

Sociology Between Objectivity and Ideology

Omar ZAHOUANI

^aTiaret University; ^bLaboratory for Research on the Behavior of Individuals, Groups, and Organizations (RBIGO), Algeria.

Abstract:

This article explores the relationship between sociology and ideology, focusing on the dialectical tension between connection and separation between the two concepts. This tension dates back to the emergence of sociology in 19th-century Europe, a period marked by an intense intellectual blend of three major ideological currents – conservatism, radicalism, and liberalism – that have continued to compete to this day. The birth of sociology was thus fraught with difficulty, as its historical trajectory has been tied to these ideological divisions from the outset.

At the same time, the founding sociologists sought to achieve objectivity as a necessary condition for the true emergence of sociology as a science, striving to liberate it from ideology and elevate it to the status of scientific knowledge comparable to that of the natural sciences. However, the relationship between sociology and ideology is marked by a certain complexity and specificity. Sociology uniquely studies and analyzes both the subject (researcher) and the object (researched), both of whom are influenced by various factors such as class affiliation, intellectual orientation, and social background. All of these are intertwined with a value system from which neither researcher nor researched can fully detach themselves, making them active participants in shaping research outcomes.

Between these two positions – the pursuit of objectivity and the acknowledgment of ideological influence – it becomes necessary to accept the principle of relativity in achieving full objectivity in sociology, especially given that even the natural sciences have not attained complete objectivity. Moreover, sociology cannot grow or reach epistemological maturity if it is employed in the service of specific social groups or classes. Rather, its true function lies in uncovering hidden phenomena and practices, whether healthy or pathological, in order to support the well-being and orderly development of human societies in response to social demand.

Keywords: Sociology, Ideology, Objectivity, Subjectivity, Relativity, Scientific Research

La sociologie entre objectivité et idéologie

Résumé :

Cet article explore la relation entre la sociologie et l'idéologie, en se concentrant sur la tension dialectique entre la connexion et la séparation entre les deux concepts. Cette tension remonte à l'émergence de la sociologie dans l'Europe du XIXe siècle, période marquée par un intense brassage intellectuel entre trois grands courants idéologiques - le conservatisme, le radicalisme et le libéralisme - qui ont continué à s'affronter jusqu'à aujourd'hui. La naissance de la sociologie a donc été difficile, car sa trajectoire historique a été liée dès le départ à ces divisions idéologiques.

En même temps, les sociologues fondateurs ont cherché à atteindre l'objectivité comme condition nécessaire à la véritable émergence de la sociologie en tant que science, s'efforçant de la libérer de l'idéologie et de l'élever au rang de connaissance scientifique comparable à celle des sciences naturelles. Cependant, la relation entre la sociologie et l'idéologie est marquée par une certaine complexité et spécificité. La sociologie étudie et analyse de manière unique le sujet (le chercheur) et l'objet (l'enquête), tous deux influencés par divers facteurs tels que l'appartenance à une classe sociale, l'orientation intellectuelle et le milieu social. Tous ces facteurs sont liés à un système de valeurs dont ni le chercheur ni l'objet de la recherche ne peuvent se détacher complètement, ce qui fait d'eux des participants actifs à l'élaboration des résultats de la recherche.

Entre ces deux positions - la poursuite de l'objectivité et la reconnaissance de l'influence idéologique - il devient nécessaire d'accepter le principe de relativité dans l'atteinte d'une objectivité totale en sociologie, d'autant plus que même les sciences naturelles n'ont pas atteint une objectivité totale. De plus, la sociologie ne peut se développer ou atteindre une maturité épistémologique si elle est employée au service de groupes ou de classes sociales spécifiques. Sa véritable fonction consiste plutôt à mettre au jour des phénomènes et des pratiques cachés, qu'ils soient sains ou pathologiques, afin de soutenir le bien-être et le développement ordonné des sociétés humaines en réponse à la demande sociale.

Mots-clés : Sociologie, idéologie, objectivité, subjectivité, relativité, recherche scientifique

Introduction

With the advent of modernity and the convergence of three major revolutions—the intellectual revolution heralded by the Enlightenment, the French political revolution, and the European Industrial Revolution—Western European societies underwent profound transformations on all levels. These changes had a direct impact on every domain, giving rise to a new societal model characterized outwardly by economic structures, yet driven at its core by a sweeping emotional current that penetrated all social and individual dimensions.

The emergence of these new phenomena generated an epistemological anxiety among thinkers in the human sciences, prompting them to seek understanding and explanation of these changes through one of the central principles of the modern era: reason. However, this could not be achieved through the existing social and human sciences of the time—such as philosophy, law, history, political science, and economics—which, although relatively clear in terms of subject matter and methodology, could only interpret these phenomena from limited and often technical perspectives. What was lacking was a comprehensive and integrative explanation that could unify insights from all disciplines within the field of human sciences.

It was not until the second half of the 19th century that thinkers finally arrived at this new science—sociology. This delay was not coincidental but rather the result of numerous factors and conditions that sociology itself would later come to explain. Nevertheless, the emergence and birth of sociology were not without significant challenges, particularly in terms of methodological rigor and scientific objectivity, especially concerning the tension between objective neutrality and ideological bias.

1. The Dialectic of Ideology and Objectivity in Sociology

The concept of ideology began asserting its presence within the field of human sciences in general during the second half of the 19th century, as scholars in Western societies came to recognize the fragility and inadequacy of the social, political, and economic reforms proposed at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. (Boudon, et al. 2023, 215) In sociology, however, the issue is more complex, as the nature of the relationship between ideology and sociology is contingent upon the discipline's existence as an independent science—one that asserts itself methodologically and objectively, being the epistemological form in which ideology is expected to recede.

Understanding sociological theory and the major schools of sociology requires a thorough grasp of the hidden ideological orientations embedded within them. Therefore, distinguishing between ideologically biased and objective, neutral theories demands a comprehension of the reciprocal influence between these theories and the lived social realities of individuals and groups. Ideology, thus, represents one of the central challenges facing sociology in its quest to attain scientific legitimacy—unlike the natural and technical sciences, where the ideology-objectivity dialectic is only marginally present. Despite early founders' acknowledgment of the differences between the natural sciences and the human sciences, they saw the role of science in the latter as uncovering contradictions—and by extension, ideology itself. Hence, sociology students must strive to understand the dynamic relationship between these two poles, which at times converge and at other times diverge.

The concept of ideology has occupied a significant and influential position in the field of social practice since the 18th century, beginning with the work of French thinker Antoine Destutt de Tracy, who treated ideology as synonymous with "psychology." With Karl Marx, however, the term took on a

more negative connotation, referring to the false consciousness humans develop about political and social realities. Yet Marx did not limit the concept to this pejorative sense; for him, ideology also involved rationalization and scientific argumentation. This aspect was later employed by Vilfredo Pareto in his theory of "derivations" (Boudon, et al. 2023, 215). Nonetheless, *"the term "ideology" has become strongly associated with Marxism in the minds of many scholars, and their reactions to the concept are largely shaped by this connection. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that although Marxism significantly contributed to the original framing of the problem, the term "ideology" and its meanings predate Marxism and have evolved beyond it, acquiring new and independent dimensions over time"*. (Mannheim, 1980, 129)

Contemporary sociology treats ideology as a neutral concept referring to the set of ideas related to the political and social spheres, without necessarily presuming their validity or invalidity. Raymond Aron, for instance, described ideologies as "secular religions," rejecting all forms of determinism and adopting instead a conception of history that is shaped by a combination of chance and necessity. Similarly, Seymour Martin Lipset referred to these as *"total ideologies"* (Boudon, et al. 2023, 215).

Sociology, in its classical definition, is an attempt to secularize the study of society. During the great transformations experienced by Western societies in the 18th century, it shared a similar epistemological aspiration with the natural sciences prior to the European Renaissance—seeking knowledge through experience. However, sociology held an exceptional position among the human sciences. The core issue was embedded in the very first word of the term "social science": the notion of "science" itself, which is closely tied to the concept of objectivity. Through objectivity, sociology aims to assert its au-

tonomy, as its subject matter is presumed to impose itself on the researcher, just as is the case in the natural sciences. Earthquakes, for example, are natural phenomena that impose themselves on geologists; eclipses impose themselves on astronomers. Likewise, according to the founder of French sociology, Émile Durkheim, the sociological phenomenon is external to the will of individuals. The early debates centered on whether it was possible to achieve scientific neutrality in sociological research, detached from subjective influence as in the natural sciences. Could sociology liberate itself from subjectivity and commit to objectivity, or does it possess a unique nature that sets it apart from other sciences?

2. The Difficult Birth of Sociology

Sociology emerged from the epistemological anxiety experienced by the thinkers of the modern era, driven by a desire to understand the profound transformation that European Western societies underwent. This transformation gave rise to numerous new social phenomena that had not previously existed, necessitating attempts to diagnose them and provide appropriate solutions.

Although there is ongoing debate about the broad geographical origins of sociology, there is general agreement with the American sociologist Robert Nisbet that the 19th century witnessed the foundation of the sociological tradition through its key figures: Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Georg Simmel, and Herbert Spencer. These thinkers indicate that the initial home of sociology was in Germany and France, due to a set of political and broadly defined cultural factors.

From a chronological perspective, sociology is a product of modernity, and its mission is to uncover the secrets of how this modern system functions in a society that has lost all external foundations (such as God, nature, or fate). Through sociology,

humans could be better equipped to control their own destinies. (Caban,&Dourtié, 2010, 80)

This was not an easy task, especially given the societal conditions in Europe and the nature of sociology itself. Like other disciplines in the human sciences, sociology sought to establish itself as an independent science. To achieve this, it needed to define a specific object of study and adopt a methodological framework that would distinguish it from other sciences – particularly those within the domain of the human sciences, as defined by Georges Gurvitch – despite the possibility of scientific cooperation and thematic overlap in explaining shared phenomena.

For the founding sociologists, defining the object of study depended on answering the following question: Can a society composed of independent individuals truly be considered a "society"?

The ideology of modernity had from the beginning shaped Western society into a mass of individuals, separated through individualism, freedom of expression and belief, human rights, equality, citizenship, the entry of women into the workforce, secularism, and so forth. Values became subject to personal decisions, or as Max Weber described it: a "polytheism of values."

Since society is the object of study in sociology, failing to offer convincing and solid justifications for this subject threatens the very existence of the discipline. Sociology also faced another, more complex challenge: the dialectic of detachment from and connection to ideology.

As a result, three major ideological-intellectual currents emerged and continue to contend with one another: The conservative current, represented by Auguste Comte. The liberal current, represented by Alexis de Tocqueville. The radical current,

represented by the French and German socialist schools. (Megherbi, 2006a)

Thinkers of the modern era realized that sociology faced certain difficulties compared to other sciences and had not yet reached scientific maturity, especially when compared to the natural sciences, which had already made significant progress despite having passed through phases of superstition and mysticism. Through this comparison, a sense of hope emerged among the early founders, particularly those who adopted the naturalist approach in sociological research. They were well aware of the challenge of modeling sociology after the natural sciences. Auguste Comte, for instance, classified sociology among the most complex sciences.

Similarly, interpretive and understanding-oriented thinkers (Verstehende Soziologie) criticized this initial approach, arguing that it was not possible to apply a unified methodology between sociology and the natural sciences. This is because sociology involves individual will and psychological dimensions, which makes causal explanations for observable practices less applicable or less reliable.

The French socialist school, beginning with Saint-Simon, and the German socialist school, especially with Karl Marx, were also highly aware of the difficulty of this endeavor. They recognized that numerous factors influence this science, including political factors, which posed the greatest obstacle to objective sociological thought. Saint-Simon, for example, could not free his intellectual work until Napoleon's defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, after which he was imprisoned by the British. Karl Marx, for his part, lived a life of exile, pursued by business owners and factory owners (the bourgeoisie). He was unwelcome in most European countries (Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, and England) due to his ideas and writings, which

threatened the very foundations of the capitalist economic system.

In addition to these challenges, European sociology initially failed to move beyond a theoretical framework, particularly in its early stages with Auguste Comte. This is something that American sociology—in what could be considered its third home—managed to overcome. The capitalist ideological orientation had a profound impact on American sociology, especially through the lens of pragmatism, which was adopted by the founding sociologists in the United States. They worked not only to analyze society but also to propose culturally tailored solutions within their specific societal system. After World War II, sociology in the U.S. increasingly focused on investigating social problems and assisting political authorities in implementing social reforms.

In this new context, sociology faced a different kind of difficulty, primarily stemming from efforts to shape it into a pragmatic science that would align with the political orientation of the ruling system—a trend that later extended into other fields such as economics, social life, and culture. In order to ensure its continuity as an academic discipline, sociology had to respond to increasing criticism directed at sociologists, especially in light of growing protest movements within factories and companies. These pressures even led to dismissals from academic institutions, as in the case of William Isaac Thomas. As a result, many sociologists abandoned reformist scientific discourse strategies and began seeking funding for research projects from sources independent of economically powerful institutions that aligned with the capitalist system and often lacked any regard for scientific objectivity.

Sociology also faced challenges directly related to ideological orientations. Marxist thinkers in the United States, for instance,

encountered significant difficulties accessing academic spaces. This was due to overt ideological bias, since most universities and research centers were funded by capitalists, such as the Rockefeller family, which financed the University of Chicago. Under such conditions, it became nearly impossible for radical thinkers like Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929) and Scott Nearing (1883–1982) to remain in academic settings. Due to their critical orientations, they were quickly marginalized and excluded from the academic world. (Duran, & Fayal, 2012, 237)

It was in this context that C. Wright Mills launched his criticisms of the American system. While he never openly declared himself a Marxist, he cleverly introduced non-ideological Marxist insights to understand and interpret American society as a system of needs and production controlled by a ruling elite. (Duran, & Fayal, 2012, 238) Despite his intelligence and careful avoidance of overt ideological bias, Mills himself faced considerable harassment and obstacles. Although his criticisms appeared methodologically grounded, they carried clear ideological dimensions, especially in contrast to Talcott Parsons, who blatantly ignored the historical dimensions of sociological phenomena.

Meanwhile, the Chicago School preferred the anthropological approach and monographic studies as a means to resist the dominant methodological model used by mainstream sociologists like Stouffer, Lazarsfeld, and Merton, whose work relied on quantitative data analysis (Duran, & Fayal, 2012, 287). At the same time, however, they also criticized qualitative research for its lack of methodological precision.

This dual origin of sociology in Germany and France, followed by a third foundation in the United States, represents in itself one of the major challenges sociology faced, due to cultural differences in social policies and the cultural specificity of each context. Nonetheless, sociology has managed to overcome

these obstacles through a long process of cumulative struggle, which enabled the discipline to make significant progress—progress closely linked to the profound transformations experienced by Western societies, at least since the 18th century.

3. Objectivity in Sociology

The first thing that often comes to mind regarding the concept of objectivity for many researchers is that it is opposed to subjectivity—in other words, objectivity is the opposite of subjectivity. This superficial definition indicates a lack of full understanding of the concept despite its importance in sociology. *Émile Durkheim* addresses the concept of objectivity as an essential condition for achieving independence in sociology as a discipline, as well as reaching advanced stages of epistemological maturity.

This can be summarized in three fundamental rules:

1. **Elimination of preconceived ideas**, which directly refers to the detachment from value judgments and subjective opinions that the researcher might hold about the phenomenon under study.
2. **Interpreting the social by the social**, which grants sociology independence in its interpretation and, consequently, its subject matter.
3. **Considering social phenomena as fixed things**, the goal of which is to emulate the method of natural sciences in order to reach the level of epistemological maturity they have achieved. This rule also combines the first two regarding the goal of achieving objectivity in sociology. (Durkheim, 1990, 162-190)

Max Weber gives objectivity a distinctive perspective by viewing it as an approach centered on understanding meaning and cautioning against the preconceived ideas of the natural

science paradigm. He continuously criticized the mistake of generalizing based on a single interpretative viewpoint, while acknowledging historical materialism without outright rejecting it. (Durkheim, 1990, 85) From this standpoint, Weber rejects the temptations presented by the natural science method, which assumes a unilateral knowledge of each isolated phenomenon, separated from all surrounding conditions. He adds:

"If it is established that knowledge without prior assumptions is meaningless in itself—that is, if the term is not an image formed with a prior assumption about objective events—then how can we guarantee scientific objectivity without falling into the absolute relativism of some historians?" (Duran, J. P., & Fayal, 2012, 87)

Regarding interpretation and understanding, the tradition of this school does not seek to establish autonomous laws but rather to reconstruct the understanding and subjective meaning of individuals' actions in order to interpret historical acts in their partial entirety. For example, to understand the French Revolution, one seeks to understand the meanings, representations, and values that various actors adhered to during their revolutionary path. (Lebaron, 2014, 10)

It is also worth noting a point of great methodological and epistemological importance—the subject matter is considered the essential condition for any science to achieve its independence. Despite the incorrect and ambiguous definitions presented in some sociology textbooks and publications (such as “objectivity is the opposite of subjectivity”), the founder of French sociology, Émile Durkheim, points out that objectivity is embodied in the principle of treating phenomena as fixed things and considering the social phenomenon as independent of the will of the individuals who produce it. For example, social investigation of a crime is usually conducted against the phenomenon itself, which it produced—just as natural phenomena

such as an earthquake impose their existence on the geologist, or an astronomical event such as an eclipse imposes its presence on the astronomer. The same applies to other fields of natural and technical sciences.

4. The Scientific Nature of Sociology

The existence of knowledge in ancient societies does not mean that it was science in the modern sense of the term, since the word "science" is generally attributed to the modern era starting from the seventeenth century onward. During this period in Western history, natural sciences began systematically applying observation and experimentation. Subsequently, social sciences, including sociology, attempted to emulate this approach or develop their own methodologies suited to the nature of sociological phenomena, beginning in the nineteenth century.

The main challenge faced by sociology, like other sciences, was the possession of an independent subject of study, alongside the attempt to apply observation and experimentation to social phenomena, while acknowledging that the researcher (the observer) is also part of the subject (the observed). Hence, the question arose: can human beings and society be studied in the same way as a physicist or biologist studies phenomena in a laboratory setting? Or do social sciences have unique characteristics that enable them to achieve scientific status apart from the natural sciences' methodologies?

Thinkers and scholars during the founding period were divided into two main positions:

- One position held that sociology was doomed or had reached a dead end due to several difficulties, notably subjectivity, ideology, the high complexity of individuals and groups, and the overlap with other disciplines

that hindered the establishment of a clear methodology to achieve scientific independence.

- Another position, represented by *Émile Durkheim*, sought to answer this challenge through comparing phenomena across time and space on both individual and collective levels, treating this comparison as a kind of "laboratory" for interpreting social phenomena.
- A third group focused on understanding social phenomena from their source – the individual who produces them, the "nucleus" through which societal behavior can be comprehended within the principle of social solidarity. Thus, social science falls within the category of cultural sciences, which concern themselves with human life events from the perspective of their cultural meanings." (Duran, & Fayal, 2012, 84)

Durkheim's comparison particularly concerns traditional versus modern Western societies, highlighting his concern with the phenomenon he called "anomie" – the loss of social anchors linked to the disintegration of society and social fabric. He viewed sociology as a means to better understand this threat and work toward mitigating its effects. (Caban, & Dourtié, 2010, 8)

Meanwhile, interpretive sociology, led by *Max Weber*, viewed sociology as a science whose task is to comprehend through the interpretation of social action, (Caban, & Dourtié, 2010, 48) Avoiding unilateral or deterministic social explanations. Society, according to Weber, is the product of individual actions driven by motives, reasons, and beliefs known only to the actors themselves. This is what Weber termed the "meaning" individuals assign to their actions.

With a methodology not far removed, the author of the *Sociology of Forms*, **Georg Simmel**, addressed many topics related to the stage of modernity, most notably the phenomenon of socialization, which he explained as a societal process involving the accumulation of factors and conditions, including history. He also studied a variety of phenomena that lie at the core of the transformations experienced by Western European society, such as fashion, money, migration, and the psychology of women.

The economic phenomenon, with its historical and political dimensions, was also strongly present as both a method and subject of study by a scholar who never once used the term "sociology" but is nevertheless considered one of its foremost figures. As Henri Lefebvre stated: "*Marx was not a sociologist, but sociology exists in Marxism.*" (Duran, & Fayal, 2012, 68) The sociological dimension in Marx's work is manifested in his emphasis on the necessity of linking theoretical questions with practical reality. For Marx, knowledge in the scientific sense cannot be realized except through demonstration and proof via organized practice, which he considered one of the foundations of dialectical materialism.

The sociology of knowledge according to Karl Mannheim is limited to scientific and technical knowledge. For example, the theory of relativity completely escapes reduction to class determinants. Mannheim studied sociology in terms of ideology, the humanities, epistemology, and scientific knowledge concerning nature. (Lebaron, 2014, 127)

Vilfredo Pareto contributed to elite theory and social circulation, analyzing political systems from social and political perspectives.

In the United States and England, sociology was largely marginalized, overshadowed by other sciences because it was

considered a cultural science lacking laws and rules. It was viewed merely as a tool to aid the study of other sciences such as economics. However, the perception of sociology changed rapidly after the establishment of the first sociology department at the University of Chicago in 1892, which marked the true beginning of the symbolic interactionist school in 1937 with figures like Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, followed by the second generation, including Howard Becker (studies on marijuana addiction), Anselm Strauss, Erving Goffman, and Harold Garfinkel.

The empirical works of Paul Lazarsfeld on the unemployed in Marienthal (1933) and his studies on marketing had a significant impact on the prestige sociology gained among major business leaders, such as the American private institution headed by the Rockefeller family.

The founder of human urbanism had a distinct methodology that preceded Western sociology by approximately five centuries by separating the subject of human urbanism from history, due to the great convergence and similarity between studying historical and sociological phenomena.

However, the scientific status of sociology remains to be proven in each society specifically. It may indeed be scientific in societies like Western ones, which generally treat it as an applied science helping the proper functioning (le bon fonctionnement) of both the subsystems and the overall societal system. On the other hand, in many developing societies, sociology is marginalized and remains confined to the walls of university classrooms, rarely leaving the realm of superstition or vague ideology. It suffers from a lack of genuine place and opportunity to advance effectively in understanding and interpreting the phenomena it produces.

This marginalization is due to numerous difficulties faced by these societies, including an inability to approach reality criti-

cally, the rigid and abstract application of Western theories that have little relevance to their contexts, and the consumption of concepts extracted from Western theories in various disciplines and sciences by intellectuals and politicians without adaptation to local realities.

5. Methodological Boundaries between Science and Politics

Considering the close relationship between ideology and politics—since politics is the tool through which ideological ideas are applied and implemented—the variables that can explain the status of sociology in any society are tied to the nature of the relationship between these two concepts within sociology.

If natural sciences are a means for humans to achieve control over nature, then social sciences represent an effective tool for achieving control over humans and society. Hence, it is not surprising that social forces holding political power seek to impose their influence directly or indirectly over institutions responsible for producing and disseminating knowledge. Such control integrates these institutions into the existing regime's project, making them indispensable tools for gaining legitimacy on one hand, and providing the regime with the necessary expertise to achieve its goals at various levels on the other. (Anser, 1999, 282)

Marx believed that the humanities represent a form of knowledge in which ideology hides, in contrast to the natural sciences, which are characterized by precision, objectivity, and the ability to reveal truth free from ideological distortion. At the same time, the role of the humanities is to expose all contradictions and distortions of truth produced by ideology in reality and thought. (Khazzar, 2013, 68)

Meanwhile, Karl Mannheim argued that knowledge in the social sciences has not yet succeeded in breaking free from nar-

row interpretations and class-based viewpoints specific to certain groups. Therefore, freeing knowledge from ideology is the task of intellectuals who can transcend one-sided views and express the full truth. Some scholars and thinkers, such as Raymond Reiss, acknowledge the coexistence of both sides – science and ideology – within researchers and scholars in the humanities and social sciences. Consequently, a politician can also possess both the ideological-political and objective-scientific aspects. Reiss considers the former as a professional commitment aimed at upholding the ethics of scientific research and following a clear, neutral, and objective methodology, without implying the delivery of content with predetermined specifications. This sets the stage for the second aspect: ideological commitment, which involves belief in an idea or set of ideas that go beyond the existing truth and reality. This allows the researcher to be identified by their affiliation and particular perspectives on their worldview. (Khazzar, 2013, 69)

Max Weber's contribution in clarifying the relationship between these two concepts is both precise and clear. In his book *The Scientist and the Politician* (*Le Savant et Le Politique*), Weber delineates the boundaries between the two professions. He argues that the scientist contributes to shaping the destiny of our rational era by rationalizing the world and freeing it from magic, thereby preventing confusion between controlling the world through technology and the value-laden aspect of culture, which he described as a "struggle of the gods." (Duran, & Fayal, 2012, 99) Even though the scientific practice and its institutions, such as universities, do not deny the political objectives of social sciences – especially sociology – Weber defined the relationship between the two functions: a sociologist can become a politician but cannot maintain the scientific spirit and intellect he once had, nor can he practice the profession of a scientist at the same time.

IbnKhalidun preceded Western sociology in defining the proper relationship between the politician and the scientist with a statement that can be considered a law of this relationship in the strictest sense: "*Scholars among humans are the furthest from politics and its sects.*" (Megherbi, 2006b, 85)

He mentioned this in the *Seven Errors* committed by historians in writing history, specifically the error of bias towards opinions and sects, and currying favor with those in power through praise and flattery. This falls within the domain of research integrity. According to IbnKhalidun, it is impossible for any historian to be objective and neutral, far from subjectivity and independence; the same applies to the scientist who cannot simultaneously practice the function of knowledge production, especially in the fields of human and social sciences.

Therefore, sociology is considered an extremely complex science. On the surface, it may seem simple and accessible to everyone, but mastering its practice effectively and beneficially requires significant effort—going back to its history, theories, methodologies, techniques, and concepts. Its delayed emergence in the West was not coincidental but the result of a range of factors. However, sociology eventually managed to assert itself to varying degrees from one society to another. Its presence as a science also varies depending on the group, party, or class that controls it.

In other societies, including Arab and Maghreb societies, despite the sociological foundation left by the scholar Abd al-RahmanIbnKhalidun since the 14th century, no distinct Khalidunian school has been established to this day. Especially when considering the tremendous global transformation currently underway—in terms of ambitions and aspirations on one hand, and wars and clashes between states and civilizations on the

other – these societies cannot afford to ignore sociology, which in the West has become indispensable knowledge.

Conclusion

The journey of sociology was marked by a unique path of emergence and development in Western societies compared to other sciences. Its launch was very difficult, similar to other related sciences often referred to as human sciences. Sociology experienced a crisis concerning its scientific status, with some believing it was aborted and could never reach cognitive maturity. It also faced division due to its relationship with ideology, which was imposed upon it by social, economic, and political circumstances surrounding it. These conditions produce an ideology that cannot be easily shed; thus, one camp labeled social and human sciences as “ideological sciences.”

The opposing camp believes it is possible to overcome preconceived ideas and value judgments through a scientific methodology that leads to objectivity. Between these extremes, sociology has proven its independence in terms of subject matter. Numerous sociological studies have yielded remarkable results in Western societies, where sociology has become a pragmatic science serving direct social demands. Nevertheless, it cannot be claimed that sociology is absolutely independent from ideology or fully neutral. Likewise, ignoring value neutrality and neglecting the ethical dimension in sociological studies and research is not possible – since the subject of sociology is not a static object, unlike subjects in natural sciences, which can be experimented on repeatedly without harm to either researcher or subject.

If sociology aims to reach scientific maturity, it must adhere to the fundamental principles agreed upon by its early found-

ers despite their methodological and ideological differences. They viewed society as an entity independent of the individual that imposes its authority on individuals. Therefore, the subject matter of sociology exists and is independent of other disciplines. What remains decisive is whether sociology is applied well or poorly, as this determines its role and function in society.

References

- Anser, L. (1999). *Crisis or absence of sociology* (2nd ed.). Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies. [inArabic]
- Boudon, R., et al. (2023). *Dictionnaire de la sociologie*. Spain: Unigraf SL.
- Caban, P., &Dourtié, J. F. (2010).*Sociology: From grand theories to daily affairs: Figures, histories, and currents* (T. I. Hassan, Trans.). Damascus, Syria: Al-Farqad Publishing. [in Arabic]
- Duran, J. P., & Fayal, R. (2012).*Contemporary sociology* (M. Tawahri, Trans.). Algiers: Ibn El-Nadim Publishing and Distribution. [in Arabic]
- Durkheim, E. (1990). *The rules of sociological method* (A. Bouzida, Trans.). Algiers: Mouvfam Publishing. [in Arabic]
- Khazzar, W. (2013).*Ideology and sociology*. Beirut, Lebanon: Forum of Knowledge. [in Arabic]
- Lebaron, F. (2014). *35 grandes notions de la sociologie*. Paris: Dunod.
- Mannheim, K. (1980). *Ideology and utopia* (M. R. Dairini, Trans.).Kuwait: Kuwait Library Company. [inArabic]
- Megherbi, A. (2006a). *Lectures on sociological theories*.University of Algiers-Bouzareah. [in Arabic].

- Megherbi, A. (2006b). *Sociological thought of IbnKhalidun* (M. S. B. Dali Hussein, Trans.). Algiers: Kasbah Publishing. [in Arabic].
- Mucchielli, A. (1993). *Identity* (A. Watfa, Trans.). Damascus: Al-Waseem Publishing. [in Arabic]