



DOI: 10.22363/2313-2272-2021-21-2-354-364

On the origins of the methodology of social knowledge in Russia: A.S. Lappo-Danilevsky and contemporary discussions*

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Abstract. The article considers those aspects of the development of sociological knowledge in Russia that were determined by the scientific and organizational activities of A.S. Lappo-Danilevsky (1863–1919). His contribution to the development of the Russian social and humanitarian thought is associated mainly with the development of the foundations of history, historiography and source studies, which is widely admitted in scientific works. However, Lappo-Danilevsky's contribution to the development of sociology, to the identification of the specifics of its subject and to the creation of a model of systemic courses on the historical reconstruction of sociological knowledge are still widely discussed. The authors consider the creative component of Lappo-Danilevsky's legacy and the strategy he developed for creating an interdisciplinary methodology for social sciences. The article aims at describing his contribution to the institutionalization of Russian sociology, which allows not only to clarify the origins of social knowledge in Russia, but also to actualize Lappo-Danilevsky's legacy. The authors pose new questions and problematize the research potential of the works of Russian scientists at the turn of the 20th century, which has prospects for supplementing the history and methodology of sociology. The description of the activities of Lappo-Danilevsky — from the development of the institutional foundations of Russian sociology to the clarification of the methodological principles of social knowledge — raises the question of the influence of positivism and neo-Kantianism on the scientific community. On the other hand, the study of the scientific and organizational activities of Lappo-Danilevsky allow to expand the field of history and methodology of sociology by supplementing it with a description of the institutionalization of sociology in Russia. The study of the foundations of sociological knowledge emphasizes three points: creation of methodology, separation from related disciplines, and acceptance of the historical component in the development of academic sociology. The article also mentions contemporary discussions which consider the sociological legacy of Lappo-Danilevsky not only as a historical reconstruction of the development of social knowledge, but also in the interdisciplinary perspective of contemporary sociology.

Key words: history of sociology; methodology of sociology; methodology of history; interdisciplinarity; Russian Sociological Society; Lappo-Danilevsky; Russian neo-Kantianism

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The article was submitted on 16.02.2021. The article was accepted on 02.04.2021.

The development of the methodological basis of sociological knowledge in Russia was determined by the scientific community's efforts to improve the analysis of social processes in order to predict their dynamics. The fact that social relations and social life cannot be objectively considered by separate sciences due to their boundaries led to the popularity of the French and English positivism in Russia. There were prerequisites for the development of sociology already in the early 19th century but no grounds for a single methodology. Positivism implied a theoretical basis for the study of society and criteria for scientific objectivity. However, there were still challenges of the disciplinary boundaries and of the limitations of positivism in the analysis of social dynamics. To forecast social processes, sociology needed a critical revision of the available research methods and, after the spread of Comte's ideas in the second half of the 19th century in France, Germany and Russia, an integral methodological basis in the study of social phenomena [22]. All suggested ways of the sociological knowledge development had its own features in the identification of research object and theoretical-methodological foundations. Positive philosophy was considered a first attempt to formalize sociology as lacking tools for revealing social phenomena and to identify its general goal — to study society in all its diversity as a unique object, i.e., positivism was defined by some Russian scientists as a metatheory of sociology.

In Russia, in the late 19th century, the study of social phenomena was conducted mainly in the framework of history, theory of law, philosophy, philology and psychology. After the spread of positivism, the Russian scientific community admitted the need to open sociological courses, specialized educational institutions and research centers (departments of the Academy of Sciences). While developing sociology as a separate branch of scientific knowledge, the need to create its methodology as comprising the experience of studying social phenomena was admitted. The grounds for this methodology were formed by scientists of the Russian School of historians and sociologists, and later of the Sociological Society. Among the well-known founders of the Russian sociological thought, Lappo-Danilevsky's contribution to the development of sociology, history, philosophy, law, source studies and historiography was praised by his colleagues (Kareev, Sorokin, Takhtarev) and in the contemporary research literature [see, e.g.: 17].

Lappo-Danilevsky believed that Russia had all necessary conditions for the development of sociology — research experience, qualified specialists (Kareev, Grevs, Takhterev, Sorokin and many others), and social

environment (for instance, reorganization of social relations in the early 20th century). According to Lappo-Danilevsky, problems of sociology's institutionalization, especially in the academy, were determined by the weak methodological basis and absence of systematic courses on the history of sociological knowledge. When Lappo-Danilevsky became the head of the Kovalevsky Russian Sociological Society in 1916 and signed its first Charter, he made efforts to create the Institute of Social Sciences at the Academy of Sciences and courses on sociology. Lappo-Danilevsky focused on two tasks: to develop a sociological methodology based on positivism (Comte, Spencer), and to draw boundaries between sociology and other social sciences, especially history. Lappo-Danilevsky argued that sociology had its own object and methodology (social relations in their diversity and integrated approach) despite similar research tasks with psychology, history, and jurisprudence.

To solve these tasks, it was necessary to unite scientists from different fields in the academy and to institutionalize sociology in the relevant educational institutions. The problem was that independent research, such as Sorokin's sociological metatheory, could not be properly integrated into university courses. Thus, the team of scientists started informal meetings (described in the archival materials of the Saint Petersburg branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences [10. P. 16]) which led to the creation of the Sociological Society. It aimed at uniting scientists with different experience in sociological research within a single structure, and at creating a university environment for supporting the independent development of sociology, including the involvement of students. By comparing various areas of sociological knowledge (like subjective theory and evolutionism), the Sociological Society strived to expand the object of sociology and to combine disciplinary approaches. When Lappo-Danilevsky became the head the Russian Sociological Society, he already had sufficient experience in organizing research teams at the university (Section of Russian History in the Historical Society of the Saint Petersburg University, Archaeological Commission, Vitebsk Scientific Archival Commission, Russian Historical Society, Union of Russian Archives and Russian Sociological Society).

Based on the discussions and correspondence on the organization of the Social Institute, Lappo-Danilevsky made an important clarification: sociology needs achievements of other branches of science but on its own methodological basis. These branches included economic sciences,

“anthropology, anthropo-geography, psychology, ethnography, ethnology” [10. P. 29]. For instance, the work *Russian Industrial and Trading Companies in the First Half of the 18th Century* was considered historic but referred to the modern state and economic relations in Russia [8].

The study of Lappo-Danilevsky’s scientific activities has always been on the periphery due to the wide range of his interests: “History, historiography, source studies, diplomacy, archaeology, sociology, philosophy, history and methodology of science — this is not a complete list of his scientific activities, and in each he achieved such significant results that many of them still remain unsurpassed” [9. P. 6]. However, recent publications of archival materials on the methodological foundations of philosophy, history and sociological research make us consider Lappo-Danilevsky’s works in a new perspective.

There are two main sources of Lappo-Danilevsky’s ideas: French–English positivism and German neo-Kantianism (mainly of the Baden school). His interest in positivism was determined by the desire to ensure reliability and objectivity in the study of society by combining methods of history, jurisprudence and sociology. In the historical and philosophical literature, Lappo-Danilevsky’s ideas are considered in detail except for the specifics of sociological methods compared to history and philosophy. He explained the essence of positivism already in his early works, especially before writing his critical article *Basic principles of Comte’s sociological doctrine* which was praised not only by the Russian neo-Kantians (for instance, Novgorodtsev) but also by historians and sociologists (for instance, Kareev) [11. P. 17]. The influence of the Baden school was obvious in the idea of combining the study of the general historical–cultural context with the identification of the specifics of significant historical events in the field of both history and sociology.

In his fundamental work *Methodology of History* on the methods of historical reconstruction and source analysis, Lappo-Danilevsky explains the specifics of sociological knowledge. When describing the development of historical science, Lappo-Danilevsky explains the emergence of the “nomothetic understanding of social phenomena” in history, sociology and philosophy [6. P. 87]. Initially, the development of sociology was determined by the scientific character of social thought as inseparable from natural sciences. Later, the disintegration of scientific knowledge strengthened the methodological differences in the study of nature, social phenomena and historical processes. Lappo-Danilevsky conducted a kind of synthesis of the

ideas of Windelband and Ricker to combine the schemes of nomothetic and ideographic approaches (generalizing and idealizing sciences). He did not seek to choose a model for the study of social phenomena based on these approaches, but identified their disadvantages and advantages to develop a new methodology.

According to Lappo-Danilevsky, the specificity of social phenomena demanded, on the one hand, to describe individual and unique events (or idealized social relations), which brings together methods of history and sociology; however, on the other hand, regularities of social life demanded to abstract from individual social manifestations (subjective phenomena). The latter is revealed in the relationship between the Self and the Other, i.e., requires a historical–social reconstruction [see, e.g.: 14; 15]. This issue is relevant for sociology and philosophy, and Lappo-Danilevsky approached the definition of social life as a social reality in ontological categories.

Probably, a more detailed comparative analysis of the perception of the ‘Alien Self’ in the works of Vvedensky and Lappo-Danilevsky can prove the significance of Lappo-Danilevsky’s legacy for the history of Russian sociology and philosophy [18. P. 24]. In Lappo-Danilevsky’s and Vvedensky’s works, there are lines of similarity in definitions of the ‘Alien Self’, in particular, the principle of criticism. However, Vvedensky wants to explain “how each of us tests our belief that there is a spiritual life in other beings” in the field of critical philosophy, without “any metaphysical presuppositions” (including materialistic ones) [20. P. 3], while Lappo-Danilevsky adds an important clarification — the subject of objectification becomes expressible only within social action [11. P. 252]. For Vvedensky, the use of the sociological context as a method of proof was unacceptable since he proceeded from the logical analysis and a ‘pure’ source of knowledge (without empirical data), while Lappo-Danilevsky argued that in the study of personal life the analysis of social environment and historical context allows to obtain the most reliable answers. The published archival materials, especially the course *General Review (Summa) of the Basic Principles of Social Science*, show analogies with the early Russian neo-Kantian thought.

However, Lappo-Danilevsky did not develop sociology on the basis of the philosophical reflection on personal characteristics and perception of the world, others and oneself in relation to others. He distinguished epistemological and psychogenetic perspectives in the ‘recognition of other’s

animation' [11. P. 246]. The latter is based on Vvedensky's works without mentioning them; the former is based on the analysis of social experience as primary for human consciousness according to the principle of uniform human nature (multiplicity of human traits as a biological being and a subject of social relations). Critical philosophy remains in a different context of problematization, that is, there are different approaches in the study of the same phenomena in sociology and philosophy, but the results of their studies can complement each other.

The developed methodology of history and source studies allowed Lappo-Danilevsky to apply the neo-Kantian methodology to the field of social sciences: in the perspective of the historical development of social life and in the perspective of constructing social phenomena at this very moment of social life.

In the study of Lappo-Danilevsky's sociological ideas, the combination of explanatory and descriptive approaches (synthesis of nomothetic and ideographic methods) remains a debatable issue. One would assume that after the detailed study of positivism and the development of the original method of historical analysis (according to Windelband's ideas), Lappo-Danilevsky would approach Durkheim's sociologism. However, his emphasis on the heuristic and predictive functions of sociology points to the opposite tradition — 'understanding sociology'. Such ambiguity stems from the use of the provisions of the Baden neo-Kantianism in which criticism of positivism is combined with criticism of natural sciences' priority in the study of culture and society (in Windelband's interpretation) [21]. Thus, Lappo-Danilevsky distinguishes research approaches on the teleological basis — depending on the purpose of the study (which determines the choice of method) and not on the belonging to a certain scientific school (criteria of objectivity and interdisciplinarity).

When analyzing the use of the nomothetic method in his *Methodology of History*, Lappo-Danilevsky stressed the remarkable and poorly studied individualizing approach of Rickert. Certainly, the methods developed by the German philosophers had both common grounds and significant differences [2]. Windelband insisted on the specificity and uniqueness of the humanities in relation to natural sciences, which implied the critique of positivism and the separation of the 'sciences of the spirit' from the unified space of scientific knowledge. Rickert identified generalizing and individualizing methods, and strived for reliability of the study of cultural phenomena and historical events in their uniqueness. Rickert considered all

humanities ('sciences of the spirit') as developing methods for the study of cultural phenomena (primarily values) and historical events in their fundamental uniqueness. Already in his historiographical works, Lappo-Danilevsky explained the need to consider individual phenomena as inseparable from social life which is something general in relation to an individual fact: "Scientifically unified or grounded knowledge can seek to generalize the data of our experience and to individualize it". Individualization depends on the cognitive goal (teleological basis of cognitive activity) as combining the empirical study with the identification of individuality in its relation to other phenomena [6. P. 219], i.e., this is a criticism of the use of only nomothetic reconstruction, because every object of the scientific research is a unity of the general and the particular [6. P. 222]. In addition to the synthesis of positivism and neo-Kantianism, Lappo-Danilevsky tried to conceptualize theories of Windelband and Rickert as a basis of the teleological unity of social sciences as including not only sociology but a complex of different disciplines.

The main issue in the works and courses of Lappo-Danilevsky was the possibility of developing the epistemological principles of sociological knowledge in addition to its descriptive, explanatory and understanding functions. Certainly, Lappo-Danilevsky's works and activities are of primary importance for the historical–methodological reconstruction of the history of sociology in Russia, because he identified and partially achieved its two main goals — institutionalization of sociology in order to ensure a transfer of the accumulated experience and knowledge, and development of sociological methodology based on the combination of interdisciplinary approaches. Moreover, Lappo-Danilevsky studied other sociological issues such as the relationship of crime and economic development, social and psychophysiological features of socialization, social phenomena in the historical memory, reliability of social perception, and so on. Thus, Lappo-Danilevsky created the first interdisciplinary model of sociology as based on the principles of both social–humanitarian (history, law, source studies) and natural sciences (positivism, biology), and later this model was updated, while the interdisciplinarity of sociology retained its significance.

The provisions of Lappo-Danilevsky, especially the extrapolation of the methods of historical analysis in sociology, can still help us to study the most pressing problems of our time, such as factors and mechanisms of transformation of the historical memory. Since this issue is interdisciplinary (sociological, historical and philosophical), the model of sociological

knowledge developed by Lappo-Danilevsky can serve as a theoretical–methodological basis for a comprehensive study of the perception of history as a process of changes in social relations and as a phenomenon that unites the value foundations of social life. Historical memory “lacks clarity as an object of sociological research due to the complexity of its empirical verification” [13. P. 11], while being directly related to the mechanisms of social consciousness and social adaptation, if we define the value foundations of society as social patterns. The connection of the historical development of society with the reality of social phenomena in their diversity, and the relationship of the general (social life) and the particular (individual mental life) were the object of Lappo-Danilevsky’s research. If we extrapolate his ideas in the search for methodological foundations for the study of historical memory, we can create a complex research scheme combining the nomothetic and idiographic approaches based on the synthesis of theoretical reconstructions with empirical data [see, e.g.: 12]. Historical memory can be considered according to Lappo-Danilevsky’s model of historical phenomena: 1) history has a general context which is invariably greater than the totality of individual social phenomena of a particular period of cultural development; 2) the accuracy of historical phenomena’s definition can be achieved with the use of empirical data on the individual characteristics of the objects that constitute the phenomenon under study; 3) any historical phenomenon can represent a unique fact that requires epistemological means of reconstruction.

The extrapolation of historical methods in sociology and the historical–sociological reconstruction of the relationship between criticism of positivism and idealization of critical realism has always been the methodological question for history and sociology [see, e.g.: 3]. The grounds for such discussions and research can be found in the works of Lappo-Danilevsky, who developed an original model for the study of social phenomena by combining two different strategies (positivism and Neo-Kantianism) on the principles of the comprehensive study of both facts and contexts. In general, the significance of Lappo-Danilevsky’s sociological legacy is determined by his successful search for reliable grounds for the interdisciplinary research, the strategies and results of which are still relevant (for instance, his works *Organization of Direct Taxation in the Moscow State from the Discord Times to the Era of Transformation* [5] and *Collection and Code of Laws of the Russian Empire as Compiled in the Reign of the Empress Catherine II* [7]).

Another significant aspect of Lappo-Danilevsky's sociological legacy is his combination of positivism and Neo-Kantianism, which allowed to develop the methodology of history and to identify the reliability criteria for the comprehensive analysis of social phenomena as embedded in the diverse social relationships. Today the meaning of positivism and natural sciences for sociology and social sciences in general is revised and discussed again [1; 4; 16]: the prospects for updating the methodological foundations of sociology and for reconsidering critique of positivism have returned "the debate in the social–scientific polis" [19. P. 77]. Lappo-Danilevsky's works can be useful for the search of the most promising methodological ways in the development of the fundamental sociological research, because, when making critical remarks about the sociological models based on positivist, 'bio–sociological', descriptive and explanatory approaches, he always mentioned not only debatable issues but also strong positions for further development.

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