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The social, cosmopolitanism and beyond

MICHAEL SCHILLMEIER

ABSTRACT

First, this article will outline the metaphysics of ‘the social’ that implicitly and explicitly connects the work of classical and contemporary cosmopolitan sociologists as different as Durkheim, Weber, Beck and Luhmann. In a second step, I will show that the cosmopolitan outlook of classical sociology is driven by exclusive differences. In understanding human affairs, both classical sociology and contemporary cosmopolitan sociology reflect a very modernist outlook of epistemological, conceptual, methodological and disciplinary rigour that separates the cultural sphere from the natural objects of concern. I will suggest that classical sociology – in order to be cosmopolitan – is forced (1) to exclude *non-social and non-human objects* as part of its conceptual and methodological rigour, and (2) consequently and methodologically to rule out the non-social and the non-human. Cosmopolitan sociology imagines ‘the social’ as a global, universal *explanatory device* to conceive and describe the non-social and non-human. In a third and final step the article draws upon the work of the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde and offers a possible alternative to the modernist social and cultural other-logics of social sciences. It argues for a inclusive conception of ‘the social’ that gives the non-social and non-human a cosmopolitan voice as well.

Key words classical sociology, cosmopolitanism, nature/culture, the social, Gabriel Tarde

1 THE OTHER-LOGICS OF COSMOPOLITAN SOCIOLOGY AND ITS LIMITS

In contemporary social studies, the question concerning both the limits of the object of enquiry and also the limits of social reasoning itself plays a dominant role. Central to such 'boundary-discourses' are socio-political and cultural processes of societies-in-the-making which are questioning and altering the (b)orders of social relations (Rumford, 2006a, 2006b). Currently, the debates about a possible new, 'cosmopolitan' framework of sociological investigation play a considerable role in visualizing the relevance of those contested boundaries (Beck and Sznaider, 2006). According to Ulrich Beck (2006), classical social scientific methodologies, theories and research agendas construct and in turn depend on the metaphysics of societies-as-nation-states. Beck argues that such a 'methodological nationalism' is a relic of 19th-century societal logics that were dominated by the 'either . . . or' of boundary politics (Beck, 1997). The latter produces 'exclusive differences', i.e. clear and distinct limits between what is culturally normal(ized) and what is not. Defined by the logics of the 'either . . . or', identities exclude each other to grant and sustain their lexical boundaries. However, as Beck and others argue, current *transnational* processes visualize new forms of network-like organizations, multiple belongings and hybrid identity formations that cannot be addressed adequately by the logics of exclusive differences (Axford, 2006; Beck, 2007; Urry, 2000).

These dynamics visualize a 'cosmopolitan condition' (Beck and Sznaider, 2006) necessitating a conceptual reorientation toward a *cosmopolitan* outlook of sociological reasoning. A cosmopolitan view unfolds the logic of 'inclusive differences' (Beck, 2006; Beck and Grande, 2006) that brings to the fore the global demand of inclusion and not exclusion of the cultural other. Such inclusive dynamics stipulate a cosmopolitan reframing of social enquiry. It enables comprehending the global transgression of traditional (b)orders precisely as a process of connecting and acknowledging the heterogeneity and difference of the cultural other instead of separating off exclusive socio-cultural spaces that fails to recognize the interdependency and interconnect-edness of cultural otherness (cf. Appiah, 2006; Cheah and Robbins, 1998).

It is not my intention to discuss whether the claim that classical sociology is performing a 'methodological nationalism' is feasible or not. Having said this, I do agree with Beck and others that it is more than obvious that current sociological concepts and research agendas have to update their modes of description in order to describe adequately contemporary societal change. Concepts of new cosmopolitanism, then, can be understood as historically updated, i.e. late 20th and early 21st sociological concepts of social change that face a globalized world that is the effect of transnational processes and structures. Following such a reading, the difference between classical and

cosmopolitan sociology is given by historical changes of globalization that necessitate a social ontology of transnational cultural differences that conceptually and methodologically includes the relatedness of otherness instead of its exclusion and separation. Beck's account of inclusive differences and all forms of the new cosmopolitanism can be understood primarily as attempts to revise the conceptual architecture of social theories of change and the related perspective and imagination of the human condition within a globalizing world.

Following from that, contemporary social sciences are well advised to imagine transnational realities and hence a cosmopolitan outlook that unfolds a sense of inclusive differences of cultural otherness. As I will argue, classical sociological thought is already well prepared to do so. I will show that classical sociology, despite its critics, has always been cosmopolitan – albeit not transnational.¹ Clearly the metaphysics of exclusive perspectives and societies-as-nation-states ('methodological nationalism') is outdated and this is precisely what brings to the fore the very strength of classical sociology – *the metaphysics of the social* ('methodological sociologism'). The very critique provided by social metaphysics has been giving sociology a cosmopolitan outlook, dating back to its very institutional inauguration by Durkheim, Mauss, Weber, Simmel, as well its contemporaries like Beck, Luhmann and many other prominent figures of social thought.

Classical cosmopolitan sociology – so my argument goes – is concerned with a universal framework of 'the social' that questions the metaphysics of the single nature, i.e. the cosmos of things, their territories and borders (cf. Chernilo, 2007). Social sciences have always been cosmopolitan given the methodological and conceptual interest in 'the social' that unfolds an explanatory space of human affairs provided by the exclusive difference between societal/cultural relations and natural laws. Such a space opens up the possibilities for what can be called 'other-wise-ness'. Other-wise-ness means: (1) human affairs are not merely caused by natural laws and accordingly can be thought of otherwise, and (2) the social space of human affairs welcomes conceptually and methodologically the cultural other, it unfolds what I like to call an *other-logics* of human affairs.

My first step will be to outline – briefly and only in a more or less preliminary way – the metaphysics of 'the social' that implicitly and explicitly connects the work of classical and contemporary cosmopolitan sociologists as different as Durkheim, Weber, Beck and Luhmann. In a second step, however, I will show that the cosmopolitan outlook of classical sociology is driven by exclusive differences. In understanding human affairs, classical and contemporary cosmopolitan sociology reflects a very modernist outlook of epistemological, conceptual, methodological and disciplinary rigour that separates the cultural sphere from the natural objects of concern. I will suggest that classical sociology and contemporary sociology – in order to be cosmopolitan – are forced to

- 1 exclude *non-social and non-human objects* as part of their conceptual and methodological rigour, and
- 2 consequently and methodologically rule out the non-social and the non-human. Cosmopolitan sociology imagines 'the social' as a global, universal *explanatory device* to conceive and describe the non-social and non-human.

In a third, highly preliminary step I will try to revise the modernist social and cultural other-logics of social sciences. To do so, I will draw upon the work of the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde. Tarde offers – so my argument goes – an alternative, that is a *cosmo-logical* reading of the other-logics of 'the social'. He argues for an inclusive conception of 'the social' that radically differs from the various versions of an exclusivist perspective of 'the social' provided by classical cosmopolitan sociology. For Tarde, 'the social' is not the explanatory device to describe and make sense of the non-social and non-human. Rather, the social remains contingent, open and to be explained by the very associations of 'hybrid acts' that connect the human and non-human. Thus, Tarde's sociology circumscribes an early form of what Bruno Latour and others call a 'sociology of translation' (Callon, 1986, 1991; Latour, 2005) which imagines the social as constantly being maintained but also 'cosmopolitized' (Schillmeier, 2008a, 2008b; Schillmeier and Pohler, 2006), that is, disrupted, questioned and altered by its association with the non-social (individual, non-human, etc.) other.

The social, then, can be understood as the effect of inclusive differences that highlight the heterogeneity of societal processes beyond the classical cosmopolitan division between nature and culture. Moreover, Tarde's account appears so interesting for contemporary social sciences since he proposes a theory of circulation, propagation and diffusion of 'the social' that is rigorously transnational in its outlook. Tarde's account unfolds a *cosmo-logics* of societal affairs that is transnational but also transsocial. It allows a reflection upon the condition of human societal affairs as the stabilization and contestation of the more or less fragile orderings of social and non-social, human and non-human associations that effect the contingent divisions between what is seen as 'nature' and/or 'culture'.

2 THE UNIVERSALISM OF SOCIAL METHODOLOGY

Since the 19th century, the social sciences have been interested in institutionalizing and professionalizing an independent scientific voice focusing on the ambivalent and contingent forms of social relations that (dis-)order human affairs. To be sure, to speak of *a* voice is misleading to a certain extent. The social sciences have never been a unified or single project. What makes the social scientific endeavour intrinsically multiple is the idiosyncratic fact

that social scientific observation is itself part of the object of concern that is to be observed: 'the social'. However, in order to turn the 'social multiple' into a methodologically universal, i.e. cosmopolitan framework, sociology made an effort to demarcate 'the social' from 'the non-social'.

For cosmopolitan sociology, 'the social' has a reality of its own – a socio-logics so to speak – that necessarily includes the cultural other but excludes the logic of 'the non-social' and 'the non-human' to gain universal explanatory power. Most recently, Brian Turner has circumscribed the methodological space of the social accordingly.

The social differs from

- (1) 'nature',
- (2) 'the individual' and its cognitive concerns, and
- (3) 'commonsense' knowledge.

(Turner, 2006: 134–5)

Only when 'the social' attains its own conceptual and methodological space and accordingly does not blend into physiological or biological orders or appears to be mere opinion² is it observable and analysable by social scientists. Methodologically speaking, the societal relevance of brains, individual bodies, natural things and artefacts is the effect of nothing but social relations of human organization that attach social relevance to mere material relations. Within the methodology of the social there are no non-social objects of and for themselves. Such a socio-logics has turned into a colourful variety of highly different concepts concerning the other-logics of the social. Drawing upon a highly idiosyncratic selection of such accounts I will outline the symptomatic traces left by classical cosmopolitan sociology.

ÉMILE DURKHEIM

Following the methodology of 'the social', the social object is no essence, no substance and no ahistorical or natural thing detached from societal affairs, but a relational and emergent effect of human practices. Émile Durkheim has outlined a quite remarkable methodology of the emergence of the social (Durkheim, 1938). First of all, Durkheim stresses that social objects presuppose non-social entities. Individual human minds and bodies living within an environment of bio-physiological conditions make human life possible and durable in the first place (ibid.; cf. Luhmann, 1996: 115). However, human interactions disclose *and* delimit an emergent space that is more than just the association of psyches, biological relations, physiological affinities, material things and embodied individuals. For Durkheim, the social realm represents a reality *sui generis*. Accordingly, it is the 'inner social milieu' that frames the

self-enclosed space of the social that limits sociology's 'specific competence' that differs, for example, from psychology or biology (Durkheim, 1938). Durkheim argues that

... a psychological education, even more than a biological one, constitutes a necessary preparation for a sociologist. But it can only be of service to him if, once he has acquired it, he frees himself from it, going beyond it by adding a specifically sociological education. He must give up making psychology in some way the focal point of his operations, the point of departure to which he must always return after his adventurous incursions into the social world. He must establish himself at the very heart of social facts in order to observe and confront them totally, *without any mediating factor*, while calling upon the science of the individual only for a general preparation and, if needs be, for useful suggestions. (Durkheim, 1982[1895]: 135; emphasis added)

Hence, paradoxically, 'the social' circumscribes a collective 'inner space' that – since it is without any mediating factor – is *exterior* to individual minds and the natural materiality of their actions (cf. Gasché, 1973). Such social exteriority then is related *and* non-related to the materiality of individual actions. But only after the nature of individual concerns is abstracted from the global, universal inner space of the methodological, do the conceptual merits of 'the social' become visible. Thus, in order to grant universal explanatory power to the social space, Durkheim necessarily has to abstract from humans (psyches) and their individual concerns as well as from their individual, embodied and material relations. Durkheim stresses:

It is always a question of discovering the general law of sociality. Since they are social, all the facts studied by the separate social sciences supposedly have a common character, and the subject of sociology is the social fact in abstraction. (Durkheim in Tarde, 1969: 137)

This complex process of abstraction, then, grants the auto-logics of the social as a global, i.e. universal and self-explanatory methodological framework. It is the general 'flexibility, freedom and contingency' of 'enlightened' *social objects* that reveal the difference to the nature of individual things and their pure material existence. Although extensive, the following passage by Durkheim makes this point very clear:

Individualistic sociology is only applying the old principles of materialistic metaphysics to social life. . . . The whole is only formed by the grouping of the parts, and these groupings do not take place suddenly as the result of a miracle. There is an infinite series of intermediaries between the state of pure isolation and the completed state of association. . . . But as the association is formed it gives birth to phenomena

which are not derived directly from the nature of the associated elements, and the more elements involved and the more powerful their synthesis, the more marked is this partial independence. No doubt it is this that accounts for the flexibility, freedom and contingency that the superior forms of reality show in comparison with the lower forms in which they are rooted. In fact, when a way of doing or being depends from a whole without depending immediately from the parts which compose that whole, it enjoys, as a result of this diffusion, a ubiquity which to a certain extent frees it. As it is not fixed to a particular point in space, it is not bound by too narrowly limited conditions of existence. If some cause induces a variation, that variation will encounter less resistance and will come into existence more easily because it has, in a way, a greater scope for movement. If certain of the parts reject it, certain others will form the basis (*point d'appui*) necessary for the new arrangement without, for all that, being obliged to rearrange themselves. (Durkheim, 1953: 29–30)

Hence, the very fact that the social is *more than* the discourse about individual, material things is significant for Durkheim's strategy of delimiting the scientific autonomy of the methodology of the social.³ Obviously, Durkheim's quest for a social methodology translates the Kantian *humanistic* idea into a methodological framework of *social facts* (cf. Kant, 1977). Like Kant, Durkheim was interested in simultaneously linking and differentiating the realms of enlightened human nature and nature's laws. Moreover, Durkheim (like Kant) was fascinated by the power of methodological abstraction: 'When the individual has been eliminated, society alone remains. We must, then, seek the explanation of social life in the nature of society itself.' (Durkheim, 1938: 102)

Such an exclusivist perspective enabled Durkheim to draw self-limiting, conceptual boundaries in order to gain a scientific voice of and for itself, a voice that speaks about 'a specific reality which has its own characteristics'. (Durkheim, 1938: 103). Only under these circumstances does the methodology of the social not fall back into the realm of naturalism and psychological individualism, and is able to gain an autonomous scientific voice instead (Durkheim, 1938). Only such a space that remains related but unmediated by the other (the individual, the physiological, the biological) is seen truly and scientifically as the exclusivity of social space that – for Durkheim – unfolds its reality that is more complex than non-social realities.

MAX WEBER

For Max Weber the notion of 'the social' as 'the relation between humans' (Weber, 1951: 165) gets its meaning by and through 'concrete contemporary

problems [*Gegenwartsprobleme*]’ (ibid.). Max Weber’s cosmopolitan understanding of ‘the social’ systematically outlines the difference between bounded matters of facts (nature) and fluid matters of concepts (culture) (ibid.: 165–6). Max Weber stresses:

It is not the ‘material’ [*sachlichen*] interconnectedness of ‘things’ [*Dingen*] but the *conceptual* [*gedanklichen*] interconnectedness of problems that defines the scope of the various sciences. A new ‘science’ emerges where new problems are pursued by new methods, and truths are thereby discovered which open up significant points of view. It is now no accident that the term ‘the social’, which seems to have quite a general meaning, turns out to have, as soon as one carefully examines its application, a specifically coloured though often indefinite meaning. Its ‘generality’ rests on nothing but its ambiguity. It provides, when taken in its ‘general’ meaning, no specific point of view, from which the significance of given elements of culture can be analyzed. (Weber, 1951: 166–7)⁴

For Max Weber, social sciences are ‘sciences of the concrete present’ [*Wirklichkeitswissenschaften*] that reflect on the interdependencies of highly *individual* social cultural life, its conditions, realities, relations, specificities and cultural meaning that actualize and perish through time (Weber, 1951: 170ff.). Extending Kant’s humanistic critique through the lenses of culture, causal relations that make up the laws of nature or cognitive processes become a ‘question of ascription [*Zurechnungsfrage*] from the standpoint of man’ (ibid.: 180), that is, a question of *Verstehen* through *relived experience*. Ascription and human position give meaning to the ‘meaningless infinity of world affairs’ (ibid.: 180); they attach a specific cultural *meaning* to the *natural flow* of things. Consequently, individuals and nature alike can be understood as a universal achievement of individual attachment of cultural meaning [*Kulturbedeutung*], i.e. as the (unintended) consequences of the plurality of the specificity of *human* relations and not the relationship of essences or naturally given objects (ibid.).

Following the Weberian legacy, it is precisely the *historical flow and social fluidity of things* that names a major insight provided by the socio-logics of otherness. It is the culturally attributed dimension of the limits of ‘the social’ that makes their boundaries fluid. The boundaries of social phenomena are fluid since they reflect historical changes and – in principle – allow the unlimited possibilities of contested *cultural* translations of *factual* relations of things to unfold. The cultural meaning visualizes the possibilities of otherness. Fluidity in Weber’s sense also refers to the multiple scales (interaction, organization, society) of cultural translations, which by definition exceed the problems of territorially demarcated entities (Weber, 1951). For Weber, contestation, uncertainty and vagueness define the *general meaning* of ‘the social’. The methodology of the social, then, does not circumscribe a scientific ‘object’

but its other, i.e. its “subjective” conditions’ [*subjektive Voraussetzungen*] (ibid.: 182).

The latter is much too fluid, vague and ambiguous to be standardized and objectified even by general social science (Weber, 1973: 206). From a methodology of the social, it is necessary to remain within a highly specialized and one-sided focus on *societal problems*, be they economical, political, religious, scientific, etc. Weber’s perspective of the social questions the assumption that there is such a thing as *the* social science or *the* society. Rather, societal problems embrace specific societal forms [*Vergesellschaftungsformen*]. It is precisely the *general* and *universal* methodological conceptualization of the social that *does not* outline a container model of social relations, but the contingency and fluidity of its individual cultural and historical conduct. Obviously, from a Weberian point of view, the ‘nation-state’ doesn’t appear as a natural object but as a culturally specific, historically changing and socially contested ‘object’. In that sense, new cosmopolitanism tackles changes of the cultural meaning of nation-states by giving it a transnational outlook. From this it follows that the limits of space as outlined by the methodological sociology of classical sociology cannot be imagined as geographical borders or geometrical lines. Rather, in a precise sense of the term, the space of ‘the social’ or ‘the cultural’ *is* boundary. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger clarifies such a relation between space and boundary very lucidly:

A space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary, Greek *peras*. A boundary is not that which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing. (Heidegger, 1971: 154)

With this in mind, there is nothing but ‘the social’ precisely because *what* the social *is* remains open, contested, multiple, fluid, etc. It is the exclusive, universally applicable difference of ‘the viewpoint of “the social”’ as ‘the relation between humans’, which actualizes the methodological rigour of the social and liberates it from the metaphysics of merely materialistic or naturalistic relations of societal phenomena (cf. Castoriadis, 1990; Luhmann, 1998). Again we find a strong relation of individual and social concerns, which turn mere natural objects and facts into socio-cultural ‘concerns’. Again such a relationship is related but unmediated by the non-cultural other. The non-cultural other only gains its voice through culture.

Although completely different in their outlook, the Durkheimian methodology and the Weberian methodology of the social share a cosmopolitan perspective precisely since both accounts unfold a self-referential methodological space that constructs and explains otherness instead of taking it for granted as a naturally appearing other. The specificity of socio-logical space (Durkheim) and its fluidity (Weber) is given precisely by the *contested nature*

of the boundaries of social objects. Since it de-ontologizes the relationship of objects, the methodology of the social is cosmopolitan through and through. Still, the cosmopolitanism of classical sociology includes the possibility of things being other but only if it frees and differentiates social space from natural laws. The space of the social is its own effect. The *socio-logics* gains its limits – its other(s) – by the *auto-logics* of the social. The social adds complexity to the description of mere natural objects.

NIKLAS LUHMANN

In the same vein, the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann argues for a universal methodology of the social when he distinguishes between ‘first-order observations’ and ‘second-order observations’ (Luhmann, 1998). Luhmann unfolds a social constructivist methodology that necessarily moves away from a methodology of objects (given by first-order observations) to a methodology of multicontextual meanings (given by second-order observations). Luhmann stresses that – historically speaking – this shift is fostered by the invention of the printing press and subsequently visualizes the transformation from tradition to modernity (ibid.). According to Luhmann, the very ‘modernity’ of ‘the social’ as ‘second-order observations’ has tremendous effects on understanding societal reality:

It will create a constructivist understanding of reality that takes into consideration that first-order observers are concerned not with constructions but rather with objects. . . . Observations of the first order use distinctions as a schema but do not yet create a contingency for the observer himself. The distinction is postulated but not designated in the designation. . . . Only observations of second order provide grounds for including contingency in meaning and perhaps reflecting it conceptually. Observations of the second order are observations of observations. . . . Everything becomes contingent whenever what is observed depends on who is being observed. (Luhmann, 1998: 39, 48)

Such typically modernist semantics of observation visualize the very specific ‘object’ of sociological methodology as part of the operation of what is observed. Luhmann radicalizes the Kantian theory of human (self-)observation by pluralizing the uniform human rationality given by Kant’s system. Following Luhmann, scientific investigation becomes visible as a social process itself, which neither *discovers* the reality of things nor is ruled by human rationality. Rather, the very societal reality is enacted by social means of observation/description that cannot be reduced by or into a single nature/rationality. Functional differentiation of societal subsystems is the key argument in order to address the very *modern* form of social ‘communication’.⁵

It refers to different auto-logics (political, economical, scientific, etc.) that configure the multiplicity of social forms of rationalities transcending the possibility of a single and hegemonic view from which society can thoroughly be viewed – human rationality included.

Luhmann's logic of second-order observation unfolds a circular, i.e. universalistic, argumentation that dominates all cosmopolitan methodologies of the social – no matter how differently they are conceived. Only on the social level do societal objects gain a non-objectified state of being. In other words, social objects remain contingent, but only if understood globally as social constructions. Hence, Luhmann's and all other cosmopolitan methodologies of the social reiterate the modernist divide between culture and nature by and through the mode of exclusive differences: *either* we engage in a methodology of observing 'objects' *or* we are interested in a methodology of 'the social'. Luhmann's radical formalist methodology of the social gives 19th-century cosmopolitan sociology a 20th-century 'cybernetic' outlook of second-order observations (von Foerster, 2002). Reflecting processes of globalization, Luhmann's account is an historically updated and theoretically radicalized version of 19th-century functional sociology. For Luhmann, the sociological interests are also not limited to the 'nation-state' but refer to 'world-society' affairs that take into account the worldwide connectivity and its effects as they are enabled by new forms of communication technologies and practices (Luhmann, 1997).

Let me summarize: cosmopolitanism begins where nature ends, and nature ends where the human, namely, social, nature of things becomes visible. The methodological enquiry into the human/social nature of things opens up an exclusive space that frees social science from the constraints of natural enactment. Socio-logics is auto-logics: this is the grand narrative of cosmopolitanism. Moreover, the methodology of the social completes and demystifies at the same time a Kantian humanist cosmopolitanism by putting it on social grounds. For cosmopolitan sociology, non-social matters of concern remain necessarily outside the cosmopolitan view since no conceptual outside is conceivable. The methodology of the social is self-referential, all-inclusive, universal. This means that sociological cosmopolitanism conceives the distinction between 'the social' and 'the non-social' as a *social* or cultural construction. Such a process cannot be explained by the laws of nature *or* by individual mental acts (rational thinking), physiological acts (sensory perception) and pure intuition. They all remain methodologically *outside* the social field and can only be understood and/or explained by the social itself.

It has been the cosmopolitan methodology of the social (*socio-logics as auto-logics*) that has led classical sociology to become a professional discipline. It marks a very modernist understanding of disciplinary professionalization. 'Each profession', as the philosopher of science Alfred N. Whitehead critically noted in 1925, 'makes progress, but it is progress in its own groove.'

Now to be mentally in a groove is to live in contemplating a given set of abstractions. The . . . abstraction abstracts from something to which no further attention is paid' (Whitehead, 1967: 197). Indeed, cosmopolitan sociology performs the global explanatory isomorphism of the social by abstracting from the non-human and non-social matter of concerns (Latour, 2005). Moreover, Whitehead also stresses that professionalization bears the danger of self-immunization. And indeed: the universalism of the methodology of the social has not only helped to professionalize sociology, it has also closed off the social perspective from other perspectives: *either* one defends the global explanatory power of the social and relates to 'a subset of the total universe of explanations that are in some broad and general sense "sociological"' (Turner, 2006: 137) *or* one is outside sociological reasoning and naturalizes, biologizes, psychologizes or objectifies the world by confusing causal (material) object relations (nature) with social effects (society).

I agree with Bruno Latour that such a strategy of methodological sociology 'nurtures in its bosom the most archaic and magical ghost: a self-generated, self-explicative society' (Latour, 2005: 86). The very bifurcation between the nature and culture of objects has been implicitly accepted as the quasi-natural *explanatory device* of sociological enquiries. In doing so, cosmopolitanism not only conducts a highly modernist division between social relations and object relations but also denies the possibility of non-human and non-social object relations to mediate and to 'object' to (Stengers, 2000) the global, universal explanatory power of the exclusivist perspective of the social.

3 BEYOND COSMOPOLITANISM

Cosmopolitan sociology has been a remarkable modernist attempt to give 'the social' its own self-referential voice of explanation. In this manner, a conceptual and methodological space has been opened up that enables it to reflect and describe the world 'other-wise'. It is the socio-cultural other that visualizes the other-logics of human affairs that differs – *clare et distincte* – from the logics of mere individual and/or natural laws. Cosmopolitan affairs, then, appear within a self-enclosed space of the social and only there, excluding the non-human and non-social from being agents of cosmopolitanism. In this last section I try to reflect upon how to develop an inclusive methodology of the social that gives the non-human and the non-social a cosmopolitan voice – rather than abstracting from it as classical sociology does. How would one conceptualize a methodology that is not concerned with delimiting the social but takes the *transgression* of the limits of humanness, sociality and nature as the very focus of its own methodological rigour? How would one imagine the methodological rigour that considers societal relations as *local*

achievements of social and non-social configurations rather than *globally* being explained by the social?

Bearing this in mind, I develop some first steps toward such an inclusive methodology, a methodology of (emerging) natures/cultures that cut across the big divide between culture and nature as given by classical sociology. Such a reading introduces a shift from the self-referential cosmopolitan critique of matters of fact by the socio-cultural other toward an understanding of the social as the effect of multiple and heterogeneous events of human and non-human, social and non-social connections (Schillmeier, 2007; Schillmeier and Pohler, 2006).⁶ Luckily, such a methodology is already at hand – the work of Gabriel Tarde – but it has been consequently silenced by the dominance of the methodological rigour of cosmopolitanism.

GABRIEL TARDE

What makes Tarde's work so different from classical cosmopolitan sociology is that it turns the methodology of the social upside down. For Tarde 'the social' has to be explained by its mediation through the non-social and non-human other. At the end of the 19th century Tarde argued in debates with his antipode Durkheim that 'there can only be individual actions and interactions' (Tarde, 1969[1904 essay]: 140); and it is the very practice of *imitation* through which human beings become social beings (Tarde, 1921[1890]). For Tarde, imitation is the social version of universal laws of repetition. By *repetition* the cosmological order is gained, maintained and multiplied (Tarde, 1969[1902 essay]: 146). In addition to imitation, two other forms of repetition exist: biological repetition (heredity) and physical repetition (wave oscillation). Through imitation, human thinking and acting become different from merely biological and physical repetitions. Imitation, then, is first and foremost an act of difference. In Tarde's words, it refers to an act of 'innovation' and 'complication' (ibid.: 147), linking and binding heterogeneous elements, both human and non-human, through time (e.g. brain cells, minds, people, groups, organizations, technologies and natural objects).

Hence, according to Tarde, the methodology of the social sciences does not differ from that of the natural sciences since they all deal with universal laws, i.e. universal laws of repetition. Still, imitation is the social form of repetition that makes the social sciences different and original. Tarde stresses that

[S]ocieties, no less than the biological world or even the physical world, present precise repetitions, regular and identical series of acts and facts. . . . [T]he advantage thus obtained of being able to treat social as well as natural phenomena scientifically is not purchased at the cost of any confusion between these two orders of facts, which continue to be

divided by a clear line of demarcation, nor by the sacrifice of human personality to the exigencies of a completely naturalist conception of societies. Seeing things from this angle we can leave aside the vexing question of free choice . . . (Tarde, 1969[1898 essay]: 89)

Crucially, Tarde is interested in connecting the cosmologies of social and non-social universal laws, quite contrary to the Kantian legacy of cosmopolitan sociology as described above that separates nature and human/social nature (culture) in order to free itself from natural laws. The Tardeian cosmological methodology stresses the similarities and relatedness of social and non-social dynamics in order to name the difference, originality and individuality given by the (emergence of) societal modes of ordering. Tarde critically observed that sociology 'seeks to be established by itself and for itself' as given by methodological sociologism that systematically oversees 'the profound unity of universal reality'. According to Tarde, methodological sociologism expresses 'a sort of egotism or scientific individualism – useful to some degree, like all animal or human egotism, but beyond a certain point harmful to the individual itself' (Tarde, 1969[1894 essay]: 112).

Following Tarde, whenever an act of imitation itself is imitated, social relations demarcate their societal identity and belonging. To be sure, for Tarde, the notion of society does not refer to 'society' as a separate conceptual sphere from 'nature' as sociological cosmopolitanism suggests (Tarde, 1999[1893]). Rather, it indicates the odd relation 'that everything is society and that all phenomena are social facts' [*que toute chose est une société, que tout phénomène est un fait social*] (Tarde, 1999: 58), be they atoms, cells, brains, stars, living or dead bodies, human beings, etc. A society is always a society of things be they humans or non-humans. The main characteristic of societies is primarily the desire to propagate – not to organize; organizing is a means whose aim is repetition and propagation (Tarde, 1921: 80).

Hence, it is the focus on dissemination and circulation which gives entities societal stability and durability but also 'leaves a large share in social destinies to individual irregularities' (Tarde, 1969[1902 essay]: 148). Reflecting upon the social changes at the end of the 19th century, Tarde explains the difference between organization and propagation by differentiating between 'the nation' and 'human society'. Whereas the nation-state refers to 'a kind of hyper-organism' of interrelated organizations, human society becomes visible as the parallel '*denationalization* of hundreds of millions of people'. The latter is the effect achieved by the propagation of '*socialization*' through new technologies of mobility and communication, for example (Tarde, 1921: 70–1). It is important to note that for Tarde, 'the social' is primarily a question of extension and velocity of how local practices circulate, diffuse and become imitated and not so much the interrelationships between rather abstract entities such as institutions, organizations and/or nations.⁷

Whenever the propagation of individual, non-customary, 'extra-national' imitation dominates over mere social imitations or the imitation of the 'national idea' (Tarde 1921: 318–19, 397), local practices become transnationally relevant, questioned, contested and altered. Interestingly enough, Tarde called this process 'European equilibrium'. It signifies a constant interchange of cultural services and borrowings of any kind. The European equilibrium foreshadows a global way of speeding up activities and acting at a distance that overcomes the limits of distance from others (ibid.: 398–400). It is the imitation of the non-familial other which replaces for a given moment the imitation of the same, the familial and the national. Cosmopolitan realities, then, regularly occur whenever the imitations of familial, common and institutionalized forms are satisfied and have achieved their limits.

Tarde sees these realities as the effect of 'cosmopolitan flooding' that started to become visible in the late 19th century. By this, he means the universal and seemingly limitless multiplication of 'extra-national' forms of imitating cultural otherness (Tarde, 1921: 422). Moreover, he visualizes social science as being just as cosmopolitan as all the other natural sciences, since imitation – similar to biological and physical repetition – is a universal natural law. However, the multiplication of 'extra-national' imitation does not mean that relations with other humans multiply as well (ibid.: 423–4). On the contrary, the global imitation of otherness as well as any global explanation of it reaches its limits. In effect, it provides room for 'the deep and fleeting singularity of individuals, their way of being, of thinking, of feeling' (ibid.: 424). It is precisely the impact of cosmopolitan processes that has radical effects on understanding societal processes, which are directly linked to individual practices. Following Tarde, the effects of cosmopolitan processes do not confirm but question the cosmopolitan conceptualization of the social as a universal explanatory device given by classical sociology. The social does not appear as a reality of its own but as the effect of highly multiple assemblages of individual singularities that configure and reconfigure societal realities.

Thus, the difference between 'nationalization' and 'socialization' beautifully describes Tarde's formula *ab interioribus ad exteriora*, 'the general arises from the individual' (Tarde, 1969[1898 essay]: 103; cf. Tarde, 1999): everything flows from the individual idea to its social imitation, from the small to the large, from the local to the global, from one-sidedness to reciprocity, from the thing to its sign, from the lover to the beloved, and so on. Although our organizations and nations are globally interrelated, individual practices strive for a more all-encompassing and faster socialization.

For Tarde's cosmological project, the complexities lie within the local, individual practices, whereas global settings and perspectives are just simplified and standardized versions of local complexity (cf. also Latour, 2002). Tarde stresses that individual acts are more complex than global social imitations:

... each of these acts depends not only on the nature of the social fact but also on the mental and biological constitution of the agent and on the physical environment, these are types of hybrid acts, socio-psychical or socio-physical facts with which we [according to Durkheim (author's addition)] should no longer sully the scientific purity of the new sociology. (Tarde, 1969[1894 essay]: 117)

Neither does 'the social' and 'cultural' enact the individual (non-social), nor does nature enact culture, nor does the macro and global enact the national and local. Rather, it is the cosmopolitan, universal 'flooding' of 'extra-national' and 'extra-social' practices which draws our methodological attention toward the *heterogeneous* and *local* character of societal relations. Hence, cosmopolitan realities become visible whenever they question, overflow and alter the borders of common social orderings.

The very methodological difference that Tarde's cosmological perspective suggests is that there is no such unmediated "purely social thing" which by definition is pure and purged of all individual reality' (Tarde, 1969[1897 essay]: 225) as Durkheim among others suggested. Rather, only in connection with individual, non-social elements is the social traceable, sustainable and changeable. Tarde notes:

It sufficed for me to see that with individual entities, with mental entities, men assembled together create a social entity by virtue of their animal or presocial attraction, and that *the* social thing is distinct from psychological *things*, precisely because it is composed of them, because it is the non-artificial synthesis of them, their true union, their objective number, and ... their local aggregate. (Tarde, 1969[1897 essay]: 225)

[W]ithout the individual element the social element is nothing, and there is nothing, absolutely nothing, in society which does not exist piecemeal in a state of continual repetition in living individuals and which does not exist in ancestors of the present individuals. (Tarde, 1969[1894 essay]: 121–2)

Tarde's objection is directed against any methodological attempt to globalize one's own perspective. From the Tardeian perspective, a self-generated and self-explicative social sphere is nothing but an 'ontological phantasmagoria' (Tarde, 1969[1894 essay]) gained by abstraction from individual, hybrid acts.

Current debates on global change and its effects explicate the lesson we can learn from Tarde's work. These post-cosmopolitan realities historically visualize the limits of the methodology of cosmopolitanism. Post-cosmopolitan dynamics address the limits of self-referential socialization (imitation of imitations) and its transgression by individual, i.e. non-social inventions, which according to Tarde visualize the *universal social* law that is nothing without the non-social (Tarde, 1921, 2000). Invention introduces novelty to

the societies concerned, which are associated varieties of social, biological and physical repetition. The social cannot gain and maintain stability nor can it change its limits without the individuality of the non-social. Hence, from the perspective of the social, more complexity is introduced only in association with the non-social. Consequently, it is the connection with the non-social that questions the global social realm and its universal methodology and 'articulates' – as Bruno Latour would say (Latour, 2005) – heterogeneity instead. On account of this, the act of *invention* visualizes, questions and transgresses common (and often unquestioned) forms of imitation – including the imitation of cosmopolitan sociology and its methodology of the social.

Tarde's account appears so radical since his methodology rigorously questions (1) the Kantian normative divide between coercive nature and freely acting human nature, as well as (2) the cosmopolitan methodology of the social that echoes and completes Kant's division by separating the social from merely individual domains. Tarde's methodology enables an awakening from the social somnambulism⁸ of cosmopolitan methodology that explains the social by itself and for itself. Consequently, Tarde's view is that the social is just part – and thus a highly limited and standardized version – of the multiplicity of associated and associating humans and non-human entities. Tarde's account develops the methodology of heterogeneous 'becomings' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988; Grosz, 1999; Schillmeier, 2007) of (un-)stable 'world-building entelechies' (Latour, 2002: 128). These material becomings (re-) connect human society and non-human societies and make societal things open for public contestation. Cosmopolitan sociology, on the other hand, addresses humans and non-humans alike through a globally conceived explanatory device of the social that explains and constructs the meaningfulness, the multiplicity and contingency of the individual and non-social. In Tarde's methodology, in contrast, 'the social' is maintained and altered by the multiplicity of individual, hybrid acts, since the individual non-social is as meaningful and multiple as is the social (Tarde, 1969[1902 essay]: 148).

It is the very cosmological solidarity of natures/cultures at the core of Tarde's methodology that differs from classical *and* new cosmopolitanism. According to new cosmopolitanism, the global, extra-national dimension of social reality enforces structural demands that re-relate individual, local, familial and national spheres. According to Beck, *global social realities* demand a new 'grammatical order' of sociological thought (Beck, 2006; Beck and Sznaider, 2006). Such a new grammar is meant to be able to speak a new, historically updated sociological language that enables one to adequately address the dimension of global change. As much as I agree with Beck's interest in renewing a self-sufficient sociology, it looks as if Beck wants to generate a *new* grammar of cosmopolitan reality before looking at its vocabulary. Beck's quest for a new cosmopolitan sociology appears primarily to be an historically updated form of classical sociological cosmopolitanism as long

as his inclusive logics leaves out a systematic interrogation of methodological sociologism itself. New cosmopolitanism will stop its quest for methodological renewal at the halfway point if it does not radically question its own methodological premises that exclude the non-human and non-social other from having a cosmopolitan voice.

Tarde's methodology, I suppose, has already achieved what new cosmopolitanism is striving for. His methodological rigour is able to tackle the processes of cosmopolitan changes *and* processes that question cosmopolitanism. It is precisely *after* the cosmopolitan flooding of social realities that 'the social' appears – globally visible! – to be a fragile temporary and local effect of hybrid individual acts of human and non-human, social and non-social configurations. The effects of cosmopolitan processes render the universal explanatory power of the social as temporarily standardized and fragile versions of a multiplicity of local 'hybrid acts' of natures/cultures. Tarde's unruly cosmological methodology is not just an historically updated cosmopolitanism that extends the global explanatory device of the social to global processes. Rather, it is a universally applicable methodological framework that focuses on individual and heterogeneous practices of natures/cultures that make up contingent characteristics of societal processes. Tarde has developed a methodology of 'cosmo-political events' (Schillmeier and Pohler, 2006). Cosmo-political events and their effects assemble societal practices by relating human and non-human entities, which in turn stabilize or disrupt, maintain or alter the cosmos of given modes of social orderings.⁹

This is Tarde's sociology of translation with which he criss-crosses and transgresses the cosmopolitan perspective from the very beginning. The social cannot explain itself by itself precisely because it is *more than* an act of biological or physiological repetition. At the same time the social is strongly connected to – and methodologically not distinct from – biological and physiological repetitions. Thus, the social cannot be methodologically abstracted from biological and physiological repetition. Rather, the repetition of 'extra-social' activities enacts the beginning and end of *la chose sociale* (Tarde, 1921: 86). According to Tarde, it is the principal undecidability between processes of *either* logical or extra-logical, familial or extra-familial, national or extra-national, social or non-social forms of repetition and innovation from which an inclusive methodology of the dis/continuities of societal change unfolds (ibid.: 2000).

Tarde's methodology seems highly attractive if we want to analyse, for example, how social practices are constantly produced and diffused, maintained, questioned and altered by globally circulating and spreading techno-scientific innovations (e.g. nuclear energy, nanotechnologies, biomedical and genetic research). His methodology is also useful for reconstructing and analysing how societal orders are disrupted and changed by natural disasters and ecological dangers (global climate change, global warming) or

the migration of (newly emerging) viruses and infectious diseases, etc. Such processes link human with non-human entities, social imitations with non-social innovations, and thereby constantly configure and reconfigure the commonality of societal realities and mobilities (Latour, 2005; Schillmeier, 2007, 2008a; Urry, 2000). These hybrid associations, then, 'make things public' and question the commonality and routine of social orderings (Latour and Weibel, 2005; Schillmeier and Pohler, 2006).

CONCLUSION

As I have tried to show, in contrast to the methodology of cosmopolitan sociology – old and new alike – Tarde is interested in the dynamics of 'hybrid acts'. Hybrid acts associate social and non-social, human and non-human elements in order to confirm or question social (b)orders. I have argued that his methodology draws upon a *cosmological solidarity* between oppositional forces (natures/cultures). Still, for Tarde, social and non-social, human and non-human are explained in the same terms: difference and repetition. In every individual act it remains methodologically open whether to adapt the routines of the social (imitation) or to visualize and transgress the limits of the social by the non-social (innovation). It is the multiplicity of these local repetitions and differences that makes up 'universal variation', and thus the 'physiognomies of individual' characteristics of natures/cultures (Tarde, 2000: 98).

Kantian cosmopolitanism as a mode of exclusivist thinking of the world as a global human affair – that consequently led to scientific separatism as fostered by methodological sociology – was Tarde's biggest concern. Instead, he encourages a 'philosophical ethos' (Foucault, 1984) of constant transliminal movement that highlights the transgression of social and non-social methodologies alike. It demystifies the otherness of 'the social' as a reality of its own set in place in order to free us from the external forces of nature – as cosmopolitanism would have it. Further, his perspective unfolds a universal methodology of openness where the possibility of transgressing the limits of sociality and humanness is part and parcel of tackling the changing dynamics of societal realities of natures/cultures. He thereby avoids (un-)doing the bifurcation between society and nature, which is the basic principle of cosmopolitan methodology – old and new alike. We just have to look at the current experience of global changes that question 'territoriality' as the dominating strategy of societal (b)orders. It reveals more than ever the reconfiguration of the limits of nature/cultures involved. Tarde's methodological alternative is a highly valid option to address the multiplicity and heterogeneity of these changes and how they question and alter 'the social'.

NOTES

- 1 Obviously classical sociology lacked the transnational perspective since societal change was very much related to inter-national connectedness whereby nation-states played a much more dominating role than in contemporary relations.
- 2 This explains the importance of the 'para-dox' within social imagination (cf. Luhmann, 1998) that is meant to differ from mere opinion (*doxa*).
- 3 Since the 19th century, the methodological discourse of the social sciences gains its own exclusive voice *not* in relation to the *objects* observed, but in comparison with other *discourses* like those of the natural sciences, philosophy, psychology, physiology and biology, etc. Through comparison with other methodologies of observation, the exclusive difference of the methodology of the social becomes evident. For a different view see Law (2004).
- 4 My translation.
- 5 The concept of communication tries to indicate the exclusive cosmopolitan social realm of 'seeing' things in endlessly different manners. Communication processes, then, neither 'think' as human beings do, nor do they feel or sense, they only communicate (e.g. through language, writing, etc.) and by doing so, they make things societally relevant. See Luhmann (1995).
- 6 This is also the main motivation of the different versions of a 'sociology of translation' alias Actor-Network-Theory, which advocates an explanatory 'principle of symmetry' where human and non-humans, society and nature are not seen as separate entities, but as circulating and thus articulating 'hybrid acts' of Society/Nature. See, for instance, Callon (1986, 1998), Hetherington and Munro (1997), Latour (1999, 2002, 2005), Law and Hassard (1999), Mol (2002), Schillmeier (2007, 2008a, 2008b), Schillmeier and Pohler (2006).
- 7 Current studies on practices, mobilities, assemblages and complex (b)ordering visualize a Tardeian mood of social studies inasmuch as they are not so much interested in a Durkheimian 'division of labour' as in the multiplicities of the 'labour of division' (Hetherington and Munro, 1997). See also Axford (2006); Law (2002, 2004); Lee (1998); Mol (2002); Urry (2000).
- 8 Tarde describes perfect imitation as social somnambulism (Tarde, 1921).
- 9 Whenever given social orderings are successfully imitated (like extra-national, i.e. cosmopolitan, practices) they are not cosmo-political but refer to institutionalized, i.e. imitated, forms of cosmopolitanism. Yet, new nationalisms can be cosmo-political as soon as they question and alter transnational configurations.

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