

Proseminar Franz Lukas: Aspekte der Verteilungsgerechtigkeit, 1996/97  
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Skript zu:

**Joel Kotkin: Tribes: How Race, Religion and Identity Determine Success in the New Global Economy, New York 1994**

Der Autor ist nicht sehr vertraut mit Kulturgeschichte, sehr wohl aber mit der Geschichte

### I.) Why is this book important?

- 1.) The subject/title: "Stämme. Wie Rasse, Religion und Identität den Erfolg in der Neuen globalen Wirtschaft bestimmen"  
These: "proxy discussion via american culture", d.h. über eine benachbarte Thematik wird über die Amerikanische Kultur geredet (USA eigentl. Thema)
- 2.) Includes a theory of history after the proclaimed end of history
- 3.) Ideology-critical (ideologiekritisch) and materialistic in the sense that theories are not self-sufficient or god-given, but means/tools to survive within a hostile environment
- 4.) German self-accusation and hypocrit-remorse remains a mere historicistic, self-centered and thus (?) perilous enterprise to the Jews themselves (Goldhagen)

### II.) Definition of tribes

1. "Global tribes are today's quintessential cosmopoliticians" (p. 4)

Definition of tribes by analogy:

- a) Able to assimilate, adopt foreign x without losing unity ("imitators par excellence", "acquisitive attitudes")
    - isolation and total assimilation are the two extremes which necessarily lead to the end of global tribes
  - b) Global network of trust beyond historically given confines/borders (diaspora vs. ethnic dispersion, "tradition of solidarity")
  - c) Passion for knowledge: learning not as matter of individuals but of groups
    - synergetic effect
    - This makes tribes as conservative (preservation of identity and unity) as innovative
- later:
- d) Belief in self-improvement and the ideology of capitalistic rationality (capital = savings = short-term sacrifices for long-term benefits: fits best to people who regard themselves as links of a long ethnic chain)

### 2.) Core properties of tribes

The subjects of history are not classes (Marxism), even less individuals (liberalistic tradition), but global tribes.

- a) Holistic (in contrast to individualistic):  
field of application: ontology (objects and relations) and the questions - "What are the units of scientific research, what shall we look for" and hence:
  - "What drives the historical process, who determines the destiny of singular lives"examples: classes, nation-states, tribes (hypothesis: also describes the historical sequence)
- b) Particularistic (in contrast to universalistic):  
field of application: ethics (matters of value and worth) and the questions
  - "How are we to derive values" and
  - "Who/what is the entity to which values are to be applied to"

Questions combining a) and b):

- "Are values formed by persons and carry over to society via communicative channels" or

- "Are values represented by a culture as a whole and no particular person can be viewed as 'holder and former' of values"

c) Culture: "...is an aggregate of divergent and contradictory pictures, and each picture is true" (Hidetoshi Kato quoted by Kotkin p. 10)

→ poses a monumental threat to science as a whole

Kotkin does NOT seem to reconcile contradictory pictures

But: it is not money but knowledge that makes Jews part of the American elite

→ Redefining knowledge: not specialized but sprawling across different fields, bringing the disrupted, disparate together,

Hollywood: from studios to agencies (who owns whom)

Questions of differentiation:

1. What distinguishes global from local tribes?

- Definition above
- tradition

2. What distinguishes global tribes from global networks or migrating populations?

It is an enduring sense of group identification

(excursion: dilemma for any diaspora tribe: the more cohesive within the host society the open to attack; therefore: lean assimilation and strong self-identity)

### III. THE JEWS

1.) "Wanderers Inc.":

- starting point: "historical fission"
- history: "predestined for the role of intermediaries"
- "handshake deal mentality"
- capitalism: best prepared for the advent of capitalism: already existing transnational networks and no ideological hindrances to access foreign markets
- not only greater mobility but essential opportunism
- "took refuge in the dynamic acquiescence in change"
- former niche-capitalists have now become GPs and "Skin a carcass on the street, rather than be dependant on other people" (old rabbinic watchword): self-employment rates! Rag-trade business (garment industry).
- making money to secure survival
- to the Afro-Americans?: 'sechel' rather than brute force
- family at the core of the civil society (in contrast to feudal gentry; Hegel) is taken earnest by Jews while European culture developed the Single
- moved on to less dirty profession, less risky
  - Indians
  - Garment (Eastern Europe)
  - Jewellery (Israel, Africa, India, Asia)
  - universally skilled professionals (USA): mutual benefit
- USA: gaining full citizenship

Self-irony vs. accusation:

"make a fool out of yourself and everybody underestimates your skills"

Immigrant business: "low cost of entry, low overhead, and not already dominated by some other group"

1930:

"schmatte business": "marketing movies like garment" while others discussed the artificial value of film

➔ control of film studios  
no public Jewish identity and "an abyss" between film Jews and banking/trading Jews  
unconscious of their Jewish solidarity

First rush of anti-Semitism:  
de-Semitization of movies  
Phantasy formation: striking the American soul  
powerfull but unloved: still right today?

### 3.) The Limits of Zion

"Jewry has no formal boundaries; its informal boundaries are subject to constant movement, change and debate"

Is this a ideological question or a Jewish truism

- Diaspora remains attractive; but Israel is the security: a tacit treaty of of mutual benefit beween diasporas and Israelis (is it in danger after the new orthodox Israli nationalism?)

Threat: emigration from Israel seeking better opportunities elsewhere (not becomming "sons of the land" as Zionist intended)

Misproportion immigartion/emigration to/from USA/Israel: more from Israel to zhe USA than v.v.

yet the USA is only a pit stop for Israeli Jews (gas station metaphor)

Jewry is only successful as a minority ("in Israel is to much yeast")

existence of Israel destroyed the Jewish personality: Is the Jewish people giving way to the Israeli nation?

Do they fail now where they were successful in diaspora and v.v.?

Dependence of the Israeli state on diaspora, the more ultra-orthodox the Israeli politics becomes (see p. 66)

Israel Diaspora

"re-created Jew" "Old Jew"

farming trading and banking

kibbutz and socialist system metropolises

mamlachtiut (statism) dynamism

paternalistic, bureaucratic state weak, laissez-faire state

Zionims (whether left or right) pragmatism

Does Kpkin try to pitch Israel's economic failure against the dependence on Amercian diaspora Jews?

Kotkin's book, an intra-Jewish dispute?

Terms:

galut = exile

schmatte = rag, detriment-

aliya = emmigration to Israel

mamlachtiut = statism

### IV.) What are its shortcomings?

1.) The concept of tribes remains unclear. It is merely given a list of five global tribes with three properties (principles). No clear criteria of selection are mentioned but:

- "vocation of uniqueness" (Einmaligkeit)

- "group identification" (Identifikation)

2.) "Wertaussagen vs. Tatsachenaussagen": No superiority, but

Not much to say about this flipside of the racial coin:

- "unchecked --> war" but who should check tribes if they are the only remaining strongholds of gobal politics?

- 3.) Understandable from a Jewish point of view (as the “quintessential tribe”)
- 4.) Tribalism is a theory of and for winners: the least favored, the weak do not fit into the grand picture
- 5.) The relation between nation-state and tribes remains inconsistent