

Max Weber's influence in Albanian sociology

Silvana Ago

PhD Candidate, European University of Tirana

Current Job: University of Tirana (UT), Lecturer

Max Weber is surely one of the most important sociologists, yet his influence is not considerable in the sociology of the Albanian reality. The elements of our sociology have been established only in the last decade, while Weber's sociology is one of the most interesting among the great interdisciplinary sociology approaches. Developing the concepts of "real" and "not ideal", the reality of the individual himself emerges as a social being as well as the development of the social structure itself. Taking into consideration the historical conditions in which our country has gone through, the influence of such names is almost invisible. The misunderstanding of Marx and maybe even the misunderstanding of Weber himself will take little place in our social reality. Understanding what really a human being is, composes once again the major concern transmitted from time to time by sociologists. Next, we are dealing with another approach related to knowing the social being as well as the individual himself, which varies from knowing other elements like God or natural causes, which in Weber's sociology compose secondary elements in the development of a social context.

Mankind is surprised at his own status, not because of understanding himself as part of the cosmos but also because he feels different from the others in universe. The approach regarding our position in universe as a being capable to think, interact and even change the world at times is very interesting. There is an idea merging that understanding the similarities to God is what makes us understand the transcendence, because the capability to understand mankind and God permits us to understand ourselves through exercising our thought. Understanding ourselves as a human being as well as people part of the social life is one of the most important influences in Weber's sociology.

Key words: sociology, Albania, God, social individual, social structure

“Man” concept according to Weber

This passage will help us understand the “man” concept according to a new interpretation. Biologically, we manage to realize human being’s anatomy and physiology. A common topic in physiology and else is discovering the inside of the human being. Dealing with the “man” concept is one of the greatest developments of science and philosophy. The reformation philosophers as well as others have tried to undress man from the mystic and invisible; Luther was among the first ones to seek for human freedom in order to act freely and move forward without anybody’s help.

Weber in his deeds, has taken lessons from his studies on Calvin and Luther and mainly deals the topic of individualization: meaning that our individual fate is surrounded by dark mysteries which are unable to be discovered and looking for them is quite naive. With its inhumanity, this doctrine would be ahead of all because of a generation subjected to the consequences of life, the feeling of an internal loneliness not heard by specific individuals. In the most important matters of life, people were informed to follow the road of loneliness to predestinate fate. None of the churches could help him unveil his fate except from himself¹.

Understanding the human as a being composes the main concern transmitted from time to time by philosophers from the ancient times to nowadays. Hereinafter we will deal with another approach regarding the attitude that knowing the man comes from knowing other elements as God or natural causes. In front of the creation sheen, the man is surprised at his own status, not because understanding himself as part of the cosmos, but also because feeling different from the universe².

The approach regarding our position in universe as a being capable to think, interact and even change the world at times is very interesting. There is an idea merging that understanding the similarities between us and God is what makes us understand the transcendence, because the

¹ Weber. Max’ *The protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism*’ Plejad, Tirana: 2005 Page 125

² Farago. Frances “Cristianism, Judaism and the Western thought” Lira, Tirana: 2007 Page 60

capability to understand mankind and God permits us to understand ourselves through exercising our thought.

The Bible considers man not as a simple animal and neither as an absolute natural being; on the contrary, he must be a holy creature coming from God, which makes us think that it is God who lets man to know himself; understanding these topics as individuals will make it easier for us to separate from other beings³. Our mentality regarding the development of social thought is a mentality which *a priori* forces us to a new knowledge: human society is a society continuously looking for itself. Trying to discover his humanity helps man to be equipped with knowledge and understand lots of things, even penetrate into other beings.

Reformation, according to me, lightened us because it enabled man to understand himself and be represented as a being capable of taking decisions and understanding himself and others. Social evaluations make the human be positioned in the opportunity to possess what he desires and what he is seeking from himself. The idea of being able to think is mentioned in the philosophy of the reformation, which must be accepted as valuable as it returned the dignity lost from the religious dogma.

The love for God, a new tradition of Albanian thought

Regarding Love for God, we have dealt with the feeling to have another power on our heads that helps us even unconsciously. The existence of God has never been in doubt. What looks evident is that God exists and as such, He is the associate to the right way. When talking about the love for God we must often think of naming this love.

God takes a very important place in philosophy. Discussing the love for God is a transcendental discussion, but this doesn't mean that we disagree at the existence of God, we have already accepted His existence even without seeing Him. The relationship between God and man is a holy conscience⁴. It is a relationship which will help to understand our existence but also the existence of Someone else, besides. The goodness coming is a goodness forcing to love Him.

³ Weber, Max "The protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism" Plejad, Tirana: 2005 Page 65

⁴Weber. Max' 'The protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism' Plejad, Tirana: 2005

The discussion posed related to loving oneself and the other often helps in understanding love for God. It is a love which seems to have brought the change not only for the individual but also for the entire society. The question to pose related to the love for God is whether it is forced or it is a love coming as a result of the reward for His help⁵?

In Saint Paul's discussion we would name this explanation as a judgement coming from the Service God has done to us. Although, religion's influence in our lives often forces us to think differently about the image of God. Luther in the love for God sees the harmony of the opposites, presenting love for God as follows: "Our good is hidden so beautifully and shown in the shape of the opposite itself. Life is hidden behind death, God's love for us is hidden behind His hatred⁶," what this passage interprets is the idea of the opposites because the opposites establish harmony. In words, I understand that love for God is a love to search inside ourselves. It is the regulation of a conscience looking for salvation.

I see it as a regulation of life giving the idea of a better life. This leads to what I will explain related to the attitude of social life, to fallibility. God's love for us is much greater than our arguments presented by Erasmus, which remain valuable. In Timothy's letter he writes the followings about Paul: "God mercied me because my disbelief came from my lack of knowledge⁷." Here, human sin undresses from any type of fear, it is justified by the desire for forgiveness. The idea of the love that God is bigger than the blame it keeps in itself. According to Calvin, the love for God established by us, is bigger than the blame. Seen in our reality, these facts seem to be pretty interesting because Albanian religious tradition related to Faith in God has been faint and this belief will liberate us from the mentality of up-to-date limited faith.

Further let's see some fragmentations from Erasmus who has been skeptical and incredulous to religion and God. Erasmus in his attitude often shows that he does not need so much love as long as he thinks that this love can be rewarded in many ways. The idea that Christianity was preaching for so much love had named the society. According to him, care and love we had for God and religion was a care which had left behind science and thought. In few words, this was a

⁵ Weber, Max "The protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism" Plejad, Tirana: 2005 Page 125

⁶ Farrago. Farnes. "Christianity, judaism, islam in the Western thought" LIRA. Tirana: 2007. Page 271

⁷Page 155

society facing hurdles and religion had contributed in the development of some ideas. Erasmus fearfully expresses this part as: "Then you will see that the founders have appreciated the deepness of the soul, while being enemies of literature and sciences."⁸

The skepticism to an exaggerated love brings us to regress. According to me, this was one of the best attitudes regarding love for God and religion. Seen in a positive way, this is an opportunity to create the existence of a World that must separate love for God from Love for oneself. Science and religion can walk undivided in order to create their own individuality. Love coming from the feeling of goodness is a love expressing the attitude that life is beautiful and must be enjoyed with or without the existence of God. At least, in this chapter of humanism we undress from religious doctrines. The full liberation from the clutches of religion makes you think that social life is constantly charged with engagements and as such it is a life that needs love for God. It also needs the development of science because it is a good prodigy for human development.

Is religion a progress or regress in the concept of Marx? Counter-argument to Weber's sociology

The history of religion composes what is called as war against the scientific thought; the church pursued with severity and brought to the stake all those who didn't follow its orders, but we need to highlight that here starts to show itself Lutheran theory for a plurality of thought. The war against the church was an open war that undertook important steps which helped society move forwards. The arguments of Marx about religion as a moral taking nowhere and that inquisition was not the best form, show that his moral represented him as a man wanting the freedom of science.

Marx was talking about the vanity of religion and the initiative that man needs to undertake in his conscience; he also talks about the damage that it brings to the society⁹. The feeling prevailing according to Marx and Engels is totally against reformation; the first group is for a total evaporation of religion while the other is for its regeneration. Thus, spirits of capitalism are

⁸ Page 157

⁹ Marx, Karl, *The capital*, Tirana: 1973, Naim Frashëri Page 98

the spirits of an individual that understands well the meaning of being free and subjected; in a few words, progress to the goodness deriving from work is completely different. One side looks at the solidarity of the religion, the other watches the evaporation of the religion as the result of work's development¹⁰.

The facts argue that some antique states that disappeared pagan religions had some progress because they gave man freedom to act and understand that religion does never bring progress to a society; according to Marx what brings the progress is the collective work of the entire social strata. As long as the society is not free, the religion will never enable development. The state must support the science to move forward and then we will see the rights of a society in the progressive development of the common good. It looks like Albanian reality as for religious beliefs, is more cooperating.

According to Marx and also Engels, philosophy is different from religion and here we will mention their fair target. Philosophy talks about the religion after studying and understanding it well. Religion promises the sky and the earth while philosophy simply looks for the truth¹¹. Religion seeks for belief while philosophy doesn't require belief in its conclusions. What can be considered as the basis for the critics of Marx is that man creates the religion and not the other way round. Religion is human's conscience and self-sensitivity, who either couldn't find himself or lost it again; man is not an abstract being that resides outside the world.

Man is the state and society, this state and society give birth to the religion, an oblique mentality as the world itself is oblique. Religion is the overall theory of the world. It transforms the human being in a fanatical reality because human being does not have a real one. So, fighting the religion is the war against that world which actually is the religion itself.

The cohabitation of 2 social-religious morals, composes the understanding of a social mentality.

¹⁰Marx, Karl, *The capital*, Tirana: 1973, Naim Frashëri Page 98

¹¹Marx, Karl, *The capital*, Tirana: 1973, Naim Frashëri Page 98

Humanism mentions the human moral also. This moral according to the reformators and especially according to the head of humanism, Erasmus, was the joint of two morals: terrestrial and holy moral. State leaders were seen in the eyes of simple people as individuals with a high moral whilst in the eyes of God they were seen as people with moral. Here it is evidenced the desire for a human Christianity. When people join the terrestrial and holy morals, they feel comfortable about their choice and God will support them. Without leaving Erasmus' ideas for a Christian humanism, he continuously wants that the believers love God. The arguments of Erasmus were convincing as he showed the believers how important and necessary believing in God was for their lives.

Erasmus was one of those who strived so that the renaissance philosophy was not known under the aesthetic aspect but in all the categories operating. Erasmus had the virtue and desire to humanize Christianity and to liberate it from the scholastic point, that of being a threat to religion. He thought that the medieval darkness had transformed mankind into an anti-human creature. He argued that the return of antique values, understanding the classical Greeks would help the society come out from darkness to light. Erasmus believed that the genesis of human reformation should begin from "The new Testament¹²".

He wanted to take away the Old Christianity and here he meant the medieval tradition where the power had transformed religion into a usurping dogma. Erasmus wanted to bring up a new spirit, a healing spirit for the times, so Erasmus undoubtedly believed in religious humanity. But to reach this humanism he said that some abstract things needed to be avoided. He was talking about such occurrences that enclose man into a box. These were magics, mystic things or meaningless activities which didn't let man to act according to his nature. As an innocent being, inspired by scholastic dogma, man had blindly believed in these things, that's why he had encountered problems.

Erasmus showed that religion didn't have to deal with tiny matters but it should deal with problems that really concerned mankind. Erasmus unfolds clearly his ideas when referring: "Human beings must really know the face of God¹³". Indeed this expression showed

¹²Erasmus of Rotherdam "The glory of insanity". Tirana: 2004, ISBN

¹³ Erasmus of Rotherdam "The glory of insanity" INFOBOTUES, Tirana 2004 Page 27.

that God was nearer to the people but the latter should try more to know Him. Furthermore, Erasmus thinks that the freedom of Christians is above everything, stopping any preaching not based on the Bible. "It is pretty important to call ourselves Christians and human", he says. So, humanism would take man to a new era, to a society with strong democratic principles.

As for Albanian reality, believing according to Weber's religion is a continuous attempt to come out of the total belief and to return to the tradition of a country without religion and with full freedom. *As a reminiscence of "critical thought", in the episode "religion is opium for the people", Fatos Tarifa shares his thoughts in this debate. According to him "religious faith comes as a result of this indoctrination, and as such, it is "no modern phenomenon".* What about Enver Hoxha's regime –where Tarifa himself was educated–, wasn't it indoctrinative and opium? *He also pretends to substitute belief (believing that God exists) with knowing (knowing that $2+2=4$), but this generated only misery. The expertise of the sociologist Tarifa is so deep in the range of education that he concludes that "in a secular state and school, pupils must learn to doubt in religion and in any dogma (religious, political or ideological) subjecting them to a rigorous reasoning empirically supported, and not to feed themselves with them"¹⁴.* Some questions raise:

1. *Can Tarifa prove empirically that the European countries which include religion in their education curricula are not secular?*

2. *Who said that in schools belief must be taught and not religion and on what theory is proven that religion and belief are synonyms?*

3. *On what empirism can "Muji and Halili" be proven, the authenticity of Lekë Dukagjin on the Canon attributed to him and on what critical reasoning are those pupils today served in their history books the number of 200.000 "Albanian arbëreshë" that migrated to Italy in the 15th century or the conclusion that "Illyrians were very honest, welcoming and brave"¹⁵?*

4. *How can we educate the doubt, thus the freedom without abandoning the "must" mentality? Besides, looking the teacher as the one who determines what is good and bad for the pupil (because he has the must/mustn't certificate), practically Tarifa, refers to Søren Kierkegaard, to justify that "belief has not an intellectual basis". But in school it is discussed to*

¹⁴ <http://www.mapo.al/2016/04>

¹⁵ <http://www.mapo.al/2016/04>

be taught religion and not belief, and ironically the lack of this basis didn't stop the Danish philosopher to be a believer and intellectual – he thinks that religion cannot be studied just to be known, but to deny transcendence, otherwise, it remains a food and surely an opium. And this is the expert's voice¹⁶.

In this tradition, we can say that the development of studies of Weber's sociology in the Albanian reality is not practically known, according to the religious and social context.

Conclusions:

The Albanian sociology is living a phase of prosperity in its field, but what we can undoubtedly say, is that it will find the space at Max Weber; his sociology as a social ethics has surely found the appropriate terrain in our reality's mentality. He agrees that people in order to solve their human dilemmas should walk to come to the rational. Belief, will, feelings are elements composing the human personality, without which, mankind couldn't solve their problems. Humanism is a consequence of these elements.

Reference:

Erasmus of Rotherdam "The glory of insanity" INFOBOTUES, Tirana 2004 Page 27,

Erasmus of Rotherdam "The glory of insanity" Tirana: 2004, ISBN T

Farago Frances "Christianity, Judaism and the Western thought" Lira, Tirana: 2007 Page 60,

Marx, Carl, The Capital, Tirana: 1973, Naim Frashëri Page 98

Weber, Max "The protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism" Plejad, Tirana: 2005 Page 125

<http://www.mapo.al/2016/04>