

Dystopian Views of Classical Sociologists and Their Social Extensions

Klasik Sosyologların Distopik Görüşleri ve Toplumsal Uzantıları

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Abstract

Classical sociologists such as Marx, Comte, Durkheim, Weber have made significant contributions to the understanding of social life, institutions, norms and structures by studying society, social dynamics and the complexity of human behavior, providing profound insights and laying the foundation for modern sociological thought. While the theories of these sociologists have greatly enriched the understanding of social structures and the formation of predictions about future social order, their works also contain sharp warnings about utopian fictions of social trends and their potential dystopian consequences, but they often offer gloomy predictions of a dystopian future depicting an undesirable or chaotic society. While critically examining the dystopian elements in the works of classical sociologists, who portrayed the depressing picture of social life in different ways by emphasizing social inequality, the oppressive nature of capitalism, the alienation of the individual and the anomie of modern society, from a sociological perspective, this article discusses the theories based on dystopian thought and addresses their relevance to contemporary issues and their validity in today's society, and also assesses the validity of ideas and the consistency of predictions in the contemporary world where dystopian elements continue to manifest. It is therefore important to gain a deeper understanding of the sociological imagination and the continuing relevance of classical sociological thought by examining these dystopian perspectives of sociologists who emphasize their concern about the potential consequences of uncontrolled social developments.

Keywords: Sociology of Religion, Classical Sociologists, Utopia, Dystopia, Social Design.

Öz

Karl Marx, Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim ve Max Weber gibi klasik sosyologlar, toplumu, toplumsal dinamikleri ve insan davranışının karmaşıklığını inceleyerek toplumsal yaşamın, kurumların, normların ve yapıların anlaşılmasına önemli katkılarda bulunmuşlar, derin kavrayışlar sunmuşlar ve modern sosyolojik düşüncenin temelini atmışlardır. Eserleri aynı zamanda toplumsal eğilimlerin ütopyik kurguları ve potansiyel distopik sonuçları hakkında keskin uyarılar içeren bu sosyologların teorileri toplumsal yapıların anlaşılmasını ve gelecekteki toplumsal düzen ile ilgili öngörülerin oluşmasını büyük ölçüde zenginleştirmiş olsa da, çoğunlukla arzu edilmeyen veya kaotik bir toplumu tasvir eden distopik bir geleceğe dair kasvetli öngörüler sunmaktadır. Toplumsal eşitsizliği, kapitalizmin baskıcı doğasını, bireyin yabancılaşmasını ve modern toplumun anomisini vurgulayarak toplumsal yaşamın iç karartıcı resmini farklı şekillerde tasvir eden klasik sosyologların eserlerindeki distopik unsurları eleştirel bakış açısıyla sosyolojik perspektiften incelerken, bu makalede distopik düşünce temelli teoriler ele alınmış ve çağdaş meselelerle bağlantılarına ve günümüz toplumundaki geçerliliklerine değinilmiş ve ayrıca, distopik unsurların tezahür etmeye devam ettiği çağdaş dünyada fikirlerin geçerliliği ve öngörülerin tutarlılığı da değerlendirilmiştir. Dolayısıyla, kontrolsüz toplumsal gelişmelerin potansiyel sonuçları hakkındaki endişelerini vurgulayan sosyologların bu distopik perspektifleri incelenerek, sosyolojik tahayyül ve klasik sosyolojik düşüncenin süregelen geçerliliği hakkında daha derin bir anlayış kazanmak önem teşkil etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Sosyolojisi, Klasik Sosyologlar, Ütopya, Distopya, Toplumsal Tasarım.

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By examining the main sociological theories of classical sociologists, whose analyses of social dysfunction and concerns about the potential impact and consequences of various social, economic and political forces are dystopically grounded, the main aim of this article is to gain valuable insights into the historical context and enduring significance of both utopian and dystopian thought in the field of sociology and its potential consequences for contemporary society.

Dystopia, a concept that has occupied the imagination of writers, scholars and thinkers for many years, is not only a creation of literary modern science fiction, but can be traced back to classical sociologists who, in their quest to understand the often disturbing complexity of societies and to give meaning to life, illuminated, sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally, the darker aspects of human nature and social organization. Pioneering sociologists such as Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Max Weber and Auguste Comte, who laid the foundations of modern sociology with their work and were keen observers of the evolving social landscapes of their times and societies, observed the profound effects of social change in the 19th and early 20th centuries with industrialization, urbanization, capitalism, technological and scientific developments, tried to offer solutions to what they saw as social problems and warned future generations.¹ In their analyses of social structures and institutions, power dynamics and the consequences of rapid urbanization, they often laid the groundwork for exploring the dystopian potential inherent in societies. Thus, the contribution of classical sociologists to dystopian discourse cannot be denied.

Analyzing social problems in different geographies with different cultural backgrounds, trying to share their predictions in a scientific way and expressing their concerns for the future, sociologists have fulfilled their duty to warn future generations by revealing the society they want to be with their utopias and the situations to be avoided, social inequality, erosion of human values and similar potential dangers with their dystopias characterized by social decay, oppression and human suffering, just as Orwell said: *"A world of fear and treachery is torment, a world of trampling and being trampled upon, a world which will grow not less but more merciless as it refines itself. Progress in our world will be progress towards more pain"* (1984, p. 290). Although their primary focus is on analyzing and critiquing existing social structures, when the perspectives of classical sociologists, whose insights inevitably enter the realm of dystopia, are examined, it is admirable that their theories and observations shed light on the potential pitfalls and dark trajectories that human societies may follow and reflect valuable insights into the enduring validity of their dystopian visions in today's world.

A vision of chaotic societies struggling with oppression, dehumanization, alienation, authoritarianism, and social decay, fiction-based dystopia has long captured the imagination of classical sociologists, who offered deep insights into the fragile balance between order and chaos, justice and injustice, and the individual and the collective, and led them to focus on issues such as social and economic class divisions, social poverty, environmental disasters, anarchy, loss of individuality, and alienation (Marx, 2017, p. 39). Although sociologists, whose primary focus is on analyzing the structure and functioning of society, have not explicitly framed their work as dystopian fiction, with their perspectives on social structures, inequality and the human condition, they have expressed in their work that societies need to be guided and informed about potential pitfalls and dangers in order to avoid falling into dystopia. It should not be ignored that sociologists who do not offer solutions at least contribute to ensuring that societies are not caught unprepared for such adversities.

Exploring the possibilities of idealized societies both as a theoretical framework and as a source of critical reflection on existing social structures, classical sociologists have also given deep thought to the concept of utopia. Striving to find answers to profound questions such as what constitutes an ideal

society and how it can be achieved, classical sociologists such as Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, in a period of profound social transformations such as industrialization, urbanization and the rise of capitalism, offered deep analyses and evaluations of utopian social arrangements in response to these upheavals, just as in dystopian societies (Bauman, 1976, p. 12; Mannheim, 2018). These sociologists, who set out to understand and explain the possibilities of achieving a more ideal and harmonious social order, examined human nature, economic structures, norms and social institutions in their work, while at the same time conceiving utopian ideals as a means of criticizing existing social conditions. This exploration of utopia by classical sociologists formed the basis of many subsequent sociological theories and continued to influence debates on social transformation and the search for a better world. In this context, it is essential to examine these classical sociologists' perspectives on utopia, as they provide valuable insights and foresights into the ongoing quest for a more just and equitable society.

Classical sociologists were concerned with the possibility and feasibility of creating a perfect society free from the deficiencies, inequalities, and social, economic, and political ills that plagued their times and societies, conceiving of utopia as a beacon of hope, a blueprint for social transformation, and a lens through which to understand the complex interplay between human nature, institutions, and the search for a better world. While their analyses were rooted in the socio-political contexts of their time, these sociologists, whose analyses have continued to inspire contemporary debates on the nature of utopia, the role of society in shaping human behavior, and the search for a more livable world (Farabi, 2023), have contributed to the ongoing debate about the ideal society and the difficulties of achieving it, and have worked to mature their nascent views on dystopia while pursuing utopia. From Karl Marx's vision of a classless society to Emile Durkheim's search for social cohesion and solidarity, from Max Weber's exploration of rationalization to Auguste Comte's dream of a positivist society, classical sociologists have taken the ideas of utopia and dystopia as a central theme in their work, grappling with questions and problems concerning human nature, social structures and the potential for creating a harmonious and fair world.

From Utopia to Dystopia

Although the concept of utopia was first used by Thomas More, its meaning can be traced back to Plato's *The Republic*ⁱⁱ (2022). Plato, known for his profound contributions to philosophy and political thought, in this work, translated into Turkish as *Devlet*, attempted to lay the foundation for an ideal state inhabited by a utopian society characterized by justice, wisdom and harmony. While Plato tried to reach the ideal state led by a philosopher-king, where the roles of individuals are determined according to their innate abilities, promoting justice and social order, with philosophical thoughts on governance, ethics, education, justice and human nature, Farabi, in his work *Al-Medinet al-Fazila*ⁱⁱⁱ (2023), saw it appropriate to list the qualities that a just leader should have for the ideal state. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that while the first utopian conceptions had the desire for a just and harmonious society, the concept has evolved over time and as we approach the present day, and has been attributed meanings by various thinkers, each offering a unique interpretation. For example, Thomas More's *Utopia* (2023) described an island society characterized by communal living, social equality and religious tolerance. Utopia as a concept continues to captivate the human imagination, offering a better earthly future characterized by harmony, justice and perfection. In the complexity of the modern world, utopia's enduring appeal remains an elusive ideal, but a reminder of the common desire for a more just and harmonious society.

From a sociological perspective, it would be wrong to say that the origin of dystopia is different from that of utopia. Why? Because thinkers and sociologists, in the period and time they lived in, reflected the longing for a livable society by emphasizing the characteristics of ideal structures and leaders, not

the defective aspects of social structures, norms and leaders. Therefore, it would not be wrong to imagine that utopian expectations stem from the dystopian characteristics of the current situation. For example, Plato, who depicts a utopian city-state and expresses the flaws of the existing Greek society, implicitly portrays dystopian imaginations while expressing his utopian thoughts explicitly. On the other hand, criticizing the excesses of oligarchy and tyranny in his work *Politics* (2023), Aristotle emphasized that social decay and moral collapse would be inevitable if leaders and rulers put their personal interests above the common good. Therefore, shifts of thought from utopia to dystopia have been observed in different places and times in the historical process. However, the political origin of both concepts from the very beginning can be said to be one of their common aspects. Therefore, any society characterized by extreme inequality, excessive exploitation, and where the majority is exploited by the minority in a harmful way is dystopian.

Both concepts are extraordinarily useful in assessing how societies have reached their current state and potential improvements for the future, and in maintaining a stable attitude. Utopias provide theoretical reflections and interpretations of where societies are heading (Coby, 1986), while dystopias give people a glimpse of a possible future society (Slaughter, 2003). Situations that lead to dystopia, such as environmental disasters, overconsumption, overpopulation, restriction of freedoms, oppressive governance, lack of equal opportunities, education and wages being exclusive to a minority, lead to the emergence of utopian views towards societies where environmental disasters are solved, overconsumption is balanced, population balance is achieved, freedoms are not restricted, equal opportunities are provided, education and equal pay for equal work are accessible to everyone.

In today's globalized world, Marx's class struggle, economic inequality and exploitation mentality, Durkheim's concept of anomie, the dissolution of traditional social bonds and the difficulties of maintaining social cohesion in rapidly changing societies, Weber's rationalized and bureaucratized understanding of society, Simmel's depiction of alienation in the metropolis, Comte's view of totalitarianism, Spencer's thoughts on social Darwinism and many similar views are considered as indicators of the shift of social life from utopia to dystopia. Life evolving towards the potential dark sides of progress and development, such as the dehumanizing effects of advanced technology or alienation caused by the relentless pursuit of economic growth, has forced people, who are confronted with inequality, conflicts and alienation from most values, to live in a dystopian environment.

When looking at depictions of dystopia or utopia, it is worth bearing in mind that these terms are not as different as they may seem. What immediately catches the eye, of course, are the contrasting characteristics they embody. Utopia is the best of all imaginable worlds, dystopia the worst. Utopia looks a priori to a future 'dream' world, to new directions and beginnings, and captures an ideal that is static; dystopia, taking a linear form or a 'progressive' trajectory, is mainly concerned with or derived from the present. Utopia thus focuses on an escape from the present reality, from time itself; dystopia depicts this immanent reality. Utopia does not exist or cannot exist: it is a projection not only of a good place, but of a place that does not exist; dystopia is portrayed as all too real, if often somewhat distorted. Whereas utopian writers believe in progress as a positive force and look forward to the freedoms that progress will bring, dystopian writers tend to show the unintended or unforeseen consequences of progress. Utopia, then, is the expression of desire, optimism and hope; dystopia is the expression of fear, pessimism and rebellion. Utopia implies an unsatisfactory present, and the realization or fabrication of utopia inevitably falls short of the original concept (Ania, 2007, p. 157).

"The future belongs to those who prepare for it today." (Malcolm X, 2020). "I love the dreams of the future more than the history of the past" (Jefferson, 1816). The concepts of utopia and dystopia represent imaginary societies in which people live their lives either in a perfect environment governed by laws that provide happiness for all or in an oppressive society governed by an oppressive and controlled

state. While Jefferson emphasizes utopia, Malcolm X points out and warns about the possibility of a dystopian future by emphasizing that we should not be caught unprepared for what the future brings.

Utopia

Everyone has a utopia. Although the concept of utopia began to be used in the 16th century, everyone who dreams of a beautiful future nurtures and keeps their utopia alive. The utopias designed in the minds are ecological, depicting a way of life in which man is close to nature, respects and protects it, and all life is in harmony; economic, where goods are distributed equally, forced labour is abolished, art, science and individuality are valued more, and there is no such thing as personal profit; political, where world peace is often desired, unity and cultural, racial and gender-based prejudices are eliminated; religious, expressing a future in which humanity evolves beyond its basic needs and is united by a common desire to achieve enlightenment, a life separated from physical nature and dedicated to spiritual well-being or a higher plane of existence; feminist, pointing to a society in which women have equal rights with men; scientific and technological utopias, representing a humanity that has solved all its problems and has gone beyond its former borders with the help of rationally developed and utilized technology (Horsfield, 2017).

Utopia is precisely about what kind of world we would live in if we could do just that. The construction of imaginary worlds free from the difficulties that beset us in reality takes place in one form or another in many cultures. Such images are embedded in myths of origins and goals in which the good life is not offered to us in this world, but is limited to a lost golden age or a world beyond death. They can be religious or secular, literary or political. Although they vary in form, content and location, they are common enough to lead some commentators to speculate on the existence of a fundamental utopian tendency in humankind. Sometimes utopia involves more than an image of what the good life would be like, and becomes an assertion of what it could and should be: the wish that things could be otherwise becomes a belief that it doesn't have to be this way. Utopia, then, is not just a dream to be enjoyed, but a reflection to be pursued (Levitas, 2010, p. 1).

What is a utopia? To put it bluntly, it means a happy island far away, where perfect social relations prevail, where people living under a perfect constitution and a faultless government enjoy a simple and happy existence, far from the turmoil, disturbing worries and endless anxieties of real life (Kaufmann, 1879, p. V). Utopia is the "perfect society" desired by humanity. It is a society where all social problems are solved and nothing disturbs humanity anymore (Jameson, 2005, pp. 1-3). Utopia means "nowhere", perhaps implying that social perfection cannot be achieved (Franko, 2009, p. 207). Marx and Engels used the word "utopia" to refer to non-scientific social theories (Engels, 2012, p. 15).

Historically, the concept of utopia is defined according to one of four characteristics: (1) the content of the imagined society; (2) the literary form in which the utopian imagination crystallizes; (3) the function of utopia; (4) the desire for a better life arising from a feeling of discontent with the society in which one lives. Utopia should then be seen as a matter of attitude, a kind of reaction against the undesirable present and a desire to overcome all difficulties by imagining possible alternatives (Vieira, 2010, pp. 6-7).

Characteristics of a Utopian Society

Utopia is a perfectly harmonized imaginary society in which it is highly desirable to live. Citizens in Utopia are truly free and have freedom of speech and thought. Based on the idea that power is corrupt, society is not controlled by constructed systems of government. Since Utopia is a concept that brings citizens together as a society, a community, people are not treated as individuals. Utopia means a return to nature for people who live in friendship with each other, free from fear; nature and the natural world are protected, embraced and respected. Utopias are usually places suspended outside of time or spatially

isolated, where the inhabitants are depicted as living perfect, acceptable lives in complete agreement (Dahrendorf, 1958, p. 117).

As far as technology is concerned, they adopt a few innovations that enhance the lifestyle experience or make everyday tasks easier. But a utopian society is never completely dependent on technology and its inventions. They believe that technology is a monster devouring humanity. Society evolves with change to create a perfect utopian world. A technological utopia does not ignore the problems that technology can cause, but strongly believes that technology allows humanity to make social, economic, political and cultural advances. In general, *Technological Utopianism* sees the effects of technology as extremely positive (Segal, 2005).

Utopian citizens have a moralistic point of view. Citizens live an honest life in a harmonious state. They adopt and embody social ideals. Knowledge, independent thought and freedom are encouraged. Citizens embrace social and moral ideals. Individuality and innovation are welcomed. Society evolves with change to create a perfect utopian world.^{iv}

Dystopia

The word "Dustopia" (Younge, 1747, p. 4), which was first used in the work *Utopia: or Apollo's Golden Days* by Henry Lewis Younge, began to be used intensively and the rise of the idea is seen towards the end of the 19th century. A large number of scientists and writers began to process the transition from utopia to dystopia by imagining the dark lives of the future where totalitarian rulers rule the lives of ordinary citizens. In their works, these writers and scientists have dealt with and still deal with many themes related to dystopian societies, such as oppressive social control systems, government coercion of citizens, the impact of technology on the human mind, human possession and human coping mechanisms, individuality, freedom of life and expression, censorship, sexual repression, class distinctions, artificial life and human interaction with nature and often the destruction of nature (Vieira, 2013).

Dystopia was coined by John Stuart Mill in one of his "1868 Parliamentary Speeches" with the prefix "dys" (Ancient Greek for "bad"), close to its current meaning. Mill, who preferred the word 'dystopia' as an antonym of Utopia in order to condemn the government's Irish land policy, said: "It is perhaps too flattering to call them Utopians; they should rather be called dys-topians or caco-topians. What is generally called Utopian is too good to be practicable; but what they seem to favour is too bad to be practicable." (1868), contributed to the consolidation of the meaning of the concept in the eyes of the society and was instrumental in its widespread use.

A dystopia (kakotopia or anti-utopia) is a fictional society that is the antithesis of utopia. It is usually characterized by oppressive social control, such as an authoritarian or totalitarian government. In other words, a dystopia has the opposite of what is expected of a utopian society. Dystopias are often depicted as collapsed social structures under an environmental burden or political regime. By their very nature they are usually situated at an uncertain point in the future; societies decay not in years but in decades (Mann, 2001, p. 477). They are obvious choices for science fiction as they instantly convey an alternative situation or environment. Dystopias in particular give characters a reason to act because there is a very vague need to create a better society (Nithya, 2016, p. 215).

As mentioned earlier, dystopia is anti-utopia. In a fictional context, it is often the case that a utopia turns into a dystopia as time goes by, society is in complete chaos, nothing is good in that society, the government and people are corrupt. People whose freedom has been taken away are under constant surveillance and are forced to live a life of fear. Dystopian societies, where environmental problems can also be observed, are generally very advanced in technology. However, it is also noteworthy that this advanced technology does not benefit people (Orwell, 1984, p. 207).

If everyone has a utopia, it would not be wrong to say that it originates from dystopias. Although the concept of dystopia started to be used much later than the concept of utopia, it is quite natural to see the traces of dystopian lives and societies in the logic of the emergence of the concept of utopia. People who observe what goes wrong in their lives or in the society they live in and dream of something better, while writing about the lives and societies they dream of, indirectly reveal the corrupt aspects of the situation and societies they are actually in. Therefore, dystopias, like utopias, are ecological, created by people who destroy nature and their relations with it, who destroy natural life in such a way that life is not possible; economic, reflecting an environment in which one or more large corporations rule the world to the detriment of humanity, dominate the human mind through manipulation, propaganda, intrusive advertising and even technology, or interfere in human life through absolute control of resources and strict limitation of existing comforts; political, where the government is the source of all evil, where there is no unity and solidarity, where society is controlled by the institutions that are supposed to protect it, where there is no personal freedom, no human rights and no trust; religious, which generally deals with a future in which society is controlled by a dangerous ideology or religion that gradually destroys everything that humanity has built along the way; technological dystopias that destroy lives, murder or enslave people, and make people dependent on themselves.^v

Characteristics of a Dystopian Society

Dystopian worlds often depict a desolate and environmentally degraded landscape. Uncontrolled industrialization, pollution and resource depletion contribute to a decaying world, reflecting the consequences of unsustainable practices in our own society. The environment becomes a reflection of moral decay in dystopian society, and ecological crises serve as both cause and effect of societal collapse (Atwood, 2013; McGinnis, 2013; Feffer, 2018).

Often formed as cautionary tales and reflections of the potential consequences of unchecked power, social manipulation and the erosion of individual freedoms, dystopian societies are characterized by a number of distinctive features that create an oppressive and often nightmarish environment for its inhabitants. One of the defining characteristics of a dystopian society is the presence of totalitarian control. The dominant power, whether it is the government or an authoritarian figure, has absolute authority over all aspects of life. Citizens are subject to constant surveillance, restricted freedoms and a pervasive atmosphere of fear. The erosion of individual freedoms in the name of collective stability is a common theme, and oppressive regimes use propaganda, censorship and surveillance to maintain their power (Orwell, 2021, p. 7).

Dystopian societies generally reduce individuals to mere cogs in a well-oiled machine, alienating them from their humanity. Conformity is enforced through various means such as strict dress codes, standardized behaviors, and the suppression of dissenting voices. Uniformity becomes a tool of control that erases individuality, promoting a collective identity that serves the interests of the ruling class. The process of dehumanization aims to create a compliant and easily manipulable populace (Burgess, 2007).

A distinguishing feature of dystopian societies is the sharp economic inequality between the privileged minority and the impoverished masses. While the ruling elites indulge in affluent lifestyles, the majority grapples with poverty. This economic disparity serves as a tool to maintain control, as those deprived of their rights are kept in a perpetual state of dependency and helplessness. Limited access to resources and opportunities further intensifies social unrest, reinforcing the dominance of the ruling class (Sealey, 2019).

In dystopian societies, personal freedom is sacrificed in the name of collective security and order. Individuals are subjected to invasive policies that restrict their autonomy, ranging from curfews and movement limitations to constraints on personal expression. Due to the prevalence of surveillance

technology, the erosion of privacy is a common theme, with ruling powers monitoring and controlling every aspect of citizens' lives. "At the apex of the pyramid comes Big Brother. Big Brother is infallible and all-powerful. Every success, every achievement, every victory, every scientific discovery, all knowledge, all wisdom, all happiness, all virtue, are held to issue directly from his leadership and inspiration. Big Brother is the guise chosen by the Party to present itself to the world" (Orwell, 1984, p. 216). After this definition of Big Brother is provided, the statement "Big Brother is watching you" (Orwell, 1984, p. 4) emphasizes that in dystopian societies, people are under surveillance to influence, govern, guide, or protect them.

Dystopian Predictions of Emile Durkheim

Emile Durkheim, whose works primarily focus on sociology, society, and ethics, is not renowned for his dystopian works. In one of his most significant works written in 1893, translated into Turkish as *Toplumsal İşbölümü, Division of Labor in Society* (2013), he develops theories on division of labor and social cohesion. In this work, Durkheim explores how the division of labor, resulting from individuals and groups taking on different tasks and roles in society, affects social order. He categorizes division of labor into two approaches: 'Mechanical', where individuals share similar abilities and values, and social cohesion is based on similarities and common values; and 'Organic', where individuals have different specializations and roles, complementing each other, and societal unity is based on cooperation and mutual dependence. According to Durkheim, mechanical division of labor is more dominant in traditional societies, where social cohesion is achieved through similarities and shared values. On the other hand, organic division of labor is more prevalent in modern societies, where societal unity is established through the coming together and complementing of differences.

Durkheim, one of the leading figures in sociology, does not have direct dystopian views. However, as previously mentioned, some utopian views in his theories clearly imply dystopian consequences. Therefore, in his works, rather than alluding to the loss of cohesion and the breaking of ties in societies, Durkheim emphasizes the necessity of strengthening these bonds to ensure unity and solidarity for societies to continue stably. Otherwise, social integration and stability are jeopardized, and the bonds that need to be unwaveringly strong to understand the complexity of modern society and the problems it brings weaken. Instead of utopian expectations, dystopian failures occur. A fragmented and isolated society, where individuals struggle to find meaning and purpose, becomes a community that people are forced to live in reluctantly.

Émile Durkheim's concept of anomie refers to a situation that arises when there is a weakness or uncertainty in societal norms. Anomie encompasses the weakening of social bonds among individuals, the ambiguity of norms, and the decrease in the cohesive power of society. It involves a state where traditional social ties break down, norms become uncertain, and the integrative force of society diminishes. Anomie, particularly associated with the negative consequences of rapid industrialization and urbanization, signifies the transition from traditional societies to industrial societies, manifesting as a lack of norms alongside moral confusion and decay.

In his work *Suicide: A Study In Sociology*, written in 1897, where Durkheim introduced the concept of anomie, he argued that as traditional social bonds weaken, individuals will become more detached from larger communities. According to Durkheim, this detachment leads to higher suicide rates and social instability. He believed that individuals feeling isolated and alienated from society are more likely to experience a sense of loneliness (Durkheim, 1997). Ultimately, Durkheim proposed that anomie gives rise to dystopian communities, and in turn, dystopian societies are compelled to live an anomalous life.

Dystopian Predictions of Karl Marx

Karl Marx, with his analyses on economics, society, and politics, stands among the thinkers who have had historical and global impact. His most significant work, *Das Kapital* (2016), along with other writings, is focused on criticizing capitalism and exploring social change and transformation. Similar to Durkheim, it is quite possible to draw dystopian implications from Marx's criticisms and predictions. To achieve this, it is necessary to elaborate on Marx's analyses of capitalism and the capitalist system.

According to Marx, the foundation of capitalism lies in class conflict, which occurs between the working class and the bourgeoisie. In his view, the capitalist system, based on the exploitation of labor, increases injustice and inequality throughout society. The exploitation of labor by capitalism inevitably leads to the exacerbation of injustice and inequality in the community. Societies experiencing such disparities are bound to transform into dystopian societies in the future.

Marx, who believed in the development of the working class's own consciousness and the overthrow of the capitalist system, articulated his conviction in *The Communist Manifesto* (Marx & Engels, 2022), co-authored with Engels, that this revolution he foresaw would occur through intense conflict and social upheaval. With this mindset, it can be argued that Marx was suffering from the existing structure, social order, unjust system, and inequality, and for this reason, he envisioned living in a dystopian society. Nevertheless, Marx acknowledged that the revolution he expected from the proletariat, who desired a social order grounded in equality and justice, might not be painless and could potentially result in chaos. Therefore, it is undeniable that such a development aligns with a dystopian scenario.

Marx, who believes that the state actually exists to protect the interests of the ruling class, envisions a dramatic shift in the role of the state with the triumph of socialism under the leadership of the working class. Societal transformations, particularly in institutional roles, often entail a painful process. In light of this reality, it can be inferred indirectly from Marx's thought that these role changes will shake the social order, lead to a chaotic environment, and ultimately result in dystopian phenomena.

In the mid-19th century, a period marked by the acceleration of industrialization and the intensification of the capitalist system, Marx drew attention to the problems experienced by individuals working within this system. He focused on these issues through the concept of alienation, emphasizing the detachment of individuals from themselves and society, highlighting the process of losing oneself. Alienation of labor, a key aspect, involves the worker's inability to claim the value produced by their labor, as well as the loss of control over their own labor. In the alienation of the product, the disconnect between the producer and the product is expressed, and the product becomes a foreign object to the worker.

Addressing alienation in interpersonal relationships, influenced by the competitive nature and dominance of individual interests within a capitalist environment, Marx argued that people, under the influence of capitalism, start to perceive other workers merely as rivals in competition, leading to a distancing among them. Lastly, there is alienation from one's own human nature and essence, referred to as alienation from oneself. This is described as the individual becoming estranged from their own essence, a concept Marx termed as alienation from one's own essence. Therefore, through the theory of alienation, Marx draws attention to the notion that the current capitalist system imposes a dystopian environment or society on individuals. The dream of transitioning from dystopia to utopia through proletarian revolution remains a vital aspect of Marx's perspective on this matter (Musto, 2021).

Marx's dystopia foresaw a society dominated by class struggle, exploitation, and an oppressive work environment. According to him, the capitalist system would lead to the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few while the masses toil in poverty and misery. In the absence of a revolution, people would experience alienation on economic, social, and political levels. Individuals would become alienated in a material sense if revolutionary change did not occur, devoid of solidarity, weakening and eventually

severing emotional ties, losing political commitment, and attempting to endure life in a chaotic environment. Those confronted with dystopian outcomes such as totalitarian regimes and widespread economic inequality often find themselves alienated due to their detachment from their humanity. In this context, the concept of alienation from one's own humanity, as proposed by Marx, frequently emerges prominently in dystopian works.

Dystopian Predictions of Max Weber

Max Weber, a sociologist who lived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, addressed the complexity of society, processes of modernization, and bureaucracy in his works. Weber also drew attention to potential dystopian dangers brought about by the processes of modernization in the context of social change and transformation. According to Weber, bureaucracy, considered as an "ideal type," is an effective and rational organizational form in the governance of modern societies, playing a crucial role in maintaining efficiency and order in social life. While recognizing the benefits of bureaucracy, Weber also highlighted its potential dangers, arguing that this system could restrict individual freedom and harm participatory democracy (2019).

Bureaucracy is organized within a specific hierarchical structure. Each level receives orders from the level above and issues orders to the level below. Bureaucratic institutions are governed by written rules and procedures. Decisions are based on objective rules and standards. Tasks are associated with specific positions, and the person filling that position is synonymous with it. It is based on the requirements of the position rather than personal characteristics. Bureaucratic institutions take on a specific task to fulfill a particular purpose and effectively operate in the process of accomplishing that task. However, despite Max Weber considering bureaucracy as an effective form of management, he also recognized its negative aspects and dimensions, leading him to produce numerous works criticizing the system.

According to Weber, bureaucratic systems generally do not support a democratic structure. Decisions are usually made by top-level bureaucrats, and individuals at lower levels are given very little opportunity for participation. Weber argues that the excessive formalism and rule-bound nature of bureaucracy can limit its ability to adapt quickly to changing conditions. He also points out that bureaucratic structures often disregard the emotional and social needs of individuals, leading to decisions being made in a cold and emotionless manner. He suggests that such a formation would be distant from social order, forcing individuals to live in an unsettling and emotionless environment, and anticipates the potential of systems aiming for utopia to create dystopian scenarios.

Weber also states that the excessive expansion of the bureaucratic system and the lack of democratic control can restrict individuals' freedoms. He argues that an emphasis on form and procedure can suppress creativity, and a system that neglects emotional needs can lead to alienation and dissatisfaction in society. Individuals who lose the power to regulate their lives under bureaucratic pressure may find themselves living in new dystopias marked by inadequate control, arbitrary practices, and violations of rights. Weber emphasizes the need for the bureaucratic system to be in balance with democratic values. As societies enter the process of rationalization, according to Weber, it can destroy individuals' emotional and cultural richness. With industrialization and technological progress, social bonds among individuals weaken, and a senseless individualization emerges in society. According to Weber, the cold face of rationalization can lead to dystopian lives.

Weber believes that the ability of individuals to engage in social criticism is critically important for the health of a democratic society. However, he is not far from the idea that the processes of bureaucracy and rationalization can also impose limits on individuals' capacities for critical thinking. According to Weber, if attention is paid to the potential dangers brought about by the processes of modernization, and at the same time, if individuals' capacities for social criticism are not weakened, then bureaucracy

and rationalization cannot weaken the bonds among individuals or jeopardize democratic values. Weber suggests that if the potential dangers of modernization processes, which can lead to the neglect of social inequalities and injustices, are carefully considered, and if measures are taken to ensure that individuals' capacities for social criticism remain intact, then bureaucracy and rationalization will not erode the connections among individuals, and democratic values will not be jeopardized. Therefore, drawing on Weber's perspective, when solutions are sought for balance and participatory democracy in modern societies, and as long as the pursuit of rationality and efficiency does not trap individuals in the "Iron Cage" of bureaucracy, utopian societies, rather than dystopias, may not be too far-fetched (2016).

The tradition, defined as values, norms, and rituals passed down from the past to the present within the cultural context of societies, is one of the fundamental elements that ensure the continuity and identity of a society. In today's world, technological advancements and social changes lead to the erosion of tradition in various areas. However, as emphasized by Weber, the erosion of tradition under constantly changing social conditions is inevitable. Therefore, in this dystopia, the relentless march of progress results in the loss of cultural heritage and identity. Considering the dehumanizing effects of technology, it is highly likely that individuals will be enslaved by what they themselves produce, losing their connections with humanity. According to Weber, bureaucracy will replace traditional values and traditions, and without the preservation of these traditional values, social unity, solidarity, and order will become unattainable. Therefore, viewing Weber's works as a system that warns people about the potential dystopian effects of uncontrolled rationalization and technological developments in modern society would be highly beneficial (2016).

Max Weber addressed modern societies through the processes of industrialization, rationalization, and bureaucratization, using the concept of the "disenchantment of the world." This concept reflects the loss of meaning and purpose in a highly rationalized and bureaucratized society. While Weber argued that these processes make societies more organized and efficient, he also contended that they lead to a kind of loss of "enchantment" in individuals' lives. Predicting a journey from the past and traditions under the governance of technocrats towards the dystopia of capitalism, Weber suggested that individuals detached from their past and traditions are moving from the "Protestant Ethic" towards a dystopia. He hinted at the utopian dreams of individuals deprived or distanced from their values, including religious and moral values, suggesting that these dreams are not mere illusions.

Dystopian Predictions of Georg Simmel

Georg Simmel attempted to understand the effects of modern city life by examining the phenomenon of alienation in the metropolis. This theory suggests that the changes brought about by modernization can weaken an individual's social ties, leading to alienation. Defined as the gradual distancing of the individual from both other people and their own inner feelings, the theory of alienation in the metropolis is based on the idea that relationships between people remain superficial and lack depth. In dystopian scenarios, individuals often become increasingly isolated from their societies and each other. The alienation in the metropolis is akin to the struggle of an individual in a dystopian world to comprehend oneself and one's surroundings (Simmel & Levine, 1971).

Simmel emphasized the significant role of technological advancements in the increasing alienation in the metropolis. Technology, which reduces direct interaction among people, further separates and distances individuals. In dystopian scenarios, the control or misuse of technology often contributes to societal alienation. Alienation in the metropolis can weaken an individual's freedom and trust. As frequently observed in dystopian stories, alienation makes it difficult for individuals to understand themselves and others, laying the groundwork for the control of society.

Georg Simmel's theory of the "blasé attitude" is based on a perspective regarding the complexity of modern society and an individual's experiences within this society. Simmel examines the fatigue that arises from various social interactions that individuals encounter as a result of the complexity of social relationships. According to Simmel, individuals in modern society are constantly engaged in different social relationships. However, the complexity and pace of these relationships can lead individuals to become weary over time. Fatigue is associated with the effort to constantly adapt to changing social connections and the intensity of these connections.

Simmel's blasé attitude theory (2005) suggests that individuals may develop defense mechanisms to cope with social interactions and, over time, may become desensitized to these interactions. Individuals may experience fatigue in the process of expending energy to adapt to constantly changing social dynamics and to perceive these dynamics. This situation can lead individuals to adopt a superficial and distant attitude in their social relationships.

Georg Simmel's theory of the marginalization of society (2009) is based on an analysis of individuals' roles and connections within social interactions. Simmel developed the idea that in the complexity of modern society, due to the increasing number and intensity of social relationships, these connections may become less meaningful for individuals. Within these relationships, individuals may form short-term and transient connections with a larger number of people. This situation can lead individuals to perceive others as less personal and insignificant. Using the concept of the "marginalization of society," Simmel suggested that individuals, within frequently changing and superficial social connections, may start to view others merely as "objects." In this scenario, individuals may experience their relationships with others less profoundly, and the personal significance of these relationships may diminish.

Dystopian Predictions of Auguste Comte

Comte attempted to establish a strong connection between science and society with his positivist approach, proposing a model of society idealized by identifying distinct stages of social evolution. Striving to transform sociology into a scientific discipline, Comte emphasized the use of scientific methods based on observation and experience. According to Comte, the disorder and complexity existing in society can be explained and regulated by science. Therefore, he advocated for the application of scientific methods to solve societal problems. Consequently, Comte, perceiving his era and society as problematic, depicted the characteristics of the future society he desired by envisioning a utopia, also highlighting the drawbacks of the existing dystopian society (2015).

Comte believed that societies progress through a specific evolutionary sequence, positing that this evolution comprises three stages: the theological stage, the metaphysical stage, and the positive stage. These stages represent the changing order of social structure and thought. According to him, societies undergo a process of transition from belief in supernatural forces to metaphysical explanations and, ultimately, to scientific positivism. Comte's concept of the "law of three stages" depicts the shift from a world dominated by religious and chaotic beliefs to a more rational and orderly one (Gane, 2006). It appears that, in Comte's view, the society of his time had not yet entered the scientific stage. His analysis of contemporary society was not utopian but rather dystopian, as he envisioned the scientific stage as an ideal where reason and empiricism would prevail.

According to Comte, social engineering (2010) aims at the better organization of society under the guidance of science. This organization should be achieved through the application of scientific methods and positive science. However, concepts like scientific management and social engineering have been interpreted by critics as a totalitarian approach, raising concerns about potential limitations on individual freedom. Therefore, it is clearly evident that Comte's utopia actually lays the foundation for future dystopian thoughts, as critics express worries about the imposition of positivist principles leading

to the chaos and fragmentation of traditional authority that Comte believed could be rescued. Observing the rise of social disorder, Comte emphasized the need for a "priesthood of scientists" to guide society but unwittingly revealed a dystopian vision in the chaos and disintegration of the traditional authority he believed could be saved by the imposition of positivist principles.

Dystopian Predictions of Herbert Spencer

Spencer argues that by applying Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection to human societies, social development can be seen as a form of biological evolution. According to him, the presence of competition and natural selection among individuals in societies is necessary for societal progress. However, extending this view further, he contends that wealth, power, and success are based on inherent abilities (Spencer, 2022). This implies that in a scenario where society is under the influence of natural selection, the strong will become stronger while the weak will weaken, painting a dystopian picture.

This perspective has the potential to create serious inequality in societies. In a dystopian future, wealth and power may concentrate in the hands of a minority, leading to the marginalization and impoverishment of a large segment of society. Ideas such as Social Darwinism and the survival of the fittest could result in a scenario where inequality deepens, and the weak are abandoned. Spencer's dystopian indicators include the erosion of social solidarity, traps of extreme individualism, and the promotion of a society where exclusion and ostracism are based on the foundation of the "natural selection" process. The surprise ending is not unexpected, given that the process of "natural selection" is rooted in exclusion and othering, fueling social divisions.

Spencer's Social Darwinism conflicts with principles of social justice and equality. From his perspective, inequality and poverty should be accepted as a result of natural selection. However, modern societal values and ethical principles reject such thinking, emphasizing that social justice should be achieved by respecting the human rights of every individual. A Social Darwinism dystopia envisions a future contrary to principles of social justice and equality. Nevertheless, humanity has the potential to move away from this dystopia by coming together and collaborating to address common problems.

Dystopian Predictions of Sigmund Freud

In Freud's works, the idea that individuals lose their freedom by being compelled to conform to norms imposed by society is frequently emphasized. This situation arises as a result of society suppressing an individual's natural inclinations, ultimately giving rise to a dystopian perception. Freud argued that internal conflicts within individuals, where desires and prohibitions clash with societal norms and rules, can manifest in a battleground. The repression or denial of these conflicts leads to individual and societal explosions. According to Freud, such internal struggles and suppressed desires undermine the fundamental structure of society and herald the advent of a dystopian environment (2012).

Freud argues that societies employ various power and control mechanisms to regulate individuals and ensure they live within the established order. However, he predicts that if these control mechanisms go to extremes or are abused by bureaucracy, it will lead to the restriction of individual freedoms and the emergence of a societal dystopia. Freud believes that excessive societal control, along with the complexity of the human mind and its internal conflicts, has negative effects on society and can result in dystopian outcomes. According to Freud, the imposition of restrictions on individual free will in the name of societal order is not in harmony with human nature. He contends that if society cannot effectively deal with the tension arising from the inner conflicts within individuals, a dystopian existence becomes an inevitable reality (2002).

Conclusion

In the beginning, some of the views put forth by classical sociologists regarding the future directly reflect their utopian visions, while others carry deep concerns about the future of society. These thinkers, who often focus on the complexity of modern society, the loss of individual freedoms, and social inequality, have observed the internal tumult and changes in society, examined human relationships, highlighted specific trends, and made valuable predictions for order in the name of social unity and solidarity. The perspectives of classical sociologists predicting a pessimistic scenario as a result of social change and transformation naturally evoke dystopian situations. Classical sociologists, who typically concentrate on the complex and large-scale changes in society, draw attention to factors such as industrialization, class struggles, individualization, and shifts in social norms, suggesting that these elements could weaken social order and have a negative impact on the future of society.

Karl Marx's critique of the capitalist system suggests a dystopian outcome marked by social inequality and class struggle. Max Weber's criticism of the undemocratic structure created by bureaucracy carries the potential for a dystopia that restricts individual freedom. Emile Durkheim's concept of anomie indicates that the weakening of societal norms could lead to a dystopia. Georg Simmel's theory of alienation in the metropolis implies the distancing of individuals from both others and their own inner feelings, ultimately approaching their own dystopia. Auguste Comte argued that the disorder and complexity in society can be explained and regulated by science, advocating for the application of scientific methods to solve societal problems and portraying the characteristics of the utopian society he envisioned for the future, highlighting the drawbacks of the existing dystopian society. Herbert Spencer painted a dystopian picture where the powerful become stronger while the weak become weaker. Sigmund Freud foresaw that if control mechanisms were taken to extremes or misused by bureaucracy, individuals' freedoms would be curtailed, leading to the emergence of a societal dystopia.

However, over time, many societal developments and changes have shown that the dystopian views and expectations of classical sociologists have not fully materialized, at least situations depicting excessively pessimistic and gloomy environments have not become a type of life that humanity must endure. Societies are dynamic and complex systems, and the balance between various powers can constantly shift. Additionally, technological advancements, processes of democratization, and global communication have contributed to the transformation of societies into more complex, diverse, and global structures. However, it would be wrong to form entirely negative opinions about societal life based on these developments and changes. When considering the views expressed by many thinkers, including classical sociologists, it is clearly seen and felt that the majority's negative expectations are far from the reality of the contemporary world.

Along with dystopian views, the analyses of classical sociologists remain valuable for contemporary societies. However, it is essential to remember that these perspectives are only a framework and are not sufficient on their own to fully understand the complexity of society. Therefore, in this study, there are many other theories used to evaluate social change and developments. What needs to be done is to take steps towards becoming individuals living in healthier societies by considering the predictions that are considered accurate. Classical sociologists who raise important questions about social change and give rise to different thoughts provide guidance to societies for their future. However, it is important that these warnings and predictions do not lead to excessive pessimism and do not hinder efforts to understand the dynamic structure of society. Taking these warnings into account and the acceptance of guidance will result in moving away from a chaotic and dystopian future. In the process of social change, moving positively with conscious efforts and effective policies is of critical importance to prevent dystopian scenarios proposed by classical sociologists.

In conclusion, the dystopian perspectives of classical sociologists highlight the weaknesses in societal structures and draw attention to potential future issues. However, whether these dystopian scenarios will come to pass depends on various factors such as the direction society takes and the policy choices made. Therefore, it is important to consider these views in order to make informed decisions and find effective solutions to societal problems. By examining dystopian perspectives, the challenges contemporary society faces and the ongoing quest for a more just and humane world can be better understood.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Ethical Approval

Ethics committee approval is not required for this study.

Author Contributions

The author solely contributed to the conception and design of the study, data collection and analysis, as well as the writing and revision of the manuscript.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Notes

ⁱ For detailed information, you can benefit from the 6-volume work titled *History of Sociology* written by Prof. Dr. Sezgin Kızılcelik and published by Anı Publishing.

ⁱⁱ This work, translated into Turkish by S. Delikanlı, has been recognised in the literature as *Devlet*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Farabi's *Medinetü'l-Fazıla* was translated into Turkish as *İdeal Devlet* by A. Arslan.

^{iv} For more detailed and comparative information, see <https://libraryguides.mdc.edu/topias>

^v Access to the full article on the website:

https://www.academia.edu/63804642/Distopia_vs_Utopia_Fighting_for_the_future E.T.: 11.11.2023