

The Sociology of Post-Industrial Societies

Lecture 1: *The Great Divide*

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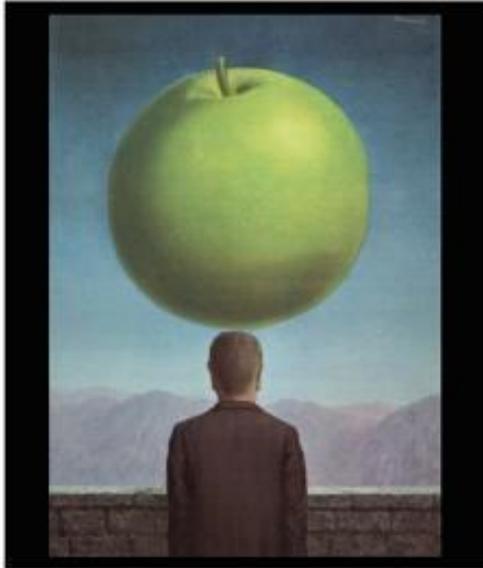
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What's so special about sociology?

What is Sociology?

Norbert Elias



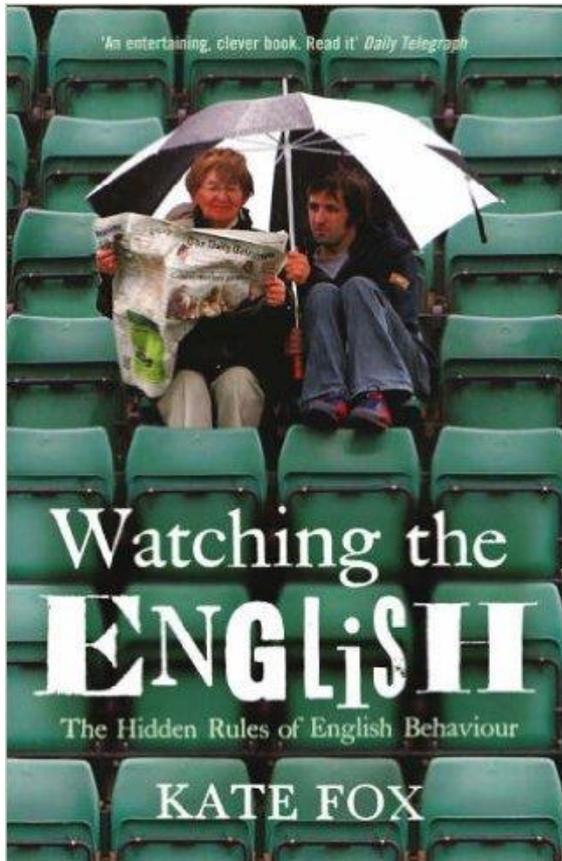
- **Economics**

- Alfred Marshall:
 - "...economics is a study of mankind in the ordinary business of life."
- Lionel Robbins:
 - "Economics is the science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses."
 - the study of the consequences (both intended and unintended) of agents' attempts to maximise utility under various types of constraints

- **Political Science**

- the study of the use and distribution of power
- the study of systems of governance
 - Parties, voters, parliaments, legislatures, executives

What's so special about sociology?



- **Anthropology**

- defined by the type of societies studied?
- defined by the ethnographic method?

- **Sociology**

- Whatever sociologists do?
- An attempt to understand the consequences of industrialisation for:
 - Social institutions
 - Social structure
 - Human welfare
- So before we get to Post-Industrialism let's try to understand the anxiety about industrialisation

Sociology of Industrial Society:

The great divide

- The early ‘sociologists’ were all grappling with the idea that industrialisation changed everything **irrevocably**
 - The way work was organised
 - Family relationships and the relationship between the sexes
 - The amount and distribution of wealth
 - The organisation of the state and politics
 - The content of intellectual life
 - The dominant social norms
 - The very texture of human interactions
 - The sense of what it meant to be human
- All share the idea that once the (technological) genie is out of the bottle there is no going back

Conservative, radical and liberal roots

- Critical views on the watershed nature of industrialisation are almost equally common on the political left and right
 - Robert Nisbet's *The Sociological Tradition* makes a case for the intellectual roots of sociology lying in the mainstream of 19th Century European conservative thought
 - Anthony Giddens' in *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* makes something of the opposite case - radical reactions to the specifically capitalistic form of industrialism are the fertile soil for sociological thought
 - Stefan Collini's *Liberalism and Sociology* makes the case for the influence of the crisis in late Nineteenth Century liberal thought
 - For example L. T. Hobhouse's obsession with the ideas of social and moral progress

Durkheim 1858-1917

- Durkheim witnessed extraordinary change in France during his lifetime
- Intellectual motivation was to understand these changes and repair the damage



Durkheim's concerns

- Social integration
 - What are the bases of social order in large scale industrial societies?
 - Normative integration comes under strain
 - People don't subscribe to the same codes or accept the same doctrines – for example religious orthodoxy
 - Individuality becomes a cult
 - Division of labour creates interdependence but also generates sectional interests
 - Contract rather than other sorts of ties comes to regulate a wider part of human affairs
 - Law comes to be less about collective rituals of retribution and more about restitution
 - Social bonds – ties to “society” – become looser

Durkheim's solutions

- Recognition of the institutional prerequisites for the pursuit of self interest
 - Contract isn't self-sufficient
- The fostering of civic associations lying between the state and the individual
 - Not a million miles from the concerns of Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone*
 - *Social capital*
 - *Bridging*
 - *Bonding*

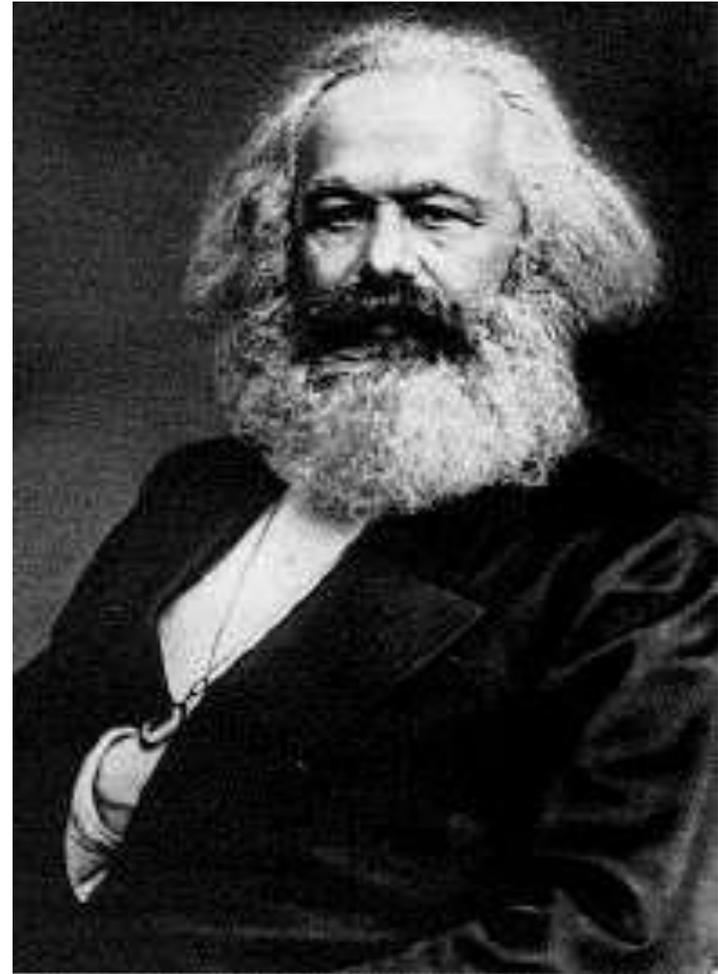
Max Weber 1864-1920

- Rationalization
 - the growth of means-ends instrumentality as the principle mode of cognition
 - theology
 - decline of magic
 - science and technology
 - routinisation of more and more spheres of life
 - bureaucratisation of governance and of work-life
 - ways in which institutions as well as the state seek legitimacy
 - Coincidence of older status structures with new money based hierarchies
 - end of ideology?



Karl Marx 1818-1883

- Capitalism breaking apart all previous social bonds
- The crude cash nexus governing relationships
- The growth of wage labour – especially factory labour
- Coalescence of interests amongst workers and also amongst the bourgeoisie – State as its executive committee
- Universal laws driving development everywhere in a unilinear direction
- Surprisingly utopian view of what the next stage would look like



Is it Capitalism?

- or is it industrialism?
- For Marx, Weber and Durkheim there was no empirical data to decide the issue

Next week

- Institutional convergence or diversity?