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Introduction to the Special Issue on Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt

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It is with a strange mixture of sadness and pride that we are editing this Special Issue on the work of the late Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt. Various articles in this collection outline aspects of the story of his life. Born on 10 September 1923 in Warsaw, Professor Eisenstadt died on 2 September 2010 at his home in Jerusalem. Appointed to teach at the Hebrew University in 1959, he eventually became an Emeritus Professor in 1990 and remained so until his death. Suffice it to say that his publications and research interests were wide, extensive and varied, ranging from the sociology of youth (*From Generation to Generation: Age Groups and Social Structure*, 1956) to the political sociology of empires (*The Political Systems of Empires*, 1963) and to modernization in Japan (*Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View*, 1996). In fact, his work covered almost the entire range of the humanities and social sciences. His MA supervisor was Martin Buber, from whom he inherited a deep sense of human creativity and moral resilience. While at one stage in the 1960s he was associated with the work of Talcott Parsons, in more recent years he has come to be regarded as one of the leading figures in the debates on transnationalism and different routes to modernity ('multiple modernities') as well as on the emergence and development of civilizational complexes (drawing on Karl Jaspers's concept of the 'Axial Age'). He was the recipient of many prizes and awards (such as the McIver Prize in 1964, the Israel Prize in 1973, and the Amalfi Prize in 2001). He was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and received an honorary degree from Harvard University. Eisenstadt not only had outstanding intellectual abilities, but he was also a warm and generous person. The articles in this Special Issue are a testimony to his exceptional intellectual and personal qualities.

In this Introduction, we do not intend to offer a detailed account of Eisenstadt's life; rather, we seek to comment on some key aspects of his work. As editors of a journal concerned with the continuing relevance of classical sociological thought, we are primarily interested in Eisenstadt as a scholar who wrote in the tradition of classical

sociology (and who may indeed be regarded as a creative exponent of Weberian thought) and secondly concerned to map out the major features of his various contributions to contemporary sociology. Having said that, it is difficult not to think that with his passing the tradition of macro-historical and comparative sociology has lost one of its most influential figures. He worked on a scale, with a depth, and over a period of time that is unmatched in recent Western sociology. His publication record is daunting, and the following articles can cover only a fraction of his work. Nevertheless, certain key aspects of his contributions to sociology stand out in this Special Issue, such as the idea of multiple modernities, the sociology of the Axial Ages, the analysis of fundamentalism and heterodoxy, the study of transnational forces, and Eisenstadt's outline of an inter-civilizational sociology. In the contemporary social sciences, prominent scholars such as Ulrich Beck have called on us to embrace cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2006 [2004]; Beck and Grande, 2006 [2004]), thereby consciously abandoning normative presuppositions associated with, or even based upon, 'methodological nationalism'. Eisenstadt made a major contribution to undermining such methodological nationalism through his life-long research on civilizational complexes and historical turning-points and break-throughs. Throughout his writings, he made every effort not to use the concepts of 'society' and 'nation-state' interchangeably. Eisenstadt's work constantly brought out the differences between civilizational complexes and their deep historical contingency. Now, in a period of professional specialization, few sociologists are trained to work on large-scale, let alone inter-civilizational, comparisons. By contrast, Eisenstadt's socio-logical and historical studies – for example, of Jewish and Japanese life forms – are not only exemplary but also indicative of the precious insights gained from methodical inter-civilizational comparisons in the social sciences. That being said, Roland Robertson, in his paper, is correct to point out that we should be circumspect in associating Eisenstadt too readily with contemporary debates on cosmopolitanism. At the level of research practice, Eisenstadt was a through-going, let us say, practical cosmopolitan, who was well connected with influential scholars across the world. He had intellectual interests in various areas relating to almost every corner of the globe; yet, to refer once more to Robertson's article, Eisenstadt's wide-ranging research network was a reflection not only of his open-mindedness and limitless curiosity but also of his kindness and remarkable generosity.

There is one further feature of his life to which we should refer in this opening comment, namely the fact that Eisenstadt was a living connection to a scholarly world that has disappeared. As we have already observed, the influence Buber had on Eisenstadt equipped him with a deep understanding of the creative potential of human cultures and, hence, the hope that – because of, not despite, civilizational differences – we may accept the otherness of the stranger. By categorically rejecting unitary conceptions of civiliza-tion and social change, he avoided the pitfalls of cultural pessimism and the despair of an idealizing nostalgia for the things of the past.

Perhaps it is the fate of influential, unorthodox, and creative minds to be systematically misunderstood. This may be especially true of Shmuel Eisenstadt, who was, as both Willfried Spohn and Ilana F. Silber note in their papers, only too frequently tarred with the brush of American modernization theory, especially functionalism. In parenthesis, some of us would want to stress that Parsons was equally misread and reduced to a naïve

version of conservative functionalism (for a critique of this misinterpretation, see Robertson and Turner, 1991). Parsons and Eisenstadt shared many interests: for instance, a fascination with Japan. *From Generation to Generation* (1956) was partly inspired by Parsons's interests in the sociology of youth. Eisenstadt, however, was primarily the heir of Max Weber's historical and comparative sociology of religious systems and their ethical teaching. To adopt the terminology of Weber's comparative analysis of religious orientations (such as inner-worldly asceticism), Eisenstadt was interested in moral orientations to the world, especially those that were conditioned by a sense of religious transcendence. As Robertson remarks in his paper, Robert Bellah, a former student of Parsons, regarded Eisenstadt as the leading Weberian sociologist of his time. While Eisenstadt was not an exponent of the functionalist sociology of social systems, with Parsons he did share recognition of the abiding importance of religion – in terms of religious institutions, orthodoxies, and elites – in determining the diverse paths of modernization. In fact, they both treated Weber's analysis of religious orientations as a key component in understanding modernization (Weber, 1991 [1947/1948]). He did not, of course, agree with Parsons's account of the normative integration of societies, as, contrary to the latter, the former conceived of culture as inevitably unstable, malleable, and dynamic. It is reasonable to argue that Eisenstadt maintained a neo-Weberian perspective in his approach to cultures, which allowed him to avoid the tendency, common among Marxist theorists of globalization, to neglect cultural and religious factors in shaping the development of the modern world.

Eisenstadt did not subscribe to mainstream sociological perspectives on modernization (see, for example, Giddens, 1990, and Therborn, 1995), some of which he accused of concentrating, somewhat one-sidedly, on social patterns of convergence in terms of broader processes of urbanization, industrialization, and secularization. Eisenstadt's idea of multiple modernities ruled out any simple notion of developmental convergence towards a unitary model of modernity. Yet, as Donald Levine emphasizes in his paper, Eisenstadt's work did not support the Huntington thesis either. Large-scale cultural encounters, particularly those following the end of the Cold War period, do not necessarily lead to a clash of civilizations (Huntington, 1996). Given the profound influence Buber had on his work, Eisenstadt was aware of the genuine possibility and normative significance of dialogue across cultures and the acceptance of otherness. He was attentive to the complex dynamics of both inclusionary and exclusionary dimensions of different civilizational horizons – notably, the Greco-Roman, Abrahamic, and Japanese traditions. In short, Eisenstadt's approach lent itself to research on transnationalism and on the complicated collective identities that emerge when societies intersect, overlap, and interpenetrate – as, according to Luis Roniger in this Special Issue, has occurred in Central America. Unable to romanticize their cultural histories, the elites of the American central isthmus had to construct a story about identity around civic markers such as citizenship. With independence and military conflict, national identities can be conceived of as a 'civic accomplishment', rather than as 'naturally given'.

Another way of examining this interest in identity, collective imagination, and transnationalism is to consider, as Saïd Arjomand does in his paper, the interweaving of tradition and modernity, and in particular how the trajectory of the modern appears always

to involve some reconstruction of the traditional. Eisenstadt's starting point was the legacy of Karl Jaspers's notion of the Axial Age, based on the contest between the mundane and the transcendental. In particular, Eisenstadt was sensitive to the profound impact heterodoxy can have on both ideological and material transformation processes of social orders. The impact of the Shi`ite revolution in Iran is a case in point. Eisenstadt combined this interest in heterodox belief systems with an analysis of different forms of fundamentalism. His view of Jacobin politics was an important component of his interpretation of religious radicalism (Eisenstadt, 2006). Political and cultural struggles around the civilizational complexes of the Axial Age are not an epochal specificity of ancient history, but they continue to shape modern politics. The divergent pathways of fundamentalism have been significant in shaping different manifestations of radical Islam across the globe, and thus, for Eisenstadt, the tussle between the modernization of tradition and the traditionalization of the modern is a key dynamic underlying the reality of modern politics. In all of these studies, we see how Eisenstadt avoided the tendency of sociologists to embrace a reductionist view of religion (for example, by seeing religious conversion as largely motivated by self-interest, in accordance with the market-based model of religion). For Eisenstadt, the spiritual search for the transcendental seems to constitute an inherent feature of human society, even more so in the context of late modernity, in which we have to live without any absolute certainties. In this regard, he followed Weber in conceiving of charisma as a persistent challenge to both traditional and legal-rational orders. In theoretical terms, it also meant that culture and social structure had to be treated separately and independently.

Given the paradigmatic impact of Eisenstadt's interventions, we may almost take it for granted that there are different routes to modernity and different types of modernization (Bhambra, 2007; Delanty, 2006; Giddens, 1990; Outhwaite, 2006). Much of Eisenstadt's work revolved around the contrasts between Israel and North America, on the one hand, and Japan, on the other. These societies are, at least in a superficial sense, modern settler societies, but they are also vastly different. As Edward Tiryakian points out in his paper, Eisenstadt's oeuvre was devoted to teasing out these differences. While both North America and Israel were the product of waves of migration, they are fundamentally different in that, at least at the constitutional level, religion and state are strictly separated in North America, whereas they are both ideologically and legally, if problematically, combined in Israel (Ben-Porat and Turner, 2011). Eisenstadt's interest in fundamentalism was probably driven by the growing influence of the ultra-orthodox Jewish community in Israeli politics. The balance between state, religion, and party in modern Israel, despite the secular vision of the founders of Zionism, once more testifies to Eisenstadt's vision of fundamentalism as a distinctively modern, rather than traditional, social movement. On the eve of Independence in 1947, the leaders of the religious communities negotiated exemptions from military service and special arrangements for religious education with Ben Gurion. As a result, the ultra-orthodox parties have been able to dictate the membership of the Religious Councils, thereby controlling the administration of marriage, funerals, dietary regulations, and so forth. Secular Jews who wish to marry outside the control of the rabbinate may have to travel to Cyprus to achieve a legal union. Shas, a new religious party, has since the 1990s been able to draw upon the resentment of ethnic minorities and has built up an

important base in electoral politics with support from the Sephardic electorate (Lehman and Siebzehner, 2006).

Eisenstadt was only too aware of how these different connections between politics and religion shaped the contours of modern citizenship and democratic participation. He was a comparativist, but understanding his own society was a lifelong concern from his early writing (in Hebrew) on the Yishuv to one of his very late essays on Israeli citizenship (Eisenstadt, 2008). Japan has, through its peculiar conception of the primordial, resisted labour immigration, despite the demographic risks and economic threats associated with its ageing population. As Robertson points out in his paper, the sociological study of Japan is a major challenge, since Japanese scholars themselves attempt to protect Japan from exogenous – that is, 'foreign' – forms of analysis. In this sense, 'Japanology' may be based on the assumption that Japanese civilization constitutes an incommensurable object of study that requires endogenous, rather than exogenous, conceptual and methodological tools, if one seeks to grasp both its historical complexity and its cultural authenticity. The challenges arising from these reflections on world religions and axial civilizations serve to remind us of the far-reaching significance of the sad loss of Eisenstadt's presence in sociology.

The essays published in this Special Issue are a collective attempt to reflect upon Eisenstadt's legacy in contemporary sociology. There is little doubt that Eisenstadt was one of the few sociologists of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries whose oeuvre will have a profound and lasting impact on future developments of the discipline. With the increasing professionalization of the social sciences in general and of sociology in particular, not only in Europe but also in other parts of the world, notably in North America, the number of institutionally affiliated and financially remunerated sociologists has steadily risen. Yet, the circle of world-class scholars whose intellectual impact will still be noticed within the next few centuries has not grown with the same pace. Rather than interpreting the professionalization of sociology as an inflationary development, one may regard it as an unprecedented chance to build a modern discipline able to compete with age-old epistemic authorities such as philosophy. In the early twenty-first century, sociology is undoubtedly one of the most important disciplines in the realm of modern knowledge production. Considering the transdisciplinary spirit underlying a large part of his writings and his worldwide influence both within and beyond sociology, it is undeniable that Eisenstadt has played a significant part in converting sociology into one of the most influential and intellectually challenging disciplines in the social sciences. The following articles, each of which has a particular thematic focus, illustrate – each in their own way – that contemporary sociologists of modernity cannot possibly bypass, let alone ignore, Eisenstadt's oeuvre.

In the first article, entitled 'A Sociological Odyssey: The Comparative Voyage of S.N. Eisenstadt', Edward A. Tiryakian suggests that one of the most central themes running through Eisenstadt's writings is his *comparative analysis of modernity*. Undeniably, the conceptual and methodological agendas of classical sociology have been marked by a tendency to study modernity by referring to paradigms such as 'progress', 'Enlightenment', 'science', 'rationalization', 'industrial society', and 'capitalism'. As illustrated in Tiryakian's contribution, the point is not to deny the normative significance that these paradigms arguably have for a sociological understanding of modernity, but to recognize that any

approach to modernity that is limited to the terminological tools of classical sociological discourses runs the risk of giving a somewhat reductive account of the nature of post-traditional societies, that is, an account that fails to do justice to the complexity attached to the various transition processes associated with the rise of the modern age. Insisting upon the epistemic centrality of recent attempts to amplify the scope of sociological analysis of modernity, Tiryakian's article focuses on two key themes in Eisenstadt's writings: first, the proposition to examine modernity in terms of the *multiple channels* emerging from 'Axial Age' civilizations, whose development is subject to constant social and cultural transformations and driven by the ineluctable tension between orthodox and heterodox visions of the world; and, second, the view that we need to conceive of modernity not exclusively in terms of continuity and evolution, but also in terms of *discontinuity and breakdown*. As critical sociologists, we have to account for both the 'bright' and the 'dark' sides of the modern voyage, which, philosophically speaking, appears to be shaped by a constant struggle between its 'Kantian' and its 'Jacobin' tendencies. Such a critical-comparative approach, Tiryakian argues, allows us to regard 'tradition' as a creative and integral, rather than a redundant or even dysfunctional, element of the 'evolving civilization of modernity'.

The second article, written by Luis Roniger, is a major piece on 'Connected Histories, Power and Meaning: Transnational Forces in the Construction of Collective Identities'. As the title anticipates, this paper is concerned with three epistemic interests that are central to Eisenstadt's oeuvre: the *historical* interest in the emergence of connected histories; the *philosophical* interest in the constitution of meaning; and the *sociological* interest in the construction of collective identities. Of course, these concerns constitute transdisciplinary issues in the sense that each of them contains, at the same time, historical, philosophical, and sociological dimensions. The transdisciplinary nature of these analytical levels is indicative of Eisenstadt's refusal to treat disciplinary boundaries as unquestionable and insurmountable limits to conceptually incompatible and methodologically incommensurable frameworks of modern-day research. Connected histories involve the creation of cross-culturally negotiated zones of meaning and the mediation of intersubjectively constructed identities; meaning is, by definition, the product of interconnected sociohistorical horizons and of the symbolic mobilization of collective identities; and collective identities are constructed through historical networks between individual and societal subjects, who have a deep-seated need to attach meaning to their existence and to the world in which they find themselves situated. Focusing upon Central America, Roniger's paper succeeds in illustrating how these seemingly abstract and merely theoretical questions are immediately relevant to our understanding of empirically constituted realities in general and modern civilizations in particular. Drawing on Eisenstadt's insights into the sociological consequences of the emergence of multiple modernities, Roniger argues that, following their formal independence from their European colonizers, societies in Central America have found it extremely difficult to develop distinct collective identities. In fact, the historical co-articulation of exogenous (predominantly European) and endogenous (primarily indigenous) influences is yet another example of the Janus-faced realities generated by multiple modernities.

One week after Eisenstadt's death, on 9 September 2010, Ilana F. Silber gave a major lecture at the symposium 'Multiple Modernities', held in memory of Eisenstadt at The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. The third contribution of this Special Issue, entitled 'Deciphering Transcendence and the Open Code of Modernity: S.N. Eisenstadt's Interpretative Approach to the Multiplication of Modernities', is based on this lecture. At first sight, this title may appear a little cumbersome, but it appropriately captures the central theoretical issues with which Silber is concerned in her paper: the place of transcendence in modernity and Eisenstadt's plea for a comparative hermeneutics of civilizations. It is worth emphasizing, however, that in this context the term 'transcendence' is not understood as a socially disembedded and historically footless force of quasi-divine abstraction; rather, as Silber spells out, it is to be conceived of as a 'polysemic idea of flexible analytical scope', that is, as a *conditio sine qua non* for the elaboration of a comparative hermeneutics of civilizations. Paradoxically, such a hermeneutically informed and comparatively orientated mode of social analysis permits us to decipher various aspects underlying human forms of coexistence: the universal and the particular, the conceptual and the empirical, the symbolic and the material, the ephemeral and the institutional, the contingent and the necessary, the open and the closed. In other words, what Eisenstadt shares with major intellectual figures such as Max Weber (1864–1920), Martin Buber (1878–1965), and Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) is the scientific ambition to study modernity as a historical conglomerate of large-scale generative structures expressed in the universality of civilizational achievements and in the particularity of collectively sustained boundaries. Ultimately, cross-civilizational comparison is about cross-cultural dialogue, and this is one of the main emancipatory potentials inherent in Eisenstadt's comparative hermeneutics of civilizations.

In his article entitled 'An Appraisal of Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt's Global Historical Sociology', Willfried Spohn makes the fourth main contribution to this Special Issue. As indicated in the title, Spohn attributes particular importance to Eisenstadt's elaboration of what may be described as a 'global historical sociology'. Asserting that Eisenstadt was not only one of the great sociologists of the late twentieth century, but also a visionary with regard to the various sociological challenges to be confronted in the twenty-first century, Spohn aims to defend the following thesis: if there is one essential thematic concern that runs through literally all of Eisenstadt's writings, it is his critical conversation with the paradigm of modernization. Yet, as Spohn remarks, Eisenstadt examined modernization not from the privileged perspective of mainstream or classical sociology, but from the heterodox and peripheral standpoint of a scholar willing to acknowledge that he himself was situated within the horizon of modernity, whilst seeking to resist the temptation of relying on reductive accounts that underestimate the global complexity permeating modern societies and erroneously presuppose the historical preponderance of an ineluctable and universalizable European pathway. With the aim of illustrating the far-reaching scope of Eisenstadt's project, Spohn focuses on four key issues: first, Eisenstadt's heterodox theory of modernity, which is based on a critical reflection upon the profound tensions, contradictions, and paradoxes arising from the emergence of globally interconnected realities; second, a succinct overview of the main assumptions underlying Eisenstadt's comparative-civilizational approach to multiple modernities; third, Eisenstadt's

most original contributions to contemporary understandings of civilizations and world history; and, finally, the relevance of Eisenstadt's work to debates on major issues in the sociology of globalization and world history. In brief, there is no such thing as a contemporary global historical sociology that can possibly bypass, let alone ignore, Eisenstadt's comparative sociology of multiple modernities.

In the fifth article, entitled 'S.N. Eisenstadt: A Sociological Giant', Roland Robertson undertakes a systematic comparison between Eisenstadt's work and the writings of the North American sociologist Talcott Parsons. By way of a somewhat unconventional and personal introduction, Robertson pays tribute to Eisenstadt for his invaluable human qualities, notably his great generosity as well as his intellectual and emotional empathy, expressed in his sustained interest in, and critical engagement with, the work of his interlocutors and students. When comparing Eisenstadt and Parsons with one another, Robertson's analysis centres upon three dimensions: first, their biographies; second, their conceptions of, and contributions to, sociology; and, third, their accounts of globality, with particular emphasis on the influence that the work of the late Karl Jaspers had on Eisenstadt and on the theoretical problems arising from the sociological engagement with the historical realities constructed by different civilizations. As Robertson explains, *Japanese Civilization* is a study that permits us to comprehend the theoretical presuppositions underlying, and the empirical dimensions informing, Eisenstadt's sociology of globality, as illustrated in his systematic attempt to place Japan in a comparative context (Featherstone et al., 1995). The normative implications of such an ambitious endeavour come to the fore in Robertson's concluding reflections on the difficult question of whether or not the emergence of a global consciousness is symptomatic of the fact that the contrast between differential modernization and global civilization has been rendered obsolete.

In the sixth paper, 'The Dialogue of Civilizations: An Eisenstadt Legacy', Donald N. Levine discusses a controversial issue: the possibility of dialogue between different civilizations. In fact, one may claim that, as interdependent beings living in increasingly interconnected societies, we need to face up not only to the possibility but also to the necessity of engaging in inter-civilizational dialogue, based on the discursive exercise of cross-cultural perspective-taking. Challenging Samuel Huntington's famous thesis about the 'clash of civilizations', Levine argues that the evidence provided in support of this thesis is suspiciously stereotypical and selective. More importantly, however, he seeks to demonstrate that the assumption that different civilizations are quasi-naturally condemned to collide with one another is deeply flawed for a number of reasons: first, because civilizations are, by definition, internally divided, organizationally complex, and ideologically heterogeneous; second, because the very possibility of civilizational development depends upon society's capacity to mobilize non-exclusionary themes orientated towards an ethics of universality; and, third, because the need for dialogue is deeply ingrained in the human condition, constituting both an anthropological invariant, which transcends the spatiotemporal specificities of different societies, and an anthropological driving-force, which makes both individual and societal developments possible in the first place. Levine illustrates the complexity of civilizational developments by examining the sociological role of exclusionary and inclusionary concepts in the consolidation of different civilizational traditions and subtraditions. We may consider the

worldwide influence of the Indian political leader Mohandas K. Gandhi, the humanistic teachings of the Japanese martial artist Morihei Ueshiba, or prominent historic and contemporary figures in the Abrahamic civilizations of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; what these examples illustrate is that we need to recognize that constructive dialogue both within and between cultures is an ontological precondition for the very possibility of civilizational development.

In the final article, 'Axial Civilizations, Multiple Modernities, and Islam', Saïd Amir Arjomand assesses the value of Eisenstadt's writings for contemporary studies of Islam. Heavily influenced by modernization theory and set to develop his own theoretical framework, Eisenstadt embraced the idea of 'post-traditional societies' in the early 1970s, which was then, as Arjomand elucidates, followed by the introduction of the concepts of 'axial civilizations' and 'multiple modernities'. One of Eisenstadt's primary concerns in the 1980s was the elaboration of a theoretical model capable of grasping the tension between an Islamic primordial utopia and the historical reality of patrimonial Sultanism: the former is based on the ideal of the Golden Age of pristine Islam; the latter designates a rather authoritarian form of religious government and the emergence of a relatively autonomous public sphere regulated by Islamic law and controlled by a religious elite, the *ulema*. In this sense, the tension between limited pluralism and puritanical fundamentalism is of central importance. On a practical level, the question that poses itself is to what extent religious power and political power are two competing, yet complementary, forces in non-secular societies. Although, as Arjomand emphasizes, religious elites may enjoy a considerable degree of ideological and institutional autonomy, their civilizational impact is ultimately determined by hegemonic political, rather than merely religious, forces. According to the author, this is illustrated in the fact that in sociohistorical contexts in which religious elites have traditionally lacked autonomy, such as in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, Islam has remained largely confined to the religious sphere, whereas in regions in which religious elites have enjoyed a greater degree of autonomy, such as in the Middle East and North Africa, Islam appears to have had a much more profound impact upon society. As Arjomand aims to demonstrate in his article, some of Eisenstadt's key conceptual tools, in particular the notions of 'axial civilizations' and 'multiple modernities', allow for a sociohistorical analysis of Islam that is capable of grasping the civilizational consequences of the complex interplay between religious and political forms of power in non-secular societies.

In conclusion, the passing of Professor Eisenstadt represents the disappearance of a particular type of scholarship and of the social conditions that produced it. In light of the above considerations, it seems legitimate to regard Eisenstadt, in terms of both his scope of interests and his depth of understanding, as the late embodiment of the comparative and historical sociology of Max Weber. Both Weber and Eisenstadt grappled with the comparative differences between North America, Europe, and Asia through the analytical framework of what we may call 'life orientations' or, in Weber's terms, 'personality and life orders'. Yet, if we look at the social changes brought about by globalization from the death of Weber in 1920 to the death of Eisenstadt in 2010, we can easily appreciate just how profound the recent transformations have been for the social sciences and for the institutional structures within which they sit. Three major developments have transformed the nature, and arguably the purpose, of universities in the contemporary world.

The first is the growth of the Internet and the emergence of electronic sources, both of which are slowly eroding the book culture that may be considered as the basis of traditional forms of academic scholarship. Academic publishing is now heavily influenced by a profit-driven market for books that sell insofar as they can easily satisfy the teaching requirements of basic courses and, furthermore, fit the spoon-feeding ethos built into the PowerPoint culture that seems to have colonized most Western universities. The second is the spread of quantitative measurement of research performance that favours articles in refereed journals over book manuscripts and effectively prioritizes grant applications over scholarly publications. This process essentially entails the rationalization of academic life and the commodification of knowledge. Finally, the most significant research clusters of modern societies are often outside, rather than inside, the university, because the neoliberal model of globalization, which in practice leads to a profoundly asymmetrical distribution of intellectual and educational resources, encourages the increasing involvement of corporate funding in quasi-independent, or pseudo-autonomous, research institutions.

These conditions seem to undermine the academic world of the individual scholar who works, somewhat privately, on large-scale and probably lifelong projects in the area of comparative and historical sociology. In short, the social conditions that favoured the type of sociology produced by Weber and Eisenstadt are being eroded. With the economic decline of the West one may suspect that, over the next hundred years, creative research networks, insofar as they do survive, may well be more prevalent in countries like China, India, and Brazil than in North America and Europe. It may be somewhat ironic to reflect upon these developments in a conclusion to an Introduction that, instead of insisting upon the alleged predominance of 'one modernity' or a 'single axial period', draws upon concepts such as 'multiple modernities' and 'axial ages'. This historical irony was not lost on Eisenstadt. The scope and diversity of these articles are a tribute to Eisenstadt as an intellectual figure, but they are also a tribute to his legacy based on the major contributions he made to the historical and sociological study of civilizations and their trajectories.

Note

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