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On the Preconditions for the Appearance of “Public Communication” in the Mass Media: A New Introduction to Media Studies

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Preface

This paper attempts to define, as clearly as possible, *what and how media studies is to be approached* for students aiming to engage in this field; I have thought and talked about this in seminars or lectures during the recent few years, and a number of conditions are compelling me to present the issues in a definite form and present it for public discussion.

Overall, the objective of this paper, as well as of my former publications, may be stated as being in consideration of the potential for media studies to become an independent “science”, put differently, it is an inquiry into the “methodology” related to media studies. About the questions posited — to define what is to be attempted and how this is to be achieved in the field of media studies — the paper here will propose arguments that are limited in scope: this is as my proposition will be made solely from the limited viewpoint of the “scientific nature” of media studies. It would of course be possible to approach the issues from different perspectives; but, as stated above, this would be at cross-purposes with my specific interests as they will be developed here.

As for the scope of the methodology of media studies, it may be argued that I have not at present thought it through *to the limits of what it may seem to encompass*, — in a general and comprehensive manner, it seems difficult to encompass all issues related to the methodology of any single discipline *to the limits of where it may be seen to apply* —, for this reason too, this paper will be limited in scope. These limitations stand out in two distinct aspects. First, the “media” referred to here is limited to the “mass media”, but no attempt is made to define *media in general*, and it may be argued that it is not possible to present an all encompassing definition for *mass media*. Ordinarily, mass media is considered to consist of newspapers, magazines, TV, and other formats of information delivery, and this may be considered sufficient here for the purposes of this paper; it is quite

acceptable and meaningful to study the *methodology* of media studies even without identifying exact definitions of what mass media is.

Secondly, the methodology suggested in this paper in no way aims to provide a common basis for *all possible* media studies. Even with the applicability of a specific methodology identified and validated, the kind of media studies which this would enable as a strictly delineated science will encompass only a small part of what could be considered the full scope of media studies. The methodology proposed here will only be effective and considered to cover a specific portion of the wide range of media phenomena that it would be possible to include, and for what falls outside the scope here — if anyone should wish to also treat that as a science — a particular methodology must be explored for each of these. I am not at present able to identify how many kinds of methodology will be necessary to cover the entire area of media studies, and whether it will be possible for all of these methodologies to be ultimately integrated into a single methodology. What I try to do in this paper is to prove that, in mass media studies which here is only a part of all of media studies, considered and evaluated according to a specific methodology, there is the potential that in some particular areas of mass media there are *regularly* occurring specific identifiable phenomena and that it may be assumed that these are the *signs of a science*, — nothing more, and only this limited claim.

Now I would like to elaborate a brief outline of the “specific phenomena” which I assume regularly occur in mass media. It relates to “public communication” and, for these phenomena as they are taken up by the mass media, we are able to ask about the *when* and *where* as it is involved in specific instances — or to be more precise, details of *the preconditions under which such a “public communication” may appear in the mass media*. When some of the “preconditions” are determined, and when we determine that some public communication emerges as a *regular response* to their occurrence, then it becomes possible to say that *there* exists a possibility for making media studies an *independent science*. As the reader will have noticed the paper does not specify what *public* communication is. In the discussion of the methodology there is no need to provide an exact definition beforehand of concepts which are not basic essential elements of the methodology: to avoid misunderstanding, I will then state that *publicness* (Öffentlichkeit) is not an element in identifying what a *public* communication is.

Commonly, science is the exploration of laws or the establishment of causal relationship; therefore, if some “regularity” in the behavior of modern mass media can be established, then it becomes possible for mass media studies to be recognized as a science. In

a previous paper “Newspapers as a research object: An Introduction to Mass Media Studies”¹ I intended to achieve something similar as here, but the term “methodology” was not used there because I was not fully acquainted with the concept at that time. Instead, I discussed “basic theory” and “applied fields” and I expected that *the latter* were possible without *the former*; this approach was overly optimistic because the terms involved appeared to express the idea that there can be a science even in the absence of a methodology. I now see that this presents a fallacy. What I then regarded as “applied fields” were “Media Effects”, “Media and Power” and the “Public”, and my straightforward expectation that these three would naturally combine into *one* single science was not to be realized. It may even be that they would remain isolated and un-integrated: To remedy this, first of all a clearly delineated methodology is necessary, with that it becomes possible to identify applied fields as they grow out of the methodology. To remedy this initial attempt, after a not inconsiderable interval, I went back to the starting point and here in this paper I will again try to propose a methodology for mass media studies. This is the reason why “new” in the subtitle of this paper.

1. Ideal Type

Methodology delineates *what to study* rather than *how to study* a specific matter; the *how* is concerned with methods, not with methodology: without a methodology, it becomes impossible to identify and select research objects. Where methodologies of existing sciences (in particular, economics, sociology and political science) can be proven to be effective also in media studies, it will be of great significance for our purpose, but as a result media studies would become an auxiliary science of economics, sociology, or political science, and *not an independent science*. In the following pages I will consider the applicability of some existing methodological concepts to media studies, and to start with the conclusion, I will show that none is sufficient and that they must be used in combination.

Economics is the study of economic phenomena and sociology — the study of social mores. However, it is not possible to delimit “social phenomena” and this limitation makes the study of sociology highly ambiguous in comparison with the “economic phenomena” taken up by economics, allowing the idea that sociology is inferior to economics in the

1 *International Media Journal*, No. 2, Hokkaido University, 2004, pp. 79–94.

degree of scientific validity. The same can be said — with even more validity — for mass media studies. The study of mass media as a research object is multifarious and the limits are not clearly discernible. As a result it may be concluded that in mass media studies “all answers apply to all questions”. You may take up any question and you will be able to reach whatever answer you may like, but this answer will be accidental and occasional and cannot be considered a result of any scientific inquiry. Therefore methodological issues are indispensable; *through them* you foresee something worth studying (for example, public communication) in the mass media and where it appears — then, you become able to study *that part* of phenomena as performance of the newly identified science.

For public communication, it needs to be repeated that while it may appear as a matter of course to attempt to define in advance what is *publicness* in communication, in fact this would lead to the dangerous trap of starting research from arbitrary assumptions. For example, it may be stated that in public communication priority is given to the interests of the *community* and not to personal, idiosyncratic interests, and that public communication must be a *rational* discourse. We may be participants in public communication, but in general it is difficult to identify *which community* we belong to, and we may wonder *what interests* it is important to estimate as preferable. When rational discourse is attempted in such a situation, the discourse is rational only in an individual-subjective sense, and there is no guarantee of rationality in a universal-objective sense. It may even be doubted whether priority must be given unconditionally to the community interests or whether personal interests must always be suppressed; such matters must be considered as the search is for an *exact definition*, and not for common verities, *taken-for-grantedness*.

Habermas may have been the first to explain how public communication is essential in *modern society* (modern society here is an undefined concept, but for the moment it may be imagined to be composed of three systems: the welfare state, advanced capitalism, and democracy), however, a noteworthy ambiguity is present among what Habermas has said about “publicness”: he sometimes regards it as a *historical* concept, and sometimes as *universal*.

“As was stated in the preface to the first edition, my first aim had been to derive the *ideal type* of the bourgeois public sphere from the *historical context* of British, French, and German developments in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The formation of a concept *specific to an epoch* requires that a social reality of great complexity be stylized to give prominence to its peculiar characteristics”².

The three phrases I have emphasized here (that is, “ideal type”, “historical context”, “specific to an epoch”), brought together, make the impression that historical explanations grow to become universal and induce us to consider ideal types as universal and normative. The “ideal type” is a core concept of the methodology of Max Weber, and Habermas is right when he points out the “great complexity” of a social reality and requires us “to give prominence to its peculiar characteristics” as Weber mentions almost the same about “ideal types” in “‘Objectivity’ in Social Science and Social Policy”³, but here Weber has put another characteristic limitation which Habermas has ignored (maybe on purpose).

“In this function especially, the ideal-type is an attempt to analyze historically unique configurations or their individual components by means of *genetic* concepts”⁴.

Since Weber himself emphasized “genetic”, this is important to an understanding of ideal types. He repeatedly used the same expressions as follows: “the content of the religious ideas which played a role in the *genesis* of the capitalistic attitude”⁵; “When a *genetic* definition of the content of the concept is sought, there remains only the ideal-type in the sense explained above”⁶; “If however I wish to formulate the concept of ‘sect’ *genetically*,..”⁷; “It assumes a *genetic* character and becomes therewith ideal-typical in the logical sense”⁸; “they [‘fundamental concepts’ of economics] can be developed in *genetic* form only as ideal types”⁹, and there are more.

In spite of the repeated use of the words (“genesis”, “genetic” and “genetically”), it is difficult to clearly identify what Weber means when they are used. When we turn our attention to other treatises by Weber, especially to “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of

2 Jürgen Habermas, “Further Reflections on the Public Sphere”, trans. by T. Burger, in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by C. Calhoun, the MIT Press, 1992, p. 422. Emphases mine — K. Y. In the following pages the same without notice.

3 Max Weber, *Methodology of Social Sciences*, translated and edited by E. A. Shils and H. A. Finch, Transaction Publishers, 2011, p. 90: “An Ideal type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *analytical* construct”. (Emphases in the original)

4 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*, p. 100.

9 *Ibid.*

Capitalism”, it becomes barely possible to understand why he, in talking of “ideal types”, mentions “genesis”.

“In order that *a manner of life* so well adapted to the peculiarities of capitalism could be selected at all, i.e. should come to dominate others, it had to *originate* somewhere, and not in isolated individuals alone, but as a way of life common to whole groups of men. This *origin* is what really needs explanation”¹⁰.

Here “genesis” (Genesis) or “genetic” (genetisch) can be rephrased with “origin” (Entstehung) or “originate” (entstanden sein), and this helps us to get closer to a clear understanding of Weber’s thoughts. It is well known that one central interest for Weber was why modern capitalism has appeared in the West, and in the West only. In the inquiry into this attention is concentrated on the early period of the *historical origin* of capitalism, and above all, on “a manner of life” (Lebensführung) of the bearers of the new economic institution; the attempt is to prove that religious factors (ethics of Protestantism) have played a role in the early years of the formation of capitalism¹¹. Accordingly, the “ideal type” is a historical concept which is composed of two elements: an “origin” and a “manner of life”.

However, as Weber feared, the ideal type tends to be regarded as a general and normative concept which is adequate to any similar historical phenomena: for example, for the origin of capitalism in Japan, we look in vain for religious sources like European Protestantism. Weber himself admits that the temptation to generalize in this manner is very strong.

“The logical classification of analytical concepts on the one hand and the empirical arrangements of the events thus conceptualized in space, time, and causal relationship, on the other, appear to be so bound up together that there is an almost irresistible temptation to do violence to reality in order to prove the real validity of the construct [the ideal type]”¹².

10 M. Weber, “*The Protestant Ethic and...*”, trans. by T. Parsons, Dover Publications, 2003, p. 55.

11 For Weber the importance of “genetic concepts” was not changed during his lifetime. See *Science as a Vocation*: “Or let us consider the historical and cultural sciences. They teach us how to understand political, artistic, literary and social phenomenon *in terms of their origins*” (*Max Weber’s ‘Science as a Vocation’*, Unwin Hyman, 1989, p. 19. Emphasis mine — K. Y.).

Weber was careful not to consider ideal types normative and general and restricted the mentions to “geneses” of historical phenomena, while Habermas emphasizes this “normative and general” aspect actively from the standpoint of the critical theory, and therefore he has ignored them. Habermas is not interested in the kind of ideal types which the former has pursued as the methodology for a new social science; for him the ideal type must be a criterion of critical analysis of the reality, specifying what a “public sphere” should be. There is a big difference between their attitudes toward what they think is an ideal type¹³.

It is difficult to clearly identify how applicable the concept of an “ideal type” is to media studies; however attractive Habermasian critical theory is, it is not the way of science to estimate actual conditions of the mass media from an *assumedly public* angle. As for the Weberian concept of “ideal type”, it may be possible to create this in media studies when the main concern is *media spirit* and the attention is concentrated on the *genesis* of such a *historical* phenomenon.

2. Morality and Laws

The public sphere is a place where public communication is carried out; Habermas thinks of it as essential for modern society because he believes that such social integration or solidarity as were supposed to exist in premodern societies can be re-created only through a process of public communication, and the ideas of Habermas of what happens in this process may be quoted as:

“The *morality* with which Rousseau demands the citizens to be imbued and that he places in the individuals’ motives and virtues must instead be anchored in the process of public communication itself”¹⁴.

It is characteristic that Habermas has mentioned “morality” as the first component of

12 Max Weber, *Methodology of Social Sciences*, p. 103.

13 See Habermas, “Further Reflections”: “Only to a superficial glance would it have appeared possible to write *Structural Transformation* along the lines of a descriptive history of society in the style of Max Weber. The dialectic of the bourgeois public sphere, which determines the book’s structure, wears the ideology-critical approach on its sleeve”. (p. 442)

14 *Ibid.*, p. 446.

“publicness” — probably because one of his main interests is how this can be integrated into modern *democratic* society which consists of un-integrated individuals and “in which a homogeneity of background convictions cannot be assumed”¹⁵. Morality is conceived not as belonging to individuals, but as a requirement of the “citoyen”. If every society is to achieve integration through “morality”, then I can agree that it ought to be formed not “in the individuals’ motives and virtues” as Rousseau states, but “in the process of public communication itself”. This is one of the central theses of the Habermas communication theory: he criticized Rousseau for not paying attention to a communicative point of view.

However, Habermas has admitted that it is not self-evident at all how “morality” is formed in the process of “public communication”.

“…… *the question remains of how*, under the conditions of mass democracies constituted a social-welfare states, a discursive formation of opinion and will can be institutionalized in such a fashion that it becomes possible to bridge the gap between enlightened self-interest and orientation to the common good, between the roles of client and citizen. Indeed, an element intrinsic to the preconditions of communication of all practices of rational debate is the presumption of impartiality and the expectation that the participants question and transcend whatever their initial preferences may have been”¹⁶.

Of the two qualities Habermas requires as preconditions for public communication: “impartiality” and transcending of “initial preferences”, especially the latter almost always means to overcome selfishness, and if so, it can be recognized as the very “morality” which Rousseau required a citizen to gain and which Habermas expects to develop as a result of the process of communication. An interesting circularity of argument! We do not know how citizens may participate in the public communication *with* “morality” which it is assumed they can acquire not at the *beginning*, but the *end* of the process of communication. Or if Habermas wishes to say that there are two kinds of morality, that is, *individual* and *social*, then it is crucial not to assign one as first, but rather to consider what mediates between these two moralities; how common values are shared by individuals and are propagated in society as a whole. Perhaps law as legal compulsion is one of the key mediators here.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 445.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 448-449.

“Modern natural law’s way of coming to terms with this problem was the introduction of *legitimate legal coercion*. And the subsequent problem entailed by this solution, how the political power required for the coercive imposition of law could itself be *morally controlled*, was met by Kant’s idea of a state subject to the rule of law. Within a discourse-centered theoretical approach, this idea is carried further to give rise to the notions that additionally *the law is applied to itself*: it must also guarantee the discursive mode by means of which generation and application of legislative programs are to proceed within the parameters of rational debate”¹⁷.

It may be more accurate to consider this “legal coercion of the legitimate *sovereign*” than “legitimate legal coercion”. As Hobbes has stated, the sovereign is not subject to any laws¹⁸. So it would appear that what Habermas intended to say here is about the possibility of *moral control over laws or over the legally almighty sovereign*. If this guess is right, then it follows that the public sphere Habermas has in mind has both a “moral” function that enables recreation of a lost morality, and a “political” function of realization of the “rule of laws”.

It is not clear which of Kant’s works was referred to when Habermas mentioned “Kant’s idea of a state subject to the rule of law”, but the paragraph in *Metaphysics of Morals* may help us to understand what “morally controlled” means:

“Further, another essential distinction obtaining betwixt juridical and moral obligations is, that the former are *coercible*, whereas the latter depend singly upon *free self-coaction*”¹⁹.

If Kant and Habermas have pointed to the same thing, then we may imagine that Habermas means: while citizens (non-sovereigns) are controlled by laws, the sovereign must be controlled morally, — he himself dares to be subject to laws with a “freely enacted self-coaction”. Perhaps this is the meaning of the somewhat mysterious phrase: “the law

17 *Ibid.*, p. 449.

18 T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapter XXVI: “The Sovereign of a Common-wealth, be it an Assembly, or one Man, is not subject to the Civill Lawes. For having power to make, and repeale Lawes, he may when he pleaseth, free himselfe from that subjection, by repealing those Lawes that trouble him, and making of new; and consequently he was free before”. Dover Publications, 2006, pp. 148-149.

19 I. Kant, *the Metaphysics of Ethics*, trans. by J. W. Semple, 3rd ed., 1871, p. 198.

is applied to itself”. The problem of sovereignty is the most important for democratic states, for there all citizens are subjects and likewise objects at the time of state-formation.

One question remains to be answered: how is it possible that every citizen who is a sovereign will learn to be “morally controlled”? I wonder if there is a relationship between this question and the difficult phrase “the discursive mode by means of which generation and application of legislative programs are to proceed within the parameters of rational debate”. If so, it follows that the answer required is the public debate which appears in the public sphere when laws are made or applied; this is very similar to what I will state below, only except that I will add details of the laws and applications.

However, in “Further Reflections” Habermas did not attempt to show how this “free self-coaction” can appear through the public sphere, but he tended toward the dangerous methodological deviation: that is, a *generalization of ideal types*. What he demanded from public debate: “the complete inclusion of all parties that might be affected, their equality, free and easy interaction, no restrictions of topics and topical contributions, the possibility of revising the outcomes”²⁰ — they might be features of a town meeting in a small society, but it must be carefully considered whether they are fit for very much larger assemblies of modern society with the highly developed mass media existing here. Almost all requirements Habermas has listed can be regarded as a matter-of-course from the *legal* point of view, but the phrase “no restrictions on topics and topical contributions” must be modified because “no restrictions” would represent the negation of a rigorous methodology.

Legally unrestricted sovereignty is an established doctrine in political philosophy. Jean Bodin is regarded as an advocate of the concept of sovereignty and in this formulation sovereignty was a “right to give laws to the whole people or to all of individuals without their consent”; it is highly characteristic that, “on the presupposition of a perfect separation between the sovereign and subjects, laws were seen as one-sided orders from the sovereign”²¹.

Rousseau’s concept of sovereignty was democratic, different from the absolutism by Bodin, but Rousseau also insisted upon the same legal-unrestrictedness of the sovereign as it appears with Bodin.

20 Habermas, “Further Reflections”, p. 449.

21 Takeshi Sasaki, *Sovereignty, Resistance and Tolerance. Jean Bodin’s Philosophy of State*, Iwanami, 1973, p. 102.

“The sovereign is bound neither by actions of the government or other subgroups nor by laws he himself makes. Even if he legislates against himself, — it means that he contracts with himself —, in accordance with the principle that nobody is restrained by the contract with himself, the sovereign is naturally not bound by the law”²².

H. L. A. Hart confirms the doctrine of unrestrainedness of the sovereign and at the same time tries to open new perspectives to the discussion.

“…… the theory does not insist that there are no limits on the sovereign’s power but only that there are no *legal* limits on it. So the sovereign may in fact defer, in exercising legislative power, to popular opinion either from fear of the consequences of flouting it, or because he thinks himself morally bound to respect it. Very many different factors may influence him in this, and, if a fear of popular revolt or moral conviction leads him not to legislate in ways which he otherwise would, he may indeed think and speak of these factors a ‘limits’ on his power. But they are not legal limits”²³.

Hart’s argument that there is no “legal limits” for the sovereignty, but that there can exist other limits, especially moral limits is a straightforward explanation of the Habermas idea cited above: “how the political power required for the coercive imposition of law could itself be *morally controlled*”. It is likely that Hart’s mention of “very many different factors” also indicates possibilities other than “moral limits”, but he surely regards “certain civil virtues” or “the common good”²⁴ as having the function of collective restrictions like

22 Yasuo Sugihara, *The Inquiry into the Nation Sovereignty. Formation and Structure of Nation Sovereignty in the French Revolution*, Iwanami, 1971, p. 147.

23 H. L. A. Hart, *The Concept of Law*, Oxford Univ. Pr., 2012, pp. 66-67. Emphasis in the original.

24 M. Sandel prefers the concept of the common good. He seems to want to say that it has been handed down as a tradition in American society. “Central to republican theory is the idea that liberty depends on sharing in self-government. This idea is not by itself inconsistent with liberal freedom. Participating in politics can be one among the ways in which people choose to pursue their individual ends. According to republican political theory, however, sharing in self-rule involves something more. It involves deliberating with fellow citizens about *the common good* and helping to shape the destiny of the political community. But to deliberate well about *the common good* requires more than the capacity to choose one’s ends and to respect others’ rights to do the same. It requires a knowledge of public affairs and also a sense of belonging, a concern for the whole, a moral bond with the community whose fate is at stake. To share in self-rule therefore requires that citizens possess, or come to acquire, *certain civic virtues*” (Michael J. Sandel, *Public Philosophy: Essays on Morality in Politics*, Harvard Univ. Pr., 2006, p. 10).

laws.

Habermas expects that such moral restrictions are reconstructed in the public sphere, though he himself does not know how they come into effect. It is important for us, citizens of a modern democratic society, to know this mechanism because we all are formally sovereigns and so free of any restraints and in danger of being thoughtless and arbitrary. Modern citizens have another question: Does modern society lack “the common good”? or Are there many small “common goods” each of which claims title to be the genuine “common good”? — Situations in modern society appear to testify to the latter, since Habermas has stated that “the presumption of *impartiality* and the expectation that the participants...*transcend whatever their initial preferences may have been*” are preconditions for public communication. He is quite right to tell us that morality is an important component of the public sphere and that a realization of these preconditions is urgently needed, but we do not yet know how this can be achieved.

3. “Ethos”

As stated above, the Habermasian “publicness” includes tendencies towards morality (the common good) as an essential element, and keeping this in mind will be very important when we think of “public communication”. Further, because the common good must be objective and collective, the Habermas thesis that its formation is realized by nothing other than the “process of communication” is, perhaps, correct. However, a great number of smaller groups (communities) will declare preferences (interests) to be “common” in modern society and, without a standard against which to compare one interest with another, there would be no reason for one particular group to be able to monopolize a specific version of “the common good”. Arguments about public communication are always entangled like this, partly because Habermas has failed to identify clear details of public communication: where it happens, about what it is, what ensures its “publicness”, etc.

As regards how “the common good” will arise through the process of public communication among separate individuals, it is conceivable to give the answer that individuals who are seemingly separate are in actual fact connected with each other, *somewhere, deeper*. Aristotle first asserted that at the bottom of society there is a basic stratum which is called “habit” (ethos) and which sustains society. In *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle repeatedly states that “ethical (moral) virtue” does not come from human nature (if so, it should be

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“Virtue, then, being of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, whence also its name (ethike) is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word ethos (habit)”²⁵.

It must be emphasized that the “habit” repeated here is not individual habits but collective or social habits. We may say the same thing about the well known Aristotle thesis: “the just man is not the man who does the just thing, but the man who has *habit* of doing it”; this has to be understood to mean that “the just man” does the things that “just people” do in a specific given society in the way it is done there.

“Actions, then, are called just and temperate when they are such as the just or the temperate man would do; but it is not the man who does these that is just and temperate, but the man who also does them as just and temperate men do them”²⁶.

Though the Aristotle *Ethics* was created in a society where individuals were not as sharply divided from each other as individuals are today, Aristotle repeatedly points out that an individual could not be expected to acquire the virtue of others. In this way Aristotle brought up the necessity of law as a necessary and required mean for the process of habituation of “ethical virtue”.

“But it is difficult to get from youth up a right training for virtue if one has not been brought up under right laws; for to live temperately and hardily is not pleasant to most people, especially when they are young. For this reason their nurture and occupations should be fixed by law”²⁷.

In the second half of the XIX century in Germany there was a determined effort to re-formulate Aristotle’s concept of “ethos”. This was the work of a group of the scholars

25 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by W. D. Ross, Oxford UP, 1966, p. 28.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 271.

(the so called new historical school) who presumed the existence of “ethos” or “Sitte” at the base of society and which enables the creation of the “common good” (Gemeinsinn): its main exponent was Gustav von Schmoller²⁸.

Schmoller developed the concept of ethos mainly in *Some Basic Problems of Law and Economics* (in particular, chapter 3: “Economy, Mores and Law”)²⁹. There the explanation of ethos is not sufficiently clear, so we have to collect fragments and to structure them into a theory.

“Something *common* combines individual economies of the people or state; it is not only the state but also something deeper: *commonness* of language, history, memory, mores and ideas. It is the *common* world of emotions and ideas, the rule of *common* representations, agreed in greater or lesser degree tension power of psychological drives, — and it is more; it is the *common* life-order which overflows the psychological foundation of agreement and becomes objective; it is the *common ethos*, as Greeks have called ethical and mental *common* consciousness which is crystallized into mores and law; it influences all human actions — therefore, economic actions too”³⁰.

The persistent repetition of the word “common” shows Schmoller’s wish that in every society there would be something like nationality or cultural traits or a national character which could be consistent from ancient times and which could enable the integration of a given society. The emphasis of “commonness” without any further analysis usually leads to a total acceptance of absolute impressions, such as a “national character”: in Schmoller’s words — “[ethos] *influences all human actions* — therefore, economic actions too”! If this means that, in order to understand economic actions, all human actions must be fully understood beforehand, then it may present one of the clearest examples of a *hatred of abstraction* which C. Menger sharply criticized Schmoller and his school for.

“It is the fundamental proposition of all methodologies that every exact science gives

28 Kazuo Ohkohchi, *History of German Thought of Social Policy*, Collected Works, v.1, 1968. “*Homo oeconomicus* which the classical economists had acquired through abstraction of concrete social life had to be put back to the most concrete social life. For this purpose Schmoller put “ethos” on the basis of the national economy, to which all the “Socialists of the Chair” — in greater or lesser degree — equally expressed their approval” (p. 379).

29 G. Schmoller, *Über Einige Grundfragen des Rechts und Volkswirtschaft*, Jena, 1875.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

us the theoretical understanding of *its own particular aspect* of the real world, and those who try to reach this goal by expanding a single science to the general theory of the total field of real phenomena in the whole empirical reality would ignore completely the most basic principle of philosophy of science; it must be questioned if he qualifies himself to thrust his nose in these difficult problems”³¹.

I agree that Menger’s criticism of the historical school was by and large valid, but that does not mean that Schmoller’s concept of ethos is entirely without merit. When Schmoller stated that ethos “is crystallized into *mores* and *law*”, it was certain that he wished to express something important: that is, we can reach ethos *through* the study of mores and laws.

The concept of ethos is attractive to media studies because the influence and ubiquitousness of media greatly resembles ethos. But, as remarked above, ethos is not defined sufficiently clearly, however ethos must be borne in mind and applied with care to media studies.

4. Mores (Sitte)

Max Weber, one of the younger generation of the new historical school, was also dissatisfied with Schmoller’s vague definition of ethos. Weber has tried to limit it only to economic aspect of the human life; for him ethos is a passion necessary for performing economic actions, and therefore in many cases used this term in such phrases as “economic ethos” (Wirtschaftsethos). The quotation below is typical:

“Here also lay the difference of the Puritan *economic ethos* from the Jewish; and contemporaries <……> knew well that the former and not the latter was the bourgeois *economic ethos*”³².

When I emphasize that for Weber ethos is “economic ethos”, then I wish to suggest that the idea of the “Protestant ethics” was not included in Weber’s “ethos”; in other words,

31 C. Menger, *Untersuchungen über die Methode der Socialwissenschaften, und der Politischen Ökonomie insbesondere*, Leipzig, 1883, S. 65–66. Emphases in the original.

32 M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. T. Parsons, Dover Publications, 2003, p. 180.

it seems to me that Weber's intention in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* was to show the combination of the *rational* Protestant ethics and the *irrational* "economic ethos", making full use of ideal types.

As stated above, Schmoller has divided the concept of "ethos" into two components: mores (*Sitte*) and law. Here I wish to determine the validity of these two as methodological concepts. The German *Sitte* has so wide a range of meanings and seems so ambiguous that we are able to compare it with the Greek "ethos" or the Latin "mores"; it means custom, habit, convention, ethic, and morality. Weber remarked that Wilhelm Roscher, one of the most important economists of the old historical school, had preferred the word *Gemeinsinn* (common spirit) to *Sitte* and that they were synonyms. Weber has the following to say about Roscher's concept of "common spirit":

"According to Roscher's religious views, it is a higher divine impulse which controls secular selfishness whose opponent it must be, — and this is to be done by creating their mixture in very different ratios and making various stages of *common spirit* on which lives of family, community, nation and mankind are based"³³.

Classical economists explained human economic actions exclusively from egoistic drives but Roscher tried to provide an explanation from a mixture of two impulses: "selfishness" (*Eigennutz*) and "common spirit" (*Gemeinsinn*). Since "common spirit" is also an "impulse", it must be considered as a mental ability innate to human beings like "selfishness" also is. On this methodological basis, based on these two impulses Roscher and other economists of the old historical school could have built a unique economic theory; Roscher, thinking of "common spirit" as "a higher divine impulse", could have concentrated his effort on the "permanent impacts of *non-economic* factors on economic actions of mankind"³⁴. In the note of the quotation above Weber mentions Schmoller's mores.

"He [Roscher] has emphasized in the later version that by common spirit he understands essentially the same as Schmoller called mores"³⁵.

33 M. Weber, "Roscher und Knies", *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen, 1968, S. 31.

34 *Ibid.*, S. 30. Emphasis in the original.

35 *Ibid.*, S. 31, Note 1.

Weber said neither “yes” or “no” about Roscher’s statement, but if Roscher is right, then it can be said that Schmoller’s mores contained not only something that all people of the given society had in common, but also rather ability to form the common good. Mores cease to be simply custom or habits and become something that participates in formation of our norms, that is, *normative mores*. Besides Weber has added another meaning to mores: “a higher divine impulse”.

Schmoller opposed mores against nature in the sense that the classical economists had based all their theories on the *natural* “homo economicus” who acts by principle according to self-interests.

“All mores oppose to a rude natural man, to the play of his passions and caprices. The mores grasp all natural phenomena and give them solid forms — these forms can be rude, grotesque and bizarre initially, but it is the awakening moral-aesthetic emotion and intellect which have begun to make just natural things follow a rule. *Any mores are not innate, not taught by God; they are obtained through incessant reorganization and purification*; they are eternally new revelations of the Spirit in the natural life. Man fabricates the second world, ‘the world of Culture’, in Nature through mores. And it is to this ‘world of Culture’ that the national economy belongs also”³⁶.

The emphasized part stands out: if mores are “not innate”, namely, “not natural”, then they are no other than “what is produced”, that is, products of historical processes. It seems, however, to be assumed simultaneously that mores were already present at the starting point of the historical process. Something that exists at the starting point of a historical process cannot be a historical product. Schmoller tried to overcome this logical inconsistency by assuming that mores have directionality which could lead people to a definite goal; mores appear as “rude, grotesque and bizarre” forms in the beginning and then, urged by inner inclinations, enable realization of “the world of Culture” by means of “incessant reorganization and purification”. To Schmoller history was a movement on the fixed course towards the pure and promised land of culture which each nation realizes on its own. (If not so, we cannot understand the meaning of “purification”.) Thus mores are historically changeable: changing every moment, they keep their commonness.

Schmoller stated that mores were “not taught by God”: this clearly contradicts

36 Schmoller, *Über einige Grundfragen...*, S. 34.

Roscher's opinion of "a higher divine impulse". Schmoller denied the divinity of mores because he imagined that mores would be purified through history. For him the "purification" through history had the same meaning as the propagation of culture among people, particularly among the working class. "The world of Culture" he mentioned means the process of development through which "the national economy as a whole is going step by step from the form of violence to the higher and purer form of social interaction"³⁷.

"Mores" as a methodology guided Schmoller not to the creation of a unique economic system, but to the practice of social reform, that is "social policy"; this is one of the most important aspects that distinguish the new Historical School of Economics from the old. Ohkohchi regarded the social policy of the new historical school as an attempt to put "ethics" into the market:

"In order that active interference of the state (with the market) may be recognized to be rational, the 'natural law' of economy — the traditional concept of the classical economics — had to be broken down.... The mission now imposed on the new historical school was to tie the state practice of social reform to economic theory, or rather, to create such economic theory as to be adequate to this practice of social reform. The first effort for this mission was *to combine the economical and the ethical*"³⁸.

As to how it is possible "to combine the economical and the ethical", Schmoller stated that this could be achieved through "the state practice of social reform", social policy; the "propagation of culture" or "purification of mores" through social policy would involve a significant cost, but it can be accepted as redistribution of income, an action of so-called "distributive justice". In this way social policy is required as a logical consequence of the theory of the new historical school, and at the same time there will be laws that stand as compulsory measures to realize this policy.

This type of social policy is clearly a historical concept as it is considered a unique conceptual complex of the new historical school. This would exclude it from being applied to media studies, but it may be possible to apply it with the modifications to be described below.

37 *Ibid.*, S. 41.

38 Ohkohchi, v. 1, pp. 378-379.

5. Social policy

Ohkohchi proposed a different concept of social policy, having removed “ethics” from Schmoller’s thought about a combination of the economical and ethical. Ohkohchi attempted to formulate social policy as a bridge between necessary requirements growing out of the capitalistic economic system and the personal aspect of workers. While social policy of the new historical school was a “worker protection policy”, he made an attempt to redefine it as a “labor force protection policy”.

“In the capitalistic economy it is necessary to look straight at the historical fact that workers appear as capitalistic commodities rather than personalities or human beings. <...> The claim that labor force must not be commodity cannot make any contribution to the understanding of social policy. Once workers should be regarded as ‘labor force’, as a commodified factor of production, <...> we must consider social policy not as opposition to the capitalistic economy but as one of the branches of its policy system”³⁹.

Here it is emphasized that “workers” are capitalistic commodities as a “labor force” and that, therefore, social policy is not ethical, but a part of the economic policy. This is a thorough criticism of the ethical economics of the new historical school. But if this ethical element of social policy is to be excluded, then how does it become possible to explain the necessity of a social policy? Ohkohchi added a further point related to this.

“From the scientific point of view of social policy it is important not that personalities have been commodified into the ‘labor force’, but that *the real bearers of these commodities (= labor force) are living human beings and personalities*. In the latter fact <.....> are hidden those contradictions, economic and social, which originated in efforts to accomplish commodifiedness of ‘labor force’ as commodities. Political efforts of the state to solve these contradictions within the existing economic order are a general form of what we call social policy”⁴⁰.

“Living human beings” and “personalities” — Schmoller would say are “bearers of

39 Ohkohchi, “Basic problems of Social Policy” (1944), v.5, p. 66.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

Sitte". The contradiction Ohkohchi refers to appears in the fact that workers in general do not willingly engage in work, that is, in an essential and universal fact of human "laziness". He described the difficulties of the formation of labor market at the beginning of the modern times (the years of formation of capitalism) as in the following, but it would be a mistake to imagine that this might be a situation that has been overcome a long time ago.

"The 'proletariat' (here: *peasantry*) who was expelled from the traditional means of production was never recognized as wage workers today. They were first of all 'vagrants' as well as 'poor people'. And the main point of labor policy for the later modern states was to educate and train these poor vagrants into modern wage workers; this process of primitive accumulation of 'labor force' was nothing else but the first 'social policy'. In England there were two types of legislation for creating 'labor force': negative and positive. Negative: to threaten and forbid 'vagrants' and 'beggars' with gallows, exile, brands and floggings. Positive: the legislation for vocational training plans whose central institution was the famous 'work-house'"⁴¹.

The observation that men hate labor in the natural state was based on the concept of a "cultural man" which the historical school of economics created, in opposition to the classical concept of "economic man" who deemed labor based on self-interest natural. "To educate and train these poor vagrants into modern wage workers" is something very similar to "purification of mores" or "propagation of culture" which is how Schmoller expressed it. Maybe, these two are the ultimate goals of social policy, and it is expected that these goals would be realized by "virtuous actions" of entrepreneurs and managers, simultaneously with the development of working people's mores through the aid of state policy. From the standpoint that (continuous) "labor" cannot be explained exclusively by "selfishness", it appears necessary to explain "labor" not on the grounds of "instinctual drive" but through "reason". The following quotation is from Schmoller.

"Simple 'natural force' and 'simple hunger' only need a temporary effort. As soon as hunger is gone, the savage will jump in bed again. <.....> To the contrary the concept of labor today, even though purely personal, have an element of normative mores. We call

41 *Ibid.*, p. 92.

On the Preconditions for the Appearance of “Public Communication” in the Mass Media labor *rational spontaneity*. Because it tries to do, as well as sustained efforts, what is justified in the system of human purposes — what has become the self-interest in a sense, as far as labor is regarded as *a school of all virtues*, as a guardian of private ownership and as *the basis of our social organization*”⁴².

The purpose of this paper is not to discuss social policy as such, but to evaluate the usefulness of social policy as a methodology for media studies, so the development of the ideas of Schmoller and the theory of Ohkouchi will not be detailed further here. Those aspects I have emphasized in the quotations above, that is, “rational spontaneity”, “a school of all virtues” and “the basis of our social organization” probably remain as an ideal of labor in the advanced capitalist society of modern times.

6. Methodology of Media Studies

To determine a methodology for media studies this paper has examined some existing methodologies. From what was stated above, it may be concluded that these are all integrated into and can be subsumed by “social policy” (except the “ideal types”). Social policy is defined as a state policy based on laws and related to the labor market. Laws will become dangerous tools unless controlled by morality; labor is a “school of virtue”.

“Law” and “morality”, according to Habermas, are important components of “publicness”, and so the communication which is involved in social policy must be considered public communication. To be more precise, by analyzing communication related to social policy, we can know what is “public communication” and what is “publicness”.

Here I wish to posit that in an economic world where economic necessity is assumed to dominate other concerns, only the labor market could permit ex-economic compulsory power (= state social policy) through which publicness appears forcibly. Another hypothesis related to the mass media remains unproved: when “public communication” appears, it would be accompanied by mass media, and if it is so, then we will be able to understand what role mass media really play in modern society. However, a proof of affinity of “public communication” and mass media seems not to be possible by a “methodological inquiry”, because “methodology” here stands for the “prerequisites for the appearance of public communication in the mass media”, and these “prerequisites” have already been

42 Schmoller, *Über einige Grundfragen*..., S. 33.

stated. If they seem valid for the present, then it would be appropriate to study specific “cases” on the basis of the “prerequisites”: social policy, laws related to the labor market, normative mores and morality.

I will conclude this quest for a methodology of media studies, presenting the works of Claus Offe which provide valuable ideas and powerful logic. In the same way as Ohkohchi, Offe states that workers must be produced by the state social policy and that wage labor is not spontaneous, it is the result of social policy. Offe has suggested that social policy will always be accompanied by communication and that the field of its appearance is the mass media. I will here quote a longer text which will be divided into 3 parts.

“……the real social effects (‘impact’) of a law or institutional service are not determined by the wording of laws and statutes (‘policy output’), but instead are generated primarily as a consequence of *social disputes and conflicts*, for which *state social policy merely establishes the location and timing of the contest, its subject matter and the ‘rules of the game’*. In these cases of extra-political or ‘external’ implementation of social policy measures state social policy in no way establishes concrete ‘conditions’ (for example, the level of services, specific insurance against difficult living conditions). Instead, it defines the substance of conflict and, by differentially empowering or dis-empowering the *relevant social groups*, biases the extent of the specific ‘utility’ of the institutions of social policy for these groups”⁴³.

Perhaps this can be rephrased to express that to determine the wording of laws does not mean to apply the wording of the laws literally to real-life situations, but, according to Offe, it is a particular feature of German social policy legislation⁴⁴. There Offe sees the necessity and possibility for the appearance of public communication and observes that public communication can be conflicting (“social disputes and conflicts”).

“……between the legal and social realities of state social policy lie power processes

43 Claus Offe, ‘Social Policy and the Theory of the State’ (1976), in *Contradictions of the Welfare State*, The MIT Press, 1984, p. 106.

44 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 110: “In this connection we may mention the extensive use of decree provisions in laws relating to social policy, as well as the latitude for judgement afforded by such concepts (which are frequently found in German labour market legislation) as ‘suitability for labour-market policy’ or ‘desirability’”.

On the Preconditions for the Appearance of “Public Communication” in the Mass Media that direct the transformation of ‘output’ into ‘impact’. It is not only suppliers and buyers on the labour market who are involved in these power processes; depending on the particular social policy issue being legally regulated, these processes also include *administrative personnel, members of the (medical, educational, legal, etc.) professions, organized interests and the mass media* <……> the developments and innovations of state social policy can be conceived not as the *cause* of concrete social conditions or changes, but only as the initiator of conflictual interactions”⁴⁵.

Here “conflictual” elements of “publicness” are emphasized again, but, the conflicts are limited to those that state social policy has “initiated”. The participants in the struggles are “relevant social groups” including the mass media rather than individuals. The mass media not only provide a place for “public communication”, it participates in the communication process as a social group that has its own specific interests.

“…… the task of any *specifically sociological investigation of social policy* cannot be the prescriptive development of ‘policy designs’ and ‘policy outputs’, but is pre-eminently that of offering an explanatory description of the conditions of socially implementing policy regulations. It is only this knowledge that supplies the foundation for the expression of political recommendations in *non-normative and non-voluntaristic ways*”.

“Specifically sociological investigation of social policy” would be at the center of Offe’s interests, but this is slightly different from the center of our interests as detailed in the present paper. It is necessary again to emphasize that Offe presents the useful suggestions that public communications appear related to social policy legislation in a broad sense, that they appear in the mass media and that they may be “conflictual”. What does this mean however — “non-normative and non-voluntaristic ways”? It seems to me that “non-normative” means that public communication does not compel certain “norms” (morality). Then, would this contradict Habermas who has considered that the “public sphere” includes “morality” as a component? Maybe the answer here is yes. But because Habermas himself stated that the question: how can norms be shared among people? remains unsolved, so if Offe uses “non-normative” in the sense that norms will not propagate of their own compulsion, then they are not contradictory. If “non-voluntaristic”

45 *Ibid.*

means “not accidental”, then this is an important indication of “natural” appearance of public communication. We cannot regard the public communication which appears in the mass media related to social policy as “accidental”, either. The proof that the appearance of public communication in the mass media is “natural”, must be left to case studies.

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《要約》

マスメディアに公共コミュニケーションが出現する前提条件について
—— 新・マスメディア研究序説 ——

山 田 吉二郎

メディア研究とは何をどのように研究すべきか——すなわち、メディア研究の方法論について考察したもの。メディア研究が一つの独立した「科学」となりうるかどうかを、マスメディアに公共コミュニケーションが規則的に出現する「前提条件」を考察することで探究しようとした。

【はじめに】

科学は「法則の探究」であるから、ある一定の前提条件の下である一定の事象がマスメディアに規則的に出現することが確認できれば、そこに科学性の端緒があると考えられる。「一定の事象」とは公共コミュニケーションのことである。

【第1節】理念型

経済学・社会学・政治学はそれぞれ固有の方法論をもっていて、科学として確立している。既存の科学の方法論のなかでメディア研究の方法論として活用できるものがあるかどうかを検討してみた。理念型は何にでも使える汎用的概念に見えるが、ウェーバーは限定的に使用している。新しい経済現象が発生したとき、その発生を促す精神的要素が人々の「生活態度」にどのような形で結実したかを述べる説明様式といえる。メディア研究に直ちに应用できるものではない。

【第2節】道徳と法

ハーバーマスの公共圏概念の構成要素として「道徳」と「法」があることを述べた。道徳が社会全体に共有されるのは法の方が大きい、法を制御できるものとして道徳がある。しかし、現代社会は多くの小集団に分裂していて、その各々が自己の利益を「共通善」として主張している。ハーバーマスは、公共圏におけるコミュニケーションの過程で真の「共通善」が形成されることを主張するが、「どのように」形成されるのかは不明のままである。

【第3節】 エートス

ばらばらの個人からなる現代社会に統一がありうるとするならば、それは、ばらばらに見える個々人が「どこか深いところで」つながっているからだと考えることは可能である。アリストテレスは、人々の心の深いところにあると同時に、社会の根底にあるこの基層を「エートス」（習慣）とよんだ。エートスは「徳」となって個々人をつなぐが、さらに、「法」によって強制されることが必要とされた。

【第4節】 習俗 (Sitte)

この考え方を継承したドイツ新歴史学派の思想家たち（特に、シュモラー）は、これを「習俗」と名づけた。習俗は国民または社会に共通で固有のものとされる一方で、歴史的に再編成され浄化されうるものとされた。こうして、浄化された習俗によって、歴史的過程の果てに「文化の世界」が実現する。

【第5節】 社会政策

これまで述べてきた「道徳」「法」「エートス」「習俗」は新歴史学派の「倫理的経済学」の「社会政策」に集約された。人間を「自発的」賃金労働者に作り変えること——ここに近代資本主義の成立の成否がかかっていた。労働市場の成立は、国家社会政策による「習俗」の改変の結果であって、法の強制のみによるものではない。

【第6節】 メディア研究の方法論

既存の方法論を組み合わせ、メディア研究の方法論を試作してみよう。経済的必然性がすみずみまで浸透している現代社会において、労働市場のみは経済外的強制力（すなわち、国家社会政策）が働く領域であるが、社会政策の「法」にもとづく強制力によって「コミュニケーション」が発現すること、「法」のみならず「道徳」が関与することで、そこに「公共性」が発現すること、その「コミュニケーション」発現の場は「マスメディア」であることを、クラウス・オッフエの理論を援用して証明しようとした。