminating presumed biases of American and European sociologists.

I have opposed this ideology during years of my tenure in several ISA duties. Running for ISA President in 2002 I used a very politically incorrect slogan "Excellence rather than balance," and in spite of that was elected for a four-year term (2002–2006) at the World Congress at Brisbane. In the *ISA Handbook of Diverse Sociological Traditions* (2010) I argued that there is, and can be, only one sociology studying many social worlds. Now the three volumes reviewed give me an opportunity to enter a more analytic discussion and to elucidate my position. Let us consider each of the three claims in turn.

Bad because Western?

The inequality of the world mentioned in the title of the books reviewed is grasped by means of four oppositions appearing and re-appearing at various pages: North-South, West-East, developed-underdeveloped and metropolis (center)-periphery. The charge of American and European domination along each of these axes is repeated in almost all articles. As far as this refers to economic resources, political influence, military might, civilizational level, technological innovativeness, and cultural production, it is obvious that the world is not equal and that in many of these domains the West is still prevailing (for how long in the future is another matter). The effort to alleviate the resulting injustices and inequalities and to emancipate those regions or countries denied and excluded from prosperity, freedom and other benefits of modernity is noble and fully commendable. But it would be megalomaniacal to believe that this huge humanistic aspiration could be achieved by sociologists, mostly the "powerless elite."

Therefore, quite properly these volumes are more humble; they are about internal inequality and domination in the discipline of sociology, treated as a reflection of those more fundamental external divisions in our globalized society. The authors are not contributing to the sociology of underdevelopment but rather to a sub-discipline known

as the sociology of sociology, which sometimes evokes the image of a snake eating its own tail. I wonder how much intellectual energy is lost on all these "trend reports" dealing with developments of sociology in various countries, with names of research institutions, topics of grants, titles of exotic journals and names of rather unknown researchers, about whom nobody cares. These are some exemplars of this *genre* in the volumes reviewed: Janusz Mucha on Eastern Europe (Vol. III, pp. 187–206), Maukuei Chang and others on Taiwan (Vol. II, pp. 158–191) Fahad Al-Naser on Kuwait (Vol. II, pp. 132–138), Charles Crothers on New Zealand (Vol. II, pp. 228–243), Mokong Simon Mapadimeng on South Africa (Vol. I, pp. 213–221). But the bulk of contributions is different, provoking even more fundamental reservations.

The authors turn the sociology of sociology into an ideological exercise, unashamedly abandoning description or explanation for the sake of purely ideological, evaluative or normative language. The ingenuity of labels is indeed impressive: academic dependency, intellectual imperialism, U.S. imperialism, colonization of sociology, intellectual colonialism, metropolitan domination, metropolitan theory, Western hegemony, North hegemony, Northern perspective disguised as universalism, mainstream U.S. and European sociology's imposition of European concepts and theories, exclusion of the South, exclusion of the East, English language domination, Eurocentrism and even "Westoxication," a truly innovative addition to the slang of anti-oxidentalism.

Chaos and misunderstandings are produced by such language, when used expressively to convey emotions rather than clear meaning. To introduce some order we must distinguish the two levels at which such labels are applied: institutional and intellectual. It is obvious that at the level of institutions, organizations and community of sociologists, "we are deeply enmeshed in global inequalities, tied to the unequal distribution of material resources (income, research funds, teaching obligations, working conditions), social capital (professional networks, patronage) and cultural capital (educational credentials, university prestige, language facility, publications)" (Burawoy

Vol. I, p. 6). As a Polish sociologist I would be the last to deny these sorts of inequalities; during my first visiting professorship in the United States, in the early 1980s my American salary was almost fifty (yes, 50) times higher than that received at home. One private measure of the success of post-communist transformation in my country is that now I earn only five times less than my American colleagues. But first of all in this regard there is nothing specific about sociology. All branches of science, including natural or technical sciences are unequally endowed across the world; the particle accelerators, laboratories experimenting with the human genome, and radio-telescopes observing black holes are to be found only in some countries. And second, such inequalities are the direct result of those fundamental economic, political, military and other differences between countries, mentioned earlier. We may dream of more just distribution of resources across the world, but as Syed Farid Alatas recognizes "we as scholars cannot do much at the structural or material level of academic dependency as we are neither in charge of institutions nor the state" (Vol. II, p. 139). The concern is legitimate, we may lament and condemn the situation, but in most cases it is not for us to improve it.

But the accusations of hegemony, imperialism, colonization, and dependency are also phrased at the epistemological level, they refer to the content of sociological knowledge (theories, models) and the character of sociological methods. Here we come to the crux of the matter and a truly contestable terrain. This is a hard historical truth that sociology, like many other things, good or bad, was born in Europe in the nineteenth century, proposed as a new discipline by bearded white males, mostly of Jewish origins, living in Germany, France and Britain. Then it had its second birth in the United States, at the turn of century. European and American roots shaped the canon, or if you will, the paradigm of the discipline which has proven immensely fertile and within which, with a number of correctives and extensions, we still operate. It is this intellectual strength of the European and American masters, and not their supposed imperialist ambitions or academic marketing that resulted in the adoption of the canon in all

parts of the world, wherever sociology set foot. Of course the canon is internally pluralistic, with a number of competing models, theories, methodological orientations, and research procedures. The critical evaluation of each is needed and welcome, as the central demand of the ethos of science. This is the meaning of "critical sociology" given to this notion in the four-fold typology of Michael Burawoy, along with "professional sociology," "policy sociology" and "public sociology" (Vol I. pp.15–24, and several earlier statements, e.g., *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 56(2) pp. 259–294). Alas, in the volume reviewed we do not find a trace of "critical sociology," substantive arguments directed at this or that theory, this or that method. Indeed, we do not find a trace of the other three "sociologies." Instead, we find an outburst of discourse which I would call "ideological sociology," and which even Burawoy would probably not admit as a fifth type of "sociology."

Many contributing authors seem to believe that simply because the mainstream sociological methods and theories have been proposed and developed into a canon in Europe and the United States, that core of capitalism and imperialism, they are marked by this sin of origins, and their expansion in other continents occurred "at the barrel of a gun," as imposition and usurpation, parallel with colonialism or at least neo-colonialism. Perhaps there would be a grain of reason in this argument if it referred to the Christian religion and forced evangelization. But sociology, at least to some extent is a science and not a religion; it is a search for truth and not a proclamation of faith, it attempts to find the regularities, mechanisms, modes of operation and change in social life. Wise with the lessons of the anti-positivist turn, we still cannot deny that in some measure, at some level sociology is similar to natural sciences. Is anybody offended in Ecuador, Bangladesh or Taiwan by the fact that quantum physics was born in Copenhagen, Heidelberg or Berkeley, or that our human genome was reconstructed in California? Is anybody doubting that gravitation works in Africa in spite of the fact that it was discovered in Britain? Why should the universalism of science be replaced by extreme relativism in sociology? Yes, the concrete empirical

circumstances of social life differ in various parts of the world, as well as in various "social worlds" present within each continent, region or country. But the regularities and mechanisms of human conduct, interpersonal relations, formation of groups, establishment of rules, operation of power, and emerging of inequalities are the same—universal. Claude Levi-Strauss travelled to the Amazonian jungle seeking exotic differences, and what he found, as he admits in *Tristesse Tropiques* (1955), was a human being. With all its weaknesses and lacunae, the canon of sociological knowledge tells us important things about human beings, men and women, whether they live in Paris, Dakar, Quito or Kyoto.

Better because indigenous?

Of course social knowledge, like all knowledge, is incomplete, tentative and approximate. The progress of sociology, like any other science, is a never-ending process of accumulation of observations, concepts, hypotheses, models, and theories. There is no reason why the pool of sociological understanding and the tool-box of sociological trade should be enriched only in the traditional European or American centers, Western universities, or research institutes. New serendipities, hunches, points of view, approaches, may derive from the experiences of multiple non-Western societies. And indeed they do, with sociology now practiced in more than 140 countries. The contributions coming from such sources expand and complement existing knowledge and the methodological arsenal. Many sociologists from the so-called "second" or "third" world, or in ISA parlance "B" or "C" countries, enter the normal channels of visibility in the discipline: congresses, conferences, journals, publishing houses, teaching assignments. They are more than welcome, not because of where they come from, but because they bring precious goods. I would call it "the weak program of global sociology." And I would be the first in praise if the authors of these volumes reviewed were doing what others, and sometimes they themselves do, for example, in ISA journals: *International Sociology*, *Current Sociology*, the Sage series in international sociology, as

well as all other academic platforms widely available to the sociological community. Namely, if they reported on fascinating empirical research, theoretical discoveries, or methodological inventions, adding in this way to the pool of sociological wisdom. Or if they faced head on with available sociological tools this fascinating list of pressing social problems articulated at the beginning of the Taipei conference by the Nobel laureate in chemistry Yuan-Tseh Lee: population explosion, natural resource depletion, environmental destruction, climate change, civilizational diseases, the gap between rich and poor, illiteracy, unemployment, unsustainable development (Vol. I, pp. 28–34). Many sociologists, by no means limited to the European or American academics, contribute to the diagnosis, explanation and policy recommendations on such and similar issues.

But most authors in these volumes under review do not contribute in this way, even if many of them are known to do important sociological research with the tools of "mainstream sociology" in India, Brazil, South Africa, Israel, and other countries beyond the purview of the accused West. Instead of such substantive contributions we have several dozen ideological manifestos preaching for some elusive "alternative sociology," or "indigenous sociologies" to replace, rather than complement, the oppressive, imperialist canon. They are all singing the radical, revolutionary song under Burawoy's baton. They put forward what I would call "a strong program of global sociology." One of its champions postulates: "non-Western knowledge traditions and cultural practices should all be considered potential sources of social science theories and concepts, which would decrease academic dependence on the world social science powers" (Alatas, Vol. II, p. 139). And the guru himself sketches the revolutionary path: "Challenging the universalism of Western sociology is a two-step project: first, to show that they do not reflect the experiences of subjugated populations and then, to demonstrate that there are alternative theories that have been ignored or suppressed by metropolitan sociology" (Burawoy, Vol. I, p. 11).

As to the first step in this project, I have to admit that I simply do not understand what

is at stake. Is the recent book on global warming by Lord (*horribile dictu*) Anthony Giddens (2009) not reflecting the experience of Bangladesh, or Seychelles Islands threatened by the rising level of oceans? Is the theory of stigmatization by Erving Goffman irrelevant for understanding remnants of the caste system in India? Is not the study of poverty and homelessness in Warsaw, the capital of Poland, or in Chicago, or in Paris reflecting the experience of poor and homeless people, wherever they happen to live? Sociological research, as long as it is worthy of the label of science, reflects universal human worries, predicaments and social issues, providing generalized knowledge to diagnose, explain, predict, and hopefully eradicate them, wherever they occur. Thus I do not see any meaning in Burawoy's first step. Maybe it is just ideological rhetoric and revolutionary fervor?

But the crux is the second step: finding "alternative theories" to "metropolitan sociology." Ever since Akinsolo Akiwowo made a call for "indigenous African sociology" (1986) I have been puzzled by such claims and searched for possible examples of those alternative, indigenous sociologies. Akiwowo did not provide one, and because he based his conclusions in the area of the sociology of knowledge on the empirical evidence of African oral poetry does not indicate any alternative sociology, but new original data to support (or undermine, as the case might be) the "mainstream" sociology of knowledge of Marx and Mannheim. This fits in the "weak program" which I accept, but I remain in search of examples of the "strong program," the true alternatives. As an ardent subscriber to *International Sociology* I have hoped to find some there. But most often I have found normal sociological methods (surveys, questionnaires, case studies, content analysis, participant observation, statistical measures and indicators) applied to the context of non-Western societies, and supporting (or falsifying) standard sociological theories (functionalism, Marxism, symbolic interactionism, phenomenology). Thus I put my last hopes in the three volumes by Burawoy et al. What a disappointment; again I have not found a single, convincing case of new original indigenous theory, or new original indigenous method. What I

found was a statement by one of the strongest advocates of "indigenization," apparently cutting down the trunk of the tree on which he sits: "The problem with most writings on these issues is that there is little work that goes about creating alternative theories and concepts, while there is a great deal of discussion on the need for such alternatives" (Alatas in Vol. II, p. 144). How true, and how aptly it describes the tone and message of all three volumes. Alas, Alatas attempts to provide some concrete examples. And what do we get? The observation that in "Asian communication studies, the Chinese, Japanese and Korean scholars have been looking at indigenous concepts" (p. 147) such as "bao," which in Chinese means reciprocity, or "bian" which means change, or "guanxi," which means network of interrelations, or "ke qi," which means politeness. But these concepts are simply the equivalents in the Chinese language of well known, "mainstream" sociological ideas: reciprocity, change, interrelations, politeness. Is the "indigenous sociology" any sociology written in another language than English? Is my book on trust published in Chinese (2006), written by a Pole, and first published at Cambridge (1999) a contribution to indigenous Polish, British, or Chinese sociology? I still have to find a true example of indigenous, alternative sociology.

But before I do, let me theorize a bit on this issue. "Indigenous" may mean many things: first, everything non-Western (neither European nor American); second, limited to one civilization; third, limited to one region; fourth, limited to one nation-state—this currently is the most common frame within which social life is lived. Let us stay with the last sense. Burawoy himself legitimizes such a choice: "The building block of that [global] mosaic is the national sociology, for the nation has always been sociology's basic unit of analysis as well as defining the parameters of its field of action" (Vol. I, p. 4). In a number of recent statements Ulrich Beck (2006) criticizes "container theory" based on the assumption of "methodological nationalism." But the idea that social life is lived within separate containers marked by the border of nation-states is still very much with us, as witnessed not only by the statement quoted, but by the table of contents of

the volumes reviewed. Just look at Volume Two on Asia, and the chapter titles. We find "Bangladesh sociology," "Indian sociology," "Turkish sociology," "Kuwait sociology," "Armenian sociology," "Azerbaijani sociology." Thus "sociologies" in the plural are clearly believed to be demarcated along the borders of nation-states.

But what could it possibly mean that there are indigenous national sociologies (in the plural)? Let me use a name of an imagined kingdom of "Lailonia," devised for similar purpose by a Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski (1989). What could be meant by Lailonian sociology? The first meaning is trivial: sociology in Lailonia, studied and cultivated at Lailonian universities and research institutes. This is the favorite topic of boring "trend reports." At this institutional and organizational level there are not many national characteristics, for due to globalization the structures of academic centres are very similar the world over. Second, it could mean sociology written and published in Lailonian. But of course if it is only a question of language, there is nothing indigenous. Translated into other languages it is the same sociology. Here we encounter this pseudo-issue of the "imperialism" of the English language. Instead of rejoicing that now, again due to globalization, we can learn only one foreign language to have access to the worldwide academic community, including all important books ever written, some people would like to re-build the tower of Babel, and reject English as a tool of domination, oppression, exclusion, and God knows how many other sins. The quicker that sociologists from Lailonia write and publish in English, the better for them, and the better for sociology. The third meaning is sociology by Lailonians, the natives of this kingdom. But the academic community has been quite mobile since the medieval time, and now due to globalization sociologists are constantly on the move, relocating themselves to foreign countries either permanently or temporarily, and their nationality is not an important marker of their work. The deeper argument for indigenous sociology in this sense may refer to the doctrine of "insiderism," convincingly rejected already by Robert K. Merton (1972), who points out that social reality need not be understood only from within.

"Outsiderism" may be a fruitful option. After all it was the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville who wrote an unsurpassed study of American democracy, or the Swede Gunnar Myrdal who understood the American racial dilemma better than the Americans. The fourth meaning is sociology about Lailonia. This is trivial observation that most sociologists draw the personal experience and empirical evidence from their own country. But if they remain sociologists about Lailonia only, they are no longer sociologists. As long as their knowledge remains nation-bound and provides information about just their own society, it is either area studies, or national statistics, but in my understanding not sociology. It is only when sociologists generalize on the basis of local data, supporting claims about universal regularities and mechanisms of social life, that we can speak of their contribution to sociology. Theories of society and methods of sociological research are never indigenous, even though they are built on the foundation of local facts and experiences. The most welcome contribution by sociologists from outside Europe or America is to provide evidence, heuristic hunches, ingenious, locally inspired models and hypotheses about regularities to add to the pool of sociological knowledge which is universal, as verifications, falsifications, or extensions. But this is all within the "weak program of global sociology," which I fully support.

The fifth meaning is sociology with Lailonian agenda, addressing specific sociological problems typical for Lailonia. Obviously each country is different in this respect. Differences of economic advancement, political regime, cultural legacies, historical experiences make certain sociological questions more salient than others. What is a significant question for Nigeria may not be significant for the Netherlands. Some questions become pressing, others fade away. But they are never entirely unique, *sui generis*, and the way to approach them is not to build a new "indigenous" theory or method for each of them, but rather treat the local particularities as a conducive strategic research ground, a sort of laboratory for applying the standard tool-box of sociology, or resolving perennial problems of social structure, social change, the role of human agency, in short

contributing to the universal theories about the regularities and mechanisms of social life. The sixth meaning of sociology for Lai-lonia is indigenously, oriented toward local, specific social problems in an effort to alleviate or resolve them by means of social reform. This is Burawoy's "policy sociology," and in more traditional terms, applied sociology. There is a fundamental truth of scientific logic that no practical directives follow from facts or data only. The facts and data must be put within the context of some theory, whether explicit or implicit. Only then will they play a role of initial conditions, together with theoretical statements of regularities or mechanisms implying predictions and directives. For example, in medicine no therapy follows from mere measurement of the patient's temperature, or even the most sophisticated MRI scan. Those diagnostic facts must be linked with the theories of various diseases and bodily mechanisms, to suggest an effective therapy. The same is true of applied sociology. As long as it is scientific, it has to draw from the pool of universal theories of society, rather than devising an ad hoc "indigenous" theory. Imagine what would happen to patients if medical doctors were constructing different theories of anatomy and physiology in each hospital. Thus applied sociologists must take into account the existing canon of sociology. If they do not do it in an explicit way, if their recommendations are not based on existing theories, they are not involved in policy sociology, but at most in intuitive politics.

The same arguments may be applied if by "indigenous" one means not national, but regional, continental, or civilizationally specific "sociologies." There are many social worlds, demarcated in various ways, but there are not and cannot be many sociologies. There may be an incomplete globalization of society, as many authors argue in *Facing an Unequal World*, but I claim that globalization of sociology is complete, at least if it is considered a science. Science is the domain which is global (universal) by definition. It was global long before the globalization of human society started, in fact from its inception because it searches for universal truth: regularities and mechanisms of reality. Copernicus and Kepler were contributing

to globalized (universal) astronomy, Newton and Faraday to globalized (universal) physics. In a similar way sociology has always legitimized its claim to scientific status by aspiring to unravel the universal laws of human society. The call for alternative, indigenous sociologies is a version of anti-scientific obscurantism. There are many different societies, but one sociology; one social science for many diverse social worlds.

The dream of global sociology

The third leg on which the ideology of the three volumes rests is the call for global sociology understood as an egalitarian partnership of many indigenous sociologies across the world. Global sociology cannot be created from above by the imposition of European and American ("Northern") ideas and methods. Rather, the claim goes on, it must be built from below, through resistance to this "mainstream sociology" by non-Western indigenous sociologies, joining the effort to build an "alternative sociology"—a revolutionary project indeed.

Having been exposed in my student days to Marxism-Leninism, some echoes of that doctrine and its logic inevitably come to mind. Just see the examples. Burawoy's Thesis One: sociology does not have its own object, it has its specific standpoint, the standpoint of civil society from which only it can study the market and the state, and unmask "the expansion of these institutions that threaten civil society and thus, not only sociology but also humanity's capacity to protect itself against, for example, the degradation of the environment and labor" (Vol. I, p. 25). Is not that the echo of the Marxist "perspectivistic" sociology of knowledge, where only the standpoint of the proletariat unravels the truth of exploitation and provides the defense against capitalism? Thesis Two: "As markets become global so sociology aspires to become global, too, contributing to a global civil society, knitting together communities, organizations and movements across national boundaries" (Vol. I, p. 25). Sociologists of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your academic status! A paraphrase of the famous sentence closing the first paragraph of the Communist Manifesto? Thesis Three: "If sociology can be constituted as a collective actor, can it also reach beyond a trade union

defensiveness, important enough that it is, to embrace wider interests and global awareness?" (Vol. I, p. 26). Oh yes, proletarians should replace their narrow trade-union mentality and achieve true class consciousness, as Lenin or Lukacs would put it.

Out of utopia

There is nothing wrong with such parallels. Inspiration may come from various sources, serendipities may occur studying all kinds of books. The real problem with the ideology of the three volumes is that this "strong (revolutionary) program for global sociology" is built on three assumptions which I find erroneous.

The first error is to dream of the egalitarianism of the domain which by its very nature is elitist, namely the domain of science. We know perfectly well, even if we believe that it is politically correct to deny it, that there are great scholars, good scholars, mediocre scholars, bad scholars, and people pretending to be scholars. We know that there are great universities, mediocre universities, bad universities and universities by name only. And similarly we know that there are leading countries where science flourishes, others where the achievements are secondary and derivative rather than original, and still others where science is marginal or there is no science at all. This also applies to sociology, sociologists, sociological research institutions, and countries where sociology is practiced. To repeat my slogan: "excellence rather than balance."

The second error is drawing wrong conclusions from diversity and relativism. Societies are diversified: social conditions, contexts, environments differ, sometimes radically. But this does not mean that there must be many sociologies, producing knowledge relative to each local, particular context. Regularities and mechanisms of functioning and change in various societies are the same. The local conditions provide a testing ground, correcting, modifying or enhancing the universal sociological knowledge. Hence we have the great importance of comparative sociology, stressed from August Comte to Alex Inkeles and Masamichi Sasaki (1996). But not for producing multiple indigenous sociologies, each about each separate society. To repeat: there is one sociology for many social worlds.

The third error is mixing up two distinct phases of scientific inquiry: the heuristic phase and the phase of justification and proof. Inspiration for empirical research or theory-building may come from all sorts of sources. The legend speaks of Newton hit on the head by a falling apple and discovering the law of gravitation. In sociology important inspiration comes from the personal experience of sociologists as members of a particular society, at a particular historical time. At the level of heuristics great sociologies are often autobiographies of their authors. We are all deeply embedded in our national loyalties, cultural values, religious faith, stereotypes, prejudices, ideologies. In fact, the more strongly embedded the better. Because our particular, local or provincial or marginal circumstances, may suggest agendas of problems to be resolved, imply possible hypotheses and prophecies. But once we enter the domain of justification and proof, we have to turn hunches into empirically confirmed facts, hypotheses into theoretical explanations, prophecies into grounded predictions. All this we achieve by reaching out for the universal methodological tool-box of sociology, and the pluralistic archive of sociological theories, taking from them what is needed to justify and test our claims to true knowledge about society. We can be quite particularistic in our inspirations and heuristic hunches. But we have to strive for universalistic knowledge, by applying universalistic standards and criteria of sociological method. One of the fathers of our discipline, one of those sarcastically referred to as "so-called classics" (Vol. I, p. 13), put it clearly: "It has been and remains true that a systematically correct scientific proof in the social sciences, if it is to achieve its purpose, must be acknowledged as correct even by a Chinese—or more precisely stated—it must constantly strive to attain this goal, which perhaps may not be completely attainable due to faulty data" (Max Weber 1949: 58). Instead of rejecting "so-called classics" (Vol. I, p. 13) as an antidote to the misguided project of global sociology and indigenous sociologies, I would suggest reading them, and particularly Max Weber's *Methodology of the Social Sciences* (American edition 1949), and Emile Durkheim's *The Rules of Sociological Method* (American edition 1964). There is no

obligation to read them in English, one can easily escape “linguistic imperialism,” as they are available in most languages.

The “strong program for global sociology” presented in the three volumes reviewed is a new sociological utopia. Even inspired by good intentions, it has to be rejected. It is not attainable for the principal reasons put forward in this review. It is like the proverbial search for a black dog in a dark room, when the dog is not there. The only lucid and reasonable approach is what I call the “weak program for global sociology,” a consistent attempt to learn from inspirations coming from all countries, all diverse societies, cultures and civilizations, and to draw sociologists from countries of weaker sociological traditions to the world-wide orbit of accepted and proven universal canon of methods and theories. These experiences and such contributions may be most valuable in testing, improving, correcting and extending the canon, rather than rejecting it on misguided ideological grounds.

The “weak program” has been and is realized, and the International Sociological Association, sponsor of these three volumes, had a big role to play. Surprisingly enough in the closing chapter of the last volume Arturo Rodríguez-Morató, a former Vice-President of ISA for research, refuses to be swallowed by the revolutionary zeal of the editors and earlier contributions and presents a report of what ISA has been doing, what it has achieved and what measures it plans to take to implement the “weak program.” Perhaps it was worthwhile to swim through those 1,000

earlier pages to reach that island of sanity. And yet, I wouldn’t recommend the effort to readers. The radicalism of the three volumes does a bad service to emerging sociologies in sociologically less developed countries, as it pushes the scholars there to write ideological manifestos and focus on the futile attempts to invent “alternative sociologies,” instead of doing normal sociology and thus contributing their local, particular experiences and inspirations to the world-wide, universal pool of sociological wisdom.

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The Last Positivist

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Who now reads Comte? As the putative founder of positivism Auguste Comte claimed that all knowledge moves through three stages – from the theological to the metaphysical to the positive. The positive stage is the search for laws and regularities which allow humans to govern first nature and then society. The “simplest” sciences

¹ For their comments I would like to thank Maukuei Chang and Michelle Fei-yu Hsieh. They were the coeditors of the three volumes of *Facing an Unequal World*, and the meticulous organizers of a most exciting and productive conference. The audio and video recordings of the panels as well as the published papers can all be found at <http://www.ios.sinica.edu.tw/cna/index.php>

emerged first – astronomy, physics, chemistry and physiology – and the last to emerge was the most complex science of all, social physics, or what he called sociology, which would then become the queen of the sciences. Thus spoke Comte.

Piotr Sztompka's review of *Facing an Unequal World: Challenges for a Global Sociology* courageously resurrects Comte's nineteenth century vision of science—the idea of a singular universal sociology, modeled on the natural sciences, that, so Sztompka claims, has now become global. For Sztompka, anything less than “universal laws of human society” is retrograde, a manifestation of “anti-scientific obscurantism”—a return to the metaphysics of the dark ages. Comtean to the core, he proclaims sociology to be a science that “by its very nature is elitist,” pioneered by a few “great scholars,” working in “great universities.”

Scientific thinking, however, has moved on since Comte. The conception of science at the inception of sociology, struggling for recognition and legitimacy, is very different from its conception, once sociology is established. More generally, the last two centuries have witnessed great transformations in the practice and self-understanding not only of sociology but also of science itself. In clinging to nineteenth century positivism, Sztompka makes himself prisoner of its assumptions: he confounds the natural and the social sciences, the global and the universal, the real and the imaginary, ideology and utopia, leading to an inverted description of the strong and weak programs in global sociology. He calls for excellence rather than balance and ends up with neither. He maroons himself on Lailonia, an imaginary Comtean land remote from the twenty-first century Planet Earth. Isolated there, attempting to resurrect a past long since disappeared, he fails to address the books he was supposed to review.

My rejoinder turns from the imaginary Lailonia to the real Taiwan, where, in 2009, 60 sociologists from 43 countries assembled to discuss the challenges of global sociology. Taiwan was a fitting venue—a country caught in the jaws of geopolitics, having faced a succession of colonizing powers, and where sociology has wrestled with and partaken in heavy and sometimes violent public debates about national identity,

indigeneity, development and internationalization. If any group of sociologists understands the challenges of global sociology, it is the Taiwanese.

The conference itself was jointly sponsored by the International Sociological Association, the Taiwanese Sociological Association and Academia Sinica, one of the leading scientific institutions in Asia. All 57 National Association members of the International Sociological Association were invited to send a representative (those from poorer countries having their expenses paid), and 29 accepted. Other countries were added to ensure equal numerical representation from the three levels of economic development as defined by the World Bank. Of course, on the one hand this still omitted many countries while, on the other hand proportional representation did not make up for imbalances in influence among countries. Sztompka's complaint that there were not enough North Americans ignores the ubiquitous influence of U.S. sociology.

The volumes themselves are organized according to region of the world, which strikes Sztompka “as strange for a book about sociology.” It is only strange for someone who thinks in terms of universal, context-free laws of human society, who denies sociology's geographical roots, who considers it irrelevant where and how sociology is produced, and who regards sociology as springing from the heads of great scholars, as if through immaculate conception, what Pierre Bourdieu (1996) calls the charismatic ideology of “creation.” Defending geographical selection, I show how Sztompka's sociology is firmly rooted in his own country, Poland; how the study of sociologies in different countries is not a worthless self-indulgence but contributes to the sociology of knowledge and science, to organization theory as well as cultural and political sociology to name but four sub-fields; and, finally and most importantly, how national sociologies are a necessary foundation of any empirically grounded global sociology.

Science Today

The distortions run deep so we must begin at the beginning. What should we mean by science today? The claim that any science can be conceived of as the inductive pursuit of

"regularities and mechanisms"—Sztompka uses this expression eight times—has been effectively dismantled by diverse schools of post-positivist thinkers that in recent times could start with Karl Popper and include such distinguished philosophers, historians and sociologists as Polanyi, Kuhn, Lakatos, Feyerabend, Shapin, Latour, and Habermas. Each of us has our favorites, but what they all show is that science cannot be abstracted from its context; it is a product of its own history but also of the broader history in which it is lodged, and, for example, that "heuristics" (what others have called "discovery") and "justification" cannot be neatly separated. The project of science, from epistemologies to theories, from methodologies to techniques is deeply saturated with the social world in which science is embedded.

Thus, the sociology of science is at the heart of contemporary understanding of science. In dismissing the sociology of sociology as "a snake eating its own tail," Sztompka overlooks the simple sociological point that science—sociology included—is not outside society, is not beyond social determination. This applies to the natural sciences no less than to the social sciences. Earlier positivist philosophers of science tried to foist their construction of an objectivist, positivist science onto the new social sciences, eager to establish their scientific credentials, but no one in the established sciences took their models seriously. One of sociology's major contributions has been to show how science itself is a social product, and how this reverberates into the conduct of sociology itself.

Among the early critics of positivism was Max Weber, whose *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* Sztompka instructs us to read. And so, indeed, we should.² What we learn there is that social scientists are distinctive in taking into account the self-understanding of the actors they study—a rule that Sztompka violates repeatedly in his review, dismissing the sociological community as composed of "unknown researchers about whom nobody cares." He even indicts his own colleague, Janusz Mucha, for

dwelling on Polish sociologists who are unknown and unimportant, missing the point of Mucha's essay which is to show how an impressive Polish sociology grew up in dialogue with nationalist movements struggling against surrounding powers. By granting significance only to "great scholars," Sztompka's elitist view of science obscures the importance of the scientific community (or a Latourian actor network)—science as a collective enterprise.

Leaving aside the repudiation of Weber's "understanding," it is a mystery why Sztompka should endorse *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Even the most casual reading of this brilliant and enduring text shows that Weber departs radically from positivism, that is, from the assumption that the social sciences and the natural sciences follow the same principles. Weber writes that we face a world that is an infinite manifold and that there are two ways of making sense of it: seeking regularities and inferring laws (the way of the natural sciences) on the one side and adopting an orienting value stance on the world (the way of the historical sciences) on the other. The social sciences, he argues, seek to combine both explanation and interpretation, but he insists that there can be no social science without a value stance.

Weber is only being consistent. Since all social action has a value orientation, that must apply to the practice of sociology, too. Marx has a value stance based on a vision of human beings rich in needs and talents, the species-being; Durkheim bases his work on the value of solidarity; Weber himself is more ambiguous but running through his writings is a powerful commitment to human reason and freedom. Different value stances thereby give rise to different research programs, each of which develops its own type of sociology. Thus, the genius of Durkheim lies in the way his concern for solidarity leads him to reinterpret the taken-for-granted, how the division of labor becomes a source of solidarity (not conflict), how religion is the product of society (not God), how suicide can be understood as a product of social forces (not individual maladjustment). Different research programs involve profoundly different ways of seeing the world.

² Sztompka's suggestion that I reject the classics is one among many of his misreadings. In this case he falsely projects on to me a misconstrual of Raewyn Connell's (2007), *Southern Theory*.

For Weber multiple values are not an accident of history. We live in a disenchanted world with a plurality of faiths. Modernity is by definition "polytheistic," a world of irreducible and irreconcilable values, involving what Weber referred to as the warring of the Gods. If values are at the foundation of our research programs (the negative heuristic as Imre Lakatos calls it), then there cannot be a singular universal sociology, unless, of course, it comes out of the barrel of a gun or a propaganda machine as in Marxism-Leninism.

The National Basis of Global Sociology

If there is no singular universal sociology, what then might we mean by a global sociology? According to Sztompka, following his Comtean proclivities, sociology is already fully globalized. But what is this globalized sociology? He includes Erving Goffman's theory of stigmatization as being relevant to the "remnants of the caste system in India." Really? Goffman's book on stigma does indeed present his dramaturgical analysis as universal, if only by virtue of ignoring historical context, in particular the dynamics of systems of stratification. Returning the claimed universality to its context, Alvin Gouldner argues that *Stigma*, like Goffman's other writings, reflects the particularities of U.S. middle-class society. Its relevance to Indian villages is questionable. It certainly cannot be taken for granted; it has to be demonstrated.

Sztompka's second example is Anthony Giddens's (2009) book on global warming—but how much does Giddens know about the effects of global warming on Bangladesh and the Seychelles Islands (Sztompka's examples)? *The Politics of Climate Change* devotes but five pages to the consequences of global warming for developing countries. Indeed, Giddens is an interesting case. His global sociology is conducted by a cosmopolitan intellectual, scurrying from one country to the next but not studying any one in depth. Even today, with our heightened national and global consciousness, much of U.S. sociology, although written without any geographic reference, is really about the United States; it is the particular decked out as the universal. To discover what is

actually universal in the particular, what may be universal in Goffman or Giddens, is a project of global sociology, involving difficult and laborious research.

Just as Sztompka's positivist commitments obscure the particular in the putative universal, they also lead him to dismiss all particular sociologies, specifically national sociologies. Instead of reviewing the 43 case studies of national sociologies, he substitutes his own imaginary Comtean sociology of the kingdom of Lailonia. So let us compare Sztompka's five meanings of imaginary Lailonian sociology with the real national sociologies explored in *Facing an Unequal World*:

The first meaning is trivial: sociology in Lailonia, studied and cultivated at Lailonian universities and research institutes. This is the favorite topic of boring "trend reports." At this institutional and organizational level there are not many national characteristics, for due to globalization the structures of academic centers are very similar the world over.

Let us descend from Sztompka's positivist kingdom to the Planet Earth and discover what he could have learned from *Facing an Unequal World*.

First, the development of sociology varies enormously among countries. Of the 192 member states of the UN, 55 have national sociological associations that are members of the ISA. Few of the remainder have active national associations, indicating weak or non-existent sociology. Across Africa, Latin America, and Asia many countries do not have the luxury of sociology departments in their universities, and some do not even have the luxury of universities. In other cases, sociology exists only under the umbrella of other departments. Sociology is definitely not globalized.

The advanced capitalist countries have elaborate fields of sociology, but they vary profoundly in their organization. In some, the national organization is very strong (e.g., the United States), in others (e.g., France) the national organization has a surprisingly precarious existence. In every country national traditions are reflected not only in the content of the discipline, but also in

its internal fissures, its institutional arrangement, its degree structure and so forth. Even though they share the common Bologna plan for higher education, Spain with its feudal order looks very different from Italy with its deeply politicized field, which, in turn, is very different from the more homogenized and centralized Britain. The depth of sociology's penetration into society also varies, depending on its longevity, but also, for example, depending on the seriousness with which it is taught in high schools. In France, sociology is publicly recognized, in part, because it is part of the high school curriculum, whereas in the United States it is likely to be confused with social work or socialism. The moment and context of sociology's inception also shape its trajectory. Thus, in Portugal, sociology came of age with the 1974 revolution and has sustained a public presence ever since. In Turkey, sociology is enjoying a renewed acclaim with the intensification of public debates around national identity. Japan offers the most ambiguous of sociologies, borrowing from the United States and Germany, yet also insulating itself from the world. These convergences and divergences confirm what modern sociological theories—institutional isomorphism, path dependency, population ecology, resource dependence, new class—would lead us to expect, namely patterned variation in national sociological fields.

Turning to countries of the Global South, one has to recognize the hegemony of northern sociologies supported by research monies, scholarships and fellowships, definition of curricula and textbooks, control of journals, and so forth. But even so the variation is enormous, depending on historical legacies as well as market penetration and state regulation. Latin America represents an especially vibrant field of sociology, cultivated, in part, through collaboration during the period of dictatorships and a shared language. Here, Brazil dominates the region with a centralized and concentrated sociology very different from the fragmentation we find in Mexico. Africa is far less hospitable to sociology. Colonialism and underdevelopment have left their mark as the university system has crumbled in so much of the continent. Still there are bright spots such as South Africa with its unique sociology, forged

under apartheid, often in close relation to the anti-apartheid struggles. Like Brazil in Latin America, so South Africa dominates Africa. Studying the relations between sociologies in the North and South, or relations among sociologies within regions, relies on and contributes to a sociology of domination: how fields dominate other fields, themselves sites of domination, and how the dominant are themselves shaped by their domination.

Domination is not the only factor at work. India and China are similar in that each dominates its region. But they have divergent legacies. British colonialism and its social anthropology suffocated the development of Indian sociology whereas Mao abolished sociology in China, which was then reinvented in the reform period, heavily influenced by U.S. sociology. On the other hand, to this day there is an intricate bifurcation between Chinese universities and the academy of sciences that together sustain one of the most dynamic sociologies. In Russia, the attempt to dissolve the Soviet legacy took the form of privatizing higher education with the result that sociology has become an arm of business, politicians, and even the Russian Orthodox church—a very fragmented field with but a few pockets of autonomy. Despite Soviet domination, Polish and to a lesser extent Hungarian sociology managed to hold onto their own traditions, something far more difficult in countries like Armenia and Azerbaijan that did not have a pre-Soviet sociology. We see here how historical legacies can outlast patterns of domination.

Even where there are forces of a global character, they are always reworked nationally and locally with widely varying consequences. Thus, the twin forces bearing down on universities the world over—marketization and state regulation—combine in different ways and with different effects. In Egypt, sociology oscillated between commodification and criminalization, whereas in the Philippines it suffers from the proliferation of regulation. In the Arab Middle East, the exodus of academics into think tanks or NGOs has weakened universities, polarized between the privileged elite connected to international circuits and those rooted in the local. Scandinavian sociology is also losing its autonomy as “Mode-2” type knowledge develops outside the

university, accountable to the policy world, and as the state invents new forms of auditing the university.³ Iranian sociology faces a very different dilemma—caught between an Islamic state intent on regulating its content and the reactive temptation to embrace Western sociologies. Israeli sociology, on the other hand, at least in its premier universities, has no hesitation in viewing itself as an appendage of U.S. sociology. Here the sociology of sociology shows that globalization is no juggernaut, mowing down everything in its path, but elicits divergent reactions thereby magnifying national differences. Hence, the growing importance of national sociologies.

Ironically, Sztompka's allergy to the idea of a national sociology prevents him from seeing how the study of those selfsame national sociologies can contribute, piece by piece, to a more universal sociology. In other words, universal sociology cannot be proclaimed by philosophical fiat but requires the arduous labor of careful and sustained research that embraces sociologies in and of different parts of the world.

Sztompka's second meaning of national sociology is one written and published *in Lailonian*:

But of course if it is only a question of language, there is nothing indigenous. Translated into other languages it is the same sociology. Here we come to the pseudo-issue of the "imperialism" of the English language.... The quicker that sociologists from Lailonia write and publish in English the better for them, and the better for sociology.

Language may be a pseudo-issue for Sztompka but it is a real issue for those who would like to present their work to international audiences. The issue is not only uneven fluency in English but also the potential loss of the linguistic richness of the communities being studied. Here again

Sztompka's positivism divorces sociology from the society it studies and engages. If sociologists spend their time talking to other sociologists from other countries in English then local issues may get lost, local audiences may disappear and sociology may become ever more rarefied. Such a sociology gives off an air of universality, to be sure, but it is ever thinner, ever more self-referential and ever less global.

The third meaning of national sociology is sociology *by Lailonians*, the natives of this kingdom. Here Sztompka talks once more about globalization allowing sociologists to move from country to country, though he forgets that this is not possible for most sociologists. Here he turns to the question of "insiderism" claiming that Robert Merton had "convincingly rejected" this position. In fact, in his classic paper on insiderism—a wonderful essay in the sociology of sociology—Merton recognizes the importance of the insider perspective, ending with the following peroration: "Insiders and Outsiders, unite. You have nothing to lose but your claims. You have a world of understanding to win." (1973 [1972]: 136). With the recognition that insiders as well as outsiders have their role to play, Merton was already far from the elitism of Comtean positivism.

Perhaps Merton's call for solidarity is premature, however. Before they unite, it might be better if insiders and outsiders entered a dialogue to better understand the social determination of their different perspectives, and the implications of those perspectives as they engage with each other in a common field of power. Chang, Chang and Tang's sensitive account of Taiwanese sociology illustrates this point well. Taiwanese sociology began with social surveys as an arm of Japanese colonial rule. Following the birth of Communist China (PRC), many nationalists fled to Taiwan where they created the Republic of China under the leadership of the Kuomintang (KMT). In this period Taiwanese sociology was Sinicized, reflecting the KMT's attempt to represent the true China. With the withdrawal of UN recognition in 1971, this idea of Taiwan as the true China faded and a thoroughgoing Taiwanese nationalism emerged, propelled still by fear of the mainland. Sociology turned in an indigenous direction, as an assertion against

³ Mode-2 type knowledge was a concept introduced by Michael Gibbons, et al. (1994). It refers to knowledge that is context-driven, problem-focused and interdisciplinary as opposed to Mode-1 type knowledge that is academic, discipline-based and researcher-led.

the PRC, but also against continuing dependence on the United States. Over the last 30 years the indigenization movement has been superceded. A variety of new institutions have emerged within and outside universities that face pressures to obtain advanced degrees in the United States, and to publish in highly ranked journals but they never give up on local issues. Even on this small island there has developed a center and periphery within sociology, the one more cosmopolitan and the other more local. This is an example of how sociology is a function of geo-political forces, how the insider-outsider distinction is inadequate, and how international sociology involves nested and interlocking fields of struggle.

The fourth meaning is sociology *about Lailonia*. "This is the trivial observation that most sociologists draw the personal experience and empirical evidence from their own country... But if they remain sociologists about Lailonia only, they are no longer sociologists." If we follow this argument then most U.S. sociology would not be sociology, while most sociology from the Global South would be, since the asymmetrical distribution of resources means that sociologists from the South have to take the North into account whereas the reverse is not true. Indeed, I would go further and argue that Southern sociology, by virtue of its subjugated status, has greater insight into global society than Northern sociology, unconscious of its domination. Typical in this regard is Sztompka who sees Northern sociology as the only genuine sociology while the rest of the world is its appendage, there to provide data, to "verify, falsify or extend" Northern theory.

The fifth meaning is sociology with a *Lailonian agenda*. Here Sztompka does recognize that different countries may face different problems, but insists on subjecting them to "the standard tool-box" of sociology and developing universal theories. Again he insists on the universality of theory, arguing by analogy that we would be in a real mess if medical doctors had different theories in different hospitals. Of course, as medical sociologists know only too well, doctors in different countries *do* have different theories about disease, about cancer, Alzheimer's, multiple-sclerosis, and so on. Furthermore,

as I suggested above, medicine is not a good analogy for sociology where there can be no singular body of theory but only multiple traditions, or research programs, within Northern countries, as well as between North and South.

In short, the case studies demonstrate the plurality of national sociologies within an ever more interconnected world. From the Comtean land of Lailonia, Sztompka's vision is limited but when he returns to his native Poland, he recovers his sociological eyesight. Thus, in a paper delivered at the ASA in 2004, Sztompka (2005) enumerated 20 reasons why he and his fellow Poles admire America and endorse its global hegemony. "America" is a bastion of anti-communism, a model of democracy, a land of opportunity, and a guarantor of global security. "America" possesses an attractive system of higher education, it is a mecca of consumerism, and above all it stands for "the struggle of civilization against barbarism." I can't imagine any U.S. sociologist giving such a paper. In other words, behind Lailonia stands a Poland battling against its communist past, and behind Poland stands "America," its beacon and savior. Sztompka's resurrection of Comtean positivism is not what it appears to be—a sociology from nowhere—but comes from a very real place in the world order, a place called Poland.⁴

Ideology and Utopia

Given the obduracy of national sociologies there are two ways forward to a global sociology. The first way is to take one or more of

⁴ I do not mean to tar all Polish sociologists with Sztompka's brush. His admiration for the United States, which would be hard to find among American sociologists, is by no means typical of Polish sociologists. Even broad Polish public opinion about the United States has fluctuated over the years. Among Poles, in 1975 "Americans" were the fifth most popular nationality, in 1985 they were the sixteenth most popular nationality, in 1991 they were the number one most popular nationality, and in 2010 they were the twelfth most popular nationality. See Jasinska-Kania (1991) and CBOS (2010). I am grateful to Aleksandra Jasinska-Kania for her assistance in identifying trends in Polish public opinion towards the United States.

these national sociologies and simply *impose them as the universal on the global*, turning “other” national sociologies into appendages, laboratories for data. This is Sztompka’s project, what he calls the “weak” program in global sociology. The second way is to accept the existence of national sociologies and, through a conversation among them, allow the gradual and tentative *emergence of the universal from the global*. This was the project of *Facing an Unequal World* that Sztompka calls the “strong” program in global sociology. But Sztompka has his labeling upside down — his is the strong program, the one that is imposed, while the one that is tentative and emergent is the weak program.

Sztompka’s curious inversion of the strong and weak programs of global sociology, and his identification with one rather than the other, arises from struggles within international sociology over the last half century. The sociological revolution that took place after the Second World War began in the United States with a reconstruction of European social thought that presented modernization as a natural and inevitable teleology. It turned out this modernization was Americanization, forged in the context of the Cold War. It was a particular self-congratulatory narrative that then-dominant American sociologists spun about the end of ideology, the virtues of American liberal democracy and a celebration of American economic entrepreneurship.

This is the America that Sztompka admires. It is also the one that informed the ascendancy of U.S. sociology, both nationally and internationally, within the ISA during its early post-war years. The 1960s social movements—student, anti-war, civil rights—challenged this messianism with a new portrait of the United States as harboring racism at home and imperialism abroad. Sociology in general, but U.S. sociology in particular, became far more critical, as its Arcadian assumptions were overturned. Accordingly, the ISA also began to shift its center of gravity, increasing its membership from the Global South, and electing such presidents as Fernando Henrique Cardoso, T.K. Oommen, and Immanuel Wallerstein. Sociology had sprung up in newly independent territories with a different vision of the world, and as

they became members of the ISA so the hegemony of U.S. and European sociology was challenged. The creation of the journal *International Sociology* in 1986 marked the appearance of non-Western sociologies impatient with existing conventions and stereotypes. It hosted the first round of debates about alternative sociologies. At the same time, the research committees that had always been and continue to be the backbone of the ISA ceded ground to the National Associations, leading to the creation of a Vice-President for National Association in 2002. The National Association branch of the ISA held its first international conference in 2005 in Florida and the second one was the Taipei Conference of 2009. Indeed, Sztompka’s positivist vision of a global sociology as singular and universal, and of exclusively Western origin, has been under siege for many years.

Thus, Sztompka’s review stakes out a disappearing position in a field of struggle. In a rearguard action designed to safeguard “civilization against barbarism,” to advance universalism against any form of particularism—and especially the case studies of national sociologies that the three volumes contain—he attacks them as ideology and utopia alternately and indiscriminately as though the two were equivalent. He forgets that Karl Mannheim defined them as opposites: ideology is a conservative world view that seeks to uphold the status quo or return to the status quo ante, whereas utopia seeks to advance a new world of the future.

In his review, Sztompka is the ideologist, seeking to restore a fictive past by imposing the universal on the global. He does not heed empirical reality, but resorts to imaginary proclamations in defense of an illusory world that has long since disappeared. The emergence of the universal from the global, on the other hand, is a utopia—and here I agree with Sztompka—a vision that cannot be fully realized so long as we face an unequal world with an unequal sociology, a state of affairs that is not likely to disappear any time soon.

Let me clarify the basis and importance of that utopia. Given that there is no sociology from nowhere—that is a positivist illusion—what should be the standpoint of sociology? My own position is that sociology

was born with civil society in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the rise of trade unions, political parties, voluntary organizations, schools, newspapers, all of which appeared in Europe in reaction to the destructiveness of the market. Just as economics takes the standpoint of the economy and the expansion of the market, and politics takes the standpoint of the state and political order, sociology takes the standpoint of civil society and the defense of communicative action. Of course, academic disciplines are complex fields of contestation, with dominant and dominated groups, but these defining principles set the agenda for debate. This does not mean that sociology only studies civil society, but that it studies economy, state, and so on, from the *standpoint* of civil society. The nineteenth century was but the first wave of marketization that brought civil society into existence, the second wave in the early twentieth century brought a reaction from the state—social democracy, fascism, Stalinism, the New Deal—and now we are in the third wave of marketization, which is outside the control of nation-states and can be contested only from a global civil society. That is precisely why a global sociology constructed from below is so important. But out of what can we manufacture such a global sociology? To be sure there are embryonic transnational groupings, movements, networks, but we simply cannot discount the nation-state that still frames so much of our lives and, particularly, our sociologies.

The problems we face in this era of third wave marketization are rooted in the collusion of markets and states — states promoting markets and markets promoting states—leading to such threats to humanity as the destruction of the environment, endemic financial crises, and relentless commodification. Thus, the Taipei conference began with an address from Taiwanese Nobel Laureate, Yuan Lee, on the dangers of global warming. As a chemist he could define the problem and even sketch the general solution, and he appealed to scientists of the world to unite behind his project. Like other such appeals, his was naïve, since the effects of global warming are very uneven, as are the proposed solutions. As sociologists we know we are inserted into the world with

different interests, and that any attempt at unity is a complex, uncertain and difficult process of negotiation and conversation. A realistic assessment of what is possible depends on a sociology of sociology, a sociology of the scientific community, and a sociology of global civil society that takes states and markets into account. Since our scientific analysis brings so much bad news, it is all the more important to also use our science to hold on to utopian possibilities. As Max Weber insisted, only by ardently pursuing the impossible can we arrive at the possible.

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