

Book Review

CONSTANTIN SCHIFIRNET, “TENTENTIAL MODERNITY - REFLECTIONS ON THE EVOLUTION OF MODERN SOCIETY”, Tritonic Publishing, Bucharest, 2016

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Without presenting a new phenomenon, the modernity in present times manifests as an essential communicative condition and as one of synchronization, making local and national effects, determined by the causes, especially, the historical ones. So, the out of phase people in development can suddenly join the civilized ones, following the way of imitation the occidental forms, and then the way of blending the ethnical specific of a nation.

In a climate characterized by confusion and improvisation, the book *Tendential Modernity - Reflections on the evolution of modern society*, and also the other books published by mister Constantin Schifirnet, is remarked by the originality of its scientific approaches, by using with accuracy the scientific terms and, also by the accuracy of the scientific explanations. The author is one of the best, and as a prove stand his own published studies, in the last years, about the idea of tendentious modernity: *Tendentious modernity and innovation*, 2008; *The mass media and the tendentious modernity in the transition process from national society to European Community*, 2009; *Tendentious modernity*, 2009; *Tendential modernity*, 2012; *Mass-media, tendential modernity and Europeanization in an internet era*, 2014.

Practically, the book *Tendential Reality - Reflections on the evolution of modern society*, is part of the author's interest regarding such an interesting field like the one of modernity, in which many theories were made, also points of view and assumptions, existing statistical data and information, studies, scientific explanations and interpretations. The author's talent is incontestable, because he succeeded to analyse the explicative models on the variety of the evolution ways to the modernity of the societies, being capable to make them interpretable from the point of view of three research directions.

The author presents these research directions as being the following: "modernity is produced and it manifests in the same way", "non-Western modernity is delayed and it is the result of the reproduction of Western modernity", "the modernity specific to the non-Occidental societies is different

due to the independence of the cultural traditions in comparison with the economical independence. ”

Besides the problems found in the present modernity in any society, the values and the standards being different, the author wants that this modernity to be analysed even from “the perspective of the universal tendential processes, as a way of evolution, in the societies and in the areas which have an nonfunctional economy.” (p. 12)

The subject of the book provokes and excites through its basis idea of its conception due to which in the non-Western societies ” modernity is an inevitable tendency because of the economical development level of Western Europe, which lead to its action as a pressure factor among the other societies, no matter what economical development level they had.” (p.13), in comparison with the Western modernity which was produced naturally, as a consequence of economical, technological and scientific development.

Through a hard work of controlling and reanalysing various scientific information, many times unclear, in order to give a scientific explanation, the author underlines the ”expansionist vocation of the Western states” , determined by the economical and technological development, these ones having their own values. So, the modernity is seen as being a development pattern identical with the one of the Western countries.

There are many studies which identify the evolution tendencies of modernity in the societies with a weak economy, from the point of view of the historical, political, geopolitical and cultural context in which they are in, as well as the state structures and institutions built as Occidental patterns.

As a confession of the author, the concept of tendential modernity was elaborated, firstly for the Romanian society, being used in the paper *Forms without background, a Romanian brand* , explaining ” the development act, in an opposite direction, from the national spirit and political structure to the economical one. ” (p.14). But, this concept can be used in any analysis regarding the modern development of a society, the phenomenon being a universal one. Using as main hypothesis the notion of modernity, the author asked himself whether and how the problems of the modernity process must characterise ” the new trend of capitalist development ” (p.14)

In this book modernity is analysed as a ” tendency ”, that is why they avoid using the term ” late modernity ” or some of the explanations regarding the development of societies from the point of view of the evolution tendencies on a short, medium or long term.

Modernization has a given name, Westernization, and its path is imitation. Modernization and modernity can be found in all the societies, regardless their geographical space, population, values, tradition and customs. The modernity process is an official process, defined by the social reports, values, standards and moral and religious prescriptions. So, modernity is a social process whose motivation and determination lead to many points of view, theories and explicative models from a cultural, economical, sociological and philosophical perspective.

For this reason, in the first chapter it is clarified the concept of modernity being underlined the classical studies from the useful social sciences. We can see the character of the modern approach, when it is connected with "the theoretical pattern of modernity" and with "the theory of modernity", but also with some discussions regarding the "beginning of the modernity" with its characteristics: capitalist industrial economies, political democratic organizing, social structure based on the classes.

In this context, the sociologist vocation was shown during the theoretical speech, when it comes to modernity , after studies made by: K. Marx, E. Durkheim, M. Weber, A. Giddens, J. Habermas, E. Dussel, G.K. Bhambra, D. Chakrabarty, P. Wagner, G. Therborn, J. Larrain.

A special attention is given to modernity principles, the author wants to clarify the rationality and scientific practice and to underline the fact that " the actuality can be considered a necessary condition of modernity ."

This theory, extremely interesting, but also critical, allows the author to make a necessary question: " But is it enough? " So, there are mentioned points of view like: " can they be modern even the things that can not be current anymore, under a chronological aspect?" Concluding that society doesn't become " instantaneously modern through the simple political reproduction of the bases principles of a European modernity " , the author pays attention to the main characteristics regarding the modernity of a society. The new social structure, determined by the modernity means "passing from the products to the services" , the multiplication of the managerial structures, replacing the agricultural jobs and increasing the informational content.

S.N. Eisenstadt promotes the idea of the existence of a cultural program of modernity. For him the advanced technological processes, as the dynamics of the modern economical and political forces, lead to the expansion of the countries with a structural modernity. One of the fundamental characteristics of the cultural program is religion, Christianity being a rational

factor in various theoretical and practical fields. Catholicism wants the position of universal religion.

One of the opportune and valuable analysis regarding the clearing up of the modernity concept is that of its social consequences. Along the time, modernity underwent big crisis of changes, it was analyzed as a " relation between freedom and discipline , or between autonomy and domination. " (Wagner) (p.36) or it was described from the point of view of " unintentionally self-limiting modernity, as a result of modern practice." (Wagner) (p.37)

The author underlines the fact that modernization is the way to modernity, made by the change of the social realities adapting to today 's requirements. Tendential modernization is described as being political, if the society changes only institutionally, legally and politically, not as a whole. Modernization is explained through concepts of the theory of the modernization: " modernity", "tradition", " diffusion", " development", " interdependence", " reforms".

The study made by World Value Surveys, on 65 societies, research made during 1981-1984, 1990-1993, 1995-1997, representing 75% of the world population is presented in this book. It clarifies the massive cultural change, cultural traditions and the connection between economical parts and the social ones in the modernization processes of the society. There are mentioned Habermas' ideas about modernization, for whom "the industrialization, the urbanization, the rise of the literacy, the education, the wealth and the social mobilization" (p.41) are faces of the modernization, but also of King Kyong-Dong's , who considered that modernization is a double process: international acculturation and adaptive native change.

Modernization is analyzed by the author who forms the perspective of the Western countries, of the non-Occidental space, according to local requests of every country. There are highlighted the studies about modernization of Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel who made a synthesis of the characteristics of the modernization: the increase of human resources, the diversity of jobs, the organisational differences, the increase of the capacities of the state, the expanding of the activities. Technological innovations are part of the transformation inside a society and make changes in all its structures.

Exploring the modernization process, mister Constantin Schifirnet identifies Samuel P. Huntington's point of view, like " the effect of demonstration which the early modernized countries have on the late ones" (p.48) is that " first he identifies their goals, in order to exacerbate their

frustrations.” (p.48) So, countries which are politically superior developed with modern political institutions, are backward in what regards the social and economical modernization.

The most developed part of the book is that with a detailed analyze of the modernity types, of tendential modernity and the space of modern development.

There are analyzed concepts and perspectives about reflexive modernity, liquid modernity, organized modernity, multiple modernity, Asian-Japanese modernity, Chinese modernity and Latin-American modernity.

Presenting different points of view on this complex phenomenon, modernity, of other researchers, the author shapes the concept of tendential modernity. From the theses presented about continental modernity, are identified a big number of modernity types: first modernity (H. Spencer, K. Marx, E. Durkheim, M. Weber); second modernity (U. Beck); late modernity (U. Beck); reflexive modernity (A. Giddens, U. Beck); organized modernity (P. Wagner); liquid modernity (Z. Bauman); multiple modernity (S.N. Eisentadt, R.I.M. Lee); regional modernity (E. Desel); alternative modernity (P. Goonkar, G. Delanty); variety of modernity (V. H. Schmidt); global modernity (A. Dirlik).

The author explores the modernity phenomenon identifying the main dimension of “tendentiality” which is the lack of definitive dominance in the modernity project. So, he adapts the “tendentiality” concept, being characterised by flimsiness and expressing differently and unequally in all the fields of social life.

The terms “tendentiality” and “tendential” are explained from a linguistic point of view, but also from the perspective of including them in some sociological studies cu the meaning of general guidance (eg: Dumitru Sandu). The author’s conclusion is that the asymptotic sense of these terms is this one: “ it tends to something, it’s getting closer to a landmark, but it never touches it.”

Tendential modernity, explanatory model of human evolution, is adopted by the author as being “the result of social objectives, determined by internal and external factors and social contexts, which act contradictory, and the intensity of their influences can be different from a society to another.” (p. 92) “ Tendential modernity means actions and ideas about modernization which remain partially undone, modernity being an aspiration, a goal to reach, but not fully accomplished.” (p. 93)

The hard path covered by certain societies for building modernity, way which is characterised by syncope, flabbiness and slowness determines the birth of modernization and modernity assumed with the insufficiency of the resources for change from the interior (ideological, political, economical, financial resources). The study of tendential modernity and the scientific explanations of the concept are based on the description of modernity suggested by some previous sociological studies which describe: unmentioned consequences of modernity, unintentional modernity, unfinished project about modernity, modernity analyzed as an incomplete process, the failure of the modernity project, dissolved modernity, untouched society by the modernity, disappearance of the traditional institutions.

The book *Tendential Modernity - Reflections on the evolution of modern society*, can be an important scientific landmark for identifying the differences between Occidental modernity and traditional modernity. The last one is determined by: modernity processes which took place over a short period of time, which appeared in the same time, unfinished, made by the modernity projects which were interrupted and in an undeveloped economy in which rules the agriculture, ruralisation, social stratification and in which the middle class is in minority. In the societies with tendential modernity, according to the author, it predominates: traditional jobs, agricultural jobs, informal norms between the social institutions and citizens, non-functional bureaucracy , even the tendencies to authoritarianism. Civil society is at its beginning, political participation is limited, dominated by the population's addiction on the actions and decisions of the state and the human's group addiction.

Scientific comments made by the author bring to light the sense of resistance to modernity which allows the development of the tendential modernity. " Survival and resistance to the institutionalization of the modern norms makes a difference between tendential modernity and other modernity. (p.68) The existence of a society with many centres, without a strategic concept of modernity and building it without the existence of a dominant to the level of the modernization project, is analyzed from the perspective of the existence of a tendential modernity.

Suggesting the role of the elite in the reality of the modernity (Chapter V) the book can be considered a methodological guide for the economical, political and cultural elite , in promoting and sustaining the modernization and modernity. Tendential modernity is presented as a change from the top to the bottom, from the educated majority in the modernity spirit and oriented to modern changes, to an indifferent and hostile majority towards changes. Socialization of the elite is , many times, inadequate to social accomplishments.

Explaining the tendential modernity, the author underlines the fact that the way the national elite sustain the citizens' interests and the way in which they fulfil the expectations towards the modern transformations, is essential. This idea is analyzed from the perspective of three examples: Italy, India and Romania.

The author shows that in Romania, one of the modernity problems is the national elite's orientation towards Occidental ideas and behaviours, unsupported financially by the socio-economical agricultural structure of Romanian society. Elite are presented as European, but the biggest part of the population expresses local requests.

In the chapter *The Space of modern development*, the author presents arguments regarding the importance of the space development in sustaining the modernity principles to show that tendential modernity exists in a certain social and historical frame. The evolution of the Occidental societies was remarked not only through economical, scientific, technological, cultural performances , but also through the extension of the influential space, passing by the local influences.

So, the values and the norms proposed by the Occidental space became attractive and were adopted and adapted in different social contexts, different from a historical, economical, cultural point of view. In non-Occidental societies the modernization processes are different from the ones in the Occidental world.

The author gives a good explanation of the modernization of rural areas, of the peasantry in modern society. Modern development lead to a process of changing from the rural societies, peasant duties, and a rural way of life, to modernity. Sometimes rural population was considered as being an obstacle in the way of modernity and modern technology.

Focusing the scientific process on pointing the studies about the modernity problem of rural areas during the modern development as in: Japan, China, Russia, Great Britain, he concludes that modern evolution in the non-Occidental societies makes a gap between the economic-agricultural sector and the political-legal one, situation often found in the European countries.

In the chapter *The state a modernity producer*, the author, with a big talent, points the role of the state in producing the modernity among the states economically undeveloped, financially speaking. This underlines the fact that due to the state intervention, modernity can appear without dominant institutionalized forms, so it can be tendential.

The explanations come with examples of non-Occidental states which took the modernity process, in order to create modern nations and independent states through precipitate actions. There are analyzed aspects regarding: the organization and the administrative power of the Occidental states, the strong position of the middle classes in the government, the economical power as a fundamental element in proposing the political regime, the democratic traditions and the institutionalized structures with a good bureaucracy. In a different way, the non-Occidental states are dominated in the process of making the tendential modernity, because they intend to compare themselves with the Occident. The consequences lead to big economical and social problems in non-Occidental countries. The author underlines the idea that democratization of the society and economical development mean protecting the majority classes and the development of the agriculture, making this modernity a priority in policy. In what concerns Romania, in his opinion, building a modern state , took place without a modernized society, without imposing the civilization values and Occidental culture, but sustained by the bureaucratic systems. So, it was necessary the political institutional formation, but our economical characteristics of Romanian society represented an obstacle in building the capitalist economy. The state plays a decisive role in the creation of social frame for the national wishes and for the modernity process.

The book wants to be an essential starting point in interpreting the tendential character of modernity, determined by the economical, social, political and cultural processes, specific to some historical periods in the evolution of societies and of some different national and regional contexts. The purpose of the study made by the author is that of strengthening the tendential modernity concept, through the examination of Romanian society during the modernity process, but also through the complex analyze of the idea of modernity in the evolution of a modern society. So, through a whole image of the modern diversity and through the description of the multiple faces of modernity, the author succeeds, with a lot of talent, to offer an image on the modernity process and on the human evolution. In this way, he clarifies the concept of tendential modernity and suggests that this concept should be used in the researches about modernization, which were created through the application of political strategies in certain societies.

The author's conclusions about the peculiar and scientific content which he described in his book, underlines that modernity models are different from one country to another country, from one region to another, determined by their own structures of social, economical and political relations. There aren't societies which tend towards the development models exclusively traditional, even though in accomplishing this process of modernity they are

vulnerable in front of the resistance, because of them being free and open. The principles and norms of modernity are common to all the societies.

Tendential modernity - Reflections on the evolution of modern society, represents a very valuable book, in which are presented, analyzed many scientific knowledge, it is highly documented, having 200 pages, structured in eight chapters.

The author, in a very argued way, with scientific talent and skills, using a complete bibliography, makes it clear, to any reader, about the information of the modernity, modernization, tendential modernity, tendential modernization concepts, their mechanisms and the universal tendentiality of modernity.