

Sociology of Science and Problem of Method in Weber

Olcay TIRE, Murat Cem DEMİR

Dr Assistant, Munzur University, The Department of Sociology, Tunceli, TURKEY
Associated Professor, Munzur University, The Department of Sociology, Tunceli, TURKEY

Abstract: In general, two theories of knowledge or their extension are the sources of social sciences. The opinions of the social world are not different from the natural world, therefore, the proponents of the positivist form of explanation applied in the natural sciences are also suitable for social sciences. In contrast, there are those who argue that the social world cannot be treated as a natural reality. Weber tries to combine positivist and anti-positivist tendencies in sociology. In this study, basic concepts and methodology of Weber's sociology will be discussed. In this study, a brief overview will be made on the Weberian concepts such as understanding - explanation dichotomy, ideal type and the spirit of capitalism.

Key Words: Weber, Sociological Method, Interpretive Sociology, Ideal Type, Spirit of Capitalism.

I. Introduction

In general, two theories of knowledge or their extension are the sources of social sciences. The opinions of the social world are not different from the natural world, therefore, the proponents of the positivist form of explanation applied in the natural sciences are also suitable for social sciences. In contrast, there are those who argue that the social world cannot be treated as a natural reality. Weber tries to combine positivist and anti-positivist tendencies in sociology. According to Weber, sociology is "a science that aims to interpret and understand social behavior and to explain the behavior through its own flow and the effects it causes" (Beyaztaş, 2004: 13). Sociological analysis should be appropriate both in terms of meaning and causality. This is achieved through ideal types. Hence, the ideal type categories related to action are those in which actors are related both with other actors and in a historical context. Ideal type analysis has a commentator-causal context that links meanings to purposes (Swingewood, 1998: 182). Ideal type analysis has a commentator-causal context that links meanings to purposes (Swingewood, 1998: 182). The aim of this article is to summarize the Weberian thought and method.

II. Anti-Positivism / Interpretation and Sociology

Positivism is an understanding of knowledge based on experiment and observation. As a result of the Enlightenment tradition, the dominant methodological orientation of sociology has been positivism. The methods applied in the natural sciences in positivist thought are also considered suitable for the study of society. This power of positivism actually results from the success of natural sciences. For this reason, positivism has long been the only indispensable method in order to repeat the success of natural sciences in social sciences. Those who adopted the positivist method believed that the social world is not different from the natural world. According to this view, the purpose of all science, whether social or natural, is to produce generalizations or laws that are proof of empirical observation. The basis of science depends on experiment and observation (Sunay, 1999: 25). Positivist sociology is the first outlet of science in the context of sociological thought. In the second half of the nineteenth century in Germany, in a debate focused on the nature of social reality and on the problems of appropriate methods, positivists insisted on the uniqueness of science to repeat the success of the natural sciences in social sciences. On the other hand, a group of philosophers said that social life was based on a cultural basis. They resisted the validity of the interpretation (hermeneutic) program.

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), representative of the hermeneutics approach said that "there was an important distinction between explanation and understanding: Explaining an event or an institution required an external mechanical relationship between the human subject and the world of reality; The explanation was conceived within the framework of the mechanical causality that actually removed the subjective aspects of human life from the analysis. But human culture was the product of the category of understanding, the interpretation of the reality of human subjects, which filled the everyday life and could not be thought of without society. Because positivism treats human subjects externally as objective data, it did not combine this dimension of understanding within its methodological framework" (Swingewood, 1998: 160). According to hermeneutics, social reality is created consciously and effectively by individuals who take into account the meanings of other people's behaviors. Social reality exists through meaningful interaction between individuals. Social reality cannot be examined methodologically based on empirical and evidence, as positivists claim.

In this sense, “the fundamental distinguishing feature of the hermeneutic tradition is that it sees a fundamental difference between natural sciences and cultural sciences or human sciences. While the natural sciences explain the relations between natural phenomena which are devoid of meaning in the form of laws, cultural sciences try to understand human. The purpose of hermeneutic is to understand human action in its historical and cultural context. Hermeneutics, who set out from this contrast between explanation and understanding, rejected the dilemma between the subject and the object of knowledge, arguing that events that are the subject of social science cannot be understood independently of the perceptions of subjects “(Gökçe, 2007: 27). For this reason, hermeneutics (interpretations) indicates that the social cannot be examined by the method used to examine objects in nature. The social world cannot be treated as a natural reality. Society is based on certain symbolic meanings and cultural system. “Social laws are different from natural laws. It is not general and universal. Social laws are rules specific to a particular cultural system. If society were set up differently, laws and rules would be different. For this reason, social sciences, unlike natural sciences, have to adopt an interpretive explanation based on understanding, rather than nomological (law-dependent) and causal explanation. Interpretation is aimed at understanding the symbolic system that is based on social life” (Sunay, 1999: 26). From this point of view, the texture of relations that make up social life is symbolic, basically these relationships are based on symbolic logic and reason. Human activity becomes meaningful only when it takes place in a symbolic integrity. A non-symbolic action is a reflex or animal motive. Regardless of the symbolic system, elements alone do not have any meaning. That is, every type of activity that is specific to human species is based on a symbolic basis. The meaning of the action derives from the symbolic integrity of which it is the element (Sunay, 1999: 14).

III. Weber and Interpretive Sociology

The basis of the traditional hermeneutics, which opposes the positivist evaluation of the methodological unity of nature and the social sciences, dates back to the 19th century. The concept of understanding developed by Dilthey. According to Dilthey (1977:205); “The method permeates the human studies is that of understanding and interpretation” Understanding is presented as an alternative to the study of causal connections among cases. According to Gadamer (2002); understanding is the reproduction of an original product. At the time when intellectuals were discussing the problem of methodology in Germany in the second half of the 19th century, Max Weber focused on the same problems and worked hard to develop an adequate method appropriate to social sciences. “Weber emphasized the impasses of the positivist method of sociology, emphasized his own specificity of the social and tried to find the best explanation model” (Esgin, 2008: 84-85). The sociology of Weber aims to synthesize the concept of interpretive understanding with a positivist emphasis on causal analysis. Because, according to Weber, “the task of sociology is not to make judgments, but to determine the structure of values within a given social context and to emphasize the importance of these values in terms of objectively understanding social action. Interpretation and causal explanation are the basic modes of analysis for scientific, objective information. The subjective meaning of social action is understood through empathy and revival” (Swingewood, 1998: 176).

Weber was against the positivist doctrines of the majority of his contemporaries. He said that the roots of various naturalistic misconceptions lie in the belief that the only legitimate aim of knowledge is the search for universal laws, and therefore the cognitive value is identical to the recurrent and the lawful. This cognitive commitment suggests that singularity is not worth knowing and that reality can be derived entirely from universal laws (Ringer, 2006: 71).

That is why, according to Weber, “The object of investigation of the natural sciences has no meaning. It is impossible to move his method to the social sciences. Natural phenomena can be explained by causal explanations. An extra effort is needed to understand social phenomena, because they need to understand their motives in order to understand their reasons; this is the reasons that lead to man's action and the goals he pursues. And the best method to clarify the meaning of an event is the method of understanding. Mankind does not simply perform a mechanical impulse, but acts for certain reasons. There are motives. For example, a human being may be a hunter for pleasure, for acting or for playing pleasure. All of this is what simple causation can't catch. Thus, the task of understanding is to fill in the gaps left by straightforward explanations in the problems specific to human relations “(Freund, 1997: 175).

As we have seen, Weber is not broken off from the causality of positivism. What distinguishes him from other anti-positivists is that he does not completely dismiss the positivist approach in the social sciences. However, the transfer of the scientific principles and methods of positivist understanding to the social field cannot be approved. The method of understanding according to Weber; through the ideal types as sociological concepts, the world of subjective meanings in the realm of historical and social reality can be examined objectively. Or, understanding, methodologically, simply re-experiencing the actions of others, is not a revival of a singular experience. Understanding is related to the concept of cultural whole. According to Derrida

(2002:242) “ the same ‘mystical’ limit will reemerge at the supposed origin of said conditions, rules or conventions, and at the origin of their dominant interpretation.”

In addition, according to Weber, sociology is the science of social action. “The basic feature of social action as a type of meaningful action is that it is an action related to the situation of others. What makes social actions clear as actions for others is the relation between action and the meaning that motivates action, the context of meaning. Meanings, by themselves, show themselves in the form of cultural qualities. According to this, the task of sociology is to identify these qualities which appear to be motivating and motivating in social actions, in other words, to determine the cultural meaning in social action as the cause of action. For example, the phenomenon of handshake is an understandable act for us as long as we are aware of the traditions, customs or traditions on this subject, that is, as long as we are aware of the cultural meaning that motivates this action” (Özlem, 2001: 125). According to, we can not examine human beings as abstract beings. Because it is the human being's ability to take action. The aim that determines the action is the reason for determining the purpose. First, the purpose of the individual is determined and then the cause of the purpose is determined. Therefore, it is important to understand the social actions which are the subject of sociology together with their specific cultural and historical environments and to make causal explanations. Because the primary data in sociology; the subjective meaning, value, belief and intentions of individuals.

As you can see, “people will continue to make sense of life through symbol systems; however, innovation is inevitable as life always challenges these symbol systems. According to Weber's statement in *Ancient Judaism*, the reason for the necessity of new religious ideas is that man has yet to learn how to confront the course of the world with his own questions. Questions arise from experiences and are positioned within the meaning structures that people apply; in addition, new ideas arise from experiences and help transform meaning structures” (Turner, 2008: 197).

On the other hand, “Weber owes his ideas about the method to the philosophy of enlightenment. The starting point and the basic unit of their analysis are individual. Sociology accepts the individual and the individual's behavior as the basic unit or atom. In this approach, the individual is the only carrier of meaningful behavior. Generally, concepts such as state, association, feudalism and similar are certain categories for sociology that show the interaction of people. Thus, the task of sociology is to reduce these concepts to understandable concepts, in other words, to reduce them to the actions of the only persons who participate in the interaction” (Gerth, Mills, 2006: 105).

“In the emphasizing the explanatory importance of interpretation, Weber's first thought was a motivational understanding of things, actions, or aspects of action: all kinds of science about human behavior, including any intellectual action and any psychic habit, attempted to understand this behavior, thus interpreting the flow of action as interpretive. (Ringer, 2006: 121). Descriptive understanding is to understand a phenomenon, a process, an action rationally based on its motives, symbols. That is, explanatory understanding is causal understanding.

IV. Ideal Types and Methodology in Weber

“According to Weber, the only possibility for a sociology based on empirical grounds and to explain its subject in a general / inclusive way is to be able to set ideal type concepts as extremely abstract concepts that must be constantly open to empirical supervision. The purpose of creating these concepts is to be able to approach the facts appropriately. For this purpose, while maintaining the coherence of empirical baseline, by trying to understand the sociological aspects with the help of the ideal types and the cultural qualities as the motives of social actions, the relation of these cultural qualities with the individual social actions, that is, with the subjective meanings that the individual individuals have put into these cultural qualities, It is necessary to observe the relation between the actions” (Özlem, 2001: 140). According to Weber, because the social sciences are based on a cultural basis, unlike natural phenomena, it is meaningless to reduce social sciences and laws to laws like natural sciences. The events of the social sciences are unique and unique events. But their singularity and singularity is not an obstacle to causal explanation. Social events based on a cultural basis can be explained both in a causal and interpretative manner. This is the most immutable reality of the work.

In other respects, according to Weber, sociology must be objective if it is a real science. Most researchers in his era did not think that an objective social science was possible because it seemed impossible to separate values from the research process. However, he argued that objective results could be achieved in sociology and social sciences. However, in Weber's method, the researcher in sociology and social sciences first begins with a subjective choice. Because. “According to Weber, the social world is different from the natural world, human action, human action aims, goals are based on the world of subjective meaning ” (Sunay, 1999: 29). Since the researcher will not be able to examine all of the numerous social realities, one of them will choose the subject of his / her interest, which is important for himself, so he starts with a subjective election. But the result should be free of value. In the social sciences, as in the natural sciences, the scientist should not confuse the results with personal value judgments. He must investigate, not what he should be. “Weber's value-free concept meant that the personal values and economic interests of the researchers should not affect the analysis

process in the social sciences. The effort to reach objective and verifiable information connects all sciences, whether natural sciences or social sciences. According to Weber, objective analysis is only possible when sociologists use a rational method in a systematic research process”(Beeghley, Powers, Turner, 2010: 214).

For Weber, values should not affect the research process in a rational discipline. Because the world of values directs only actions. Here, social scientists face a fundamental problem with scientific practice: to select which topics to investigate. Is there a scientific way of deciding whether poverty or pre-marital sexual intercourse is a more interesting or important research topic? Weber's answer is simple, **NO**. It is their religious beliefs, economic interests, and other values that direct certain subjects to research, but the research process must be objective after the research topics are selected (Beeghley, Powers, Turner, 2010: 215).

“The essence of the Weberist epistemology is to establish the unrealistic in order to understand real causal relationships. Science is not a copy of reality. because reality is endless; however, science is a collection of concepts supported by small information. In fact, every concept is limited to understanding only one aspect of reality, and the sum of all these concepts is limited compared to the infinite magnitude of reality. The known reality is always the reality in which concepts are abstractly restructure”(Freund, 1997: 178-179). I “Weber thinks that every science needs a map of concepts, an inventory of basic concepts describing the phenomena investigated, and from there it begins to develop a system of concepts and calls these concepts as ideal types”(Beeghley, Powers, Turner, 2010: 214). For this reason, the ideal type in the sociology of Weber is an important concept.

“The ideal type is an abstract mental work brought about by rational methods, free of value judgments, covering all the typical features of a particular social event, and bringing these features together from an individualizing point of view. Real-life relationships are never found in the conceptual purity of the ideal type. In fact, the ideal type is not the target. it is a tool that is used to detect, understand and explain the singular events” (Kızılcelik, 1992: 153). According to Weber, the ideal types were the analysis tools. they were mere guards. And, they were the way of revealing concrete cultural phenomena in their interdependencies, causal conditions and meanings, (Swingewood, 1998: 179). However, “Ideal types are meaningful to the extent that they allow for the distinctions made during the construction of adequate interpretations or explanations and against anti-case comparisons” (Ringer, 2006: 13). Weber treats methodological problems through ideal types. According to Weber, sociology will first establish the ideal type concepts for expressing the general patterns of social relation, then he will try to understand the reasons for his social actions with the help of these concepts. Sociology will thus achieve generality and inclusiveness. So reality will be known through ideal types.

Weber demands the ideal types to compare reality at all times and every opportunity. The comparison is an indispensable inspection method in the stage of controlling by reaching a concept as a result of the comparison of countless processes at the stage of establishing both ideal type concepts and returning to the historical examples. The point to be reached with this method is to understand the historical / social / cultural world as a special reality world within the schemas, hypotheses and theories based on ideal types as special concepts (Özlem, 2001: 174-175).

The ideal type of Weber has three main functions. First, the “ideal type” expresses the stages in the interpretation process with a more comprehensive causal analysis strategy. Theoretically, it introduces how some elements in this sequence of behavior can be called into a variety of factors, including causal reasons, beliefs, and other conditions. Secondly, it enables commentators to express their meaning relations in particular actions or texts. For Weber, a plausible explanation about a meaning relation was a compulsory but inadequate condition of a valid statement in the world of action. This suggests that an interpreter should be able to articulate the meaning of the meaning in an ideal type. Third, this approach emphasizes the active role played by the researcher in the interpretation of actions and beliefs. Such an approach draws attention to their commitment to their own norms on 'correct rationality' (Ringer, 2006: 151).

For Weber, “ a historical event can be explained both from the outside causality relations and from within the cultural context” (Sunay, 1999: 32). In terms of historical events, “the most important concrete example of Weber's proposed method is his work on capitalism. The most important project of Weber's scientific life was to uncover the uniqueness of Western civilization by comparing the capitalist moral system with the different civilizations and the reasons for the social life of the system based on this system. Weber's in-depth study of Hebrew, Chinese and Indian civilizations is primarily aimed at explaining capitalism. In order to understand why capitalist society emerged in the West rather than elsewhere, and to identify the reasons for the birth of capitalism, Weber applied a comparative method. The causality relationship between historical events can only be determined by a profitable method; but to understand the system of morality that constitutes capitalism, we need to understand the world of meaning of subjects”(Sunay, 1999: 32).

“According to Weber, the only factor describing capitalism is only not being described by the social classes. Capitalism is also characterized by the conduct of economic activity in accordance with the rationality. In addition to the various material conditions, Europe required the adoption of a particular set of values and attitudes (the spirit of capitalism) in the emergence of capitalism in 16th and 17th century. The idea that the

spirit of capitalism is related is not the notion that economic gain is a tool that brings us to worldly pleasures, but the idea that it is a divine call or duty that it is an end in itself. In the spirit of capitalism; The contributions of virtues such as honesty, diligence, punctuality and stance to the increase of economic gain have been pointed out. So it was legitimized" (Keat-Urry, 2001: 236). As seen in this case study, Weber's important contribution to method knowledge is the concept of causal pluralism. This completes his method of understanding and rejects the unilateral model of causality as inadequate. It opposes the traditional thought that considers causality as sufficient reason. In this way, Weber rejects the theories that want to accept that the events have come out for one reason.

Interpretative understanding of Weber as a synthesis of all of these also arises now. "Weber arrives interpretive understanding by making a distinction between observational or direct comprehension and explanatory or motivational comprehension. Weber says: when someone says or writes a $2 \times 2 = 4$ proposition, we understand the meaning of it directly. Similarly, we understand the anger of someone because of the various bodily expressions of that person; we can directly understand the action of the carpenter" (Keat-Urry, 2001: 232). Because, "if we understand the words and phrases that people share the same language, we will understand the behavior in a similar way. From childhood, we learn how to behave in a society in terms of behavior, rules, values, and what people want in certain situations. Thanks to this knowledge, we do not have any difficulty understanding immediately what we are doing"(Beyaztaş, 2004: 20-21).

"However, explanatory understanding is related to the knowledge of the motives behind this directly understood action. Weber defines motive as a subjective meaning, which provides an adequate explanation for the act of the actor and the observer" (Keat-Urry, 2001: 232). "The explanatory understanding is to place the behavior in a sense of meaning that seems appropriate to us. For example, when a little boy reaches for the hands of an elderly person in the feast day, we understand that a little boy want to kiss his hand (instant understanding). When we know why he wants to kiss the hand, we understand it in a descriptive manner" (Beyaztaş, 2004: 21). It is clear that explanatory understanding is to understand the cultural qualities and motives of an action or a phenomenon. In other words, he tries to understand the cultural codes that are effective in his life, which leads the person to that action. Explanatory understanding is to understand a phenomenon, an action rationally, based on cultural symbols, a causal understanding. The method of understanding sociology has a rationalist attitude due to these issues.

"Emphasizing the explanatory importance of interpretation, Weber's first thought was a motivational understanding of things, actions, or aspects of action: any science of human behaviour, including any intellectual action and any psychic habit, sought to understand this behaviour, thus interpreting the flow of action as interpretive. Works" (Ringer, 2006: 121). When this route is followed, the meaning and explanation are also perfected.

According to Weber, "the norms that are related to the continuity of means-objectives are guided by action involving a social content, and the aspect of collective action that operates according to these particular models is that the sociologist starts the causal analysis. Thus, objective knowledge is possible within the cultural sciences; The fact that the study object is cultural values does not give birth to a subjectivist sociology" (Swingewood, 1998: 175).

All these can be said that the social sciences are social and cultural values, so the universal general laws in social sciences as in natural sciences cannot be attained. Because, unlike naturalists, social scientists do not do research on a static substance, instead they solve social relations, cultural values and an activity; As these relations, values and activities are social behaviors that always evolve with the continuous development of conditions, universal general laws in social sciences have no meaning. General laws are not valuable because they lack the content. The larger the scope of a term, the more it will take us away from the wealth of reality, because the general law will be as abstract as possible and therefore lacking content to cover the common elements of more cases.

V. Discussion and Conclusion

"Sociology, unlike natural sciences, preoccupied with a pre-interpreted world. The creation and reproduction of meaning frameworks in this world is a fundamental condition of humanitarian behavior what sociology is trying to analyze" (Giddens, 2003: 209). On the contrary, "positivist sociology has not been concerned with the pre-interpreted character of human life. Positivist sociology has overlooked some of the things that are fundamental to their nature by trying to reduce people to the level of objects" (Turner, 2008: 104). According to Giddens, "a social science approach that attempts to express its epistemology and ideals directly in natural sciences is certainly doomed to failure and can only reach a limited understanding of human society" (Giddens, 2003: 27).

In this way, Weber aimed to combine positivist and anti-positivist tendencies in sociology. The idea that social actions can be interpreted and understood and that objective conclusions can be drawn from subjective elections; the idea that all social phenomena and events can be expressed in generalized form in ideal

typifications reflects positivist tendencies. Because through ideal types, the world of subjective meanings in the realm of historical-social reality can be examined objectively.

According to Weber, “the phenomenon that separates the subject of historical sciences from natural sciences is human.. The most important feature of man is his ability to act...The explanation of the action is included in the general methodology of Weber: The purpose of the individual is determined, but it is not enough, but the cause that determines the purpose is also determined” (Sunay, 1999: 34). According to Weber, in the social sciences we must first understand the action, the motivation that leads to behavior. A value or rule can be generates behavior. Therefore, in order to understand human behavior, we need to understand the cultural factors of a person and the cultural factors of society. Since cultural factors are historical and specific to each community, we cannot reach universal laws that apply to all societies. We need to understand and explain every society, every social phenomenon within its historical and originality. Understanding should always come before explaining. Firstly, you need to understand and then you can explain. In Weber's method of understanding, the point of departure for scientific research is subjective, but the result is objective, because sociology must be objective if it is science. Sociology makes it through ideal types.

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