

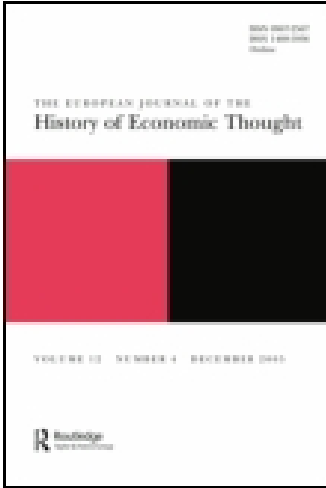
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Ivan Kinkel's (1883–1945) theory of economic development

Nikolay Nenov Nenovsky

1. Introduction

The totalitarian and authoritarian regimes that came to power in the 1920s and 1930s led to the emigration of large groups of scholars, including economists. This movement, which manifested itself both physically and intellectually as a transfer and emergence of new knowledge, has been subject to numerous analyses mostly in relation to German-speaking economists and social scientists. The other large emigrant wave, that of the Russian-speaking economists who left Russia after the war, has also been studied, although to a much lesser extent and not as systematically. The lack of research is most obvious with regards to Russian economists from the Balkan countries, Bulgaria and Serbia mainly, where these economists were prominent and seen as major pillars of the economic and social sciences in the period between the two World Wars.¹

In the case of Bulgaria, mentioning just four of them would be sufficient to reveal the importance of Russian economists in the formation of economic science and theory in the country. The economists I have in mind are Simeon Demostenov (1886–1966), Ivan Kinkel (1883–1945), Naum Dolinsky (1890–1968) and Oskar Anderson (1887–1960).²

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1 On Russian intellectual émigrés to Bulgaria in general, see (National Library 2006).

2 The most internationally renowned among them is, of course, Oskar Anderson, one of the founders of statistical and business cycle analyses, who contributed greatly to the formation of a school of Bulgarian scholars and was in touch with the most prominent economists of his time. He was also mentioned in Schumpeter's *History of Economic Analysis* and ended his career in Germany.

Among these, I find Simeon Demostenov and Ivan Kinkel especially interesting as they epitomise the two main approaches to making economic science. These approaches include the construction of a pure economic theory in isolation from other social spheres (Demostenov) and an economic methodology encompassing the syncretic unity with the sociological, psychological, historical and biological fields of analysis (Kinkel).³ Despite the fundamental, theoretical and methodological differences between these two leading Bulgarian (Russian) economists, Demostenov and Kinkel, they both stand out as vivid expressions of the encyclopaedic education, sophistication, and style of writing and discourse typical of the pleiad of Russian economists and social scientists of that period.⁴

Speaking of Kinkel, it is my view that he made a series of contributions to economic theory and to the discussion of economic development and social dynamics in general. If we look more closely at Kinkel in particular, I think his theory of economic development set out in his work “*An Attempt at Constructing a New Theory of Economic Development of Cultural Mankind*” (completed in 1918 and published after minor revisions in 1921) deserves our special attention for at least three reasons.

First, this theory allows us to present an original effort by a Bulgarian (Russian) economist and sociologist, which offers insights into the emergence of economic theory in the peripheral Balkan countries and demonstrates the diffusion of economic ideas and knowledge. Kinkel's theory can be understood within Schmoller's project for systematic analysis of economic development, its causes, forms, and dynamics, and through synthesis of theoretical and historical knowledge.⁵ The *Schmoller-programm*, of course, has its own variety of developments by other authors, most of which are taken into account by Kinkel when building his theory.

3 As for Simeon Demostenov, he, in my view, made significant contributions to pure theory by further developing a set of constructs for the Austrian analysis and for the theory and history of money.

4 A few of the most distinctive names to mention here are Sergey Bulgakov, Peter Struve, Mihail Tugan-Baranovsky, Joseph Kulisher, Nikolay Berdiyaev, Semyon Frank, Alexander Bogdanov, etc. Simeon Demostenov and Ivan Kinkel had both Russian (Peter Struve was their mentor) as well as Western education: Demostenov studied in Germany and Austria (he associated with Carl Menger), and Kinkel – in Switzerland and Germany. Curiously, Demostenov is buried in London (Hendon Cemetery) next to Semyon Frank.

5 See Ebner (2000), Peukert (2001), Shionoya (2001), and obviously Schmoller (1905/1906 [1900]).

Second, Kinkel's theory allows us to understand the present, where the economic and social history development is marked by a series of deep global social and economic changes. During periods of intense social and economic turbulence and instability, it is necessary to revamp economic theory with the goal of identifying the long-term patterns of social and economic development as well as its phases and dynamic forces. All this has naturally stirred up the interest of economists in interdisciplinarity and has compelled them to look back at historical development. This could also explain the surge in interest in global economic history and political economy in recent years. It follows that Kinkel's theory, which he created in equally critical times, offers interesting ideas that could inspire new theoretical interpretations of our own economic times.

Third, Kinkel's theory of economic development, which will be discussed further below, provides some interesting food for thought in the context of the post-communist period as well. What I mean here is the need to generalise and rationalise the period of post-communist development over the past two decades – a process that has been in the background for a long time. Those who witnessed the last years of communism and the early years of democracy remember well the strong interest (although mainly from Marxist perspective) in rationalising the overall long-term development and the individual periods in these countries. This kind of analysis disappeared from the field of research as the focus shifted rapidly to studying technical, micro-economic and micro-social problems.⁶

The article is organised as follows. In the beginning I present some facts about Kinkel's life; then I proceed to examine the main tenets of his theory of economic development, published in 1921, which could be considered as his primary work. The last part is dedicated to his other theoretical achievements and the specific features of his interdisciplinary and pluralistic scientific approach. The concluding remarks discuss possible ways of using Kinkel's conceptual legacy in explaining the contemporary state of the world.

6 This happened for various reasons: the perception of the ongoing processes as the "end of history", the end of the big changes, a smooth and crisis-free development in a market economy, a democracy within an EU setting, etc. To paraphrase Bertram Schefold, all global studies and reflections disappeared from the post-communist economic analysis like the cat in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* – "it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone" (Schefold 1999).

2. A brief account of Ivan Kinkel's life and work

Ivan Germanovich Kinkel, whom I will refer to as a Bulgarian economist, although Russian by origin and education (born in Bryansk on 18 January 1883 and migrated to Bulgaria in late 1917⁷), has left a lasting trail in a number of fields of scientific knowledge. His versatile activities ranged from professorship in economic history, economics and history of economic thought at the University of Sofia (1921–1945) and the Free University of Sofia (1920–1945), through founder and first chairman of the Bulgarian Sociological Society (1931–1939) to founder of psychoanalysis in the country. His skilfulness could also be explained by his education: apart from legal and economic sciences in Russia (Emperor's College in Tsarskoe Selo) he also studied medicine in Berlin (1903–1905), graduated with a major in social philosophy from the University of Leipzig (1906–1908)⁸ and specialised in psychoanalysis in Zurich (1908–1911).

Kinkel's works extend to nearly all major social areas, economics, economic history, history of economic sciences, sociology, social psychology, law, philosophy, psychoanalysis, etc. All these studies are not at all disorganised; quite on the contrary, they follow a major goal, which is to find out and present his views on the mechanisms, driving forces and

7 According to the University of Sofia Almanac, he came to Bulgaria in early 1917 before the October Revolution, a fact that coincides with the information given by Kiril Grigorov who wrote that Kinkel came to Bulgaria for health reasons after he had been a member of the Eser party (Grigorov 1960, p. 128). Meanwhile, I found some new facts of Kinkel's life in the archival record of his wife – the sociologist Mara Kinkel (1885–1960). This record (National Archive, 620/1/22) contains Kinkel's biography in Russian. Here it becomes clear that Kinkel lost his right hand in the First Russian Revolution of 1905. He was personally invited by Lenin at the beginning of October 1917 to chair the Supreme Economic Council; however, this nomination failed because of his and his wife's ill health. Kinkel and his wife then travelled to Bulgaria using a note written personally by Lenin to cross the Russian frontier. Unfortunately, Kinkel himself had to destroy the note during their transit through Ukraine, which was at that time in the hands of the counter-revolutionary Nestor Makhno. In his wife's recollections, Kinkel said he was losing the autograph of "the most influential man of our century, the maker of a new epoch" (620/1/22/40). According to other sources, he came to Bulgaria as a member of Wrangel's army. See recent paper on Kinkel as an economic historian by Penchev (2012).

8 Mara Kinkel's archive record also contains Ivan Kinkel's diploma of his doctoral thesis on Aristotle's theology (*Summa cum Laude*) dated 8 July 1911 (MCMXI) and issued by the University of Leipzig with Ernest Hafter as his tutor and awarded by rector Arnold Meyer. Most likely, the diploma travelled with Kinkel from Germany to Russia and then to Bulgaria with his name written in Latin as *Ioanni Kinkel* (when translated in Western languages, Kinkel's first name often appears as Johann, Johannes, Jean and even Jan).

forms of social and economic development.⁹ Kinkel was convinced that only a diversity of views looking in one direction could produce the necessary scientific result. This shaped his interdisciplinary approach, which he himself would often refer to as an “eclectic method” of making a theory.

Kinkel’s creative legacy could be best understood if one takes as a starting point his book on economic development and cultural cycles published in the Annual of the University of Sofia Law Department in 1921 (Kinkel 1921). This book was a kind of a life project that he further developed in various directions later on leading to new fundamental research studies.

3. Theory of economic development and economic cycles

In 1921, Ivan Kinkel published his fundamental study on economic development (312 pages), its cyclic character and dynamic forces. This work, in my view, is marked not only by sophistication and knowledge of world literature, but also by originality and creativity. In Kiril Grigorov’s view (a leading specialist in the history of economic thought from the communist period), this work of Kinkel’s theory was known to the international scientific community (Grigorov 1960, p. 51). I have never found evidence in that regard; however, this does not preclude the possibility that his book was indeed known given the integrated nature of the scientific community in the interwar period and Kinkel’s international contacts.

Before we look into the main analytical components of this theory, it would be appropriate to summarise it. This has been done already by the author himself at the end of his book:

THESIS

The economic development of cultural mankind has passed through three major cycles. The first cycle was the economic culture of the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Chinese and Peruvians characterized by common, distinct features for all these peoples. The second cycle was the culture of the peoples of Greece and Rome – once again having specific features of its own. The third cycle was the culture of the West and East European peoples (Slavs), which from the XIX century onward became a world culture. In each of these cycles national economies evolved from primitive forms to most complex ones which always passed through four periods of

9 Kinkel’s position at the State Higher Education School of Finance and Administrative Sciences in Sofia was “part-time lecturer in history of economic development” (Kinkel 1943).

economic development: 1) family (corporate-collectivist and communist form; 2) petty-individual; 3) capitalist (in three different forms – types); 4) state-collectivist (state-collectivist-oriented trends, respectively).

Between the three world economic cycles exists a continuity of culture. The Greek-Roman culture repeated from the beginning the forms typical of the Egyptian-Babylonian culture to evolve thereafter along its own specific paths. The West-European culture too repeated from the beginning the forms of the first cycle, followed in the track and evolved the forms of the Greek-Roman culture, to come to its own unique new ways. The biogenetic law of development (phylogenesis – ontogenesis) is manifested in this continuity of the culture between the three cycles.

The dynamic forces of the economic progress of humankind have always been the growth of productive forces, of consumption forces and the cultural needs of society. The economic activity of mankind intensified under the influence of these factors with each of the three economic and cultural cycles evolving its economic-social organization in a direction to the above four successive forms, each next of which being more intensive and better suited than the preceding one in terms of production, consumption and common cultural values.

A comparison between the three world economic cycles indicates a specific economic progress from cycle to cycle as well. Such a comparison reveals the major trajectories of the overall economic progress of humanity. This is a slow and gradual evolution in the division, specialization and differentiation of labour alongside the progress of the organizational concentration from cycle to cycle. This development and advance would have as its ultimate state of perfection the creation of a world economic and social organization encompassing all productive forces of humanity. (Kinkel 1921, p. 305)

Thus, according to Kinkel himself, the main task, which the new theory has to solve, is to find out “what the economic progress and development of humankind is all about” (Kinkel 1921, p. 285).

The periodisation of economic and social history is examined on two analytical levels. The first, or fundamental level, is the level of the three economic eras, the three cultural cycles or the three “rungs of mankind’s economic culture”. It determines the long-term and civilisation dynamics of the economy. The second and more specific level is the level of economic forms, which, as already mentioned above quoting the author himself, are four. The four economic forms are reproduced within every era or cultural cycle. It is extremely important to take into account the fact that economic forms reproduce themselves and develop, while never really repeating themselves, so that new and unknown patterns appear with each new cycle. Any form of determinism in Kinkel’s model is instantly denied making it very much consistent with contemporary theories of chaotic, nonlinear, complex and evolutionary forms of the development of nature

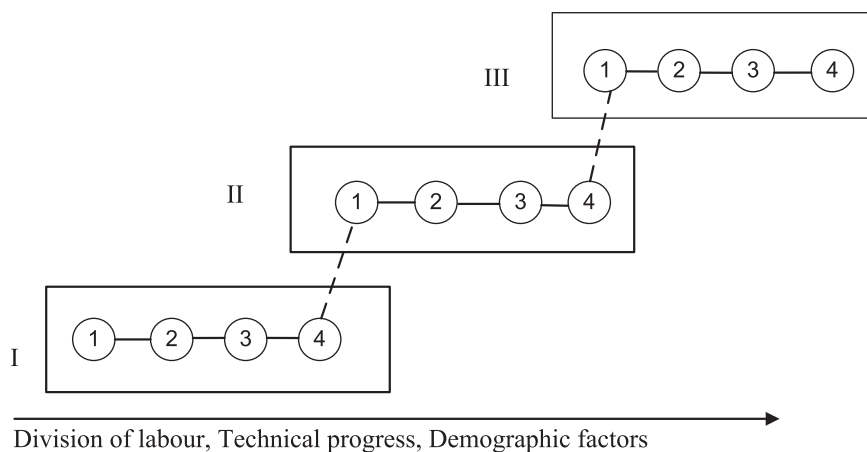


Figure 1 Periodisation of economic development according to Ivan Kinkel

and society. The model of economic development is outlined in the diagram of [Figure 1](#).

In the figure, Roman numerals stand for the following eras:

- (I) – Babylonian, Egyptian, Peruvian, ancient Chinese eras (5000 to 700–550 B.C. – the Egyptian–Babylonian era; until sixteenth century – the Peruvian; and from 4000 B.C. to ninth century – the ancient Chinese era)
- (II) – Greek–Roman era (from 1800 B.C. to fifth century)
- (III) – West and East European (Slavic) era, partly Arab–Muslim era

The Arabic numerals stand for the following forms:

- (1) – Family, corporate-collectivist and communist economic form
- (2) – Petty individual economic form
- (3) – Capitalist form (agrarian, commercial and industrial capitalism)
- (4) – State-collectivist economic form

According to Kinkel, the progress of economic or cultural periods is determined by the division of labour, as well as by the evolution of economic organisational forms within each period. A careful reading of the book reveals that behind these two factors, which the author repeatedly brings up, there are two other more fundamental reasons, which are technological developments and population dynamics. The role of technology

and of the quantitative and qualitative structure of population¹⁰ is often pointed out as instrumental in determining the character of a cultural period. Cycle I, for instance, is dominated by mining, Cycle II – by processing industry and agriculture, and Cycle III, also as a result of the differentiation of labour – by industry, transport, communication, etc.¹¹

As for the moving forces inside each cultural period, that is, during the transition between the four economic organisational forms (from 1 to 2, to 3, to 4), three basic drivers emerge as dominant, namely the productive forces, the consumption forces and the cultural and social needs (Kinkel 1921, pp. 39, 47–49, 305). In one of his numerous efforts to expand and enrich this outlook of his, Kinkel wrote:

Some of these factors-forces are of major significance and of fundamental and permanent nature: these are the development of society's productive forces and the development of its consumption forces, meaning the personal and social needs of people and the cultural needs of the whole society (collective needs). (Kinkel 1921, p. 295)

When a given economic form comes into conflict with the development of these two factors, that is “becomes too narrow for them” (to use Marx's words), then a social change occurs, most often in the form of a social revolution. The above can be expressed concisely as the following functional relationship and is illustrated for better clarity in [Figure 2](#):

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Economic cultural era} &= f(\text{division of labour, economic form}) \\ &\equiv f(\text{technology, population}) \\ \text{Economic form} &= f(\text{productive forces, consumption forces, cultural} \\ &\quad \text{needs}) \\ &\equiv f(\text{labour intensification, productivity and organisation of labour}) \end{aligned}$$

Looking further into the dynamics of *the four economic forms* (1, 2, 3 and 4), in particular into the debatable issue of the recurrence of these forms in the three cultural economic eras, the presence of capitalism and state-planned economy in the Egyptian–Babylonian and the ancient (Greek–Roman) periods appears to be particularly interesting.

10 Kinkel always considered the role of demographic factors as fundamental and one that explains the processes between the wars. It is, therefore, not accidental that he thought highly of Thomas Malthus, to whom he dedicated a special study (Kinkel 1941).

11 According to Kinkel, at the time when he was writing the book, the first signs of a new cultural period IV were making themselves evident. The author called this cycle “cycle of world culture”; today we would call it “globalisation”. This cycle was not analysed in detail.

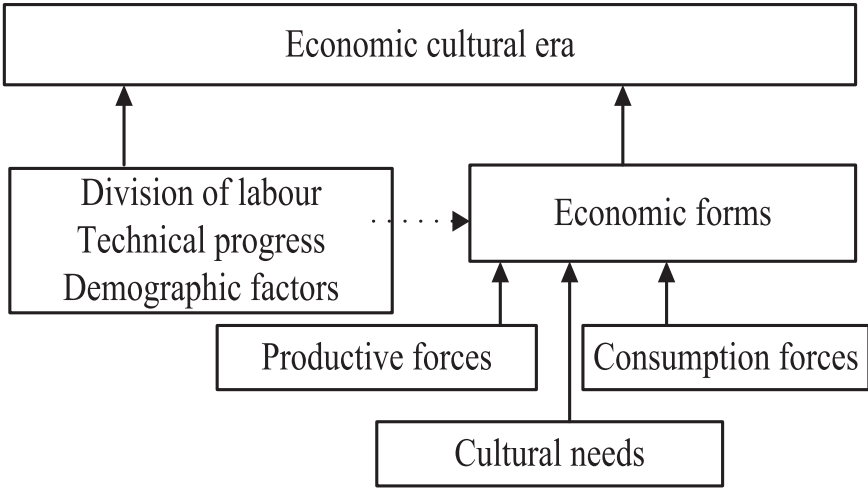


Figure 2 Factors of economic development in Kinkel's model

The outlook upholding the existence of capitalist relations in the ancient world is not new and was well known to Kinkel from the works of Eduard Meyer, Theodor Mommsen, Max Weber, Joseph Kulisher and others.¹² This view of capitalism is in contradiction with the interpretation of Karl Marx's economic history, where capitalism is an independent phase that started in the eighteenth century and is placed on the same analytical level as the antique (slaveholding) period, and on the level of the feudal period of development. In his course on the history of economic thought, when presenting Marx's and Engels's system of political economy, Kinkel gave a critical analysis of Karl Marx's formational approach (Kinkel 1939a, pp. 58–83). It is true that in Marx we find different models of formational development (the so-called five-component or three-component models), and that Marx examined in detail the simple commodity production as also existing in the pre-capitalist forms of economy. However, Kinkel's approach theoretically "undervalues" to a great extent the role of capitalism by placing it on a lower analytical level, that is not within the frame of civilisation eras, but as some kind of economic form, which comes and goes in the alternation of the four economic forms.

12 Max Weber, for instance, analysed the difference between ancient and modern capitalism. Weber's views are subject to debate, see (Spahn 2004), (Schefold 2011).

Kinkel defines *capitalism* (economic form 3) as the existence of large income in kind or in money (not necessarily only money as Marx has it); a large-scale (*en grand*¹³) economy, that is a wide market, an amalgamation of a large number of human work force, cooperation and above all exploitation of free and unfree human labour (Kinkel 1921, pp. 16–21, 122, 231, 289–92). Capitalism existed in all three cultural periods; however, it took different forms, which, in turn, became ever more complex as a result of the development and division of labour, the appearance of new branches of the economy, etc. Capitalism, as observed for instance in Egypt, could be agrarian on a professional principle and a barter economy (3300–2000 B.C.), or agrarian as in the Chinese Emperor period (2205–1766 B.C.), or agrarian and commercial based on slave and wage labour in Greece (from fifth century B.C. to the end of Alexander of Macedonia's empire) and in Rome (from fifth century B.C. to the Emperor period); privilege-based agrarian capitalism under feudalism, that is, feudal capitalism until thirteenth century) to come to the agrarian–commercial–industrial capitalism, to a capitalism based on market speculation in Western Europe (sixteenth to eighteenth century) and Eastern Europe (a century later). Each next form of capitalism not only integrated the basic features of the preceding one, but also it offered new and more sophisticated economic elements.

The fourth form of economy, or the *state-planned* one (Figure 1) which inevitably comes after the capitalist economy in each of the three civilisation eras, follows the same rules of integrating the preceding elements and an accelerated and more complex development. For instance, in Egypt, Greece and Rome, just as later on during the West and East European economic period, this fourth phase indicates a number of astonishing similarities with the preceding forms, such as centralised planning, administrative and statistical control, nationalisation of labour, predominance of politics over economy, etc.

Writing his book in the first years after the war (and most likely starting even earlier while still in Russia), Kinkel was aware of the obvious trend of transition of his contemporary western capitalism to this fourth, state-collectivist form of economy. He identifies such features involving planning and centralisation, although not fully revealed, in the Bolshevik rule during the War communism. According to Kinkel, a number of economic phenomena from the Bolshevik economy repeat the most primary forms of state economy from the previous cultural periods (even as far back as the Egyptian period) such as the existence of state shops and food

13 This term was actually not coined by Kinkel; it was popular in that period, for instance, in Gustav von Schmoller's writings (1905, 1906 [1900]).

rationing, the destruction of money, the existence of state peasants, state employees and producers, etc. This system is characterised by exploitation too, which however, is mostly power based and hinged on political instruments. Within this fourth form, the author sees the focus shifting from nationalisation to socialisation (where enterprises are placed in favour of the entire society while also preserving the class privileges).

Undoubtedly, the growing role of the state after each war is obvious, as a great number of prominent economists have noted. Kinkel successfully foresaw the state-organised regimes emerging later in Europe and around the world (the first attempt was that of Mussolini in 1922). Later on, Kinkel made an extensive analysis of the above fourth form in the West European period in his book entitled *Economic System and Social Structure of Contemporary European Society* (1930), where he criticised most of the orthodox Marxist explanations of the concentration of capital, ownership, class polarisation, etc. This theme was again studied by Kinkel somewhat later in a number of articles in the *Archive of Economic and Social Policy*, where he examined the evolution to a planned economy (Kinkel was convinced that a planned economy is not possible on a capitalist basis) (Kinkel 1933c), the reasons and mechanisms of autarchy (in his view it is neither impossible nor efficient on a national basis) (Kinkel 1937a, 1937b), the shortcomings of Werner Sombart's socialist model of national and closed economy (Kinkel [Mladenov] 1935), the nature and forms of non-party power, the crisis of party parliamentarism, analysis of fascism (Kinkel 1933a, 1933b, 1934), the economic crisis as a way to a new type of social structure (Kinkel [Fridyung] 1934), etc.

It was already noted that the dynamics of economic forms is determined by the development of productive and consumptive forces, and by the level of society's cultural needs. They "drive the peoples to advance to a more complex and more productive economy – social forms that would satisfy these forces and needs" (Kinkel 1921, p. 288). By mobilising an extremely rich historical material, Kinkel shows the endogeneity of transitions between the various phases, illustrating his theses with numerous examples.

Similarly to the connection between the economic forms, there is a connection and continuity between the three cultural eras. Each new era carries the imprint of the preceding one, taking from it a number of key elements (thus, for instance, the Egyptian–Babylonian culture left its mark on the Greek–Roman culture in all of its forms). This makes it possible for every new culture, instead of starting from scratch, to step on what has been already achieved, which in turn smoothes the development at the beginning and gives better prospects for innovation of new economic practices at a later stage. Thus, for instance, Kinkel also gives as an example the

development of the theory of economy and society, tracing in time the Egyptian–Babylonian collectivist ideas, which were further developed in Plato's social ideology, and from there transferred to and transformed further during the Mediaeval period (Thomas More, Tomasso Campanella), through the Industrial Revolution period (Saint-Simon, Fourier, etc.), to eventually come to Marx, Engels and even the Bolsheviks Kinkel 1921, pp. 294–5.¹⁴

With time, each new culture, having repeated past forms, heads forward to something unfamiliar until then. Kinkel brings as an example the western civilisation, which, in his view, started on new tracks only in the nineteenth century (Kinkel 1921, pp. 297–8) having followed in the track of the Egyptian–Babylonian culture until the seventeenth century (the absolute monarchies are akin to the Egyptian Pharaohs, the Babylonian kings and the emperors of ancient China), and in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries in the forms familiar from the Greek–Roman period (the English lords and German barons for instance fit perfectly into the mechanisms of the Roman agrarian and colonial system). The new movement was the result of the appearance of technical means and a large-scale process of division, differentiation and specialisation of labour (Kinkel 1921, pp. 298–9).

The above reasoning and his knowledge in the field of evolutionary biology and sociology (as we shall see in the next section), allowed Kinkel to formulate the “law of social development” as a manifestation of a “universal biogenetic law of development”. Kinkel believed that:

Natural sciences thereby established the fact that a parallelism exists between the development of a higher species and the development of an entire kind of lower species, or [...]: the higher species repeat in their evolution the forms and stages of evolution of lower kinds and species. [...]. Sociology, in turn, has fairly recently started to observe that the same parallelism exists between the spiritual evolution and art in primitive peoples with that of cultural man in childhood, his first and sentient (conscious) period. [...]. These statements mark the beginning of understanding that the biogenetic law of development is valid in the social area, and here its formula states that peoples and mankind in general repeat in their spiritual and social development the evolution of a single individual, which he is surely undergoing right now. (Kinkel 1921, p. 295)

This law was, of course, formulated in its purest form by biologist Ernst Haeckel, who although much criticised and questioned, in my view (and within my knowledge) sounds up to date and largely fits into the contemporary theory of evolutionary biology, fractal geometry, etc.

14 In some of the passages, Kinkel's thoughts are surprisingly reminiscent of Karl Popper's ideas in his book about the open society and its enemies.

Later on, in his fundamental work on methodology of sociology (1931), the author formulated the manifestation of this universal law in relation to spiritual evolution in the following way:

Its fundamental tenet, when applied to social psychology, states that the spiritual development of a higher species' individual repeats the stages of that development of the entire human species, that is, the development of all previous generations in general lines. (Kinkel 1931, p. 295)

Likewise, Kinkel maintained and demonstrated with facts that each new economic practice or activity (such as transport, finances, banking, communications), which emerged later in the process of historic development, passes individually through the same phases of development as the preceding social activities, and most importantly – at accelerated pace. This part of the author's theoretical model sounds up to date in the light of the latest achievements in the theory of sophisticated and complex systems, bearing an astonishing resemblance to the ideas of fractality of social and economic life. Fractality exists when similar irregular processes and forms are reproduced as mirror images on different system levels and of different scale within the same system (Benoit Mandelbrot).

On the whole, Kinkel is a vehement proponent of the continuity of historic development, of the evolutionary combination of old and new, unknown. It would also be worthy of note that the author himself remarks about the limitations of his predictions when speaking of the future:

All this is actually just one further development of those elementary factors of the economic structure and life, which were already created during the Greek-Roman culture, and it seems that the possible future forms of state collectivism will likely reiterate those developed during the Hellenistic-Emperor period in Greece and Rome, which would further evolve to a scale that is still inconceivable to us, perhaps at the global level as well. (Kinkel 1921, p. 295)

Indeed, it is evident that Kinkel applied a special kind of dialectics (not explicitly elaborated), combining elements of Hegel's philosophical system and philosophy of history with elements of Marx's historical materialism. Moreover, this type of dialectics is considerably more flexible and non-mechanical due to its use of elements from other non-dialectical methods and a vast knowledge from a range of areas (as we shall see further below). The recurrence and cyclical nature of the economic forms in Kinkel's theory are in my view only a secondary aspect of civilisation development, represented by the three eras. Incidentally, these eras do not reproduce themselves and no cyclicity between them exists; they follow a single direction as they are driven by technical progress. Nowhere does the author claim that new civilisation economic eras are unlikely to emerge.

Even where he mentions the existence of a new fourth wave, namely the global one, and where at first sight we might think he has in mind some higher and ultimate economic phase, he is extremely careful in his predictions. Thus, a very interesting scheme of development is achieved by combining linearity and irreversibility of evolution in terms of eras driven by technical progress and population dynamics, on the one hand, with the cyclicity of economic forms within each era, which reproduce themselves while never really repeating the old forms.

The questions that immediately and logically come to one's mind are as follows: What is the place of Kinkel's theory among the other theories on economic development? What does it borrow from them? And what is the new that it has to offer? Why is his theory not well known and has it been neglected in the history of economic thought?

Undoubtedly, to me at least, Kinkel was familiar with almost everything written before him (his book was largely completed before World War I, with the exception of a few minor notes on Slavic and Balkans history that were added later). When arguing the need of his model and pointing out the limitations of the other theories, Kinkel himself mentions the new things he intends to propose. He analyses systematically and extensively the strengths and limitations of the models of Friedrich List, Bruno Hildebrand, Karl Rodbertus, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, some other Marxists (such as Karl Kautsky), Karl Bücher, Gustav Schmoller, Werner Sombart, Waldemar Mitscherlich and others (Kinkel 1921, pp. 2–36, in fact the first two chapters).¹⁵ While not denying their achievements, Kinkel argues that the shortcomings in their theories are due, first and foremost, to the “triviality or the arbitrary character of the initial viewpoints or the basic criteria they employ, which are inadequate to capture the nature and essence of either the entire economic evolution or of an individual economic era or period” (Kinkel 1921, p. 37). And secondly, Kinkel emphasises limitations of factological, historiographical and theoretical nature that existed in relation to a number of historical eras (such as the Ancient period etc.

¹⁵ I am grateful to an anonymous referee for pointing out that the only major scholar of economic development absent from the list is Schumpeter and his book from 1911. Kinkel finished his book before World War I, and the only “big” theory emerging after the war was by Waldemar Mitscherlich (1920). I suppose that Kinkel was aware of Schumpeter's book, because he mentioned him (albeit only once), alongside with other economists having an approach to capital as social relation (Kinkel 1921, p. 18). Nevertheless, I guess that Kinkel considered Schumpeter and Weber more preoccupied with Modern Capitalism and its evolution, and Weber, with comparative studies, while Kinkel's theory has far-reaching objectives (economic development of the whole human civilization), and its spirit is closer to the classical German historical school.

or at the turn of the century when revolutionary breakthroughs occurred in the economy and life style of the Balkan countries, studied by Nicolae Iorga (Iorga 1925)). The new information and the new knowledge were not available to the above authors and Kinkel believed that it was necessary that these be reflected in the construction of the theory.

Thus, for instance, Kinkel criticised a group of the above theories (Karl Rodbertus's theory among them) for misinterpreting the economy of ancient times as being closed, domestic and natural. Rodbertus was disproved by Kinkel not only by means of extensively using empirical evidence from the works of Weber, Meyer and Mommsen,¹⁶ but also by employing his good knowledge of the ancient authors (Kinkel wrote a study on Aristotle in German in 1911, see Kinkel 1911).¹⁷ In a similar vein were the critiques levelled at Karl Marx for separating the feudal system from the capitalist one, and at Karl Kautsky for dating capitalism to the eighteenth century. He also questioned the Marxist law of the dynamics of development as a contradiction between economic base and political and legal and ideological superstructure, as well as within the base between productive forces and productive relations. This critique is clearly evident from the definition of consumers and cultural forces along the same lines as productive forces – a theme, which was systemically expanded in his consequent works, especially those on sociology. Kinkel made an active use of the concept of productive forces, which on the face of it appears to have been borrowed from Marx. But actually it was a category actively used by German economists whose definition could be found as early as in the works of Friedrich List.

The representatives of the German historical school were criticised for their choice of purely technical or organisational criteria for periodisation, such as Karl Bücher's "road of development from production to consumption", etc. A special attention was given to Werner Sombart's system's scheme (the book "Modern Capitalism", 1902 that appeared in a number of his articles at the close of 1890s), which was admired by Kinkel and exhibited similarities with Kinkel's ideas. Sombart distinguished between four economic orders, or systems, each of which consisting of three steps: individual, transitional and social, respectively, but this theory of his was rejected because of the "theoretical mess" (Kinkel 1921, pp. 29–32). Later on, Kinkel criticised Sombart on another occasion for his model of closed

16 Incidentally, the last two authors were professors at the Universities of Leipzig, Berlin and Zurich, where Kinkel himself studied or specialised (Meyer (1855–1930); Mommsen (1817–1903) and Karl Bücher (1847–1930)).

17 A copy of this issue with the author's signature could be found in Karl Bücher's personal library (kept at the University of Kyoto, Bücher, 1970, 8).

national “Mediaeval-oriented pseudo-national socialist economy” (in Sombart’s book *German Socialism* Kinkel [Mladenov] 1935).

Precisely in the spirit of *Schmollerprogramm*, in his two-tier model of development (economic cultural era and economic form), Kinkel strived to combine in one system exogenous factors (technical progress and demography above all), manifesting themselves at the economic era level, with endogenous factors of development such as productive forces and consumption forces and cultural needs (effective at the level of economic forms). In other words, Kinkel attempted to combine the natural and technological factors with the public and social ones. Whereas the former carry definite linearity, single direction and uniqueness of development (from I to II, then to III), the latter possess cyclicity and are dialectically reproduced (e.g. I(4) reproduces elements from I(1) and precedes II(1)). This way, the dialectics at the level of economic forms is united with the linearity of development on a deeper and more fundamental level.

It is worth mentioning that the theories of economic periodisation were taught in the lectures on political economy of that time in Bulgaria and were included in the majority of Bulgarian textbooks, such as those by Georgy Danailov and Dimitar Mishaikov (1934 [1906], pp. 36–61). Georgy Danailov, the leading academic mind of that period, was critical of Kinkel’s theory of economic development, along with the theories of the major, mainly German, scholars (Danailov 1934 [1906], pp. 59–61). Nevertheless, Kinkel’s theory of cultural development was highly praised and respected by Bulgarian scholars of his time, while during the communist period Kinkel was intellectually rejected.

Kinkel’s model of economic development is the result of his overall view of the need for a synthetic and interdisciplinary approach to social and economic phenomena, and at the same time, it serves as a starting point for his numerous studies that followed until his death in 1945 encompassing various topics and issues of social development.

4. Interdisciplinary approach to social phenomena

The range of topics and social scientific areas in Kinkel’s works is so vast that to the modern scholar, accustomed to narrow specialisation, such a diversity would look impossible and useless, not to say a sign of superficiality. This kind of censure is also typical of the critiques levied at the author during the communist period. For example, Kinkel was criticised for being eclectic, which in Kiril Grigorov’s view serves as a byword for any kind of eclecticism. Kiril Grigorov calls Kinkel’s models “kinkeliads”. This criticism

is fully in-line with the accusations addressed at the historical school and at the works of Schmoller (see Peukert 2001).

My personal view is that given the encyclopaedic knowledge of the Russian economists and social scholars of that period – such as S. Bulgakov, P. Struve, M. Tugan-Baranovsky, A. Bogdanov among others – and their aspiration to construct systems and combine the achievements of natural and social sciences, one can see that Kinkel is a competent and original author and by no means a perfunctory compiler.¹⁸ Almost all of Kinkel's publications could be viewed as a direct continuation of or elaboration on his theory of development alongside the *Schmollerprogramm*. As was already noted, it was a starting point of his personal intellectual project, a kind of *Kinkelprogramm*. Given that the economy is at the intersection of various social and natural factors (it is “socially embedded” – a phrase often used these days), it is only logical that the economic science should also integrate the achievements of the social and natural sciences.

From that point on, things are clear: all factors and mechanisms of economic and social development should seriously be studied and explained. Therefore, apart from economic factors¹⁹ Kinkel systematically examined a number of other factors of development such as legal and political factors, religious and ethnic factors, scientific factors and aesthetic–artistic factors (see Kinkel 1943, pp. 29–32).

Thus, for instance, Kinkel often pays attention to the ethical factors of economic development, which he examines in a special study entitled *The Ethical Factor in Economic History* (Kinkel 1930a).²⁰ In this book, having reviewed all that has been said about the role of moral and ethics in the history of economic thought, the author presents the evolution of relations between economic activities and ethical norms in the individual economic eras and periods I, II, III (in this study, Kinkel expands his analyses of the Indian, Chinese and European civilisations, which are relatively overlooked in his book of 1921). Kinkel indicates the relativity of the relationship between economics and ethics with regard to the various eras and negates the existence of a universal and eternal ethics. In addition, this book mobilises all that was known until the time it was written, with Kinkel

18 For a detailed survey on the Russian economic historian tradition, see Gloveli (2008).

19 As was already discussed above, in an effort to overcome the one-sidedness of a number of authors, including Karl Marx, in addition to production (productive forces) Kinkel also includes consumption (consumption forces) and culture (sociocultural needs).

20 Kinkel dedicated a whole book on European and Christian ethics (Kinkel 1938a).

being not only encyclopaedic but also pedantic in this respect. At the same time, he could not be criticised for simply retelling other authors' theories, something he himself categorically rejected and despised.

Kinkel pays attention to both external (exogenous) natural factors, that is, the environment of economic subjects and internal (endogenous) nature – the psychic factors (Kinkel 1943, pp. 29–32). The former include the role of geography, climate, genetics, races, etc. (all of which are topics typical of the studies of the majority of systemic scholars of that period), which were discussed in his monographs “*Natural Factors in the Economic and Cultural Life of Peoples*” (Kinkel 1942) and “*Sociology and Biology*” (Kinkel 1939c). In light of the achievements of western and Russian ideas and based on the breakthroughs in biology and social biology, Kinkel attempted to prove his views on the biogenetic law of development of economy that he examines in the monographs.

Along with the work on his “development” book, Kinkel dedicated a great number of his studies to social and individual psychology. The achievements in social and mass psychology (Le Bon,²¹ Tard and others), which made enormous progress at the turn of the twentieth century were summarised and systematised in many of Kinkel's studies. Among these, of special interest is his book “*Social Psychology in Revolutionary Movements* (Sociopsychological and psychoanalytical essay on the psychology of revolutionary society)” (Kinkel 1924), and “*Science and Religion in the Light of Psychology*” (Kinkel 1924a). Led by his desire to understand the different forms and components of social dynamics, in this particular case, the drastic changes observed during times of revolution, and being obviously under the immediate impression of the Russian Revolution, Kinkel put forward an original analysis of revolutions from the viewpoint of the recent achievements in psychology, psychoanalysis and even medicine. The major manifestations of revolutions are defined from a range of perspectives, such as maniac psychosis, cyclophrenia, mass insanity (psychosis), *mania furiosa*, *mania persecutoria*, *paranoia*, psychic epidemics, maniacal impulsiveness, megalomania, euphoria, passion for speculation, sexual extremities, alcoholism, drug addiction, etc.

As Kinkel sees it, psychological factors play the key role during revolutions, or as he often puts it: “the psychological revolution should precede the social one” (Kinkel 1931, p. 54) and “the revolution dies politically because it has died previously in people's psychology” (Kinkel 1924, p. 84). The psychology of a revolutionary society and of many of its forms were extensively analysed mainly based on the facts of the French Revolution in 1789 and the process and personal observations of the October

21 “*La psychologie des foules*” by Gustav Le Bon was translated into Bulgarian in 1906.

Revolution of 1917. In summary, Kinkel based his “law of psychological regression” of every revolutionary society on primitive psychic forms of behaviour. He consistently presents various manifestations, such as the idea that “degenerates often rise to positions of revolutionary leaders” (Kinkel 1924, p. 128). Kinkel sees no disparity between the existence of this law of psychological regression and the possibilities to also see revolutions as a form of creation (and not only destruction) and definite social advancement (Kinkel 1924, pp. 21, 51, 85, 156).

This probing into individual psychology and mechanisms of the subconscious (Kinkel studied medicine and psychoanalysis) was fashionable in that period and makes Kinkel the founder of Freudianism in Bulgaria (he was co-founder of the Psychoanalytic Circle in 1921). According to Nikola Atanassov, Kinkel’s article on psychology and religion written in 1921 was published in German in 1922, following the recommendation of Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank, and then translated in Swedish, Russian and English (Atanassov 1997, 2002).²² Actually, in this article, written at the same time as his book on economic development, Kinkel, apart from introducing a number of innovations in psychology, also shows the possibility for periodisation of the psychological development and the world outlook in three eras (animistic (magical – mythological), religious and finally in the seventeenth century – objective-scientific era).

The 200-page long study, “*Methods of Knowledge of Contemporary Sociology*” published in 1931, is an attempt to systematically present his views on his sociological approach. Bulgarian sociologists consider Ivan Kinkel as one of their ground-breaking authors, founder of the Bulgarian Sociological Society and its chairman in the period 1931–1939. In this encyclopaedic work, Kinkel once again drew a connection with his theory of economic and social development. He worked out the basic methodological and theoretical branches and trends in sociology, following the key factors of development in the order proposed by him. Just as social development (and being part of it, economic development as well) is multifactorial, so must be sociology too (implicitly, this should also apply to the economic science), that is to say pluralistic. With regards to sociology, any type of methodological monism that overstates certain types of factors (economic factors in particular) is being dismissed:

²² Also see (Johansson 2001, 2006). Actually, Kinkel’s study was definitely popular not only among psychologists, but also among historians (Langer 1958). Interestingly, for the majority of economists and sociologists, this side of Kinkel’s career is either unknown or underestimated, just as psychologists and psychoanalysts are not interested in the rest of his work.

To contemporary sociology, given the colossal development of individual sciences with implications for social life and several “major factors-forces” (to use this essentially wrong expression!) as their drivers, such a faith or dogma already appear to be absolutely impossible. From the perspective of the entire contemporary knowledge of society we must acknowledge the outdatedness of the view about the existence of only one such factor – a kind of a Hegelian “spirit” in the social cosmos, which determines and forms all existence, is constantly transformed and changes into its concrete manifestations, thus creating at one moment law and politics, religion and art at another, etc., etc.; only this universal spirit, underlying and explaining all creation, is clad in materialistic social philosophy of thick and coarse material (economic) uniform. This may have been conceivable some hundred years ago at the then existing state of science, but not now when the various sciences affecting society’s life compellingly point to numerous “major factors”, or better call them – *driving or dynamic forces*. (Kinkel 1931, pp. 190–1)

Monism is absurdity, a peculiar form of “universal phlogiston”:

A universal sociological method encompassing and explaining all phenomena of social life is not applicable nowadays as it would be scientific absurdity [...]. (Kinkel 1931, p. 193)

The only true method that there could be is the eclectic or synthetic–eclectic method encompassing all formulated regularities in the social, and not only, sciences:

If none of the old universal methods satisfies us today, could we at least construct a new monistic method in sociology? We must explicitly state that in principle, given the contemporary state of sociology, this is not possible! Even if another sociological genius was to appear in our times of the stature of Kant or Marx wishing to construct a new synthetic method, the latter would still have to incorporate the self-contained principles of all individual methods constructed in sociology over the recent years, that is to say, this method would essentially be not a monistic, but an eclectic one. (Kinkel 1931, p. 193)

Although as a sociologist, Kinkel has been classified as positivist (by Russian sociologist Golenkova 2011) or as Freudian (by Russian sociologist Egorova 2008), and although he strongly believed in scientific sociology and economic theory, his positivism was, in my view, much more flexible than assumed. The wrong idea comes, I think, from a few of his statements where he distinguishes sociology as a scientific area free from value reasoning whose mission is to have knowledge of society, from social philosophy, which is value oriented and normative (Kinkel 1931, pp. 1–10). Actually, Kinkel was a supporter of the equal status of the two basic approaches in sociology, which in his time were already differentiated, namely, the positivist and scientific sociology, on the one hand, and the insightful and contextual sociology, on the other.

In the mid-1930s, Kinkel applied his sociological approach to a number of new phenomena in the economic and social life, in particular, the crisis of the parliamentary and party democracy, the emergence of authoritarian regimes and the evolution towards a planned economy, autarchy, etc. As already noted, Kinkel dedicated a number of articles on these topics in the *Archive of Economic and Social Policy*, and because of the extremity of his views (he was very critical of the new authoritarian regimes and held that history was moving towards a new regime, which differed radically from the capitalist one, towards some form of global non-Bolshevik socialism), he published some of his articles under the pen names M. Mladenov, A. Fridyung and others. His analyses of fascism (Kinkel 1933a) in many respects foretold the interpretations of the classical authors of fascism (such as De Felice 2005 [1969]), of the crisis of parliamentary power (Kinkel 1934), and of economic depression (Kinkel [Fridyung] 1934) and could be regarded as examples of applying the sociological and sociopsychological analysis to concrete political and economic phenomena.

Lastly, I would like to mention the significance that Kinkel attributed to the historical, comparative and evolutionary approach in the analysis of both individual economic and social institutions and society as a whole (one should not forget that Kinkel taught economic history and history of economic thought).²³ The organic approach was popular in the inter-war period and Kinkel attempted to define an approach of his own to organic theory. In the same vein, he also saw the relation with the people's spirit, and even tried to define a Bulgarian national and economic spirit (Kinkel 1931, p. 145). This approach, which was explicitly accentuated and expounded in his book on psychology, has been applied many times to individual historical phenomena, institutions and entire periods. Without going into details, I shall only mention the original studies of the Bulgarian economic culture of proto-Bulgarians (Kinkel 1926) and some interesting ideas about the Renaissance economy (Kinkel 1938b, 1939b). As for the Bulgarian Renaissance, Kinkel, in the light of his view on economic development, disputed the approach of Bulgarian Marxists, who applied the Marxist scheme of development (see Jacques Nathan for instance). Jacques Nathan (1902–1974) was also criticised for applying a purely philosophical and sociological (in this particular case, Marxist) template to Bulgarian economic history and for failing to offer any

23 His side work on the history of economic sciences (Kinkel 1925b, 1936, 1937a, 1937b, 1939a), the article on Malthus (Kinkel 1941), and the two textbooks on economic history (Kinkel 1925, second edition 1947, as well as 1939a).

analysis whatsoever of historical facts and documents. Kinkel wrote a similar critique, only in the opposite direction, of the seminal study on trade and crafts in Bulgaria during the Middle Ages written by the prominent economic scholar Ivan Sakuzov (1895–1935). Kinkel criticised him for the lack of theoretical analysis of the numerous facts and for Sakuzov's view of society as something isolated from the rest of the social spheres (Kinkel 1932).

Kinkel believed, for instance, that Ivan Sakuzov, in stating the facts of the massive development of trade in the fifteenth, sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries, failed to draw theoretical conclusions, such as the considerable market expansion of the Ottoman Empire, which benefited Bulgaria. Or that the decline of external trade in the mid-seventeenth century resulted in turn in the flourishing of crafts aimed now at the domestic Bulgarian market. The following citation from the review of Ivan Sakuzov's works speaks for itself:

But the author (Ivan Sakuzov) views the economic system in isolation from the social structure, so they appear to have no relation to one another in his treatise, although the economic relations as well as many economic activities, such as those of the rural population, have resulted directly from the legally privileged status of certain social classes and the subordinate status of the other classes. Thus, the treatise does not reveal the close relationship in general between the social and legal system and "social grouping" of the population, on the one hand, and the economic system and life, on the other, so that the outline of the "social grouping" of the population seems to just supplement the extensive account of the economic way of life and the range of economic activities. Again because of its monographic character, the treatise fails to give a general picture of the economic life as one whole within a concrete time frame. As a result, the type of the economic life and economic culture of the examined period remain unclear. (Kinkel 1932 [1931], p. 5)²⁴

Kinkel's critiques on Nathan and Sakuzov books are sufficient to help one grasp of Kinkel's perception of economic history as a unity of facts

24 It is worth comparing Kinkel's review with that of Georgy Danailov, who is the other recognised authority on economic theory and history (Danailov 1933 [1931], pp. 1–16). Whereas Kinkel makes critical remarks vis-à-vis Ivan Sakuzov for not applying a macro-economic and macro-social approach to economic phenomena and for letting himself be carried away with facts and "primitive economic chronology", Danailov's comments are basically microeconomic by nature: Comments and critical remarks on the facts stated by Sakuzov. Danailov claims for instance that "changes in economic institutions do not always coincide with the stages in the political history of a given nation: Economic development follows its own trajectory regardless of historical events" (Danailov 1933 [1931], p. 5).

and theory. His scientific credo is obvious: we should strive to analyse and understand economic and social development in its unity while also considering its multiaspectual and complex nature.²⁵

5. Concluding remarks

The question is, what follows from the study of Ivan Kinkel's theory of economic development and can we draw any scientific and practical values from it? I think we can and it should be sought in the following directions.

First, studying Kinkel's work is part of "bridging the gaps" in the history of economic and social thoughts in Bulgaria and Europe, and the history of emigration of Russian economists and scholars in the interwar period. Coming to know Kinkel's works make us aware of a scholar who has contributed both intellectually and organisationally not only to the economic science, but also to a range of other spheres of social knowledge. His theory of economic development and cultural cycles is, in my view, an original input of world significance and as such it should be made known to the international academic community.

Second, the work of Kinkel is a valuable contribution within the *Shmollerprogramm* and the historical school (whether we follow the criteria of Schumpeter or those of Backhouse)²⁶ alongside the contributions of the youngest historical school whose representatives are Kinkel's contemporaries, namely Weber, Sombart and Schumpeter. However, Kinkel is a representative also of the famous generation of Russian economists and social scholars from the early twentieth century who created the original theories on economic development.

Third, a great number of Kinkel's ideas, both from a methodological and from a theoretical point of view, have contemporary resonance and can give us directions and prompt some basic principles in analysing the current situation of deep economic, social and geopolitical changes. This is because we need a longer-term historical perspective if we want to capture some social trends and patterns. These trends are not deterministic

25 Here the influence of Kinkel's teacher, the great Russian economist Peter Struve, is revealing. Struve asserts that "a systematician–economist examines the history of economic life as a processing of the historical material of economic life with the help of the systematic categories of political economy" (Struve 1913, p. 35). Thus, there are two ways of studying economic history: the first we could call "theoretical economic history" (Kinkel, Struve, Sombart and others) and the second – "historical economic history" (Bücher, Schmoller and Sakuzov in the case of Bulgaria).

26 See Peukert (2001) and Shionoya (2001).

and always carry new elements, new processes and new forms. We should investigate society over longer historical periods and not just focus on the currently existing states and problems.

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Abbreviations

BAS – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
AESP – Archive for Economic and Social Policy
HSC – Higher School of Commerce, Varna
ASSFAS – Annual of the State School of Financial and Administrative Sciences, Sofia
AUS (FL) – Annual of the University of Sofia, Faculty of Law
JBES – Journal of the Bulgarian Economic Society
NL – *St. St. Cyril and Methodius* National Library

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Abstract

This paper presents and discusses the “*Attempt at Constructing a New Theory of Economic Development and Cultural Cycles*”, published by the Bulgarian economist and sociologist of Russian origin, Ivan Kinkel (1883–1945) in 1921. Kinkel’s theory, although unknown outside Bulgarian academic circles, carries a range of original ideas and new insights within the frame of *Schmollerprogramm*. It emphasises the importance of studying economic development as sociocultural evolutionary change, focuses on the role of unity in social life and the plurality of human motives and attempts to methodologically link theory and history into a multidisciplinary approach. Kinkel’s work in general, and his theory of cyclical development in particular, can not only be of value for the study of economic thought and the diffusion of ideas, but can also offer insights into the forces underlying the profound changes that we have been witnessing recently.

Keywords

History of economic thought, historical school, Bulgaria, Russia

JEL classifications: B10, B20, B30, N13, N14, G01