

## Social Sciences as Utopias

Liliana Deyanova<sup>1</sup>

---

**Abstract:** This article is about the *tension* between value neutrality and commitment to the social sciences at times of radical transformations of the scientific field – not about tension as such, but about the tension that is around and within us. The problem of *science as a vocation* as well as of *science, which is in danger, and for that reason is becoming dangerous*, that is, of the autonomy and heteronomy of the scientific field, has been examined not just by Max Weber and Pierre Bourdieu. But their conceptions of the *scale of values* and of the scientific *illusio* in the sociological field are the starting point for the cluster of meanings of utopias (a term in the title of this text which was written at a time when *the scale of values* with which we conducted our *value-free* research is changing before our eyes) outlined at the beginning of this article. Although my numerous empirical studies, and especially those on *think tank* institutions and their autonomous-heteronomous expertise (but of course not “conspiracy”) are the background to this article, it is only an account (an illustrative, not a systematic account) of some old – and not so old – classical debates (between Bruno Latour and Pierre Bourdieu, and between Gabriel Tarde and Emile Durkheim). Latour’s return to the “precursor”, Tarde, is a stake in direct battles in a research field that is undergoing transformation. (Critical sociology, especially that of Pierre Bourdieu, is accused of “confusing social theory with conspiracy theory”.) In a similar way, the famous 1903 debate between Tarde and Durkheim was a clash not just between two opposite views about how we should understand “the fundamental principle of sociology: the objective reality of social facts”, but between two incommensurable views on society at that time. For every classical theory is also a utopia of society, a utopia of the role of universities and of the vocation of scientists. Thus, my hypothesis is that by revisiting these old (and not so old) debates and understanding the classic arguments of the respective incommensurable sociological traditions, one can also gain a better understanding of the present-day incommensurable notions of expertise and critique, a better understanding of our opposite views on the academic field, which is being just as radically redefined. I have chosen a roundabout way to think of the contradictions of heritage – moreover, not just of scientific legacies but, as it turned out, to think also of the sociological utopias of the society we are yet to live in.

**Keywords:** utopias, *scale of values*, P. Bourdieu, *illusio*, B. Latour, *Tarde-Durkheim debate*, G. Tard’s two fictional works, expertise and critique, *time-place* or *utopoi* (M. Mamardashvili), the contradiction of heritage, neoliberal transformation of the scientific field

---

1. Professeure à l’Université de Sofia. E-mail: lilidey51@gmail.com

This article is about the *tension* between value neutrality and commitment to the social sciences at times of radical transformations of the scientific field – not about tension as such, but about the tension that is around and within us. At first, I thought I could look back at my life as a sociologist and understand this tension by reviewing my apparently *divergent* empirical studies of the post-communist processes (and the debates they involved me in). Studies starting back from the historical sociology of socialism but focusing on the traces left by socialism on our present-day society and on the not particularly stable autonomy of the academic field. Studies on how sociologists *narrate* the past of their discipline<sup>1</sup>, how history textbooks are rewritten and how different groups of historians strive to *turn their own narrative of socialism into a canon*<sup>2</sup>, how the new academic reforms, which exercise an institutionalized form of symbolic violence and polarize the European research space in the “knowledge society”<sup>3</sup>, are interpreted. And so on. But this was not much more than an enumeration driven by a sense of common motivation. Only after that did I realize that in this “and so on” there was a problem that made me understand whence came my conviction that these studies were *apparently* divergent.

The problem was how *think tank* institutions are present in the academic field, combining expert knowledge with commitment to neoliberal policies and with other programmes (called “democracy promotion” programmes). I wanted my studies to avoid the stigmatizations of *think tank* institutions (which are often not just heteronomous but “multi-heteronomous”) that are characteristic of conspiracy theories; but I also wanted to identify myself with a *critical sociology of neoliberalism* which does not give grounds for being stigmatized in turn as a “conspiracy theory”. In fact, this was a problem which I had encountered in all my other studies and which made me turn to paradigms and classical theories that have a strong influence on the disciplinary innovations and debates in Bulgaria (Pierre Bourdieu’s critical “reflexive sociology”, Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network-Theory, Max Weber, of course, whose conceptions of science as a vocation, *Beruf*, of value commitment and scale of values inform this article along with the Weber-influenced field theory of Bourdieu).

According to Bruno Latour, however, critical sociology, especially that of Pierre Bourdieu, “confuses social theory with conspiracy theory”. Waging a battle against this sociology and “the standard sociology of the social”, Latour offers an alternative definition of sociology and of “the new production of knowledge”. That is why he turns to Gabriel Tarde as a “direct precursor of Actor-Network-Theory”. But the return to Tarde is a stake in direct battles in a research field that is undergoing transformation. The famous 1903 debate between Tarde and Durkheim was a clash not just between two opposite views

- 
1. On each of these topics, there are outstanding studies by Bulgarian scholars. The seminal study on the topic in question is by Svetla Koleva (2018).
  2. Liliana Deyanova (2014). From Memory to Canon: How Do Bulgarian Historians Remember Communism? In M. Todorova, A. Dimou, S. Troebst (eds.), *Remembering Communism: Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experience in Southeast Europe* (pp. 439-458). Central European University Press.
  3. One of these studies was part of the collective research project *The Humanities and Social Sciences on the Periphery: Sciences or Technocratic Instruments*, conducted from June 2006 to May 2007 and coordinated by the Peace Institute – Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia; its results were published in Maja Breznik (ed.) (2008) *Časopis za kritiko znanosti*, 35(228). See Deyanova (2008). Another study was discussed in my paper at the conference “Les sciences sociales et leur public. Engagement et distanciations”, held on 22-23 September 2011 at Iași University. See also Gheorghiu, Arnault (2013).

about how we should understand “the fundamental principle of sociology: the objective reality of social facts”, but between two incommensurable views on society at that time. For every classical theory is also a utopia of society, a utopia of the role of universities and of the vocation of scientists. Thus, my hypothesis is that by revisiting these old (and not so old) debates and understanding the classic arguments of the respective incommensurable sociological traditions, one can also gain a better understanding of the present-day incommensurable notions of expertise and critique<sup>1</sup>, a better understanding of our opposite views on the academic field, which is being just as radically redefined. That is why I chose a roundabout way, perhaps a bit more vague and parabolic, to think of the contradictions of legacies – moreover, not just of scientific legacies; and, as it turned out, to think also of the sociological utopias of the society we are yet to live in.

By “utopias” here I have in mind a commonplace for historians of science (such as Alexandre Koyré<sup>2</sup>), who place emphasis on the idea that every scientific paradigm is a belief, conversion of the gaze, transformation of the dominant vision of the world: for example, the Ptolemeans and the Copernicans differed in their beliefs about the Earth, the former assuming that the Earth is stationary. Before he made his “distance-glass or telescope”, Galileo had come to believe that nature is mathematizable, that is, it is precisely structured and quantifiable; he had doubted the authority of the Church – the “divine” Aristotle; he had retracted his belief in the dominant theological paradigm; and only then did he discover the telescope. “I thought you could simply look through the telescope and convince yourselves”, Galileo tells the savants at the Florentine court (in Brecht’s play) when they ask him to hold a “disputation” first; for they would indeed be unable to see anything dramatically new through what “may not be a very reliable telescope” if they did not believe in Galileo’s Sun.

By “utopias” I also mean what Max Weber calls “scale of values” (a scale which, in modernity, cannot but be associated with the “horizon of expectation” and “futures past”) (Koselleck, 2004); as well as what Pierre Bourdieu calls *illusio* – investment in the game: “visceral commitment to it”, “the belief that it is worth a prayer, or to put it more simply, that it is worth playing”, “immediate adherence to the necessity of a field” (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 102), “involvement in the game of life” (*ibidem*, p. 222). The comparison to games shows the logic of social action well, for what is at issue is not calculation but habitus and “ontological complicity” with the force lines in a field (in this case, the scientific field and its space of the possible<sup>3</sup>), practical sense of its historically changing meanings. Thus, what is at issue is the historicity of our scientific *illusio*; but also, more generally, our *other time*. That is to say, what Merab Mamardashvili calls *utopoi*,

- 
1. “Knowledge managers” (as well as politicians and others using “knowledge services”) very often ignore the fact that sociological expertise is not just technocratic expertise, it is a unity of *expertise and critique, of facticity and normativity, of positive knowledge and normative knowledge*, that is, critique; to paraphrase Kant, “critiques without expertise are empty, expertises without critique are blind”. See on this topic, in B. Lahire (2002), the contributions of D. Martucelli, C. Grignon and others.
  2. Here I have in mind Alexandre Koyré’s classic works published in French under the title *Études galiléennes* in 1939, as well as Bertolt Brecht’s play *The Life of Galileo*.
  3. To understand what Bourdieu calls “space of possibles” (*espace des possibles*) and his theory of the “field”, as well as what I think of the logics of the scientific field, the different imaginaries of social actors, and elective affinities, see Deyanova (2013); Koev (2003); Deyanov (1998).

*times-places*. *Utopoi* are condensed time, singular points, non-transparent, inexpressible in terms of language. The meaning is a place. It is not the sum of the meanings of the different events or their sequence; it is something at the zero point between the past and the present, in “the interval between me and me” – “the meaning of the past happens now” (Mamardashvili, 1997, pp. 176, 120, 328). But how does our condensed time, the *time-place*, become a narrative? How can we enable the past to happen? All the more so, considering that it is not predestined to happen.

This is what a novel in search of the fading Revolution deals with. Its author is Yuri Trifonov (another voice of the 1970s and 1980s). The protagonist, Pavel Letunov, is trying to make sense of what happened and to unravel the truth about the past. He has dedicated his life to the utopia of the great change and has spent years on securing the rehabilitation of a hero of the Revolution who was sentenced to death: the Cossack revolutionary Sergei Migulin, a maverick, a friend and a foe of those who had entrusted him with senior positions in the Red Army and who continued to regard him with suspicion even when, upon hearing his sentence, he cried: “Long live the Social Revolution!” (Trifonov, 1999, p. 181). The past is told from the perspective of the 1970s. That is when Pavel Evgrafovich receives a letter from an old childhood friend, Asya Igumnova, the girl he was in love with but who secretly became Migulin’s wife and bore him a son. The first letter expresses Asya’s happiness that someone still wants to find out the truth about Migulin. They exchange more letters. Pavel Evgrafovich is determined to meet with Asya and ask her a vitally important question as she is the last person alive who knows the answer: Could Migulin have indeed been preparing a counterrevolutionary uprising in August 1919? They meet, he asks her the crucial question, and then he dies. At the very end of the novel we learn from Igor Vyacheslavovich, a graduate student who wants to get hold of Pavel’s memoirs and all his collected documents because he is writing a dissertation about Migulin, that

The truth is that when the investigator asked that sweet man Pavel Evgrafovich in 1921 whether he could admit the possibility of Migulin’s having participated in the counterrevolutionary uprising, he answered in all sincerity, “Yes”. But of course he forgot about that. Nothing surprising about it: everyone – or nearly everyone – thought so at the time, and there are times when truth and belief become so tightly, inextricably fused together that it’s difficult to sort out what’s what (*ibidem*, p. 261).

Apparently, Igor thinks that today it’s not difficult to sort out what’s what.

Since that is hardly true, I have chosen another way of thinking about our sociological *illusio*, about us as part of the present: not about who we are and what is the secret of our wish to do sociology, but about what relationships could have been established, invented, imposed, multiplied, transformed through our sociological work and dreams (or “nostalgia for the future”); about how power and resistance have produced each other. I have put this in Foucauldian terms because in his works I see a possibility to explain why dissent or heterodoxy was transformed into “promotion of democracy” after 1989 (after the end of the so-called totalitarian science<sup>1</sup>).

1. For a critical discussion of the discourse of “totalitarian science”, see Deyanova (2010). The autonomy of the field of social sciences after 1989 is discussed in Deyanova (2008).

That is why I have chosen to tell about our new notions of scientific knowledge and critique, of the autonomy and heteronomy of social scientists, and so on, by referring to a previous “fin de siècle” and to the famous debate between Emile Durkheim and Gabriel Tarde in 1903 as well as to the reasons why it has become topical today. Tarde is also the author of two genuine utopias, a “uchronia” and a “fairytale” from the 1880s: *Fragment d'histoire future* (translated and published in English as *Underground Man* in 1905) and “Les géants chauves” (“The Bald Giants”). It is no accident that one of the most cited contemporary sociologists, Bruno Latour, has revisited the old debate and, through Tarde as his precursor, as “an alternative precursor for an alternative social theory” (Latour, 2005, p. 14), has waged a battle against “the standard sociology of the social” (*ibidem*, p. 8 – which was institutionalized by the “national-rationalist” Durkheim and which had consigned Tarde’s “asociology” to the margins of the scientific field for more than a century). What is more, Latour thinks that if the winner of the debate had been Tarde, not Durkheim, then not only sociology but also society at large would have been different.

There is a lot in common between the century of the “Tarde-Durkheim debate” and the century of the “Latour-Bourdieu polemic”, between then and now tendencies in the field of social sciences in which clash opposite notions of the legitimacy of knowledge, of its publicity, autonomy, institutionalization. That is despite the fact that today we live in a world where “the promises of a strong ‘socio-logy’” have become impossible to deliver (Latour, 2005, p. 2); where the relationships between nation and state, between the Republic and “the republic of scientists”, between scientists and the market are changing; where the “grand narratives” about the tasks of science in a “post-” situation – post-modern, post-disciplinary, post-national – are falling apart.

In the era of “the Republic”, Durkheim believed that “building the Republic is parallel to building sociology and vice versa”. I will not discuss his sufficiently well-known *ŷuvre*. What is less well-known is how he defended his republic during the Great War – with the historian Ernest Lavisse he published, in three million copies, *Letters to All French People (Lettres à tous les Français)*, reminding them of the nation’s great moments and of “French vitality”.

Who was Tarde and what was his dispute with Durkheim’s utopias of sociology and the republic about? To quote Tarde’s son: “Do you recall the discussion between Durkheim and my father, at the École des hautes études sociales? Before they had even said a word, one sensed by their faces, their looks, their gestures, the distance that lay between these two men. One knew that such a discussion was sheer madness”. Tarde was a lawyer, judge, fiction writer, criminologist, psychologist, philosopher and sociologist. He collaborated regularly with the French physician Alexandre Lacassagne (an opponent of Cesare Lombroso) and became known as an opponent of the “Italian School” and of the postulate about the biological determinism of crime. In 1890 he published *Les lois de l'imitation* (arguing that imitation, “something akin to sleepwalking”, is at the core of social life and it is a way inventions circulate). Of central importance in his theory of social cohesion are desire and belief as well as the theory of the triad *repetition (imitation)*, *opposition (differentiation)*, and *adaptation (invention)*. In 1900 Tarde was appointed professor of modern philosophy at the Collège de France. He then published his ever more popular nowadays two-volume *La psychologie économique* (1902), in which he criticized classical political economy – and, of course, Marx – from the perspective of a theory of the subjective value of commodities. His son claims that he was sympathetic to

the supporters of Dreyfus during the protests of intellectuals (1892-1899), which marked "the birth of intellectuals as an autonomous group". The records, however, disprove this claim. Tarde long remained silent on the Dreyfus Affair. During the days in which Emile Zola, who had defended the French officer accused of treason, was tried and convicted, Tarde wrote the essay "Le public et la foule" ("The Public and the Crowd", 1898). He believed that the philosopher's mission was not to directly intervene in the battles, but to develop ideas that would orient politicians. It is true, however, that after the end of the Dreyfus Affair, when the parliamentary peace was at risk, he signed the "Appeal to Unity" on the grounds that it was necessary to return to "normality" (once again, not on account of the cause of the intellectuals around Zola and Durkheim). Seeing the barricades of the Paris Commune, he said: "I understood then why the devil is painted completely red, and why boiled crayfish are also red". The reasons for this realization become even clearer in his "Études sur le socialisme contemporain" ("Studies on Contemporary Socialism", 1884), especially if we compare them with Durkheim's views in his "Note sur la définition du socialisme" ("Note on the Definition of Socialism", 1893).

Tarde and Durkheim had two truly contrasting sociological visions and two different conceptions of the principle of social cohesion ("solidarity"), of the "spirit of collectivity" and the "spirit of individualism" of the mission of the social sciences. Durkheim believed in the "theoretical services" which sociology can render by *enlightening* public opinion, which is becoming a "master", a "mindless despot", because "the collective spirit has been weakened in us"; the mission of sociology is to "react against this dispersive tendency":

*Our society must regain awareness of its organic unity. The individual must develop a sense for this social mass which envelops and penetrates him [...] I believe that sociology, more than any other science, is in a position to restore these ideas. It is sociology which will make the individual understand what society is, how it completes him, and how little he really is when reduced to his own forces alone. It will teach him that he is not an empire embedded within another empire but the organ of an organism. It will show him all that is beautiful in conscientiously performing his role as an organ. It will make him feel that there is no diminution in being integrated with others and depending on them, in not belonging quite entirely to himself. (Durkheim, 1978, p. 69; emphasis added)*

The "organ of an organism" and a free person? Obviously, the 1903 debate between Tarde and Durkheim was not just about how we should understand "the fundamental principle of sociology: the objective reality of social facts". It was not just about what they were discussing directly: What is "the social" and the "inter-mental", and is "inter-mental sociology" elementary sociology? Is sociology different from philosophy? What is quantification? What is the "comparative-historical method"?

This debate was the culmination of polemics between two opposite views on society at that time (for every classical theory is also a utopia of society), as well as on the role of universities in building society, on scientists and politicians, on the institutions of "the Third Republic": how they should serve the common good without representing "society as God" and its common will which turns the individual into "the organ of an organism"<sup>1</sup>. The two scholars' views on "sociology as an intellectual genre" were inseparable from their

1. Tarde insisted that in order to understand the social, one must start from individuals. He believed in nominalism. But as J.L. Fabiani (1988) has shown, the battle between realists and nominalists was an old battle in French universities, in which realists wanted to deprive their opponents of access to universities.

conceptions of its integration in the disciplinary restructuring of French universities and its institutionalization as a science uniting education, research, and professional practice.

*The hypothesis is that by revisiting these old debates and understanding the classic arguments of Tarde or Durkheim, one can also gain a better understanding of present-day opposite views on the academic field, which is being just as radically redefined.* For their arguments can help one gain a more comprehensive view of the current processes of heteronomization of the scientific field, of its “deinstitutionalization” (as conceived of by present-day reformers), of the disintegration of classic disciplines. This, however, will be impossible if we take the arguments of the classics out of their historical context and real complexity, and reframe them in the familiar refrains – regarding the “rentiers of the universal” with their “conspiracy theories of society”, the most conspiratorial one of which is, according to Latour (who also wants to “refound” the republic, but from the bottom up), Pierre Bourdieu’s theory; or, on the other hand, regarding “our socio-philosophers of science” who “disseminate false problems” or “banalities”, but “always in a radical way” (as Bourdieu [2004, pp. 21-31] says in a very critical debate with Latour and his Actor-Network-Theory).

The Third Republic undertook a “brutal institutionalization of universities”. This was associated with the will of the state itself to strengthen its control over higher education in a situation of crisis, of multiplying projects about Catholic universities (Noiriel, 1999, p. 216). Thus, however, university people became employees of the state. Historians, for example, were workers of the state, its army reserve and herald; they were subject to a centralized order, uniform recruiting rules and uniform privileges. Yet on the other hand, such a system ensured meritocracy and social mobility; it changed the public of universities, making it more and more differentiated and professionalized (*ibidem*)<sup>1</sup>. This is a vast topic in itself; what is of interest to us here is that Durkheim and Tarde expressed two main points of view on what they called *the central conflict of modernity*, the problem of liberty (that is, the obverse of the problem of discipline): on the one hand, this was the discourse of individualism and liberation, and on the other, the discourse of disciplinization, of imposition of a moral order<sup>2</sup>.

Tarde’s view on “the theoretical services which sociology can render” in an enlightened society was quite different from Durkheim’s. According to Tarde, the “*state socialism of the Third Republic betrayed the very principles of the French Revolution of 1789 and the “conditions for the rise of individualism”*”. He argued that the task of intellectuals was to resist the *democratic levelling*, to serve as a corrective to “the crowd”. In his view, intellectuals facilitated the birth of “publics” in a *cosmopolitan, transnational* society whose contours he saw in the “first globalization”. Conversely, for Durkheim “the Republic” was a guarantor of Reason, a *moral corrective to individual liberty*. That is why Durkheim was very hostile to American pragmatism and all those theories that “weakened the general will of the republic” and undermined “French national culture”.

- 
1. In this sense, it is not fair to condemn “national-rationalists” for serving the authorities (as done by the pamphlet against republican intellectuals as “watchdogs of the State”, written in the interwar period, or a symmetrical pamphlet about the “new watchdogs”, written in the present neoliberal times).
  2. This thesis is advanced by Peter Wagner in his book *A Sociology of Modernity: Liberty and Discipline* (1994). This “central conflict” had different phases and utopian imaginaries: between 1750 and 1850 the discussion was about the rational state; much later, it was between two principles, the principle of “enlightening the Enlightenment” (Bourdieu) and “modernizing modernization” (Latour).

We can see the opposite interpretations, described previously, of “state-socialist leveling” and of the “conditions for the rise of individualism” in Tarde’s fictional works.

In his utopian short story “Les géants chauves”, the reformer-revolutionary is called (obviously not by accident) Samuel Zède. In the future 1992 (the story was written one hundred years earlier), this agronomist-philanthropist and reformer launches the greatest revolution that will regenerate the human race. Strolling among his wonderfully improved tulips, dahlias and double roses, the pupil of “Gall, Lavater, Fourier and *tutti quanti*” is suddenly struck by the thought that nature is the most perfect thing in the world, therefore human nature must be improved (“human nature is a raw material that no one yet has been able to manufacture”). Obviously, all revolutionaries until now – including those who “swoon over the cabalistic figure 1789” – have been quite modest and no one yet has “treated human stupidity, human imbecility, our incurable wound, as we treat fever with quinine”. That is why France, a country “divided into a dozen universal republics”, has returned, in the name of communal liberties, to feudal oppression, while the French, always enthusiastic, are rejoicing at being avenged by the Grand Czar Nicholas V, who has invaded their territories... So, Samuel Zède invents a technique of moulding children’s skulls so as to develop particular faculties chosen by their parents: “eloquence, music, painting, mathematics, physics, etc.” Of course, he starts his revolution in secret, experimenting with different moulds on the head – made completely bald – of his infant son Isaac. But the technique turns out to be successful and two protuberances or, to put it more simply, two bumps, “that of calculation and that of the game”, appear on Isaac’s forehead. Thanks to them, Isaac grows up to be a genius. As the newly invented technique resulting in mental transformation begins to be widely applied, all traces of heredity are erased and universal suffrage no longer seems absurd: “Babeuf’s dream has come true, and we are founding the true republic of equals” (Tarde, 1882, p. 615). Isaac reconquers Algeria and Senegal, and performs many other feats, sending “Caesar and Napoleon into oblivion”. But he imprudently confides the secret of his genius to his lover, who turns out to be a spy for the Russian czar. Hence, other states also set out to “decretinize” their populations, some making moulding compulsory, others leaving it optional. But things aren’t all just rosy; various crises arise and overlap. The massification of genius reduces its value. Moreover, parents start choosing more “prestigious bumps” for their children and this leads to a severe shortage in all but several occupations – for example, there are swarms of lawyers, and no litigants. And that is not all: it turns out that women are not susceptible to moulding and prefer natural, unenhanced men, so they start emigrating en masse to “the cretinist states, that is, where there were still men as stupid and rude as an academician of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could be”. There is a series of wars, the cretinist states are ultimately defeated, and the Darwinists, whom Tarde is also arguing with, exterminate the more inferior races among the “decretinized” populations themselves. But the most inferior brethren emancipate themselves and new wars break out, this time between the fraternally allied geniuses, leading to their final death. At the end it becomes clear that a few “cretins” – that is, men whose skulls were not moulded – have survived, they form large families, and the world is eventually repopulated.

In Tarde’s other – “positive” – utopia, which he described as a “uchronia” (a term coined by Charles Renouvier as the title of his 1876 novel *Uchronie*), the story is told by a first-person narrator living in the thirty-first century AD (Tarde, [1896]/1905).

The previous millennium had been plagued by war, as the state had seized power and control over the public good. Since the population had grown to thousands of millions (Tarde, 1905, p. 37), democracy turned out to be impossible. The world was ruled by a succession of monarchies: dynasties of physicists, geometers, artists... The crown was eventually won by a philosophical financier, who re-established order and began to apply his ideal of government.



Eventually, abundance was achieved, but at the price of “an insufferable sameness of colour, a depressing monotony, a sickening insipidity” (*ibidem*, p. 46), parallel with the reduction of science to a catechism... In the twenty-fifth century, however, the Sun disappeared and the Earth became ice-bound. Only a few hundred people survived this climate catastrophe; they were “the remnant of the flower of humanity” (*ibidem*, p. 67) who, led by Miltiades (a cross between a Slav and a Breton), would build a new civilization underground. After some confusion and disorder – for they had all huddled together in the central state shelter (furthermore, “Not a single university professor was there, but a crowd of deputies and assistants; not a single minister, but a crowd of young secretaries of state” – *ibidem*, p. 68) – they were persuaded by Miltiades that they should move underground for good. Soon, the Troglodyte society began to function perfectly. Everyone’s economic needs were satisfied, and satisfaction of all aesthetic needs was entirely possible in cities with “galleries of crystal, which, wherever they cross one another, form so many crystal palaces” (*ibidem*, p. 136). There were different cities – for example, a city of painters and a city of musicians (but there was no “city of philosophers, notably owing to the incessant trouble caused by the tribe of sociologists who are the most unsociable of mankind” – *ibidem*, p. 127). In this society there was “no longer any native land, but only a native grot” (*ibidem*, p. 145) and a natural cult of the arts; instead of Fatherlands, there were guilds which one entered voluntarily and which were based not on the exchange of services but on a spiritual, interpsychological exchange – “the exchange of admiration or criticism, of favourable or unfavourable judgments” (*ibidem*, p. 123). “Geniocracy” worked perfectly, for each city elected its best genius. But crises began to emerge in this society, too. As the genocratic republic controlled sexual relations to prevent overpopulation, only men who had produced a masterpiece were permitted to have children (Chapter Six, “Love”). And so on.

The picture of the future in this fictional work is even more detailed and is difficult to retell in brief. I think, however, that this short summary is enough to demonstrate the main line of Tarde’s anti-egalitarian utopia<sup>1</sup> which sketches a society in which the separate social orders, but not the social itself, can be transformed; in which there is no accumulation and concentration of inequalities; in which the power of certain groups over others is temporary and is a natural element of human creativity (Favre, 1983, p. 26; Rosental, 2011) – a creativity that differs from that of the reformer-agronomist Samuel Zède, who abandons agronomy after his revolutionary act and sets out to resolve all sorts of social problems.

It is worth revisiting the old debates today, at a time of so-called deinstitutionalizations (and depoliticizations) whose logics we are trying to grasp by considering the arguments of both parties and *capitalizing* knowledge. Bruno Latour himself says in an early article that “if we want to understand the sciences, we must ask ourselves precisely about capitalization... knowledge – knowledge”, to paraphrase Marx (Latour, 1985, pp. 175 nf). For there are centres which are given a chance to develop new data-processing practices which they capitalize, that is, they accumulate resources in order to accumulate resources which collect and diffuse the intellectual capital of their predecessors, use the social capital of their contemporaries, and plunder some of the capital of their successors. Now this issue is indeed central: that of the centres of Tarde’s “flat” world, the world of

1. The Durkheimians differed in their opinions about Tarde’s utopias. Célestin Bouglé thought they were “brilliant” because he liked their critique both of Rousseau and of naturalism, but others did not accept the parodic profanation of the idea of equality and of revolution. For more about those two utopias and their context, see, e.g., Rosental (2011), Favre (1983), Trousson (2008).

“deinstitutionalizations” in which, if we believe Latour’s “utopia”, “Actors can download those theories of the social as effectively as they do MP3 files” (Latour, 2005, p. 231). What is at issue is the spirit of modernity, of course. And its unresolved “central conflict” mentioned above.

At this point it would be good to refer to Merab Mamardashvili (2003, pp. 414, 417) again:

One may say that, in a sense, the entire contemporary culture and philosophy are a response to the First World War; an effort to make sense of, process and assimilate this event of 1914-1918 in some way. But the point is that all such attempts are driven by the same reasons as those that provoked this war. Indeed, at the turn of the century something happened that culminated in the First World War, a war that was completely incomprehensible to classic culture, a war that did not fit into any rules of human understanding, into any habits of the Enlightenment or principles of reason [...] We may provisionally designate this period thus: 1895-1918 [...] The boundary of the prewar and the war years. We are all still living there. That is to say, today we are trying to resolve what they were trying to resolve back then. We are assimilating what they had invented or were trying to invent back then, at the turn of the century, when there began a very significant change in cultures – a change whose outlines, hard as it is to believe, are still unclear [...] It seems to be like a huge prehistoric animal, of which we see only the tail or the head, the rest of its body fading in the mist, and what’s more, in the mist of the future. That is why it is still difficult for us to understand what is happening to us...

What is happening today is rooted in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century or thereabouts. Something happened then – something we can understand by accumulating the arguments of both Durkheim and Tarde, while ceasing to define them in terms of winner and loser. For both were losers. Just like the Revolution recounted by Yuri Trifonov’s novel, whose ending I want to return to at the end of this article.

At last, Pavel Letunov has met Asya Igumnova and asked her the question about the truth (about the Cossack commander who was sentenced to death for betraying the revolution): Had Migulin indeed set out to launch a counterrevolutionary uprising in August 1919? After a pause she says: “I’ll answer that I have never loved anyone as much as him in the whole of my long, wearisome life” (Trifonov, 1999, p. 260).

Still, how would the graduate student who is writing a dissertation on the subject answer that question and respond to “the demands of the day”? At the end of the novel, we are told only that he manages to obtain Pavel’s memoirs and all other documents from Pavel’s son, leaves the latter’s house, heads for the station, but is “caught in a sudden icy downpour of hail” and takes shelter under the archway of a building. As he stands there waiting for the rain to stop, he sees, as the very last sentence of the novel tells us: “Two little girls, covered with a transparent sheet of plastic, [who] ran barefoot over the asphalt” (*ibidem*, p. 261).

**Résumé:** Cet article traite de la tension entre la neutralité des valeurs et l’engagement en faveur des sciences sociales à une époque de transformations radicales du domaine scientifique. Le problème de la «science en tant que vocation» ainsi que de la «science qui est en danger, et pour cette raison devient dangereuse», c’est-à-dire de l’autonomie et de l’hétéronomie du «champ» scientifique, n’a pas été examiné uniquement par Max Weber et Pierre Bourdieu. Mais leurs conceptions de l’«échelle des valeurs» et de l’illusion scientifique dans le domaine sociologique sont le point de départ de l’ensemble des significations des «utopies» (terme qui figure dans le titre de ce texte et qui a été écrit à un moment où «l’échelle des valeurs» avec laquelle nous avons mené nos recherches «sans

valeurs» est en train de changer sous nos yeux) exposées au début de cet article. Bien que mes nombreuses études empiriques, et notamment celles sur les institutions de *think tanks* et leur expertise autonome et hétéronomique (mais bien sûr pas sur la «conspiration») soient à la base de cet article, il ne s'agit que d'un compte-rendu (illustratif, et non systématique) de quelques vieux – et pas si vieux débats classiques (entre Bruno Latour et Pierre Bourdieu, et entre Gabriel Tarde et Emile Durkheim). Le retour de Latour au «précurseur», Tarde, est un enjeu de batailles directes dans un domaine de recherche en pleine mutation. (La sociologie critique, notamment celle de Pierre Bourdieu, est accusée de «confondre théorie sociale et théorie du complot»). De même, le célèbre débat de 1903 entre Tarde et Durkheim a été un choc non seulement entre deux points de vue opposés sur la façon dont il faut comprendre «le principe fondamental de la sociologie: la réalité objective des faits sociaux», mais aussi entre deux points de vue incommensurables sur la société de l'époque. Car toute théorie classique est aussi une utopie de la société, une utopie du rôle des universités et de la vocation des scientifiques. Ainsi, mon hypothèse est qu'en revisitant ces vieux (et pas si vieux) débats et en comprenant les arguments classiques des incommensurables traditions sociologiques respectives, on peut aussi mieux comprendre les incommensurables notions actuelles d'expertise et de critique, mieux comprendre nos visions opposées du champ académique, qui est tout aussi radicalement redéfini. J'ai choisi une manière détournée de penser les contradictions de l'héritage – d'ailleurs, pas seulement des héritages scientifiques, mais, en fin de compte, de penser aussi les utopies sociologiques de la société dans laquelle nous devons encore vivre.

**Mots-clés:** utopies, échelle de valeurs, P. Bourdieu, *illusio*, B. Latour, «débat Tarde-Durkheim», les deux ouvrages de fiction de G. Tard, expertise et critique, temps-lieu ou utopie (M. Mamardashvili), la contradiction de l'héritage, la transformation néolibérale du champ scientifique

**Rezumat:** Acest articol are ca obiect tensiunea dintre neutralitatea valorilor și angajamentul în favoarea științelor sociale într-o perioadă de transformări radicale ale domeniului științific. Problema „științei ca vocație”, precum și cea a „științei în pericol și care din acest motiv devine periculoasă”, adică a autonomiei și heteronomiei „câmpului științific”, nu a fost examinată doar de Max Weber sau de Pierre Bourdieu. Dar concepțiile lor despre „scara de valori” și despre iluzia științifică în sociologie constituie punctul de plecare pentru ansamblul semnificațiilor „utopiilor”, termen care figurează în titlul articolului, scris într-un moment în care „scara valorilor” la care ne-am raportat în calitate de cercetători se schimbă sub ochii noștri.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** utopii, scară de valori, P. Bourdieu, *illusio*, B. Latour, dezbaterea Tarde-Durkheim, expertiză și critică, timp-loc sau utopie (M. Mamardashvili), contradicția moștenirii, transformarea neoliberală a câmpului științific

## References

- Bourdieu, P. (2000). *Pascalian Meditations*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2004). *Science of Science and Reflexivity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Deyanov, D. (1998). Bourdieu: The Loss of the Biographical *illusio*. *Sociological problems*, 30(3-4), 124-139 [in Bulgarian].
- Deyanova, L. (2007). Sadbata na kriticheskata sotsiologiya v epohata na global-optizma. In G. Dimitrov *et al.* (eds.), *Inovativna sotsiologiya* (pp. 282-296). Sofia: Sv. Kliment Ohridski University Press [Деянова, Л. 2007. Съдбата на критическата социология в епохата на глобал-оптизма. В: Димитров, Г. и др. (съст). Иновативна социология. София: УИ “Св. Климент Охридски”].
- Deyanova, L. (2008). “Le nouveau paradigme” des Sciences Sociales vu de l’Est. *Regards sociologiques*, 36, 69-81.

- Deyanova, L. (2009). *Ochertaniya na malchanieto: Istoricheska sotsiologiya na kolektivnata pamet*. Sofia: KX – Kritika i Humanizam [Деянова, Л. 2009. Очертания на мълчанието: Историческа социология на колективната памет. София: КХ – Критика и хуманизъм].
- Deyanova, L. (2010). Les sciences sociales socialistes à l'épreuve de la consommation élargie: Le double tournant à l'Est. In N. Ragaru, A. Capelle-Pogacean (eds.), *Vie quotidienne et pouvoir sous le communisme: Consommer à l'Est* (pp. 51-81). Paris: Karthala & CERL.
- Deyanova, L. (2013). Privlichaniya i prichinnosti – ponyatiето na Maks Veber "rodstvo po izbor". In D. Deyanov et al. (eds.), *Chuzhdenetsat i vsekidnevieto. Sbornik, posveten na 60-godishninata na Kolyo Koev* (pp. 86-98). Sofia: NBU & IKSI [Деянова, Л. 2013. Привличания и причинности – понятието на Макс Вебер "родство по избор". В: Деянов, Д. и др. (съст.) Чужденецът и всекидневието. Сборник, посветен на 60-годишнината на Кольо Коев. София: НБУ & ИКСИ].
- Durkheim, E. (1975). La sociologie et les sciences sociales: Confrontation avec Tarde. In E. Durkheim, *Textes. 1. Eléments de théorie sociale*. Paris: Editions de Minuit.
- Durkheim, E. (1978). Course in Sociology: Opening Lecture. In M. Traugott (ed.), *Emile Durkheim on Institutional Analysis* (pp. 43-70). Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.
- Fabiani, J.-L. (1988). *Les philosophes de la République*. Paris: Editions de Minuit.
- Favre, P. (1983). Gabriel Tarde et la mauvaise fortune d'un 'baptême sociologique' de la science politique. *Revue française de sociologie*, 24(1), 3-30.
- Gheorghiu, M.D., Arnaut, P. (eds.) (2013). *Les sciences sociales et leurs publics. Engagements et distanciations*. Iași: Editura Universitatii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza".
- Koev, K. (2003). *Elementarni formi na vsekidnevен живот: Maks Veber i nemskoto sotsialnonauchno poznanie ot kraя na XIX i nachaloto na XX vek*. Sofia: Prosveta [Коев, К. 2003. Елементарни форми на всекидневен живот: Макс Вебер и немското социалнонаучно познание от края на XIX и началото на XX век. София: Просвета].
- Koleva, S. (2018). *Totalitarian Experience and Knowledge Production: Sociology in Central and Eastern Europe 1945–1989*. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Koselleck, R. (2004). *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Koyré, A. (1939). *Études galiléennes*. Paris: Hermann.
- Krastev, I. (1999). *Pod liniya: Sotsialnite nauki na drugiya vek*. Sofia: Fakel express [Кръстев, И. 1999. Под линия: Социалните науки на другия век. София: Факел експрес].
- Lahire, B. (2002). *A quoi sert la sociologie?* Paris: La Découverte.
- Latour, B. (1985). Comment peut-on parler de capitalisme scientifique? *T.L.P.*, 5(3), 173-184.
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mamardashvili, M. (1997). *Psikhologicheskaya topologiya puti: M. Prust "V poiskakh utrachennogo vremeni"*. Sankt Peterburg: Izdatel'stvo Russkogo Khristianskogo gumanitarnogo instituta, Zhurnal "Neva" [Мамардашвили, М. 1997. Психологическия топология пъти: М. Пруст "В поисках утраченного времени". Санкт Петербург: Издательство Русского Христианского гуманитарного института, Журнал "Нева"].
- Mamardashvili, M. (1997). Savremennostta – usiliето da razberech. In L. Deyanova (ed.), *Sotsiologiatata kato chans. Antologiya*. Sofia: Iztok-Zapad ed.
- Noiriel, G. (1996). *Sur la "crise" de l'histoire*. Paris: Belin.
- Rosental, P.-A. (2011). Où s'arrête la contagion? Faits et utopie chez Gabriel Tarde. *Tracés. Revue de Sciences humaines*, 21(2), 109-124.
- Tarde, G. (1884). Études sur le socialisme contemporain. *Revue Philosophique*, 18, 173-192.
- Tarde, G. (1890). *Les lois de l'imitation*. Paris: Alcan [Translated by Elsie Clews Parsons and published as *The Laws of Imitation*, with an Introduction by Franklin H. Giddings. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1903].
- Tarde, G. (1892). Les géants chauves. *RPL. Revue bleue*, 50(20), 611-619. Available online: <https://laporteouverte.me/2018/07/29/gabriel-tarde-les-geants-chauves-conte/>

- Tarde, G. [1895] (1999). *La logique sociale*. Paris: Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond.
- Tarde, G. [1896] (1905). *Fragment d'histoire future*. Paris: V. Giard & E. Brière [Translated by Cloudesley Brereton and published as *Underground Man*, with a preface by H.G. Wells. Westport, CN: Hyperion Press, Inc., 1905].
- Tarde, G. (1898). Le public et la foule. *Revue de Paris*, 4, 287-306, 615-635.
- Tarde, G. (1902). *La psychologie économique*. Paris: Alcan.
- Todorova, M., Dimou, A., Troebst, S. (eds.) (2014). *Remembering Communism: Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experience in Southeast Europe*. Budapest/New York: CEU Press.
- Trifonov, Y. (1999). *The Old Man*. Translated by Jacqueline Edwards and Mitchell Schneider. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999.
- Wagner, P. (1994). *A Sociology of Modernity: Liberty and Discipline*. London/New York: Routledge.

