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Contact:

fiar@interamerica.de
www.interamerica.de

[49] 521-106-3641
(European Standard Time)
Postfach 100131



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Guest Editors of Vol. 13.3:

Jessé Souza (Universidade Federal do ABC (UFABC), São Paulo)



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100th anniversary of the death of Max Weber: Commemoration from the Americas (Introduction)

JESSÉ SOUZA (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO ABC (UFABC), SÃO PAULO)

Since the end of the 1990s, the so-called “left turn” has been gaining ground in Latin America, breaking with the “Washington Consensus” for two decades. On the basis of rising commodity prices and strong economic growth, social and labour policies were expanded and reshaped. While the West held on to its neo-liberal model and faced growing social and political distortions due to the financial crisis of 2008, poverty in Latin America was reduced by almost half. These achievements were accompanied by broad social mobilisation and in some cases complemented by new models of political participation. The region became more independent and gained international influence.

Since the middle of the last decade, this political trend has reversed. With the fall in commodity prices, the region has fallen into an economic crisis, which has quickly worsened the social situation and fuelled political conflicts. Progressive forces have lost legitimacy and influence. Social dismantling and discrimination against the weak and minorities have become a part of the political programme, and in some countries, such as Brazil, politicians on the extreme right have been elected into government.

Over the last two decades, Latin America has had a century’s opportunity to embark on a new path of development in politics and the economy. This option has been weakened, but has not yet failed. It is now necessary to learn from the mistakes of the last decade of progressive governance, for those who do not know their history are doomed to repeat it.

To do so, it is necessary to analyse the internal factors for the recent failure of progressive governments that contributed to this social and political crisis. The left’s loss of confidence and legitimacy has hardly been analysed so far. What is particularly striking is the silence of

many intellectuals who, not so long ago, strongly supported progressive governments. For this reason, CALAS launched a dialogue platform in Guadalajara in early October 2019 entitled “The Latin American Left in the 21st Century: Looking Back to the Future.” There it became clear that the relationship between state and society plays a central role in the failure and must be discussed anew, but also that new projects committed to the political and social participation of all must be a part of this process .

One of the most influential state theorists to date is Max Weber. It is necessary to take into account that Max Weber, albeit from a “culturalist” reading that distorts his work, is the most important author for hegemonic social science in the Americas as a whole. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Max Weber’s death, the following volume presents various contributions that explore the significance his ideas continue to have for the analysis of the state, where it could be expanded or replaced and what significance Max Weber still has for Latin America today.

The set of texts presented here discuss Max Weber’s work at two different levels of abstraction. The texts by Wolfgang Schluchter, Hans-Jürgen Burchardt and Boike Rehbein are dedicated to discussing methodological and philosophical aspects that are considered essential for the understanding of Weber. In the case of Rehbein the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity, in the case of Schluchter the relationship between ideal and material causality, and in Burchardt’s case the need to criticize the Weberian concept of the modern state.

The set of texts by Jessé Souza, Marcos Abrão and Francisco Colom refer, on the contrary, to Max Weber’s application to the concrete Latin American context. Souza questions the „culturalist“ use of Max Weber in

American social sciences in general, both in the USA and in Latin America. Abrão shows how this skewed reading was used politically in Brazil, while Colom focuses on the traditional use of the concept of patrimonialism for Latin America. The two levels of abstraction must be interconnected in order to produce a productive critique of the use of Max Weber in American sciences.

This volume shows that Weber is still the most important thinker both for the construction of “American exceptionalism,” and then for the construction of the idea of USA as the „promised land“ of the ascetic Protestant and his supposed moral superiority; and, on the other hand, for the construction of the idea of the Latin Americans as an inferior and corrupt people. The “culturalistic” approach in US and in Latin America social sciences is still today dominated by the figure and the ideas of Max Weber. Patrimonialism, ascetic Protestantism, modernity, tradition are all terms from Weber’s work which were interpreted by the Americans and Latin Americans in very peculiar ways.

It is precisely this context that profoundly affects the Americas as a whole that the present collection of texts aims to help to clarify. To understand how Weber was used and misused by American and Latin American thinkers and readers is to understand the very scheme of continental domination and the role of ideas in it. Weber is significant both for the legitimation of the USA as a homeland of ascetic Protestantism and freedom, and also for condemning Latin American countries to the backwardness of patrimonialism and tradition. Reviewing these paradigms, decentering methodology and theory is a central objective of CALAS.

Author’s biography

Jessé de Souza is a Brazilian sociologist, professor at the Federal University of ABC, with research in the areas of inequality, social stratification and critical theory. He is a fundamental reference of contemporary Brazilian social thought, having published on political sociology, peripheral modernization theory and inequalities in contemporary Brazil. Among his recent works, stand out *A Construção Social da Subcidadania* (2006); *A ralé brasileira: quem é e como vive* (2009); *Os batalhadores brasileiros: Nova classe média ou nova classe trabalhadora?* (2010, 2012). More recently he published *A elite do atraso: Da escravidão à Lava Jato* (2017).

“How Ideas Become Effective in History” Max Weber on Confucianism and Beyond [1]

WOLFGANG SCHLUCHTER (HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY, GERMANY)

Abstract

Max Weber's interest in East Asia starts as early as 1898, but it comes to fruition only after 1910. Instead of continuing his essays on ascetic Protestantism, as promised to the public, he embarked on a comparison of world religions, in which he included Confucianism, although he did not regard it as a religion in the strict sense of the term. As a matter of expediency, he used Confucianism, however, as the most pronounced counterexample to ascetic Protestantism, seemingly similar from the outside, but totally different from the inside. So, Confucianism is included in his attempt to provide a sociology and typology of religious rationalism. Confucianism is also used as a backdrop to understand the singularity of the Western development. The sketch, as he calls it, is not meant as a full-fledged analysis of this intellectual and social movement nor of Imperial China at large. Therefore, it is very dangerous to apply Weber's analysis to the current situation in China (after the "Cultural Revolution" and the one-child policy). I call this the fallacy of misplaced application. This does not rule out, however, using Weber's methodology and conceptual tools to a certain extent for such an analysis. How this could be done, is shown in the last section of this presentation.

Keywords: Max Weber, Confucianism, world affirmation, religious rationalism, Chinese capitalism, emerging middle class

Introduction

The title of my presentation contains a quotation from Max Weber's first essay of his study on "The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism." This essay appeared in 1904. [2] With the promise to the reader that he would demonstrate in the following essay how ideas operate in history, he justified the publication of this study in the newly founded *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*. Weber belonged to the editorial board of this scientific journal, which for Germany's social sciences became as important as Durkheim's *Année sociologique* for the social sciences in France. According to the statement of mission of this scientific journal, signed by Edgar Jaffé, Werner Sombart and Max Weber, it was designed to provide fresh impulses for the development of the social sciences at large. [3] It was not meant to cater primarily to strictly historical work. In his essay on "Objectivity", with which Weber partly complemented this statement, he also

stressed the importance of a new approach to the social sciences beyond mere historical studies. Therefore, his justification seems to be in order. In the second essay on "The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism," which was published in 1905 almost one year later, Weber fulfilled his promise. In this essay he emphasized the impact of religious ideas on human conduct, putting institutional arrangements and class-constellations into brackets. Therefore, his essay, although a historical study, could be regarded, besides its historical merits, also as an important contribution to social theory. [4]

In this second essay Weber provided a spiritualist account of the emergence of the new economic ethos defined as spirit of (modern) capitalism. He regarded it as a one-sided analysis on heuristic grounds. In the second essay of 1905, we find many indications that he intended to supply, in a third essay, the 'other side of the causal chain', as he put it later. [5] Although he was encouraged by his publisher Paul Siebeck to write this third essay right away and to put

all three essays together as a book, he shied away from this suggestion. Instead, he became entangled in a sterile controversy over his first and second essay that lasted almost four years. In 1910, when Weber ended this controversy with what he called his "last word", he had given up on this book project for the time being. [6] Instead, he embarked on a huge comparative project on the relation between religion and the economy. The first published result of this endeavor was the study on Confucianism, written down in 1913. It appeared unchanged in the *Archiv* under the title "Confucianism" in October and December 1915 in two installments, together with the "Introduction" into the "Economic Ethics of the World Religions" and the "Conclusions: Confucianism and Puritanism," in which Weber compared the impact of Confucian and Puritan Ethic on the conduct of life, clarifying at the same time, as he declares, the relationship between Confucian rationalism and Puritan rationalism. [7]

Interestingly enough, the essay on Confucianism (not on "The Religion of China", as the title is mistranslated) [8] was not Weber's first encounter with East Asia. As we know from his lecture notes, he dealt with East Asia already in his lecture courses before the turn of the century. In the lecture on "Practical Economics", delivered for the last time in winter 1897/98 in Heidelberg, he alluded to the "entry of East Asia into the orbit of the occidental cultural sphere" (Kulturkreis), referring to Japan and China. Here he regarded Japan as a feudal system, based on rice-contributions in exchange for military service, China as a state-like system ruled by officials and without any feudal remainders since the Manchu conquest. [9] There is no mention of cultural or religious factors in either case, however. Now, in 1913/1915, we encounter a very different approach to East Asia. Whereas Japan is pushed to the sideline, China is considered thoroughly in its early transition from feudalism to patrimonial bureaucracy, with the result that it became dominated by an educated Confucian elite, the literati. This elite, according to Weber, transformed Confucianism into a kind of civil religion or state ideology.

Between the lecture course of 1897/98 and the essay on Confucianism of 1913/15 Weber

had two important insights: 1. Economic history has to be supplemented by religious history, and this included an analysis of cultural or religious ideas and their effectiveness 2. Under specific circumstances cultural or religious ideas could become rationalizing forces. The first insight is tied to the Protestant Ethic, the second to the comparative studies on the economic ethic of the world religion. Both insights together are central to Max Weber's later work.

An Economic and a 'Spiritual' Interpretation of History Combined

In June 22, 1915, Max Weber wrote to Paul Siebeck, his publisher, with whom he had a friendly relationship: "I am willing to provide the *Archiv* with a series of essays on the 'Economic ethic of the world-religions,' which have been sitting here since the beginning of the war ... and in which I apply the method used in the essay 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' in a general way." [9] It was an attempt on his part to compensate the publisher for his lack of cooperation in the case of the essays on ascetic Protestantism. Siebeck had asked him to grant permission for a separate edition of these essays. But Weber declined, as he had done several times before.

What does it mean: to "apply the method used in the essay 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' in a general way"? As we have stated already, Weber pursued in this study a one-sided analysis, focusing on the spiritual side, putting institutional arrangements and class-constellations into brackets. In other words, he analyzed the emergence of a peculiar 'spirit', not the emergence of a peculiar 'form.' To apply this method in a general way would mean that he did the same in his early studies on the economic ethics of the world religion. However, this seems to be not in line with the texts published in 1915. For Weber starts his early essay on Confucianism with a short analysis of structural and institutional patterns of Imperial China, before he turns to the 'spirit' of its carrier stratum, the literati. Nevertheless the focus in this early version is still on the 'spirit', not on the 'form'. It is not by accident that Weber considerably extended the so-called

“sociological foundations” in his revised version of the essay in 1919/20. [10] He felt obviously obliged to provide a much more detailed analysis of this part of his essay than he had achieved in 1913. We may surmise from this fact that all the essays written down in 1913 emphasized the spiritual side of the matter. As we know from Weber’s schedule in 1916, he worked again on his studies on Hinduism and Buddhism from 1913, especially on “The Hindu social system.” Therefore, prior to publication of these essays in 1916/1917, he was able to amend the structural and institutional side and put it on equal footing with the spiritual side. The same holds for his study on ancient Judaism, which was rewritten from 1917 onward. Here, the required balance between the two sides is also achieved before the first publication of this work.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that Weber had discovered the importance of the ‘other side of the causal chain’ only after the publication of the study on ascetic Protestantism. The double-sided analysis between ‘spirit’ and ‘form’ was already in place. This can be inferred not only from Weber’s insistence that his study on ascetic Protestantism was not meant “to substitute for a one-sided ‘materialistic’ an equally one-sided spiritualistic causal interpretation of culture and history,” adding, that “*both are equally possible*,” but in each case only a beginning. They have to be elaborated and combined (Weber, *The Protestant Ethic* 179, translation slightly changed). This is corroborated by many hints in the second essay on ascetic Protestantism and his statements in the “Anti-Critiques”. Here he remarked that as soon as he would be finished with his analysis as intended, his critics would accuse him to surrender to materialism, as they do now with regard to idealism or ideology. Of course, Weber wanted to overcome historical materialism, but without siding with idealism. Rather, he strove for a multidimensional analysis, which he had justified in his essay on “Objectivity,” analyzing the religious conditioning of the economy and the economic conditioning of religion as well. [11]

What can we learn from these considerations?

1. A one-sided analysis can only be a beginning.
2. One has to consider both sides of the causal

chain, the economic conditioning of religious patterns as well as the religious conditioning of economic patterns. 3. Crucial is the distinction between form and spirit. 4. There is an elective affinity between these two sides, no law-like or functional relationship.

According to some statements in the secondary literature, Weber started as a materialist, turned into an idealist, and returned later on, luckily, into a moderate type of materialist. Nothing can be more mistaken. Consider for instance his early lecture on theoretical economics, delivered before the turn of the century. Here Weber argues already that the economic perspective on human life is always one-sided and that the development of human needs cannot be reduced to economic conditions. Man’s attitude toward the world is informed also by noneconomic cultural powers, especially by religion. And a religion, furthermore, cannot be regarded as a reflex of economic conditions (Weber, *Allgemeine Nationalökonomie* 364-6). Consider also his late lecture course on universal social and economic history. After having dealt extensively with the structural and institutional preconditions of modern capitalism, he ends up stressing the importance of the spiritual side of modern capitalism. The entire last paragraph is dedicated to it. [13] In addition, consider the short time span from 1904 to 1908, when Weber wrote the study on ascetic Protestantism and on the “Agrarian Condition of Antiquity,” [14] the former emphasizing the spiritual, the latter the structural and institutional side. As we can see, Weber pursued from the very beginning and till the very end a program beyond materialism and idealism, and he did not waver on this issue over the course of time.

Weber’s approach is also comparative from the very beginning. Comparison and explanation are two sides of the same coin. The reconstruction of a cultural phenomenon requires three steps: 1. Identification –what are the defining characteristics of a cultural manifestation? 2. Causal attribution –how did this manifestation arise? 3. Weighing –which of the causal factors can be regarded as an adequate cause? The first question can be answered only by comparison, the second and third only by counterfactual arguments using the

categories of objective possibility and adequate causation. These three steps inform Weber's project of the *Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religion*, which he anticipated already in 1915 and of which the revised essay on Confucianism from 1913/15, now entitled "Confucianism and Taoism," becomes an integral part.

The *Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religion*, prepared in 1919/20, alongside with *Economy and Society*, his *Sociology*, both unfinished at Weber's untimely death, was to comprise four volumes. Weber was able to prepare only volume one for publication. He included the revised version of the "Protestant Ethic" and the revised version of the study on Confucianism. But contrary to the study on Confucianism, he still did not supply in case of the study on ascetic Protestantism 'the other side of the causal chain.' The analysis of the structural and institutional preconditions of modern capitalism is still lagging. It is an open question whether he wanted to provide this analysis in volume 4 of the *Collected Essays*, devoted to Western Christianity. More important in our context is however: More than three out of the four volumes would have been dedicated to the developmental history of the West. This can be easily inferred from Weber's plan, which he turned in to Siebeck in 1919, and from its execution till his death (see appendix below). [15]

As one can see from this plan and its execution, Weber is quite explicit on the aim of his comparative and developmental religious studies. In his summarizing statement we can also detect the three questions mentioned above. To rephrase it: What are the distinctive economic and social characteristics of the West (identification), how did they arise (causal attribution), and in particular, how do they stand in relation to the development of religious ethic (weighing)?

A Sociology and Typology of Religious Rationalism

Comparison, however, serves an additional purpose: The creation of typologies. In the "Intermediate Reflection" ("Zwischenbetrachtung"), dealt with already

in the first version of *Economy and Society* of 1914 ("The Economy and the Societal Orders and Powers") [16] and published in a more sophisticated version together with the study on Confucianism in 1915 in the *Archiv*, Weber underscored that his comparative studies, comprising Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Early Christianity, Eastern Christianity and Western Christianity as well as Islam should also be read as a contribution to a sociology and typology of religious rationalism. Already in 1915, he defined the yardsticks according to which he wanted to measure the degree of rationalism incorporated in a religious creed. There are two "primary yardsticks", independent of each other, but nevertheless interdependent: 1. "the degree to which the religion has divested itself of magic" (disenchantment); 2. "the degree to which it has systematically unified the relation between God and the world and therewith its own ethical relationship to the world" (theodicy or cosmodicy) (Weber, *The Religion of China* 226). [17] The first yardstick belongs to the realm of praxis, the second to the realm of doxis. Both are integral parts of the world view that a religion proposes.

At this juncture Confucianism enters the picture. Confucianism and Puritanism are depicted as polar types. From the outside, they look similar; from the inside they are very different. Both are rational, but of a different kind. Confucianism, as embodied in the carrier stratum of Imperial China, lacks the potential to radically change the existing world, because it is not a salvation religion, not even a religion. It is in its practical consequences, in its effectiveness, a social ethic supportive of an education that aims at the creation of a "gentleman." In contrast to these practical consequences of Confucianism, Puritanism calls for an interpretation of man as a tool of a powerful creator god, whose commands have to be fulfilled by his subjects in total submission. It aims at the creation of a "vocational man" dedicated to God's cause. The Confucian bureaucrat is affirming the existing world; the Puritan entrepreneur is rejecting it, while acting out these different mentalities in this mundane world. In this connection Weber distinguishes between two pure types of culturally or religiously bound rationalisms:

the rationalism of world adjustment (major example: Confucianism) and the rationalism of world domination (major example: ascetic Protestantism). [18]

We have already alluded to the notion of disenchantment (first yardstick). Disenchantment becomes a crucial concept in Weber's comparative studies on religion since 1913. It is used to establish a double link. The first is historical, connecting ancient Judaism with ascetic Protestantism, the second is typological, contrasting Confucianism and ascetic Protestantism as two types of rationality. Ascetic Protestantism, according to Weber, has driven disenchantment in the relationship between a powerful creator God and man to the extreme, whereas Confucianism does not know anything about a creator God and has left magic outside its own sphere virtually untouched. This is due to the fact that it is not a religion, based on the notion of salvation and troubled by prophetic eruptions, as it is true for Christianity and other salvation religions. To keep the harmony between this world and the world beyond, not to dramatize the rupture between them, is the Confucian way.

As we can see now more clearly, Weber starts his comparative endeavor with Confucianism, *because* it is not a religion, not to mention a salvation religion. The transition to salvation religions is provided in the "Intermediate Reflection," which is placed *after* the study on Confucianism and *before* his entry into the developmental history of the West. It is a transition that occurred in his view already in Asia, especially in Buddhism. Although Buddhism had a tremendous influence also in China, it originated in India, and therefore Weber deals with it in the following essay, entitled "Hinduism and Buddhism" (and not "The Religion of India"), which is also not a book, as the English publication suggests. [19]

For Weber, the decisive dividing line runs not between Asia and the West, as for instance in Hegel's philosophy of religion, but *within* Asia. It is a dividing line that separates Confucianism from Buddhism, a social ethic from a salvation religion, a rationalism of adjustment to the world from a rationalism rejecting and at the same time fleeing the world. That the West embarked on a

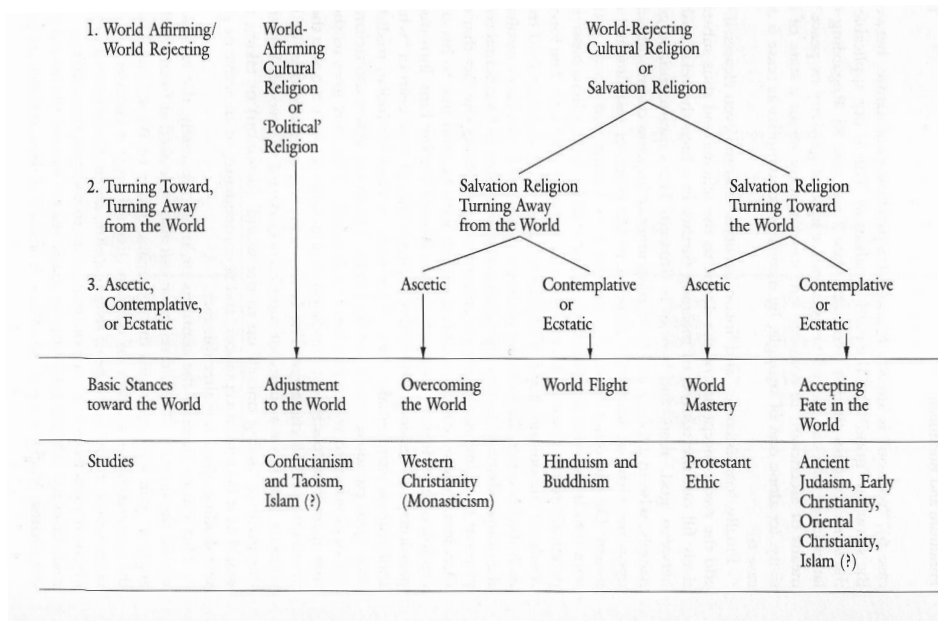
different trajectory compared with the salvation religions in Asia is due to its religious sources. They originated primarily in ancient Judaism with its notion of a personal creator God who rules the world.

As is well known, in his "Intermediate Reflections" Weber distinguishes four types of religiously motivated world rejection. He labels them innerworldly asceticism, otherworldly asceticism, innerworldly mysticism and otherworldly mysticism. The distinction between "innerworldly" and "otherworldly" is applied to distinguish an attitude turning toward the world and changing it from one turning away from the world and leaving it. These different avenues on the road to salvation can be pursued either with ascetic or with mystical, contemplative means. Each of the four religiously motivated stances toward the world carries its own rational potential. It is important to realize that this is a differentiation *within* religiously motivated attitudes of world rejection. To provide the full picture, however, one has to add to these world-view rejecting attitudes those affirming the world. [20]

According to Weber, Confucianism belongs to such a typology and sociology and typology of religious rationalism, because it represents the most elaborated case of world affirmation. It is within his project a borderline case. Weber regards it as a matter of expediency to include it and to start the entire series with such an example of rational world affirmation. It is important to keep this in mind when it comes to the usage of his essay today.

We can summarize Weber's sociology and typology of religious rationalism as follows (Schluchter, *Rationalism, Religion and Domination* 144):

Classification of Cultural Religions



The fallacy of misplaced application

The essay may be still useful for our research if we eschew what I call the fallacy of misplaced application. There are two likely ways to commit this fallacy. One pertains to Weber's work, the other to the current situation in China. Both have to do with the insufficient contextualization of Weber's study. Let me give a short illustration in both regards.

An insufficient contextualization within Weber's work occurs when we disregard the role of the study on Confucianism in his comparative project. I have already alluded to this. Weber does not consider Confucianism a religion in the strict sense of the term and he does not provide us with a comprehensive analysis of all important cultural movements in Imperial China. He does not even provide us with a comprehensive analysis of the "sociological foundations," although he considerably extended this side of the causal chain, the impact of structures and institutions on the life conduct of the carrier stratum, in the revised version of the text after 1913/15. More important, Weber does not even pretend to offer a full-fledged coverage of the history of Imperial China, following the sequence of dynasties and the major turning points in its history. He had,

as he confessed, only a very limited knowledge of Chinese history, because he could not read the sources in the original and depended on the European scholarship of the time. As we know from the secondary literature on Weber's study, he neglected Neoconfucianism altogether. And although he dealt with early Buddhism in his study on "Hinduism and Buddhism," he did not pay much attention to Chinese Buddhism as an additional cultural force in Chinese history. As in the study on "Hinduism and Buddhism," he rested satisfied with identifying Chinese indigenous cultural resources and the way in which they became institutionalized. From here he jumped to the time of the emergence of modern capitalism in Europe. All this can be regarded in retrospect as major deficiencies. [21]

However, we should also acknowledge Weber's self-imposed limitations when we criticize his study one hundred years after its inception. As we can infer from the table of contents of the *Collected Essays*, his emphasis was not on Asia, but on the West. He made this quite clear in the "Preliminary remark," with which he prefaced this collection in 1919. [22] Here he pointed not only to the difference between the study on ascetic Protestantism and

the remainder –he treated in case of ascetic Protestantism “only one side of the causal chain,” whereas in the studies on the economic ethic of the world religions he dealt with both sides– but he also made clear to the reader that his interest in Asia went only “so far as it is necessary to find points of comparison with the Occidental development.” Hence, he regarded his studies on Asia not to be “complete analyses of cultures” (Weber, *The Protestant Ethic* 27). [23] To put it differently: The studies on Asia serve him as a backdrop to his study of the Western trajectory.

At this point the allegation of a Eurocentric perspective in Weber’s comparative studies becomes relevant, and justly so. The question is only: what type of Eurocentric perspective is at stake, a heuristic or a normative one? A normative Eurocentric perspective would put the West above all other civilizations, regarding them as deficient and the achievements of the West as the summit in the development of mankind. In contrast, a heuristic Eurocentric perspective would look upon world history from a consciously one-sided Western viewpoint in order to get insights into the distinctiveness of its trajectory. In my view, there is no doubt that Weber regarded his comparative studies as a contribution to the latter. This becomes quite obvious in the famous first paragraph of the “Preliminary remark,” if read with care. Here Weber states: “A son of modern European civilization, studying any problem of universal history, is bound to ask himself to what combination of circumstances the fact should be attributed that in Western civilization and in Western civilization only, cultural phenomena appeared which (as we like to think) lie in a line of development having *universal* significance and validity” (Weber, *The Protestant Ethic* 13, translation slightly changed). “As we like to think,” this is an important qualification. It can also be read as an invitation to members of other civilizations to ask similar questions from their one-sided point of view.

An insufficient contextualization occurs also when we use Weber’s study as a kind of manual for the analysis of the current situation in East Asia. Then we end up with the so-called Weber paradox. Since Weber had attributed the absence of an indigenous development of rational capitalism in Imperial China to

institutionalized Confucianism, one might conclude that Confucianism must be a hindrance to the development of capitalism in general. But the economic development in East Asia tells us a different story. Where Confucianism has maintained its cultural influence, economic modernization seems to fare much better than in cases where it has lost its power. Therefore, something must be wrong with the so-called Weber thesis on China. Confucianism cannot be a hindrance to and a promoter of modern capitalism at the same time. [24]

This would be a very superficial conclusion, however. It would be based on a double disregard. On the one hand, Weber distinguished clearly between invention and diffusion. Modern capitalism was invented in the West, but then it penetrated the world. He argued that in the course of diffusion, countries with a Confucian heritage would be more receptive to this process than countries with a different cultural heritage. [25] On the other hand, mainland China underwent a process of detraditionalization throughout the last 100 years. Especially since the Communists have deliberately cut the threads to traditional China, we are faced with a situation not anticipated by Weber. I mention only the long-lasting consequences of Mao’s “Great Leap Forward,” the destruction of traditional Chinese culture during the “Cultural Revolution,” the one-child-policy, which destroyed the traditional family structure and will cause a demographic disaster in the future. [26] And although Deng’s reforms have profoundly changed China, [27] it is still ruled by a Leninist-type party, in total control of the military, public communication (propaganda) and the economy. [28] If we want to analyze the Chinese type of capitalism in its politically authoritarian context, we should not use Weber’s study on traditional China, but his methodological and theoretical approach.

Capitalism in modern China from a Weberian perspective

Let me begin this final section of my article with a thesis: Since Deng’s reform Communist China has taken over some capitalist institutions and has stimulated an outstanding economic growth, industrializing an agrarian country. But it is still

dominated politically as well as economically by a Leninist party and it lacks a carrier stratum independent of the party and dedicated to the rational tempering of the irrational drive for acquisition and the values connected with it.

If we want to interpret the current economic constellation in China from a Weberian perspective, we have to define first of all the explanandum, rational capitalism, more precisely. According to the second version of *Economy and Society*, Weber's *Sociology*, the conditions necessary "for obtaining a maximum of formal rationality of capital accounting in production enterprises" are as follows:

- a) Complete appropriation of the means of production by private owners;
- b) formally free labor;
- c) freedom of contract;
- d) open markets;
- e) complete autonomy in the selection of managers by owners;
- f) separation of household and enterprise.

Furthermore, with regard to concomitant institutions outside the economy:

- g) rational technology;
- h) formal-rational administration and formal-rational law;
- i) institutional differentiation between the economy and the polity. [29]

Does China's capitalism today meet these institutional requirements? This holds true only to a very limited degree. With regard to a) there exists still a lot of insecurity, despite the Property Law of 2007, with regard to e) the influence of the party still looms large. With regard to h) there can be serious doubts whether China meets the regular standards of an impartial bureaucracy acting *sine ira et studio vis-à-vis* the public at large and whether it lives up to the minimal standards of a legal state. With regards to i) the differentiation between the state (party) and the economy remains underdeveloped. The economy lacks, in Weber's terms, relative autonomy and autocephaly *vis-à-vis* the state (party). [30]

One consequence of this lack of institutional differentiation seems to be a tremendous amount of corruption, running from top to bottom of the political system. It is also a system that has produced extreme inequality. Of course, the communist party and its affiliated organizations have become more responsive over time to the needs of the population, comparatively speaking. [31] And as a result of this 'opening' a new middle class has emerged. But this new middle class is still not really politicized, asking for participation in the political process. We are facing a type of consultative authoritarianism, not a Western type of democracy.

To be sure, a Western type of democracy is not a necessary condition to make modern capitalism possible and flourish. This is a Weberian insight, as we can infer from his studies on the Russian Revolution of 1905. [32] It is also true that Weber's catalogue of requirements forms an ideal type of rational capitalism. It is to be used as a heuristic yardstick to measure deviation and to encourage thereby the search for causal attributions. The ideal type should not be reified. Therefore, we cannot expect that an empirical case would meet all these requirements. Nevertheless, we may distinguish between types of modern capitalism. Authoritarian capitalism deviates from the ideal type much more than liberal capitalism (for example in the US) or welfare capitalism (for example in Europe).

As we have seen, Weber alerts us always to the distinction between 'form' (structures and institutions) and 'spirit' (culture and mentalities). One side cannot be regarded as the function of the other. This was the message of the study on ascetic Protestantism, and this is the message of his entire approach. On the level of the 'spirit' we may distinguish three modes of capitalist orientations, embedded in different cultures: the political, the speculative and the economic mode. The first is associated with political capitalism, where the actor exploits political instead of market opportunities; the second is associated with adventurer capitalism, where the actor exploits very risky short-term opportunities either in the political arena or in the marketplace; only the third one is associated with economic capitalism proper. This is the orientation of the capitalist entrepreneur, capable of deferred

gratification and dedicated to sustainability in his action. He represents what Weber called the "vocational man."

I know of no empirical study that would distinguish between these three types of capitalist orientation and measure their empirical manifestation quantitatively. However, I think it is safe to say that in today's China political and adventurer capitalist orientations are at least as widespread as the strictly economic ones. In view of this situation, we should turn Weber's question in his study on Imperial China around, so to speak, and ask ourselves: Could a revitalization of Confucianism be helpful in promoting an economic capitalist orientation among the Chinese middle class in general and among Chinese businessmen in particular? For in a Weberian perspective the rational tempering of the irrational drive for acquisition and the values connected with it do not come automatically with the adaptation to capitalist institution. This holds especially true when these institutions are still partially not properly in place.

I regard the reappropriation of Confucianism, which was crushed especially during the "Cultural Revolution," to be helpful in this situation. I can think of four elements, deeply embedded in Confucian ethics that could serve the purpose at hand:

- The Confucian emphasis on learning and academic qualification. It is well known that in Western countries, especially in the US, the rate of illiteracy is much higher than in countries under the influence of Confucianism.
- The Confucian emphasis on social relations, especially family relations, and on filial piety (xiao) that is very different from the Western emphasis on patria potestas and on individualism. [33]
- The embeddedness of economic relations in social relations (guanxi) and the personal trust that goes with it. Disembeddedness of economic relations is a serious problem in Western societies. [34]
- The Confucian ideal of order and harmony (Lin 54-8).

It is an open question, however, whether the Communist ideology, after all a Western product, would be compatible with such a kind of

reanimated Confucianism. It would also require the modernization of Confucianism itself. But we are convinced: The Chinese party-bound capitalism, this authoritarian capitalism, remains a form without spirit for the time being and without a carrier stratum that is able to promote a new civil spirit based on freedom, calculated risk-taking, responsibility and sustainability. [35]

With these remarks we deviate from Weber at the end of our presentation. As is well known, he finished his study on ascetic Protestantism on a very pessimistic note. He regarded victorious capitalism as emancipating itself from the old spirit of modern capitalism. Based on mechanical foundations, he argued, victorious capitalism does not need this spiritual support any more. This form will function without actors dedicated to the idea of a 'calling.' Victorious capitalism will produce the required mentalities quasi automatically. It will determine the lives of those born into this mechanism, and this will go on, "until the last ton of fossil fuel has been consumed" (Weber, *The Protestant Ethic* 181, translation slightly changed). With these statements, however, Weber does not only pass a value judgment, as he himself admits, he also deviates from his own analytical strategy, denying any law-like or functional relationship between 'spirit' and 'form.' Furthermore, we know today that the last ton of fossil fuel will indeed soon be consumed, but new energy resources will be unearthed and the limits of capitalism thereby extended. True enough, capitalism cannot function without energy, but it cannot function without cultural resources either.

Appendix

Weber: Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religion

Plan dated 1919 and its execution

Volume 1 was submitted for printing and was proofread by Max Weber. It ends with the "Intermediate Reflections". Marianne Weber decided after Weber's death to present the study on Hinduism and Buddhism as volume 2 and the study on ancient Judaism as volume 3. This was not in line with Weber's plan. However, with the exception of the fragment on the Pharisees, she did not find any text that would fit Weber's plan of 1919. Many texts had still to be written. The titles in *italic* indicate these texts.

Volume 1

Preliminary Remark	1920
I. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism	1904/05,
I. The Problem	revised
II. The Work Ethic of Ascetic Protestantism	1920
II. The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism	1906 (two versions),
	revised
	1920
III. The Economic Ethics of World Religions	1915,
Introduction	revised
	1920
I. Confucianism and Taoism	
I. Sociological Foundations:	1915,
A. City, Prince and God	revised
	1920
II. Sociological Foundations:	
B. Feudal and Prebendal States	
III. Sociological Foundations:	
C. Administration and Agrarian Conditions	
IV. Sociological Foundations:	
D. Self Government, Law and Capitalism	
V. The Literati	
VI. The Confucian Orientation to Life	
VII. Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy – (Taoism)	
VIII. Result: Confucianism and Puritanism	

Intermediate Reflection: Theory of Stages and Directions in Religious Abnegation of the World	1915, revised 1920
II. Hinduism and Buddhism	1916-1917
I. The Hindu Social System	1920 republished
II. The Orthodox and Heterodox Redemption Teachings of the Indian Intellectuals	(intended revision not carried out)
III. The Religiosity of Asiatic Sects and Salvation	

Volume 2

<i>The General Foundations of Occidental Development (and/or: the Development of European Citizenship in Antiquity and the Middle Ages)</i>	News bulletin of the publishers 25th Oct. 1919, p. 11
<i>Egyptian, Babylonian and Persian Relations (or: Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Zarathustran Religious Ethics)</i>	Archives, vol. 44, booklet 1, Oct. 1917, p. 52 and News
Ancient Judaism	1917-1920, 1920 republished (intended revision not carried out)
I. The Israelite Confederacy and Yahweh	
II. The Origin of the Jewish Pariah People	
<i>Supplement: Psalms and the Book of Job</i>	Preface RS III
Appendix: The Pharisees (intellectual estate)	Preface RS III and News

Volume 3

<i>Talmudic Judaism</i>	News
<i>Early Christianity</i>	
<i>Oriental Christianity</i>	
<i>Islam</i>	News

Volume 4

<i>The Christianity of the West</i>	News
"The subject throughout is the treatment of the question: on what the social and economic <i>uniqueness</i> of the West is founded, how it arose and especially in what relation it stands to the development of religious ethics."	News

Endnotes

- [1] Reprint with permission of the author.
- [2] On the following, see my introduction to Max Weber, *Asketischer Protestantismus und Kapitalismus. Schriften und Reden 1904-1911*, 2014,. Wherever possible, Weber's works are quoted according to the Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe (MWG). MWG I includes his works and speeches, II his letters, III his lectures. The statement I am referring to cannot be found in the second edition of this essay of 1920. English translations are also used throughout this essay, but sometimes altered.
- [3] The founding of the *Archiv* is described in Ghosh 2010.
- [4] See Max Weber 2001a (*Max Weber Gesamtausgabe vol. I/9*), pages 12-22 and pages 65-66.
- [5] A list of these indications can be found in Max Weber 2001a, pages 90-93.
- [6] All critiques written by H. Karl Fischer and Felix Rachfahl as well as Max Weber's replies, his anti-critiques, can be found in Max Weber 2001a. For an English edition of Weber's texts see Chalcraft and Harrington (eds.) 2001.
- [7] See Max Weber, „Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen. Religionssoziologische Skizzen. Einleitung. Der Konfuzianismus I, II,“ and Max Weber, „Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen (Zweiter Artikel). Der Konfuzianismus III, IV. (Schluß). Zwischenbetrachtung. Stufen und Richtungen der religiösen Weltablehnung.“ The dates of the volumes and the dates of the issue do not coincide. The articles appeared in issue 1 and issue 2 respectively already in 1915.
- [8] See Weber 1951. The translation is unfortunately very poor.
- [9] The lecture course on “Practical Economics” has still to be edited. It will appear as Max Weber, *Praktische Nationalökonomie. Vorlesungen 1895-1899* (Max Weber Gesamtausgabe vol. III/2).
- [10] A comparison between the two versions can be found in Weber 1989 (Max Weber Gesamtausgabe vol. I/19). See especially the synopsis of the tables of contents, pp 77-79.
- [11] See Weber 1904, pp. 22-87, esp. pp. 37-39. This volume was the first of the new series which Edgar Jaffé established together with Werner Sombart and Max Weber in 1904, Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe vol. I/9.
- [12] See Weber 2011b, pp. 380-396. (Max Weber Gesamtausgabe vol. III/6).
- [13] See the book-length article in Weber 2006, pp.300-747, esp. I. Einleitung (Max Weber Gesamtausgabe vol. I/6). The article appeared in 1908.
- [14] See, in addition to the appendix, my article “On the Place of the Study on Confucianism in Max Weber's Work.”
- [15] We distinguish in the meantime a prewar version from a postwar version of *Economy and Society*. The prewar version carries the subtitle *The Economy and the Societal Orders and Powers (Die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte)*, the postwar version the subtitle *Sociology (Soziologie)*. The prewar version is available in 5 volumes. One of these volumes is on religious communities (Religiöse Gemeinschaften), where the first version of the “Zwischenbetrachtung” can be found. This text was then turned into an article, linking the study on Confucianism with the study on Hinduism and Buddhism and published in two versions, 1915 and 1920 respectively. See Max Weber 2001b (Max Weber Gesamtausgabe vol. I/22-2).
- [16] Brackets are added. Disenchantment means in this context demagicalization of the means of salvation. There is a second meaning of disenchantment in Weber's work. See chapter 1 in my book *Die Entzauberung der Welt. Sechs Studien zu Max Weber*, 2009.
- [17] This juxtaposition between Confucian and Puritan rationalism remained unchanged between the first and the second version of the study. It can be found in the summary statement, entitled “Conclusions: Confucianism and Puritanism” (“Resultat: Konfuzianismus und Puritanismus”).
- [18] See Max Weber, *The Religion of India. The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*, translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (1958). This translation is even worse.
- [19] An English translation of the “Intermediate Reflection” („Zwischenbetrachtung“) can be found in Weber 1946, here “XIII. Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions.”

[20] For the importance of Neoconfucianism to the cultural history of traditional China and beyond, see de Bary 1981. For a critique of Weber's approach from the point of view of the specialist, see Metzger 1977. A wide range of issues connected with Weber's study and its shortcomings is discussed in Wei-Ming (ed.) 1991. See also Schluchter (ed.) 1983. A recent, very insightful contribution to Weber's 'history' of Imperial China is Faure 2013, and in general Faure 2006.

[21] The text entitled "Vorbemerkung" was written in fall 1919. Parsons translated it as "Author's Introduction;" Kalberg, as "Prefatory Remarks to Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion (1920)." Neither translation is correct.

[22] I am using Parsons' translation here.

[23] This was a hotly debated issue especially during the time when the so-called four tigers (Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea) developed very successful capitalist economies. It caused the so-called "Weber fever" in Taiwan.

[24] This was a hotly debated issue especially during the time when the so-called four tigers (Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea) developed very successful capitalist economies. It caused the so-called "Weber fever" in Taiwan.

[25] See Weber, *Religion of China*, page 248: "The Chinese in all probability would be quite capable, probably more capable than the Japanese, of assimilating capitalism which has technically and economically fully developed in the modern culture area." Similar statements can be found with regard to India.

[26] The cover story of a recent TIME International issue stated: "because of the one child policy, China's population is out of whack: Too few youths, too few women, too many elderly." ("Why China Needs More Children" 17). The gender disparity is remarkable: boy-girl ratio is 118:100.

[27] Within 20 years, China has managed to raise per capita income almost three times and to fight poverty (famine) to a remarkable degree. To put it figuratively: Where bicycles have been before, there are cars now. It holds at least for Beijing and Shanghai. It is predicted that in 2030 China will have the biggest economy in the world.

[28] See McGregor 2010 (in German: *Der rote Apparat. Chinas Kommunisten*, 2012), esp. chapter 1.

[29] See Max Weber Gesamtwerk vol. I/23, pages 375-381 (§§ 30 and 31). English translation in Weber 2013, pages 161-166; with a new preface by Guenther Roth.

[30] See McGregor 2010, chapter 2.

[31] In Weber's terms, the opening of social relations from the point of view of the party occurred to a certain extent during the last years. On the one hand, even an entrepreneur can now become a party member, on the other hand, consultation with bodies outside the party has increased. But this has not shattered the monopoly of the party with its affiliated organizations.

[32] See Weber 1989, esp. pages 267-274 (Max Weber Gesamtwerk vol. I/10). On page 270 we can read: "It is ridiculous to attribute to the current developed capitalism, as it exists in den United States and as it is imported to Russia right now, an inevitable 'elective affinity' to 'democracy' or even to 'freedom'" (my translation). Weber is convinced that capitalism when taken over from the outside could flourish even under "enlightened despotism."

[33] Gary Hamilton has alerted us to the fact that Weber equated the Occidental legal concept of patria potestas with the Chinese moral concept of xiao. This was not without consequences for his ideal type of patriarchalism, which became therefore strictly westernized. The application of this concept to traditional Chinese relationships, the five lines, distorted the traditional Chinese role-model. Here, for instance, the son does not submit to the father's command, but he acts like a son as it is prescribed by a role. See Hamilton, "Legitimation Domination in China: A Reconceptualization," paper presented at *Max Weber and Chinese Culture: The Religion of China Centennial International Conference 2013* (forthcoming), and Hamilton 1990.

[34] See Lin 2008, esp. pages 43-45. The question of embeddedness and disembeddedness poses an intriguing problem in case of China, however. On the macro level, the embeddedness of the economy into the polity seems to be counterproductive, whereas on the micro level economic relations proper may profit from emdeddedness.

[35] See also the insightful article from a Weberian perspective by Ku 2007. He mentions the spiritual vacuum caused by the "Cultural Revolution," but is skeptical whether a revitalized Confucianism would do the job. See page 85.

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Author's biography

Wolfgang Schluchter is one of the most important commentators and scholars of Max Weber's work in the last fifty years. His "neo-evolutionary" approach to Weber's work has influenced numerous authors such as Jürgen Habermas. In dozens of books dedicated to Max Weber, Schluchter reconstructed both the historical and systematic content of the Weberian work. In addition to his analysis of Weberian studies on the great world religions, his reconstruction of Weber's moral theory stands out.

Rethinking the State: How Necessary is a Farewell to Max Weber?

HANS-JÜRGEN BURCHARDT (UNIVERSITY OF KASSEL, GERMANY)

Abstract

Our understanding of the modern State is being called into question by the global rise in nationalism, exclusion, authoritarianism, and protectionism, which are already shaping the agendas of influential states. Social scientists and political elites have struggled to respond adequately to these challenges, rejecting these rising political patterns more by negation (as anti-liberal or pre-modern) rather than using them as a cause for reflection on the predominant political understanding. This article proposes a more productive engagement with these trends through examining the usefulness of the ideas of one of the most important state theoreticians, Max Weber.

Keywords: State Theory, Max Weber, Norbert Elias, Postcolonialism, North-South Relations, Post-Development

Rethinking the State: How Necessary is a Farewell to Max Weber?

The year 2020 saw the 100th anniversary of the death of Max Weber. The following contribution aims to stimulate an analytic proposal to think with Weber beyond Weber and to open up new options for state analysis.

Our liberal understanding of the state is currently being called into question in a number of ways: nationalism, exclusion, authoritarianism and protectionism are rising globally and are already shaping the agendas of influential states. Modern Western conceptions of the state, which for a long time have been the most important points of reference for contemporary analyses, are coming under pressure –more than ever with the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, however, social scientists and the political elites have struggled to respond adequately to these challenges. Instead, these rising political patterns are vilified and rejected by negation (as, for instance, anti-liberal or pre-modern) rather than using them as a cause for (self-) reflection on the predominant political understanding.

This article develops a more productive engagement with these recent developments. First, it outlines the two central dimensions that underlie Western understandings of the state while identifying the need for a new, context-

sensitive method of analysis. Subsequently, the usefulness of the ideas of Max Weber, one of most important state theoreticians to date, will be examined. Through this analysis, the article builds a case for resuscitating the Norbert Elias figuration model for understanding recent societal trends. Some brief examples will illustrate the deployment of this methodical framework.

1. Limits of Western Political Understanding

Up to the present day, engagement with the state has been characterised by one constant: in virtually all methodical and theoretical approaches, the Western state is taken as the central point of reference. This Eurocentrism is comprised of two dimensions: the first level is an understanding of development as an *evolutionary process* aligned to the achievement of an abstract telos projected onto the future and judged by European experiences and standards. Here, development is always imagined in strictly sequential terms rather than as simultaneous coexistence. This interpretation conceives of the emergence of the European state as a continuous process of modernisation, which through secularisation and rationalisation obey a kind of natural impetus. European state formation is thus stylised as universal, a totality

that excludes alternatives. Critics, however, have long pointed out that the consolidation of European states did not follow identical patterns but differing and contradictory dynamics in which neither the rational legal authority and bureaucratic administration nor the capitalist logic of exploitation spread continuously as a linear outcome of development. [1] Moreover, state monopoly on the use of force and taxation, the most important pillars of modern statehood, were established in European state formation processes intrinsically through arms races and armed conflicts between competing rulers, which led to a convergence between resource extraction and a coercive apparatus. [2] Recognising that it was only through war that modern statehood became established underscores the uniqueness of European development and the impossibility of transferring it to other countries or regions. [3] Nonetheless, most state research continues to use Western experiences as the ground for typification while interpreting other forms of statehood as an expression of imperfect Western states. [4]

The second dimension of this Western understanding of the state is an androcentric, *individualistically theorised subject concept* informed by liberal theory and conceiving of the individual as a rationally acting maximiser of self-interest or freedom who shapes both the state and societal development accordingly. This is a cultural concept of the secularised West, which, as first outlined by René Descartes, stylises rational control as a virtue to be internalised and that was subsequently, via Adam Smith, made describable and measurable through the category of (economic) interest (Hirschman). [5] This understanding of the rational utilitarian individual promised reliable calculability of the irrational: human beings, with unrestrained passions transmuted into cherished interests that increasingly made acting strategic and thus calculable. Since measurability and calculability are central to today's science, liberal conceptions of the subject as an individual, rational maximiser of self-interest remain powerful today, shaping our understanding of institutions as incentive structures and aggregations of rational actions.

Through this idea of freedom and self-responsibility, the human being became

historically, socially, gender-specifically, culturally and locally de-contextualised. [6] What is omitted from this method, however, is that individuals also always constitute themselves through collective forms of identity. This should not be considered a fundamental criticism of individualism but should primarily be understood as an effort to integrate subjective collective relations and affections more strongly into analysis. This is not to say that the subjects of distinct social or ethnic groups or nations are in principle more strongly shaped by the group or by affect, but rather that different roads of state formation have led to different balances between ratio and affect as well as between the individual and the collective. Omitting precisely this insight is the reason why many social scientists, alongside political elites, have failed to recognise in a timely manner recent articulations against the establishment's liberal politics and how to cope with them. This lack of understanding often results in helpless moral repudiations and frequently becomes counterproductive. An up-to-date understanding of society and state, however, has to overcome the Eurocentric tunnel vision and adopt a context-sensitive and decentred perspective towards the state both methodically and theoretically.

2. Max Weber and the State Today

One who analyses the state talks about Max Weber. With his understanding of the state as a compulsory political organisation with continuous operations (*politischer Anstaltsbetrieb*), which successfully enforces the monopoly of legitimate physical force within territorially bounded orders (Weber, *Economy and Society*), Weber created a definition that influences and orientates state theory down to the present day. This broad recognition of the Weberian concept of the state is rooted in its multidimensionality: it addresses the relationship between force and legitimacy, which the political institutions of the state have to arrange and organise, thus emphasising the double function of the state as an instance of authority and as a form of community. The popularity of Weber's ideas was enhanced by the fact that, as a legal scholar with formal juridical

formula and a focus on administration and law, Weber could rely on the support of the influential legalist and institutionalist state research, while his analytical idea of the state as an organisation or relation of authority (*Herrschaftsverhältnis*) also guaranteed him the interest of political state philosophy.

The de facto failure of state formation processes in, for instance, Afghanistan and Somalia, however, reminds us that the Weberian understanding of the state has always only corresponded to a fraction of the state forms worldwide. While in Weber's sense the modern state is predominantly understood as an autonomous apparatus separated from society and economy, i.e. where the separation of state authority from the economic and social spheres is warranted in the form of an 'impersonal power,' [7] many states in the Global South –and not only there– are characterised by an overlapping coexistence and reciprocal interpenetration of heterogeneous, formal, and informal systems of power and regulation which undermine the homogeneity and integrity of the state and may even constitute regulatory systems inconsistent with and/or antagonistic to it. The limited effectiveness of the state monopoly, the weak institutionalised control mechanisms of state power, the superimposition, penetration or substitution of formal institutions and procedures by other arrangements, and the absence of civil instances that socially mediate and control state policies generate political patterns and structures in which personal power rather than impersonal power prevails. [8]

The explanatory power of Weber's theory of the state monopoly of legitimate force has been further eroded by recent developments that have caused the concept of the enlightened citizen as the primary subject of political action to lose influence in the West, while under globalisation and regionalisation of economic activities, juridical space and state territory have increasingly diverged. Yet criticisms of the Weber-influenced Western understanding of the state have failed to confront Weber's ideas themselves with the two stated dimensions of the critiques of Eurocentrism. Remarkably, to this day neither the exponents of Weber's theoretical tradition nor its critics have made

the larger effort of exploring whether his work could provide stimuli for new and more context-sensitive research.

Examining this neglected question shall be the first task. In order to approach this systematically, Weber's work will be evaluated on the basis of the following questions extrapolated from criticisms of Eurocentrism: (1) whether and how individual and collective action, i.e. the relation between structure and agency in the field of the state, are addressed and made empirically measurable; (2) how context-sensitive Weber's understanding of the subject is and, in particular, the relevance attributed to affect; (3) the extent to which Weber's methodical approach directly integrates context factors; (4) whether the androcentrism that frequently underlies the Western understanding of the state is addressed; and (5) the extent to which a local contextualisation of the object of study takes place and/or an evolutionary universalism is advocated for.

Structure and Agency

For Weber, the state is grounded in the individual actions of individual persons. Thus, the state can be depicted as a complex of socially interdependent interactions (*Zusammenhandeln*). Central to this is the importance of predominant moral concepts, especially religious ethics, to which human beings partially submit on the grounds of their yearning for salvation. Thus, for Weber, the Western individual's desire for the intensified religious provision of meaning or purpose (*Sinnstiftung*) has through a *rational conduct* of life led to depersonalised routines and mechanisms for the collective administration of imperative authority or domination (*Herrschaftsverwaltung*). This in turn promoted new social action, which conditioned and accustomed the individual to rational control and generated consent, and could institutionalise itself as a 'shell as hard as steel' (original in Weber, *Soziologie* 131, 147; translation in Baehr 153). Simultaneously with his contemporary Werner Sombart and his concept of 'economic behaviour' (*Wirtschaftsgesinnung*), Weber thus developed a multi-layered model of analysis that, through the dimension of

values, convincingly couples the dimensions of agency and structure. This systematised alternation between the micro- and macro-level allowed Weber to develop a consistent model of analysis that avoids economic reductionism. This is certainly one of his most significant achievements, and it opened up new perspectives for state and authority analyses.

A Context-Sensitive Subject Conception

For Weber, action alone does not make the state, however: only the individual's meaningful order-oriented social action (*Gemeinschaftshandeln*) constitutes authority and the state. This is why Weber's methodical focus exclusively rests on forms of human behaviour that are subjectively meaningful to him, which for Weber is the actual foundation of sociological analysis. He hereby typologises meaningful behaviour and attributes to purposive-rational action (*zweckrationales Handeln*) the *greatest evidence of empirical research*; that is, action in which the individual actor's behaviour relates to his/her own expectations towards the behaviour of others or an object in an effort to pursue his/her own interests as successfully as possible through the use of a certain amount of (un)conscious self-reflection (Weber, *Soziologie* 99; Weber, *Economy and Society*). In other words, and to avoid a common misunderstanding, Weber by no means assumed that human social behaviour was principally instrumental and rationally determined. Rather, he had a clear view on 'instrumentally irrational' affects and emotional states. In fact, Weber constructed instrumental rationality as a 'borderline case' for his methodical approach; affects and fallacies could thus be classified as 'deviations', and a type could be described according to the degree of deviation. Thus, for Weber, each subject fundamentally has a disposition for rationality, the specific manifestation of which he categorises as a type rather than comprehending it as a mutual processual contingency between structure and agency. [9] This understanding establishes him as one of the founders of *methodological individualism*, which still today enforces the claim to the universalisation of Western theory and thus for good reason is central to criticisms

of Eurocentrism.

Consideration of Context Factors in Method

Weber understands the Western process of rationalisation in the context of the development of normative interpretive patterns, which become an objective frame of reference for social action and thus constitute the ideational legitimation basis of interest-guided individual action. Here, for Weber, the administrations of state and authority are key expressions of individually internalised value and norms systems and focal points of social action. He then believed one could identify the underlying types of authority in an axiologically neutral fashion via an analysis of reasonable patterns of action. Thus, Weber's method consists of a clear formulation of a problem, an approach of explanatory understanding and an ideal-typical technique strictly based on value freedom (Weber, *Society* 263; Weber, *Economy and Society*). The methodical prioritisation of instrumentally rational behaviour and the attempt to statically describe state and authority through typification not only starkly reduces context sensitivity, but also negates it entirely through the postulate of value freedom. After all, typification required Weber to develop often functionally or rationally guided and allegedly universally valid attributions or categories with a claim to comparative systematisation that correspondingly required de-contextualisation. [10]

Androcentrism

There are only scattered comments on gender issues in Weber's work, such as in the context of cultural anthropological examinations of the gendered division of labour and the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy. Neither his sociologies of religion and authority nor his modernisation theoretical analyses capture or theoretically conceptualise gender issues in a methodically systematic way. At best, then, Weber can be assigned a lack of sensitivity towards the constricted androcentric Western view of subjects. [11]

Local Contextualisation versus Evolutionist Universalism

While Weber's scholarship was driven by an effort to establish a universal theory of the state and authority, he did not assume that Western rationalism itself was universal and therefore, in principle, transferable. In this sense, Weber was quite conscious of the fact that the use of force and war coupled with the containment and expansion of the market played a central role in the genesis of the modern Western state. Furthermore, to him the development from the Protestant ethic to capitalism is neither the causal nor the linear process it is occasionally represented as being. Rather, the intentional behaviour of many individuals (religious salvation) has led to a non-intentional overall change (rational modernity). Indeed, this 'paradox of rationalisation' (Schluchter), in which religious meaning- and identity-giving norms and practices as a form of demystification mutated in the West into rational and efficient but meaningless domination, is for Weber quite unique. Therefore, Weber's theory of the development of worldviews (*Weltbilder*) aspires to be universal historical, but it is not, in contrast to the positions of many of his later apologists, universalist.

Thus, for example, it is easy to explain through Weber why Western efforts at state building frequently fail: these policies understand the development of administrative capacities as a lever of Western modernisation seeking to increase individual rationality by increasing state rationality. This, however, constitutes an inversion of cause and effect; in the West, rational authority was only established after the internalisation of individual rationality. Furthermore, when, as in the West, the transferred instrumentally rational principles have a destructive effect on existing structures of meaning, this actually drives counter reactions, such as extreme traditionalism and fundamentalism.

On the whole, it can be stated that Weber provides some methodical and analytical responses to the critiques of Eurocentrism. With his proposal for viewing actors' interpretive patterns and moral concepts as important determinants of action orientations, which shape (the objectives of) institutions as much as they

are shaped by them, he innovatively connects structure and agency in the analysis. Moreover, he by no means embodies the universalist idea of development as an evolutionary process guided by Western modernity but actually displays sensitivity to local contextualisation. However, his subject construct, which principally makes recourse to reasonableness and instrumental rationality, undoubtedly makes Weber one of the originators of the second dimension of Eurocentrism. This core idea of his entire work, which culminates in coupling the notion of the state as a compulsory political institution (*Anstalt*) with that of a rational authority itself based on the rational behaviours of individuals, renders Weber only partially suitable for decentred research. [12]

Transcending Max Weber: A Plea for Greater Passion in Analysis

Context-sensitive state analysis would have to integrate Weber's suggestion of understanding institutions as sedimented forms of subject action with a subject concept that also considers affects. Therefore, what is essentially advocated here is to focus, within a changed subject perspective, on the rationally and affect-guided interrelations between humans, their social environments and the state; that is, a *complementary* view of the ongoing and visible reciprocal forms of articulations and a systematic analysis of this interwovenness among individual action and (state) collective as a *process*.

This effort to transcend the Weberian rational subject towards one that considers its relations to society and institutions has been a concern of numerous social theorists, including Bourdieu, Fraser, Foucault, Giddens and Habermas, yet a complete separation from the concept of the rational subject has in most cases only been partially achieved, or these approaches have remained too firmly rooted in the experiences of Western societies. In the following, I will refer to a classic that appears to offer particularly inspiring responses to the previously stated criticisms of Eurocentrism, thus providing interesting suggestions for context-sensitive state research: Norbert Elias' figuration model.

This choice may come as a surprise. The Elias civilisation theory, in particular, has not only been criticised for its historical representations and interpretations, but also for its theoretical premises. [13] After all, the title of his *The Civilising Process* (1994 [1939]) already evokes associations of a normative and teleological understanding of development, which in addition explicitly refers to European social trajectories. Indeed, the view Elias expresses in the book, that the development process of Western states is best described as a process of increasing affect control, can and has to be questioned, especially in consideration of some recent dynamics of Western societies. [14] Such criticisms and the persistent ignorance towards making the Eliasan approach fruitful for decentred state research are probably derived from the tragic fact that Elias is not only one of the most cited scholars in the social sciences, but also one of the most misinterpreted. [15] The multifarious and indeed justified criticisms, however, have largely obfuscated the fact that the model of figuration presents a template that excellently accomplishes the complementary integration of affect in social and state analyses, while its relational understanding of the individual and the collective simultaneously facilitates new methodical approaches. This, in fact, would be in the spirit of Elias: as he once stated, the notion of figuration seeks to provide a conceptual tool through which the flawed society–individual duality can be overcome (Elias, *What is Sociology?* 123ff). [16] The following section will outline the kind of inspirations that Elias provides for decentred research. To facilitate a methodical comparison with Max Weber, the work of Elias will be examined in accordance with the same dimensions already deployed with respect to Weber. In addition, specific positions of Weber will be referred to in a contrasting fashion. [17]

Structure and Agency

Just like Weber, Norbert Elias attempts to methodically and theoretically decode the relations between subject and (state) collective action. In this regard, however, his approach is significantly more complex than Weber's, as he does not take individual subjective behaviour

as the starting point of his examinations. Rather, he consistently assumes a dialectical relation between the collective context and the individual sphere of life, which also includes the affect dimension. In order to explicitly balance the two dimensions of structure and agency, he disaggregates the understanding of state and society formation into *figurations* in which a multitude of persons, who to him are not individuals, are bound together in different ways through a range of interrelated, unstable power balances. Thus, the figuration approach is based on a theory of power relations that, while viewing power as control over resources, does not understand the exercise of power as a unipolar mechanism but as fluctuating transformations. The social force field of power does not rest in individual human beings (and not only in the political) but in what happens between people and in what is changing. Power is the dynamic essence of interpersonal relationships, which means that its recognition, legitimation, counter power and the possibility of empowerment for those over whom power is exercised are also always integral. For Elias, power is *the* central relationship attribute between people and authority, the examination of which permits the empirical investigation of structure and agency (Elias, *What is Sociology?*).

A Context-Sensitive Subject Conception

Elias is convinced that the 'homo clausus', i.e. the essentialist individual isolated from society, does not exist. [18] Rather, humans can only be conceived of in the plural, as they are integrated in inter-generational interdependences that they shape as much as they are shaped by them in their affections, thoughts, and actions. Here, rather than understanding rationality and affect as antipodes, in which one side neutralises the other, Elias conceives of these as a complementary relation, and consideration of both sides is necessary to understand social action and state formation. For Elias, affects are also constitutive, that is, humans are always rational and passionate at the same time. He thus assumes that individual action is not primarily grounded in a rationally guided individualism, as was ideal-typically assumed

by Weber for the West and to some extent empirically demonstrable, but that the individual simultaneously tends to identify via collectives (often the family, tribe, sex, class, ethnicity and nation), organises in these, orients its action in accordance with them, and in this is also guided by affects. This is so because, within actions, emotions cannot be fully separated from cognitive understanding, nor are ritual acts, such as state ceremonies, performed completely unreflectingly or unconsciously. An examination of the particular relations and intertwinings of affective action and (state) collective then facilitates a context-specific analysis without predefining all subjects through the specific Western rationality–affect balance.

Consideration of Context Factors in Method

Elias rigorously opposes static analyses and typologisations as introduced by Weber and principally criticises the method of generating de-contextualised isolated factors or variables. Instead, he proposes approaching the object of study via its relationship dynamics. In this, social practice becomes the focal point of his analysis, as to him it is within social *processes* in particular that the individual and the (state) collective become identifiable and describable in their totality. [19] For Elias, the human being is not simply embedded in processes, it *is* the process; the only immutable thing about humans is their mutability emanating from evolutionary change (Elias, *What is Sociology?* 108ff). Thus, Elias encourages future research to rely less on typologisations and associated quantitative analyses and adopt a stronger relational perspective rather than a strictly static and/or (field) isolated one.

Androcentrism

Throughout his work, Elias problematises androcentrism at great length, to which the important thesis of ‘situated knowledge’ is immanent (Haraway). By applying his figuration approach, he formulated key ideas that are intensely discussed within today’s gender research, particularly in intersectional approaches. For him, gender relations are also

dynamic power balances that unfold among the sexes at the macro-level of the states and in the gendered division of labour, as well as in subjective and affective relations at the micro-level. [20] In his studies, he also showed that power balances between men and women always operate simultaneously in the public sphere, in the economy and politics, in the family, and in marriage and sexuality. Conversely, changes in the political framework, such as through reforms, also shapes gender relations (Brinkgreve).

Local Contextualisation versus Evolutionist Universalism

Elias’s integration of the affect dimension enabled him to create a strong contextual connection between social and state analysis, and history, culture and the local beyond the micro-perspective. Accordingly, Elias imagines development processes as models in space and time while emphasising that not only intra- but also inter-state influences have to be integrated in the analysis by understanding the latter as an extension of chains of interdependence. Subsequently, Elias extends his elaborations to countries in the Global South, convinced that his methodical framework of figuration is open and therefore, in principle, applicable to different forms of social development (Elias, *What is Sociology?* 162). In accordance with Elias’s conception of power, social and state structures are then produced through the volitional acts, plans and passions (as articulations of power) of many. However, due to existing interdependences and fluctuations, these social processes in their totality are uncontrolled, that is, social and state development is always contingent. In this regard, Elias clearly transcends Weber; for Elias, the contingency of social change is constitutive. Thereby he clearly rejects universalism.

On the whole, the Eliasan focus on social interdependences permits the development of proposals on how the characteristics between the individual and the collective may be systematically explored, categorised, and thus made accessible for empirical measurement. On the one hand, Elias develops the category of *affective valences*, i.e. an also affectively

shaped web of relationships between people, in which for Elias human satisfaction is always primarily related to other humans (Elias, *What is Sociology?* 133). With regard to larger units, such as the state, such affective attachments are not restricted to humans but also involve unifying symbols, such as coats of arms and flags, emotive concepts, such as the homeland, or emotionalised mass events, such as football. [21] Here, affect articulation is already becoming directly related to (state) collective articulation. This example in particular illustrates how Elias, with his focus on affect, avoids cultural relativism. While culture and the state usually have ‘the nation’, ‘ethnic identities’ or some other historical myth as their central reference points, affects for Elias always also refer to social positionings; traditions, for example, are not only locally or ethnically rooted but directly tied to changes in state and society (Hobsbawm and Ranger). Change itself moves into the focus of analysis rather than solely viewing the respective state as the origin and place of shaping power.

Furthermore, Elias’s categories of integration and differentiation facilitate the measurement of the quality and quantity of social interdependences (Elias, *What is Sociology?* 133). *Integration*, above all, is a physical violence-reducing group survival function which produces social structures, societal organisation and, finally, state monopolies. *Differentiation* and the division of labour in particular (which in capitalism reached a new intensity) deepen and broaden the interdependences. Both processes are inextricably intertwined. This means, for example, that the state formation of bourgeois society cannot be separated from the emergence of capitalism. Therefore, Elias does not place economic structural constraints or political regime configurations at the centre of analysis, but rather the power differentials and power balances that integrate these chains of interdependence. Elias systematises these three categories into a basic regulatory triad in which differentiation represents the control dimension of extra-human contexts of events, integration represents the control of inter-human relationships, and his assumed affect reduction represents self-control (Elias, *What is Sociology?* 147). With this approach, which

combines psychogenetic and sociogenetic studies, Elias develops definable and empirically deployable categories that permit the analysis of social and personal structures within a specific state process.

Thus, Elias’s figuration model first focuses on affects and explicitly also examines these with regard to their collective expressions through state symbols and forms of political articulation (e.g., populism). Second, it is non-essentialist both with respect to its understanding of the subject and of structures, as it seeks to relate social and political with economic and other determinants, the interdependences of which have to be empirically determined and can lead to varying social (socialisation) modes and patterns of the state. This means that the figuration model is neither state nor market centric and that it operates largely free from normative presuppositions. This comes very close to approaching states in an unreserved manner. Third, the model’s category of integration further allows for the scrutiny of perpetuated and naturalised social and political exclusion as simultaneities of inside and outside, which is a globally increasingly relevant component virtually unexplored by Weber. [22] Fourth, by contrast, via the notion of fluctuating power balances, Elias takes into account the dynamics of spaces of social order and their forms of legitimation, placing power and social positioning at the centre of his explorations. [23] Therefore, by not neglecting affect and context, Elias provides a form of analysis that avoids slipping into cultural relativism and ethnologisation. [24] Fifth, with its notion of space–time, the concept offers not only the possibility of a strong contextualisation of the state, but also a methodical-analytical perspective on how social processes in societies can be traced and explained as interdependent (including transnational) multi-level trajectories.

With his figuration approach, Elias thus radically breaks with the two narratives of Eurocentrism. In this, just like Weber, he connects structure and agency. However, Elias offers not only a consistent but also an open, context-sensitive methodical framework that is particularly apt for research into the particularities of states. This methodical understanding is best illustrated by a concrete example. For this purpose, we select

a major country in the Global South, which at the beginning of the 20th century had the same per capita income as Germany and that in 1940 was still predicted by agricultural economist Colin Clark to become one of the four nations with the highest per capita income worldwide within the next thirty years: Argentina. Soon after this prognosis, however, Argentina was hit by severe social and political dislocation and economic decline; instability, poverty and deep inequalities have since become key features of society. Most commonly this is attributed to structural (e.g., deferral of agricultural reform) and institutional (e.g., hyper-presidentialism and weak rule of law) distortions. However, the Eliasan figuration approach could expand such stunted explanations by introducing the following considerations: on the one hand, the emergence of the Argentine nation was based on massive external resource influx. Referred to as Belle Époque, which lasted until the First World War, this nourished an almost forty-year economic boom during which the nation experienced a cultural heyday. The leading agricultural elites quickly learned to optimise the use of their fertile soils while banking on a poorly diversified export basket of everyday necessities (wool, grain and meat), which ensured a relatively steady demand, even during international sales crises. On the other hand, liberal migration laws that demanded few concessions be made towards the new homeland led to a remarkably high immigration rate; at the turn of the century, one-third of the population was made up of migrants. The economic boom facilitated high collective upward mobility, leading to the formation of a broad middle class relatively early within the region while easing integration in a general sense. At the same time, however, this complicated the emergence of identity-establishing collectives and intensified the strong self-referential acting of the subjects motivated by gains in freedom. Ideal (family) relations shaped by the European countries of origin remained important reference points for the elites and later migrants. Argentina viewed itself more as a European outpost than as a nation of its own. Such collective experiences in state formation generally favoured outward-oriented solution options, which impeded efforts in national identity politics, the development

of political institutions and the consolidation of their conflict resolution mechanisms. Therefore, due to the massive resource influx and the European migratory background of broad sectors of society, no profound *integration* and *differentiation* occurred in Argentina. The elites never had to struggle for a central monopoly as the cash inflows initially ensured sufficient resources (and power) for all relevant groups. It did not appear necessary to build up a strong central state; the majority of institutions, such as monetary currency, laws, state bureaucracies, and even the establishment of a capital city were only created after state formation, and the pronounced non-compliance of (not only) the elites in paying taxes to the present day (Cetrángolo et al) demonstrates the state's limited legitimation and powers of self-assertion. Self-interests were best realized through the development of social conflict potentials (and violence) rather than through active participation in the state; progressive *affect control* was neither necessary nor conducive to this. The economic concentration on exports, which due to a redistribution of export revenues was never abandoned in its final logic even during periods of inward orientation, further reduced the need for social differentiation. Therefore, growing interdependence, with which Elias by reference to Europe associates first consolidation followed by gradual horizontalisation and de-personification of state power, never occurred. This explains why populism and violence are still important political means in Argentina today. The latter, in particular, is remembered in the form of the most recent military dictatorship, which even by regional comparison was extremely brutal and perfidious. For Elias, social interdependence is inextricably intertwined with affect control: if the first is coarse-meshed, the probability of the use of political violence increases. [25]

However, the figuration approach also offers concrete explanations with respect to the current political developments in the USA and in Europe. It allows us to link Thomas Picketty's research findings on the dramatic increase in social inequality in industrialised nations with Zygmunt Baumann's insight that nationalism and reference to ethnic affinity constitute a substitute for integration factors in a disintegrating society

(*Strangers at Our Door*). Accordingly, due to growing inequality, social integration in Western societies is decreasing, and the importance of affects is again increasing. Initial manifestations of this are the successful mobilisation of and support for political discourses and behaviour that strongly appeal to the emotions and passions of people, and through this they seek to revitalise forms of identity formation that may often have been suppressed or hitherto regarded as functionally counterproductive. These more recent processes are, in accordance with Elias, indeed alarming. After all, when banking on exclusion and mobilised against minorities or more vulnerable people, they may subsequently lead to direct violence. Elias's approach, however, also leaves no doubt about how to deal with this threat: the dimensions of integration and differentiation have to be strengthened politically. This is only possible through broader participation, which would have to be functionally legitimate and rest on positive attributions in terms of identity rather than on exclusion.

Towards New State Research with Max and Norbert

To be sure, an updated deployment of Norbert Elias's theory also requires its revision in various respects. In order to make the figuration model applicable for contemporary research, the three categories of the Eliasan triad should be rethought. With respect to the category of *affective valences* it should first be positively noted that this implies historical retrospective (i.e. the historical social research approach), which in principle promises a decentred analysis, as here Elias works with a three-generation view. Nonetheless, for the sake of the practicability of data collection, it has to be asked whether this method could be optimised in research economic terms. A further advantage is that both a historical perspective and the integration of affects provide key criteria that permit a systematic contextualisation of social and state processes without being restricted to local particularities.

However, it would be necessary to clarify to what extent Elias's interest in progressive affect control and, therefore, self-control would have to be extended towards other motives for action.

For example, Elias stylises competition as the principal source of social dynamics while, just like Weber, insufficiently engaging with cooperation. Elias assumes an archaic fear of the individual towards the Other (nature, humans) as the driving force of such competitive constellations, which can be transformed into security principally through domination; this is an interpretation that essentially follows Hobbesian natural law and Sigmund Freud's conception of the human being (Wickham and Evers 2-11). Context-sensitive research, however, would have to acknowledge a broader range of motives for action in order to capture the relevant aspects of social change. After all, the cohesiveness of a state requires not only the internal renunciation of violence but also empathy and solidarity. In this respect, a synthesis with Spinoza's affect cataloguing appears useful, starting with the basic affects of pleasure and displeasure, which enter awareness as greed and then lead to secondary affects (of which hate and love are fundamental). This would permit a broader research focus (Lord 83) as, in Spinoza's ontology, affections not only have an effect on the individual but also on other relational categories, such as identity, power and politics, while in turn being influenced by them. [26]

As regards the issue of *integration*, the assumption that the diffusion of affects primarily occurs as a statist top-down tendency has to be corrected; this is an assumption that has largely been made relative by more recent historical analyses. Moreover, although Elias explicitly delimits his category of *differentiation* from structural functionalist assumptions, he nonetheless implicitly draws from these in his own analysis. In this respect, it would have to be examined, inter alia, whether a less passionate engagement with those theoretical approaches opposed by Elias could facilitate new syntheses that would permit the development of indicators and operationalisations without having to neglect the research focus on state processes. [27] In addition, the degree of integration and the thickness of differentiation that state interdependence chains have to dispose of in order for them to maintain their efficacy and not to rupture would have to be further specified. This is above all of significance if the analytically

relevant transnational dimensions of state interweavings, as also considered by Elias, are to be analysed with respect to their degrees of efficacy (Mann).

Two other tasks are of cardinal importance. On the one hand, further development of the figuration model would require continued serious consideration of the criticisms of androcentrism in all respects (Walby). On the other hand, the Eliasan model's understanding of state change and the subject–structure relationship would have to be vigorously calibrated with the positions and knowledge of non-European doctrines and world views, as well as with the state of knowledge of postcolonialism in order to clarify whether and what analogies exist and where syntheses are possible for an even more refined application of the figuration model to states in the Global South.

These are undoubtedly only some initial explorations of the directions in which the figuration model may be further developed as a methodological toolbox for a decentred analysis of state and society. The fundamental objective would be to sharpen its categories, update it to the latest state of knowledge, and adapt it to the corresponding conditions of the current dynamics of state processes in order to develop new indicators for empirical inquiries.

In sum, the preceding systematisation sought to illustrate that with respect to empirically grounded and decentred state research, Eliasan figuration analysis is more advantageous than the Weberian approach. Max Weber's analyses of the state and authority rest on arguments for a universalism that is becoming increasingly counterproductive, both politically and scientifically. Weber himself provided the basis for this through his one-dimensional, reductionist subject concept. [27] Nonetheless, Max Weber equally offers assistance in the effort to refine the Eliasan figuration model. After all, one crucial element is absent from Elias's significantly more complex social analysis: the orientation of action. Today, as affects in the politics of Western societies once again gain in apparent relevance, an application of Elias's extended subject concept appears expedient. However, Weber continues to provide assistance to Elias as he rightly admonishes us not to lose sight of ethics

and values. In today's rapidly changing world, such a method framed by an extended figuration analysis appears to be a productive approach towards better understanding contemporary states and societies.

Endnotes

[1] See Ertmann 1997.

[2] See Centeno and Enriquez 2016; and Tilly 1985, 1990.

[3] See Centeno 1997; and Schlichte 2005.

[4] For example, after 9/11 by reference to the new deficit concept of *failing states*, state research unabashedly relied on Western models, while political consulting called for their reproduction through *state building* (see Fukuyama 2004).

[5] Certainly, by reference to Smith's earlier writing *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, it has been pointed out that this ascription would do the Scottish moral philosopher wrong (see Máiz 2010). However, what can be stated with certainty is that *The Wealth of Nations* became a key foundation of social study and research focused on rational interests.

[6] For critical accounts, see Chakrabarty 2000; Coronil 1997; and Samir 1989.

[7] See Gerstenberger 2007.

[8] See Schlichte 2005.

[9] In a synchronic approach, this presupposition of an always existent subject disposition for rationality then permitted Weber in his sociology of religion to categorise different cultures in which no rational authority had developed. The approaches of 'multiple modernities' (see Eisenstadt 2006) picked up this thread. Even though it was not the intention of the inventor, such a methodical design once more promotes the analysis and evaluation of state configurations against a Western backdrop. After all, Western rational behaviour is not only of conceptual centrality to the analysis, but it also is empirically all-encompassing as all aspects of behaviour (and with it social and political institutions) are rationally systematised and geared towards a particular objective or stipulated in accordance with an ideal value.

[10] It should be noted, though, that Weber's method is not entirely de-contextualised. His dimension of values and ethics, or the complex of meaning (*Sinnzusammenhang*) of action, certainly always also reflects local contexts. Yet, Weber largely leaves such value setting to religion as an almost anthropological constant, which, despite variations, to him always constituted a soteriological expectancy (*Heilserwartung*).

[11] See Ciaffa 1998.

[12] This also applies to the continued efforts to recycle Weber's categories for analyses of contemporary global changes in state and society. For example, the concepts of

cosmopolitanism (see Beck 2006) and neo-institutionalist studies (e.g., Acemoglu & Robinson 2012; North et al. 2009) are noteworthy in this respect.

[13] For an overview, see Dunning and Hughes 2013.

[14] Baumann 2000.

[15] Gabriel and Mennell also explain this ignorance by quoting an email from Alan Sica: “The reason Americans don’t take to Elias is that he writes about European historical and cultural change and American sociologists don’t feel comfortable with that sort of thing, except for [Jack] Goldstone and that small lot; and because he is theoretically very adventurous and synthetic, and they don’t go for that; and because he trashed Parsons, who many of them liked back in the day; and because he could be mistaken for a closet Freudian, which they don’t like; and because he brings up really obnoxious qualities of humankind, which they particularly don’t like; and because he wrote a helluva lot of stuff, which takes a long time to read, they don’t have time; and because ‘figuration’ is a word that has a distinctly effete connotations in this country, and sounds like art history” (18).

[16] For an overview, see Dépelteau and Landini 2013.

[17] Surprisingly, to date hardly any scholarly work appears to be available that systematically compares the theories of Weber and Elias. Despite differing starting points (meaning giving norms on the one hand and changes in moral behavioural patterns on the other), the key interests are identical, which are namely to understand and explain the genesis of Western capitalism and the state.

[18] Elias, who according to him was highly appreciative of Weber’s work in many respects, was aware of Weber’s reductionist subject concept, which probably inspired his own reflections (see Goudsblom 2003).

[19] Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault and Anthony Giddens, amongst others, whose influential social theories are also based on studies of social practice, were strongly influenced by this approach. See also Gabriel and Mennell (2011) for Elias’s international impact on social science research.

[20] In gender research, the latter has long been referred to as ‘doing gender’ (see West & Zimmermann 1987).

[21] For the latter, see also Elias and Dunning 2003.

[22] See also Elias and Scotson 2008; Rehbein and Souza 2015.

[23] This relational understanding of power bears a double benefit for state research: on the one hand, it *per se* avoids the power-blind reductionism still often practiced with a control-oriented and technocratic bias and the economic or functionalist narrowness of power-sensitive approaches. On the other hand, it does not restrict the definition of power to the Weber-influenced and still widespread notion of power as a unilateral assertion of one person’s will in a social relation; that is, the exertion of influence on others (‘power over’) as an interpretation of power that inadequately simplifies the contextual analysis of complex power relations. After all, if such a one-dimensional

approach (also often by reference to Weber) is coupled with a corresponding formalist and institutionalist angle, this can hardly be expected to produce valid knowledge about the current state dynamics. However, Elias’s understanding of power far transcends Weber’s, who was first and foremost interested in the distribution of power among different instances of power but not in the relation between the individual and power. Rather, Elias’s perspective, according to which the dominant power figurations are also articulated outside the political and inscribed or reflected in the individual, has also influenced Bourdieu’s and Foucault’s definitions of power. In fact, his discussion on the issue of the genesis of power may even have been more profound than theirs. Furthermore, the figuration approach may provide inspiring contributions to more recent debates on power, which in pursuit of an integral concept of power address both the repressive and productive character of power through the concepts of ‘power over’ and ‘power to’ (for an overview, see Clegg and Haugaard 2009). It is therefore all the more striking that Elias’s positions continue to receive little attention in contemporary sociological and political science debates on power.

[24] This is exactly how Gayatri Spivak would argue later by pointing out that all struggles of cultural discrimination are equally struggles of social progress (Spivak 2003).

[25] This cursory illustration alone gives us some idea of the kinds of questions that may be posed and engaged with through a figuration method. For example, the figuration model permits us to understand the state fiscal monopoly, which in contrast to democracy and the monopoly on the legitimate use of force has barely been enforced in Latin America, not as a pre-modern system deficiency or technocratic implementation failure but as an expression of a specific, historically grown and to date (in essence, political regime neutral) legitimating power asymmetry between groups that can be empirically delimited. Therefore, this could permit us to concretely identify the extent to which functional considerations (power and resource maintenance) and/or affective guiding patterns (such as the traditional external orientation of elites) play a central role in order to explain why, for example, more recent reforms to increase tax revenue in the region have often remained ineffective.

[26] See Kisner and Youpa 2014; Nadler 2015; and Soyarslan 2016.

[27] Essentially, the two Eliasian categories of integration and differentiation are not completely alien to modernisation theoretical ideas. However, Elias has a much more sophisticated understanding of progress in rationalisation than Weber: Elias assumes a differentially strong ‘awareness’ of simultaneously existing orders, and Weber attempts to illustrate a process in which rationalisation *per se* (in the sense of a progressing cognitive control of reality) only represents a partial aspect of gradually extending interdependent chains of action and condensing figurations. Nonetheless, the two theoreticians are in close quarters here: both assume that the genesis of Western modernity was grounded in a growing rationality within social relations.

[28] What has also to be neglected here is Weber’s ‘double constitution of the subject’: Weber was not only an

intentional observer of the historically newly constituting capitalist society in Germany, astutely distinguishing between a private bourgeois entrepreneurial spirit and a far-reaching bourgeois ideology, which led to an overall reconstitution of the way of living. As a political activist, he also was an ideological designer of a new bourgeois subjectivity aiming at moral reform of the upper classes and the integration of the intellectuals and the skilled labour force so that precisely this new form of social organisation could develop and stabilise itself. Max Weber presented himself as a class-conscious apologist of the German national interest, who in the sense of a 'liberal imperialism' was desirous of a foreign politically self-assertive German power state.

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Author's biography

Hans-Jürgen Burchardt is Director of the Maria Sibylla Merian Center of Latin American Advanced Studies (CALAS), Director of the Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos (CELA) in Kassel and Chair of International Relations at the University of Kassel. He has published extensively on North-South relations, ecological, labor and social policy regimes from an international perspective, on theories of State and development, especially focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean.

Max Weber, Understanding and the Charge of Subjectivism

BOIKE REHBEIN (HUMBOLDT UNIVERSITY BERLIN, GERMANY)

Abstract

According to the prevailing opinion, there are three fathers of sociology, namely Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber, and Weber is supposed to be a subjectivist in contrast to the two other classics. This paper argues that Weber is not subjectivist enough. He awards the notion of understanding a key role in his philosophy of science but actually dismisses it in his empirical research. An average meaning, which can be identified on the basis of observation, replaces the process of understanding other human beings. The chapter explores the notion of understanding and the role that it should play in the social sciences in some detail.

Keywords: Explanation, meaning, philosophy of the social sciences, qualitative methodology, understanding

According to common knowledge, Max Weber was a subjectivist who tried to explain society on the basis of the subjective meaning generated in the minds of individuals. In this paper, I will argue that this opinion is not only wrong but that almost the opposite is the case. Actually, Weber is far more objectivistic than subjectivistic. His classification as a subjectivist is based on the first few lines of *Economy and Society* (Weber 1972), where the expression “subjective meaning” figures prominently. But if we continue to read the book, we see that Weber does not put subjective meaning into use either for his theory of science or for his actual research. This point has been made before by Peter Winch. [1] I will follow Winch in his critique of Weber but not in his suggestion of an alternative approach, which according to him captures meaning more appropriately. Winch proposes to interpret social relations as relations between concepts, while I would suggest to follow Pierre Bourdieu [2] in interpreting social relations as anchored in embodied and mostly unconscious meaning. From this perspective, I propose to give the practice of understanding a much more prominent role in sociology than either Weber or Bourdieu have done, even though the notion of understanding has occupied a central role in their work (Weber; Bourdieu, *Weight of the World*). Both Bourdieu and Weber have called

for the relevance of understanding because any social action is meaningful and linked to some meaning for human beings. All human beings participate in the construction of the social world by acting meaningfully and interpreting meaning. However, both Weber and Bourdieu have tried to come up with theories that render the understanding of particular human beings and their perspectives superfluous. Ideally, the social science of Weber and Bourdieu can accomplish what all objectivist science is aiming at, namely explain and predict the particular perspectives and the actions emanating from them. Bourdieu (*Weight of the World*), at least, introduced the necessity of understanding as a method giving access to subjective meaning but in the end these subjective meanings only serve to illustrate his general theory.

However, it was Max Weber who first took the problem of understanding in the social sciences seriously and thereby opened the field for all later researchers. He did so by drawing on the Historical School and Neo-Kantianism, both of which were influential intellectual tendencies in Germany at the time. They initiated the first phase of what was later called the explanation-understanding-debate (Apel). In light of this, the first part of this paper will be devoted to the notion of understanding developed in this debate, on which Weber drew. The second section of the

paper will discuss the notion of understanding, which Weber develops on the first pages of *Economy and Society* that have been used to show that he is a subjectivist. The remaining two sections will unfold the notion of understanding by exploring two dimensions which appear in Weber's work but are in fact entirely neglected by him. I argue that these two dimensions were made accessible by Weber and that they should play a key role in the social sciences. The first dimension is the object that understanding in the social sciences actually has or should have, namely another human being. The second dimension is the methodological application of this understanding for social research.

Explanation and Understanding

According to the mainstream theory of science, which is historically rooted in the works of Galilei, Descartes and the Enlightenment, the purpose of science is to *explain* a given phenomenon. The explanation consists in a description of the object and the application of a lawlike proposition, which deduces the description of the object from a previous state of affairs. In other words, explanation is structurally identical with a prediction (Hempel). The main goal of science, therefore, is to find lawlike propositions, which can be used to predict a great number of similar cases or phenomena. Ideally, this knowledge can be formulated in mathematical terms, which are precise and entirely deductive.

Confronting the ideas of both Descartes and the Enlightenment, Giambattista Vico argued that the Cartesian philosophy of science was not applicable to the human world. According to him, the human world can be more fully comprehended than nature, because we ourselves create it (Vico). A mathematically formulated knowledge in this regard is neither necessary nor meaningful because we can interrogate the object, reproduce its functions, and understand ourselves. We can imitate or even replicate the actions of another human being but not of an object of the natural sciences. We can understand what another human being is saying but not what an object of the natural sciences is saying. And we can engage in a conversation with another human being clarifying what he or she meant but not

with an object of the natural sciences. Vico's argument in direct opposition to Descartes and Galilei was that we cannot comprehend nature because God created it; and for this reason, nature can only be comprehended by God. In contrast, the human participates in the creation of the human world and thereby plays a role in his or her own destiny and must deal with that.

Even if it seems unlikely that we comprehend the human world better than the natural world simply because we construct it ourselves, in identifying the basic difference between the natural sciences and the humanities, Vico at the very least made this question accessible from the perspective of the philosophy of science. Science itself is a part of society. That notion has a whole row of consequences which were worked out in connection with Vico. Many of them figured prominently in the debates about the theory of science that should be applied to a new set of academic disciplines, which were the social sciences.

The social sciences were formed in the nineteenth century as a relatively unified group of academic disciplines. Emerging as the first discipline of social sciences in the eighteenth century, British economics was able to divorce itself from the field of philosophy. Sociology emerged partly as a result of disputes with economics and partly from discussions of the French Enlightenment. These traditions were extensions of the Cartesian philosophy of science and, adhering to Galilei's approach to the natural sciences, sought to apply the theory of explanation, i.e. to subsume the object under universal laws. In Germany, an opposition emerged to that approach in the nineteenth century. It took Vico's argument as its point of departure and with that was more sympathetic to the humanities than to the natural sciences. [3] This opposition mainly arose in two different but related schools.

The Neokantian School postulated that an explanation regarding the human world really concerns itself only with an individual case or object and does not allow for the formation of general laws (Rickert). One is interested in comprehending a specific historical event, a text, a person or a cultural configuration. The explanation of any of these should render

plausible the many factors which lead to the occurrence of the phenomenon. The German Historical School argued, following Vico, that ideas were entirely different from things and their study thus required a completely different methodology. Johann Gustav Droysen added that values were contained within history, and that humans made decisions on the basis of these values. "Morality", then, was first and foremost in the composition of the human world.

The Neokantians recognized the object of the social sciences and the humanities as being entirely particular, precisely because these disciplines pursued a different goal than did the natural sciences. Their goal was not to deduce from universal laws but rather to understand meaningful objects, incidences, expressions, opinions and people. It would be wholly uninteresting to form an explanation of a work of art using universal laws. The same is true for an important historical event. An attempt at understanding the work or the person in the first place is much more appealing. The investigation of the social world does not often contain general or universal pronouncements, but instead has as its goal the particular, which the Neokantians referred to as the "historical individual" (Rickert 84).

One often wants to know what something means or how someone sees the world. There are not only limitless possible descriptions and explanations but also myriad possible epistemological interests and all are more or less equally legitimate. Even if one claims to have understood a written statement, the conditions under which it was written, why it was written one way and not another, and what exactly the author intended it to mean remain unknown. None of these epistemological interests can be reduced to another.

The relationship between subject and object in the social sciences has to do with the role of understanding. Firstly, we must understand the object's significance or place in the social world before we can explain it, which is precisely what Weber argued in response to the Neokantians. We need to know if an action is the casting of a vote, a spirit cult or a game –and what these are. Objectivist approaches attempt to avoid this very problem, and to that end, these approaches

remain unsatisfactory. Secondly, if we were to arrive at a statistical explanation of the social world, which was plausibly and thoroughly objective, we could only do so by overlooking the bulk of the social world. We simply know more about the social world than statistics are capable of revealing. More importantly, we want to know more. We want to know, for example, what a text or ritual means; why a person made one decision instead of another; why or how a certain institution came into being; on what basis someone was found innocent or guilty by a judge; and perhaps most succinctly, how another person sees the world.

The related issues can be illustrated with reference to an explanation –or prediction– of voting behavior. If the social scientist comes from a society, in which the political system has never included elections, he or she would have to understand the institution of elections before attempting any kind of explanation. Otherwise, he or she might interpret the election as a game, a lottery or a religious ceremony, all of which would be misguided. This kind of misinterpretation is exactly what the first European anthropologists presented in their work. The misinterpreted many phenomena they encountered against the background of their society and, on this basis, presented explanations and theories that have nothing to do with any kind of reality.

Therefrom arises another issue, namely that interpretation plays a significant role in understanding. One could easily interpret an election as a neutral poll regarding the best and/or most rational political program for a society to embark on for the next four or five-year period. Alternatively, one could understandably view an election as a choice between candidates whose appeal in the eyes of the electorate is more or less emotional. An election appears differently, however, if one understands it as a clash of ideologies or a legitimation of the ruling class. Each of these explanations is in part warranted, yet each explanation, at least to some extent, contradicts the others. Even more important is the fact that the explanations exert some kind of influence on reality. Voting decisions are influenced by these explanations however one interprets an election, and, with that, each forecast influences the course of an election.

What would become of the election forecast if a group were to, based on some projected outcome, stage a coup d'état or if the forecast caused the electorate to lose faith in the societal function of voting? What scientific value would explanations of voting behavior have in a world in which elections no longer take place?

Max Weber's Concept and Practice of Understanding

Max Weber replied to the issues discussed in the preceding section. He took the Historical School's argument seriously that any explanation in the social sciences presupposes understanding and he agreed with the Neokantians that the formulation of universal laws in the social sciences misses the point. He did not follow the Neokantians in their normative approach, however. Weber attempted to develop a specific science, which was value-free and non-philosophical for approaching the human world.

In his sociology, Weber endeavored to provide a connection between explanation and understanding. This is very evident in his most famous sentence. His main work begins with the famous postulate: "Sociology ... is a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with causal explanation of its course and consequences" (Weber 1, my translation). Weber understood action as an internal or external activity, bearing or omission, if it is imbued with *subjective meaning*. For him, action was then social insofar as it related to the meaning in the conduct of other people.

The consequential formulation of "interpretation" and "thereby" has misguided students of Weber to classify him as a subjectivist. One could read the sentence as claiming that the understanding of meaning already is or at least enables the "causal explanation". The scientific process begins with understanding, which is also the basis for explanation. Many interpreters of the sentence have added that Weber after this claim goes on to define the meaning to be understood as "subjective meaning". This they take to refer to a concrete state of mind in an individual. Thereby, Weber seems to imply that

any phenomenon, which is relevant to the social sciences, is rooted in an individual mind. At least, the social scientist has to anchor his or her explanation in an individual mind.

It is certainly true that Weber believed all social phenomena to be rooted in meaning and meaning in turn to be linked to the subjective experience of the mind. Insofar as machines, for example, are regarded only as physical matter, they have no meaning and are therefore no sociological objects (Weber 3). However, not everything that is meaningful can be understood. The core characteristic of sociological objects is the reference to meaning, nothing else. Weber distinguishes different types and levels of meaning and acknowledges that many aspects of the human world are void of meaning but they have to have some relation to human meaning if they are to be included in the scientific research of sociology.

Subjective meaning seemed to be of central importance for Weber, but, in the end, it did not play much of a role in either his examinations of the philosophy of science or his empirical work. In the first instance, Weber excluded those topics from the purview of sociology which were imbued with a singular and known meaning, at least insofar as he differentiated between meanings which were considered ordinary and those which were construed as ideal types (Weber 1). Of the ordinary types, Weber dismissed random actions and put the focus on an "average meaning". For example, if somebody greets another person in the cultural context of Brazil by showing his fist, this is extraordinary and not the common type of greeting. The average greeting is a handshake along with saying "oi". This is what sociology should focus on.

By observing a certain regularity in actions, for example a repetition of the handshake as greeting, one can establish this type of action as an "ideal type". Only the ideal types should be considered objects of sociological inquiry (Weber 2, 9). Following Weber, these objects should not have anything to do with ordinary, singular meanings. A meaning can, for the sake of order, be subsumed under the figurative heading of an ideal type if an action repeatedly takes place, either in the same person or in a group of persons (Weber 14).

In contrast to Durkheim, Weber's sociology had as its principal object of inquiry "social relations", not the totality of a "society". According to Weber, a social relationship is a mutual, reciprocal and potentially replicable exchange between people (13f). The propensity for recurrence defines the social relation as a sociological object (Weber 14). This regularity needs to be observed from a scientific perspective, is not established by the social actors themselves and can be ascribed with a degree of validity. The human interaction then finds its orientation in the establishment of the *legitimacy* of the social relationship in question (or better yet, in the "organization" of the social relationship) (Weber 16).

Sociology should, following Weber, situate the ideal-typical action in a comprehensive correlation of meanings. This correlation can then be viewed in a "typical manner" as a reason or motive for an action (Weber 4). Weber regarded as typical those characteristics contained within dominant mental and emotional habits or practices, characteristics which can be viewed in similar experiential terms (Weber 5). He depicted the first criterion as being adequate on the level of meaning and the second as being adequate in a causal context. "A correct causal interpretation of a specific action means to grasp the observable process and the motive correctly and at the same time intelligibly in their context" (Weber 5, my translation). Sociology must establish categories of actions and with that explain how these categories are incorporated into comprehensive, determining contexts.

With that, understanding has as its sole function the comprehension of the meaning of an action. In contrast, sociology's chief task lies in explaining the aforementioned categories through comprehensive contexts. How can the criteria be fulfilled, which context should be viewed as determining, if the criteria themselves are not tasked with comprehending the internal workings or the meaningful experience of the actors? Weber replies that the categories should be reconstructed according to the model of instrumental rationality, the relation between purpose, means and marginal consequences. The actual actions as they unfold, then, can be considered deviations from the pure, difficult to recognize ideal-typical action (Weber 3). This

ideal-typical action was selected as a conceptual guide because Weber's sociology did not arise from or aspire to a subjective meaning but rather sought to depict and render understandable the social contexts from which meaning can be derived. Sociology is supposed to aim at larger contexts of meaning, not at individual interpretations or experiences. Therefore, Weber allowed only *one type* of action to be reconstructed in the relationship between subjective and comprehensive meaning, and his motives for doing so were purely rational and explicit.

Weber's sociology sought firstly to identify meaningful or important social phenomena and secondly to explain them in the context of a hierarchy of meaning. Understanding in and of itself, however, remained largely irrelevant for his approach to sociological knowledge (Winch 113). If one sticks to the Cartesian perspective, understanding's contribution to the social sciences is meager and provides only peripheral illustrations and verification. Adhering to the Cartesian perspective, however, is neither possible nor desirable in the social sciences. Weber did not want to fully give up the ideal of a Cartesian science, because for him this idea called into question the notion of *Wertfreiheit* and, with that, scholarship in general. He attempted to avoid these questions by presenting a whole line of as-if hypotheses, which in their totality allowed sociology to approximate the Cartesian approach to science.

Existential Understanding

Even if Weber had based his sociology on subjective meaning, he would have developed an external or psychological perspective, which was the Neokantian perspective. Only after Weber, philosophy and sociology managed to elaborate a non-psychological notion of meaning. This was carried out on the one hand by the phenomenological tradition inaugurated by Weber's contemporary Edmund Husserl and on the other hand by the philosophy of language linked to philosophers like Wittgenstein. While Husserl tried to understand meaning entirely from the perspective of introspection, Wittgenstein located meaning exclusively in the

context of social practice. Their interpretations of meaning can be situated at the opposite ends of a spectrum between society and individual but they have one thing in common as opposed to Neokantianism: they do not regard meaning as something that can be understood by drawing on scientific hypotheses about the psychological structures of the mind.

Weber and the Neokantians had no particular interest in understanding itself. As I tried to show in the preceding section, Weber was not even interested in subjective meaning, which is accessible only through understanding. If we study understanding, we realize that it varies according to the type of its object. We can distinguish between five types of objects of understanding. The various objects of understanding require different types of understanding. Meaningful objects obviously represent an important type of understandable objects, and for the hermeneutical tradition, text was the archetype for these objects. We can with very few problems comfortably equate the understanding of meaningful objects with *hermeneutical understanding*. The goal of hermeneutical understanding consists in comprehending the meaning of something. Explanation plays a role in this process, chiefly as an instrument for explaining, for example, a grammatical mistake or the absence of a page from a text. This kind of understanding is of fundamental importance for the humanities but is far less important in the social sciences.

The social sciences place priority on actions. Von Wright argued that the explanation of an action was a teleological explanation which could also contain a causal explanation. The social scientific connection to action is certainly much more complex. Von Wright contended further that one must understand the meaning attached to a given action, and with that, he seemed to have had Wittgenstein's concept of life-form in mind, which in turn is related to Weber's complex of meaning. With a social scientific observation of an action, we must be well acquainted with the social environment in which the activity takes place if we hope to understand or explain it. For Wittgenstein, activities represented the expression of a life-form (19). One can only understand the language-game of an unknown

life-form insofar as one learns the way in which the action is performed. The forms of life and expression are mutually dependent on one another and form the hermeneutical boundary of possible experience. This boundary, like the life-form itself, changes constantly (Wittgenstein 65). According to Wittgenstein, we are not capable of understanding a single word if we are not well acquainted with the practice to which it is attached. In this sense, we can equate the understanding of activities with *practical understanding*.

On the basis of practical understanding, we can construct psychological, historical, sociological or other theories in order to explain actors' motives. That is more or less exactly the same as von Wright's teleological explanation. It is teleological because a motive is not the same as a cause. A motive does not trigger an activity according to any kind of law, because an actor, in spite of his or her motives, could act differently or be hindered from performing an activity. For that reason, Hempel characterized this form of explanation as statistical and differentiated it from the nomological explanation. By combining practical understanding with a teleological explanation, one can perhaps understand why a person acts one way and not another. This kind of understanding can be referred to as *the understanding of motives*.

Practical understanding and the understanding of motives are components for most approaches in social sciences, but they only constitute the core of the scientific approach in anthropology and psychology. The majority of the social sciences use practical understanding and the understanding of motives in order to gain entry to social structures or contexts – and to verify statistical studies. They regard actions and motives as expressions of a life-form, which itself becomes an object of inquiry. In this context and connected to Hegel, Dilthey (180) spoke about an "objective meaning", which we can understand here in terms of traditions, norms, or institutions. For example, one hopes to understand why a law has been enacted, how an art form has been transformed or how an organization functions. This particular kind of understanding is closely connected to explanations and can be referred to as *objective understanding*. This is also the

type of understanding, which would characterize Weberian sociology. In summary, at least three different kinds of understanding activities can be distinguished. One can differentiate between action, motive and objective meaning with regards to the universe of discourse.

Beyond texts and activities, we sometimes want to understand another way of seeing the world – or another person. I would like to refer to this kind of understanding as *existential understanding*. Attempts have been made to reduce existential understanding to the understanding of motives, practical understanding or hermeneutical understanding. These attempts, however, have been misdirected. If we truly want to understand another person, we do not try to explain motives, reconstruct mental conditions, understand activities or meaningful objects and consider that person's state of mind. All of these processes require a theory of the object and are connected to an explanation.

The understanding of another person merely implies an existence and has nothing to do with an explanation. If we want to understand another person, we attempt to conceive of his or her way of being in the world. We can only really do that in a hypothetical way, because we do not have access to another being in the world. Existential understanding is neither empathy (Stein) nor a change of perspective (Mead) but is instead a construction. It implies pre-understanding, hypotheses and falsification. One could well say that we construct or even dream up the way of being of another person. If our observations of another person plausibly match up with our construction, then we can justifiably make the claim that we have understood that person. This process can be differentiated from the conventional forms of knowledge in at least two ways: firstly, its object is a lived experience and thus is really not an object; and secondly, this experience is principally not open to intersubjective verification. For those reasons, I am of the opinion that one should certainly differentiate between the understanding of another person and knowledge –or, at least, distinguish different forms of knowledge.

Following Max Weber, Alfred Schütz has attempted to base the social sciences on existential understanding. He preceded Peter

Winch in criticizing Weber for neglecting subjective meaning and understanding in his theory of science. While Weber claimed that all social phenomena were linked to subjective meaning, he rendered its understanding irrelevant by focusing on ideal-types and explaining these by complexes of social meaning instead of subjective meaning. Even though I agree with Schütz in his critique of Weber, I think that Weber's theory of explanation as interpretation of layers of meaning is a perfectly adequate concept of sociology, while Schütz' interpretive sociology is misguided. It is misguided simply because social meaning is not generated out of individual meaning. Social meaning is largely unconscious and it mostly precedes any individual meaning. It is a more fundamental layer of meaning and should be the core object of sociology, just as Weber has claimed.

Furthermore, Schütz (like Weber) associated meaning with the mind or consciousness. Just like the focus on the individual is misguided, so is the concept of consciousness. Heidegger made clear that existential understanding's object of inquiry, existence, is not really an object at all. The earlier renditions of hermeneutics and phenomenology made the mistake of equating existence with "consciousness" or "experience" and as a result fully overlooked the particularities of existence (Heidegger 45ff). The human is not a thing, substance or object but is an existing being, fully aware of his or her own existence. The particularity of existence stems from its being lived out. In other words, this particularity is not that thing which one observes but is rather what one *is* during the course of observation. A reified object can certainly be observed, but nothing is "there" for him or her; rather, something is "there" only for the observer, who is a "being-there" ("Dasein") (Heidegger 55).

If one seeks to conceive of humans as consciousness, then one tends to objectify them and overlook the decisive factor. A way of life, imbued with "experiences" or "consciousness", certainly does exist but does so in an entirely different way than does a thing. In order to get an appropriate grasp of this notion, the mode of existence must be allowed to come into full view. The meaning of an experience or consciousness

is attributed by the observer, but existence itself is lived out. Rather than being an object, it is the point itself (Heidegger 48). Existence distinguishes itself from all objects in that it is lived out. The human is his or her own existence.

This observation, which Heidegger employed to much different ends, not only allows us to conceptualize another person as a living being but also allows us to do the same regarding ourselves. Existence differs from other forms of being to the extent that it permits us to thematize our own being. Heidegger (55) illustrates just that point with his example of a chair standing near a wall. The chair is not “near the wall” because the wall does not exist “for the chair”. Only with regards to existence is something there, and the presence of the thing is not coincidental or accidental but is only possible on the basis of existence. This implicates the notion of meaningfulness. Existence’s specific way of being is meaningfulness (86). From the perspective of existence, meaning does not emerge by means of organizing a predicate and subject in a propositional structure but rather comes from being there. Heidegger referred to existence’s meaningfulness as “being in the world” (53). Only existence is in the world, because something can only exist for existence. All other things, of course, exist as well, but nothing exists for those things. Existence, however, exists only in relation to something. It might seem a bit obvious, but a person is an existing being only insofar as he or she exists. Weber never acknowledged the object of sociology as an existing being and never linked meaning to this kind of existence.

Heidegger rightly indicated that human knowledge and life should not be conceived of as categories or objects but should instead be thought of as being or existence. Similarly to Kant, however, he was interested in existence as a theoretical process and extended this thinking to being. Humans are not in the world so that theories can be formulated and so that the world can be viewed as theory’s object of inquiry but are here in the first place as active beings. It should therefore come as no wonder that Heidegger, after the publication of *Being and Time* (which was to be the first volume of a philosophical work), shied away from the analysis of existence

and turned instead towards being. He was not at all interested in understanding persons but he opened the path towards it.

Methodological Understanding

If understanding partly aims at discovering meaning as constructed or experienced by other human beings, it is also methodologically relevant. It gives access to the meaning of objects in the social sciences as well as to the world view of other human beings. This is important because the social scientist is a human being him- or herself. He or she only has one particular perspective on the world and needs to understand the perspectives of other human beings if he or she does not want to run the risk of merely proclaiming his or her own world view. This point has been made by ethnomethodology, which emerged in the wake of Weber and Schütz. It is also a core assumption of anthropological methodology.

Even if we say that another person’s experience is in principle not observable, this does not mean that pure fantasy contributes something to understanding. We need a plausible basis for the hypothesis we come up with. In the nineteenth century, Western anthropologists traveled into the “wild”, described the behaviors they encountered and attempted to convey to their readers who these people were whom they were observing –without being able to speak their language or being able to interpret their activities. In Wittgenstein’s words, these anthropologists knew very little about the life-forms and language-games of the people they were describing. Or, in Weber’s words, they did not understand the more fundamental complexes of meaning. Thus, most anthropological explanations from the nineteenth century have not stood the test of time and are now regarded as baseless. They now serve to illustrate the point that one must be able to act in a manner similar to another person in order to understand that person –at least in his or her imagination.

Of equal importance is the idea that one must at least to some extent understand the respective symbolic universe. A certain amount of practical and hermeneutical understanding is then a necessary precondition for an existential

understanding. The actual carrying out this process is not a necessary requirement, but it provides a much better basis than does pure imagination or fantasy. There is a vital difference between imagining oneself to be hungry and actually being hungry –or imaging oneself eating and actually eating. The familiarity with language-games and life-forms is of a different kind for the observer than for the actor. If we want to recognize or even learn a new language-game and life-form, we do so on the basis of the life-forms and language-games which we have already mastered.

In many cases, we revert back to the life-forms and language-games we already know. We then have a more extensive knowledge than the actors, but we invest less. We thus are not capable of relaying the exact experience of other people. We certainly do not understand an object automatically once we have fully mastered the language-games and life-forms which that object has already mastered, and we can sometimes understand an object without knowing much about his or her life-form. The only real requirement is the *re-enactment* of the experience. This re-enactment is, of course, hypothetical and not real. One can master a foreign life-form and still not understand anybody. It can also be the case that one arrives in a foreign place and can more or less understand another person straightaway. One must be in a position to re-enact his or her existence. That can take place entirely in one's own imagination (Geertz 31).

The imagination must be compatible with the observed behavior and is merely a hypothesis which must be validated empirically. This hypothesis is roughly equivalent to a scientific hypothesis but is even more problematic, because that which is contained within it is wholly unobservable. One acquires a notion of the connection between that which is observed and the consummated experience throughout the course of his or her own life history via involvement with other people. Our own experience teaches us something about being in the world, but the notion of our own being in the world is only approachable as a result of our experience with other people. Our own experience evinces the openness of life to many

different opportunities (Humboldt 261).

Understanding another person teaches us about existence but does not tell us anything about an object. Our involvement with other people strengthens both the possibilities of life and our examination of understanding. In an interaction, one attributes a subjective experience to the other person, and this experience is then verified by means of further observations which show them to be either compatible or incompatible with the attribution. This process is indeed similar to a scientific experiment. These attributions can then be communicated to the other person and discussed. This would imply that one can carry out or perform his or her life in a similar way to the other person. The precise point at which this implication becomes dubious would be foreign territory for the other person. This experience can be made or produced in connection to people with whom one has lived for years. Understanding is not rendered impossible by such an experience but rather opens up new possibilities for one's own life and sparks a further effort towards understanding. Furthermore, we tend to pursue a reflexive approach with regards to the people we are trying to understand. On the basis of our own existence –including our life stories, our times, our languages and our knowledge– we make assumptions about the existence of other people, and we then attempt to either confirm or disprove these assumptions by means of observation.

I wish to argue that existential understanding should be a core feature of any sociological methodology. Understanding is used in the social sciences as a method implicitly all the time, in fact every single moment. However, it has been theoretically neglected because the access to meaning has been taken for granted or even dismissed. This is especially true for existential understanding. How another person sees the world and exists in it seems to be rather irrelevant for most social scientists. The objectivism inherent in the social sciences, including Weber's sociology, is largely responsible for this. If one wishes to arrive at general statements about the social world, it seems to be necessary to leave subjectivity behind as soon as possible.

Bourdieu (*Weight of the World*) has shown us a different path. He has argued that the social

world consists of social positions that are relative to each other giving rise to different perspectives that need to be understood. Each person has a specific perspective on the world, which is linked to his or her existential conditions, which in turn are shared by an entire group of people. From this sociological perspective, existence and subjective meaning matter. The other human being is not merely an informant who delivers data to be integrated into a theory by the social scientist but another being-in-the-world with whom one has to enter into a hermeneutical process of mutual understanding because both sides have something to say. Sociological research from this perspective becomes an exercise in existential understanding.

Following Bourdieu (*Weight of the World*), this type of understanding has been further developed into a full-fledged method. The Hannover school of Michael Vester has produced the method of “habitus hermeneutics”, which aims at the reconstruction of the other’s habitus. Habitus in this sense is the link between position and perspective. The method comprises life-course interviews, which are not interpreted in a monologue of the scientist with him- or herself but by a group of researchers who also thematize their own position and perspective in the process. [4]

A similar methodological approach has been adopted by Jessé Souza and his research team. [5] The goal was to establish a personal relationship and to understand the other human being by doing a series of interviews. Each interview was supposed to produce a closer relationship and to make a deeper understanding possible. As with Bourdieu and Vester, the guiding assumption behind the research process was that researcher and interviewee are members of a society whose existence is largely determined by the social conditions, which are different for different social groups. This assumption only comes to the fore if one actively engages with the other through existential understanding.

Conclusion

Weber opened the space for social research. He put the concepts of meaning and understanding into the centre of his approach. Thereby, he was

the first sociologist to acknowledge the complex and special relation between subject and object in the social sciences. He also clarified the relation between individual and society to a large degree by postulating layers of meaning, which are more or less general, and by detaching these layers both from the individual consciousness and the society interpreted as nation state. These are very important advances in the theory of science over the objectivism prevailing in the nineteenth century.

However, Weber fell short of an adequate conception of understanding because the positivistic theory of science was still too dominant at the time. With the help of Neokantianism and the Historical School, he was able to include the subject into his science. But he still dreamt of a science without perspective generated by a free-floating spirit or even a divine point of view. His ideal was value-freedom and towards this ideal, he sought to establish a dismissal of the scientist’s and the object’s subjectivity. For this reason, he never adequately dealt with understanding or with subjective meaning.

Another reason for the inadequacy was the notion of consciousness or mind. Weber, like the entire nineteenth century before him and phenomenology after him, linked meaning to an interior world, which is supposed to happen in the mind and to be accessible only to the individual. On the basis of this assumption, understanding always refers to an individual state of mind. Wittgenstein has shown that meaning is always shared, Heidegger has deconstructed the notion of consciousness, Merleau-Ponty has demonstrated that meaning is located not in the mind but in the entire body and Bourdieu has developed these ideas into a theory of practice. There is no way back to Weber’s concept of subjective meaning from here.

Ednnotes

[1] See Winch 1958.

[2] See Bordieu 1990.

[3] For more, see Apel 1979.

[4] Cf. Vester 2003.

[5] Cf. Souza et al. 2009.

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Author's biography

Boike Rehbein is professor for the sociology of Asia and Africa at Humboldt University Berlin. He studied philosophy, sociology and history at Freiburg, Paris, Goettingen, Frankfurt and Berlin and received his PhD in 1996 and "habilitation" in 2004 at the University of Freiburg. He was acting chair of sociology at Freiburg from 2004 to 2006 and director of the Global Studies Programme from 2006 before moving to Berlin in 2009. His areas of specialization are social theory, globalization, social inequality and mainland Southeast Asia. Recent books in English: *Critical Theory after the Rise of the Global South* (Routledge 2015; translated from German), *Society in Contemporary Laos* (Routledge 2017), *Inequality in Capitalist Societies* (with Surinder Jodhka and Jesse Souza, Routledge 2017), *Inequality in Economics and Sociology* (edited with Gilberto Antonelli, Routledge 2018).

Max Weber e o “Culturalismo Científico” do Senhor e do Escravo

JESSÉ SOUZA (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO ABC (UFABC), SÃO PAULO)

Resumo

O texto aqui apresentado pretende discutir a importância científica e política da recepção da obra de Max Weber nas Américas. A tese central do texto afirma que Max Weber foi o autor mais importante para a construção da interpretação dominante e do “mito nacional” tanto dos Estados Unidos quanto do Brasil, as duas nações mais populosas e importantes do continente. No entanto, nos dois casos estudados, Weber foi utilizado como um pensador “culturalista,” ou seja, a partir do uso de sua análise da gênese do capitalismo baseada na religiosidade protestante, como se a mesma pudesse ser utilizada para a questão, muito diferente, da “expansão do capitalismo” para o globo, que o próprio Weber imaginava como exportação de “instituições prontas,” com fábricas, burocracias e escolas. O uso “culturalista” de Weber construiu, por um lado, uma mentalidade que legitima o imperialismo informal americano, como fica claro no trabalho de Talcott Parsons e sua idealização da sociedade americana, quanto, por outro lado, a mentalidade “vira-lata” do povo brasileiro, percebido como corrupto e inconfiável. Weber, portanto, serviu para legitimar uma mentalidade do senhor e do escravo nas duas nações mais importantes da Américas.

Palavras-chave: Culturalismo; ética protestante; mito nacional; imperialismo informal

Os seres humanos são animais que se interpretam. [1] Isso significa que não existe “comportamento automático,” mas, sempre, comportamento influenciado por uma “forma específica de interpretar e compreender a vida.” Essas interpretações que guiam nossas escolhas na vida foram obra de profetas religiosos no passado. Nos últimos 200 anos essas interpretações que explicam o mundo e nos diz como devemos agir nele foram obra de intelectuais seculares. O mais importante desses intelectuais no Ocidente moderno foi – juntamente com Karl Marx– o sociólogo alemão Max Weber. Afinal, foi da pena de Max Weber que se originou a forma predominante como todo o Ocidente moderno se auto-interpreta e se legitima. As ideias dominantes que circulam na imprensa, nas salas de aula, nas discussões parlamentares, nas discussões de botequim, e em todo lugar, são sempre formas mais simplificadas de ideias produzidas por grandes pensadores.

Daí a importância de recuperar o sentido

original dessas ideias que são tão importantes para nossas vidas ainda que, normalmente, não nos demos conta disso. Afinal, a ciência herda o prestígio da religião no contexto pré-moderno e assume, em boa parte pelo menos, o papel de explicar o mundo moderno. Não existe tema que seja discutido na esfera pública de qualquer sociedade moderna que não invoque a “palavra do especialista” que fala pela ciência. Assim, o potencial da ciência de produzir efetivo aprendizado individual e coletivo está ligado e muitas vezes decisivamente condicionado, por força de seu prestígio público, a servir de instância legitimadora e primeira e decisiva trincheira da luta social e política pela definição legítima de “boa vida” e “sociedade justa.” Em outras palavras: não existe ordem social moderna sem uma legitimação pretensamente científica desta mesma ordem.

Talvez o uso de Max Weber e de sua obra sejam um dos exemplos mais significativos do caráter bifronte da ciência: tanto como mecanismo de esclarecimento do mundo

como quanto mecanismo de encobrimento das relações de poder que permitem a reprodução de privilégios injustos de toda a espécie. É um atestado da singular posição que Weber ocupa no horizonte das ciências sociais perceber que, precisamente por ter captado a "ambiguidade constitutiva" do racionalismo singular ao Ocidente, [2] ele tenha formulado os dois diagnósticos da época mais importantes para a autocompreensão do ocidente até nossos dias: uma concepção liberal, afirmativa e triunfalista do racionalismo ocidental; e uma concepção crítica extremamente influente deste mesmo racionalismo, que procura mostrar sua unidimensionalidade e superficialidade.

Para a versão liberal e afirmativa, Weber fornece, por um lado, sua análise da "revolução simbólica" do protestantismo ascético, para ele a efetiva revolução moderna, na medida em que transformou a "consciência" dos indivíduos, e a partir daí a realidade externa. É a figura do protestante ascético, que com vontade férrea e com as armas da disciplina e do autocontrole, que cria o fundamento histórico para a noção do "sujeito moderno." É esta ideia que cria a noção moderna de "personalidade" enquanto entidade percebida como um todo unitário com fins e motivos conscientes e refletidos. Essa ideia é o fundamento da noção de "liberalismo moderno," uma espécie de "religião secular" da época, sendo a base de toda ética e toda lógica seja na dimensão institucional seja na dimensão individual.

A grande maioria das versões apologéticas do "sujeito liberal" nutre-se, quase sempre com fundamento empírico na história da pujança econômica e política norte-americana, em maior ou menor grau, na figura do pioneiro protestante weberiano. Além disso, por outro lado, é Weber quem reconstrói sistematicamente a lógica de funcionamento tanto do mercado competitivo capitalista quanto do Estado racional centralizado, de modo a percebê-los como instituições cuja eficiência e "racionalidade" não teriam igual. Ainda que a perspectiva liberal apologética se restrinja ao elogio do mercado, confluem, aqui, os aspectos subjetivos e objetivos (institucionais) que fundamentam, de modo convincente, a afirmação do "dado," ou seja, do mundo como ele é.

Mas Weber, e nisso reside sua influência e atualidade extraordinárias, também percebia, no entanto, o lado sombrio do racionalismo ocidental. Se o pioneiro protestante ainda possuía perspectivas éticas na sua conduta, seu "filho" e, muito especialmente, seu "neto," habitante do mundo secularizado, é percebido por Weber de modo bastante diferente. Para descrevê-lo Weber lança mão de dois "tipos ideais," ou seja, de modelos abstratos, no caso, de modelos abstratos de condução de vida individual, os quais se encontram sempre misturados em proporções diversas na realidade empírica concreta. Esses "tipos ideais" que explicam o indivíduo típico moderno para Weber são, por um lado, o "especialista sem espírito," que tudo sabe acerca do seu pequeno mundo de atividade e nada sabe (nem quer saber) acerca de contextos mais amplos que determinam seu pequeno mundo, e, por outro lado, o "homem do prazer sem coração," que tende a amesquinhar seu mundo sentimental e emotivo à busca de prazeres momentâneos e imediatos. [3]

Se a primeira leitura fornece o estofo para a apologia liberal do mercado e do sujeito percebido como independente da sociedade e de valores supra-individuais, a segunda leitura marcou profundamente toda a reflexão crítica da sociedade moderna até nossos dias. A percepção do indivíduo moderno como suporte das ilusões da independência absoluta e da própria perfeição narcísica, quando, na verdade, realiza, sem saber, todas as virtualidades de uma razão instrumental que termina em consumismo e conformismo político, está na base de grande parte das vertentes críticas mais influentes do século XX. [4]

Nesta introdução, nosso interesse é examinar de perto o elemento apologético e o uso do prestígio científico weberiano para a afirmação de uma visão distorcida, conformista e superficial da realidade. Minha tese é a de que a própria construção de uma oposição substancial entre sociedades avançadas do centro – Europa ocidental e EUA– e sociedades atrasadas da periferia –por exemplo, as sociedades latino-americanas– foi construído, pelo menos em sua versão mais "moderna" e "culturalista," em grande medida com base nas categorias weberianas.

Nesse sentido, as categorias científicas são utilizadas “por debaixo do pano,” ou seja, sem que seu real caráter fique efetivamente explícito, como justificação de uma violência simbólica que, ao fim e ao cabo, funcionam como uma espécie de “equivalente funcional” do racismo. Estou consciente que a aproximação entre “racismo” e “ciência” provoca desagrado a certos espíritos delicados. Talvez o desagrado seja, como quase sempre, simplesmente o “sintoma” de um problema real. Afinal, para o mesmo Weber que estamos discutindo os ricos e felizes não querem apenas ser ricos e felizes. Eles querem ter o “direito” de ser ricos e felizes. O aspecto que mais caracteriza Weber como pensador crítico é precisamente sua atenção aos processos que “legitimam” o poder social fático e o tornam “sagrado” –no contexto das grandes religiões analisadas por Weber– e o tornam “científico,” ou seja, o equivalente do “sagrado” no mundo desencantado de hoje.

Assim, do mesmo modo como o “racismo científico” –que possuía projeção internacional até a década de 20 do século passado– partia da superioridade “racial” dos povos brancos e de olhos azuis, a versão “culturalista” do racismo parte da superioridade de certo “estoque cultural” das sociedades do “atlântico norte” como fundamento da “superioridade” dessas sociedades. Do mesmo modo que no racismo de fundo “racial” é construída uma separação “ontológica” entre sociedades “qualitativamente distintas” onde as diferenças não são de “grau,” ou seja, não são quantitativas, mas de “essência,” implicando a noção de “sociedade superior” – assim como de “indivíduos superiores” que a compõem - no sentido moral do termo.

É preciso notar, especialmente para certo tipo de leitor que receia uma “extensão indevidamente polêmica” do conceito de racismo que o “procedimento” – a distorção simplificadora da realidade – e o “efeito” – a construção de uma fronteira entre “gente” e “sub-gente” de modo “ontológico” funcionando como uma “pré-compreensão,” uma dimensão não discutida, de grande parte dos conceitos e noções que utilizamos – são precisamente os mesmos do “racismo científico.” Minha tese é, portanto, que a obra de Max Weber foi utilizada em sua versão apologética para conferir “prestígio

científico” a uma visão de mundo atrelada a interesses particulares que se mascaram com a universalidade e a neutralidade apanágio do prestígio científico. Isso fica claro quando o atributo de “universal” é atrelado às sociedades centrais, e o atributo de “particular” ou “regional” é reservado às sociedades periféricas. O objetivo deste texto é, nesse sentido, construir a categoria de “racismo culturalista” e demonstrar o caráter de violência simbólica desta visão científica até hoje hegemônica tanto no centro quanto na periferia do mundo atual.

Pretendo defender essa tese em dois passos: 1) reconstruindo o debate central e periférico que usam essas categorias como seu eixo central; e 2) demonstrando o potencial de distorção sistemática da realidade social das teorias até hoje hegemônicas, tanto no centro como na periferia, no discurso científico internacional.

Confiança/Racionalidade x Corrupção/Afeto

O racismo velado do “culturalismo científico” opõe e separa como configurações qualitativa e substancialmente diferentes as sociedades ditas “avançadas” e as ditas “atrasadas” ou como manda o politicamente correto, as “sociedades em desenvolvimento.” Essa oposição é construída simultaneamente na dimensão cognitiva e moral, ou seja, as sociedades avançadas e por extensão seus membros são percebidos como mais “racional,” ou seja, o dado cognitivo, assim como “moralmente superiores,” ou seja, o dado moral. Como essas categorias só são compreensíveis na relação especular e dual com suas oposições binárias, as sociedades atrasadas, as sociedades latino-americanas no nosso caso, têm então que serem construídas como negatividade tanto na esfera cognitiva como na esfera moral. E é precisamente o que acontece na realidade. Assim, para fazer a oposição especular perfeita, as sociedades latino-americanas são percebidas por todas as versões hegemônicas deste culturalismo como “afetivas e passionais” e, conseqüentemente, corruptas dado que supostamente “personalistas” como se houvesse sociedades “impessoais.”

Como o afeto e a emoção são percebidos na hierarquia moral ocidental como o “outro

negativo” da razão deste Platão [5] e como a doutrina platônica da virtude foi transformada no caminho da salvação cristão, essa doutrina tornou-se a base cotidiana e inconsciente de toda ética ocidental. Quando Santo Agostinho, no começo de nossa era, interpreta a virtude cristã como controle dos afetos pelo “espírito” ele cristaliza a forma como primeiro a Igreja e depois todos nós iremos “avaliar” o mundo. Em grande parte, como resultante da própria ideia da dominação dos afetos temos, também, a ideia de uma suposta orientação “particularista” – a famosa preferência “pessoal” ao invés do domínio da “impessoalidade” – do comportamento das sociedades latino-americanas que as tornariam essencialmente corruptas. A corrupção ou a desconfiança generalizada também seria, é claro, um apanágio dos habitantes dessas mesmas sociedades.

Como essa oposição é criada e legitimada “cientificamente” e o que isso tem a ver com a obra weberiana? Max Weber oferece os conceitos centrais por meio dos quais foram pensados e tornados vida prática essa divisão racista entre “gente” superior, das sociedades avançadas, e “sub-gente” inferior, das sociedades latino-americanas e periféricas. Mais que isso. Max Weber é uma espécie de “chave mestra” que nos permite abrir o registro profundo desse “racismo científico” dominante em todo lugar, ainda que até hoje inarticulado, mas, por isso mesmo, “naturalizado” e aceito por todos tanto na esfera científica quanto na esfera prática e cotidiana de todas as sociedades modernas. [6]

Na impossibilidade de tratar de todos os elementos que explicam essa conexão irei escolher os mais representativos e importantes de modo a tornar convincente e plausível meu argumento. Tomemos então três obras representativas que reproduzem com fidelidade o que acabamos de dizer: as obras de Talcott Parsons – o mais importante sociólogo americano do século XX – nos Estados Unidos e as obras de Gilberto Freyre e Sérgio Buarque – os fundadores da moderna sociologia brasileira – no Brasil. Weber tanto foi utilizado por Talcott Parsons, a partir dos anos 30, para criar uma imagem idealizada da sociedade americana, especialmente – ainda que não apenas – na construção de seus “pattern variables” que se

tornou o eixo teórico central de toda a “teoria da modernização,” influente ainda hoje, ainda que com outras roupagens; quanto, também, foi utilizado por teóricos latino americanos, também a partir dos anos 30, para a construção de uma interpretação “orientalizada” da América Latina. [7] O conceito central dessa versão hoje ainda dominante foi e é o conceito de “patrimonialismo,” retirado de modo a-histórico e sem rigor analítico da obra weberiana como iremos ver em maior detalhe a seguir.

Ambas as construções são como imagens no espelho de uma e outra. À construção do predomínio do “primitivo,” “pessoal” e “corrupto,” como marcas da sociedade patrimonialista, temos a afirmação da “modernidade,” “impessoalidade” e “confiança” típicas das sociedades centrais. Esse quadro vigora até hoje nas “ciências da ordem” hegemônicas praticamente sem críticas. Esse ponto é fundamental posto que permite demonstrar que a partir de um fundamento comum; uma leitura unilateral da tese weberiana da especificidade do ocidente, pôde se constituir uma leitura hegemônica das ciências sociais contemporâneas cujo núcleo é um “equivalente funcional” do racismo científico sem disfarces antes dominante. O que antes era legitimado como diferença racial e biológica passa a ser obtido pela noção de “estoque cultural,” num caso, o das sociedades do atlântico Norte, cognitiva e moralmente superior, e no caso exemplar das sociedades latino-americanas, cognitiva e moralmente inferior.

É importante sempre notar que não são apenas as sociedades que são “inferiores” nos dois aspectos decisivos da moralidade dominante; o cognitivo e o moral. Também os “habitantes” dessas sociedades passam a ser vistos como indignos de confiança, basta ver a representação dos mexicanos na imensa maioria dos “westerns” americanos, e potencialmente corruptos.

Mas isso ainda não é o mais importante. Hoje em dia parte-se do pressuposto que a “teoria da modernização” morreu no final da década de 60 [8] quando alguns de seus próprios arautos mais importantes passaram a criticar de forma decidida alguns dos pressupostos centrais dessa teoria. [9] Isso simplesmente não é verdade. Os pressupostos do “racismo cultural” da teoria da

modernização continuam a operar até hoje em literalmente todas as grandes teorias sociais que pretendem lidar com a sociedade mundial. Algumas indicações acerca disso serão feitas na segunda parte deste texto.

E como o que é discutido nos jornais, na televisão, nas universidades, nos tribunais e nos parlamentos, é sempre alguma forma de repetição mais simplificada da produção de intelectuais influentes, conhecer esses argumentos “intelectuais” é entender como o mundo funciona. No mundo cotidiano essas ideias parecem não ter autoria e serem tão “naturais” como ter-se duas pernas e dois olhos. Por conta disso, recuperar a sua gênese perdida é o mesmo que recuperar o sentido mais profundo de nossas ações e avaliações no mundo.

Como se inicia o “racismo culturalista,” até hoje dominante, e como ele se desdobra em uma versão central e outra periférica? O culturalismo que passa a ser a leitura dominante nas ciências sociais americanas com a crítica ao “racismo científico” em boa parte devido ao prestígio da obra de Franz Boas [10] na primeira metade do século XX, não começa com Parsons. Mas Parsons constrói a síntese mais coerente do ponto de vista teórico e mais influente do ponto de vista pragmático/político.

A questão básica da sociologia para Parsons é perceber como a ação social pode ser integrada por meio de valores compartilhados socialmente. Nesse sentido, a questão de perceber como os valores sociais orientam a ação prática é o objetivo maior da ciência social. A construção das “pattern variables” (variáveis padrões) levada a cabo por Parsons e Edward Shils em “Toward a general theory of action” [11] espelhava precisamente pares dicotômicos de orientações valorativas que permitiriam determinar o sentido da ação social em qualquer contexto. Os polos dessas variáveis refletiam precisamente as oposições que estamos discutindo aqui, como as oposições entre racional, impessoal e universal, de um lado, e afetivo, personalista e particularista, por outro lado.

A importância deste esquema para as ciências sociais americanas e depois para toda a ciência social do pós-guerra foi retumbante. Não existia

praticamente nenhuma área das ciências sociais que não fosse dominada pela procura da demonstração empírica da validade teórica universal dessas categorias. [12] No começo o aspecto mais importante era simplesmente legitimar científica e politicamente –com farto financiamento das agências estatais americanas nos EUA e fora dele a superioridade americana em relação a todas as outras sociedades. [13] Isso incluía tanto as sociedades europeias quanto muito especialmente as do terceiro mundo, de modo a transformar a sociedade americana do pós-guerra em modelo absoluto, concreto e realizado de todas as promessas da modernidade ocidental. A oposição moderno/tradicional utilizada por Weber para explicar a gênese da singularidade do ocidente e o “aparecimento do capitalismo apenas no ocidente,” no contexto de seus estudos sobre as grandes religiões mundiais, foi utilizada para o estudo dos “entraves para a expansão do capitalismo em escala global.”

Toda a ambiguidade de Max Weber em relação tanto ao capitalismo –produtor de seres humanos amesquinados precisamente nas dimensões cognitiva e moral (os especialistas sem espírito e homens do prazer sem coração)– e em relação à própria sociedade americana –seu texto nunca comentado pelos culturalistas sobre a hipocrisia como marca indelével da “confiança” interpessoal utilitária do protestantismo americano [14] –foi cuidadosamente e intencionalmente posta de lado. Houve um esforço deliberado e consciente para a retirada de todas as ambiguidades da obra weberiana para o uso pragmático e apologético de suas categorias para a percepção da sociedade concreta americana do pós-guerra como exemplo acabado de perfeição. [15] Foi a partir deste esforço “científico,” politicamente financiado, que toda a hierarquia mundial passou a ter o exemplo concreto americano como modelo máximo com todas as outras sociedades sendo percebidas como versões mais ou menos imperfeitas desse modelo.

Os efeitos “políticos” desse modelo tornado hegemônico de pensar o mundo são fáceis de serem identificados. Primeiro, o efeito conservador e de acomodação “para dentro,” dado que, se os EUA já são perfeitos exemplo

de modernidade realizada então não existe nenhuma mudança desejável para a própria sociedade americana. Segundo, como a modernidade é percebida como um conjunto unitário e homogêneo de orientações valorativas todas elas apenas positivas, então a legitimação científica da dominação fática dos EUA se torna completa. Novamente, porque a repetição na ciência pode ter a mesma importância que tem na música: esse esquema interpretativo geral não é apenas americano e muito menos limitado ao período do pós-guerra como é sempre muito repetido. Ao contrário, depois da recuperação europeia a partir dos anos 60 e 70 esse esquema continua a ser utilizado apesar das críticas às suas categorias principais com a única diferença que se utiliza agora a palavra “ocidente” como algo restrito às sociedades do “atlântico norte,” ou seja, Europa ocidental e EUA/Canadá. É nesse sentido que –o que sempre surpreende alguns latino-americanos – nesses lugares se fale do Brasil e da América latina como não só não fazendo parte do ocidente, mas, também, como perfeito exemplo, do “orientalizado” oposto ao ocidente.

Mas que a ciência hegemônica e não crítica nas sociedades afluentes legitime seu próprio poder fático não é muito de se espantar. Afinal a ciência crítica, ou seja, àquela que explicita e critica seus pressupostos, é minoritária em todo lugar. O que causa mais espanto, no entanto, é o fato de que precisamente o mesmo esquema interpretativo foi utilizado também pelas sociedades periféricas –como a brasileira– para explicar suas próprias sociedades. Este o fato mais intrigante e o nosso desafio a seguir.

Apesar de Parsons e a teoria da modernização ter exercido e –sempre vale a pena repetir, ainda exercer até hoje– impacto avassalador nas ciências sociais brasileira e latino-americana a partir dos anos 60 do século passado, a gênese do “culturalismo brasileiro” é operada de modo independente de sua obra. A interpretação culturalista brasileira foi criada e imediatamente se tornou hegemônica na década de 30 do século passado com a publicação de “Casa Grande e Senzala” por Gilberto Freyre. Essa auto-interpretação realiza, pelo próprio punho dos pensadores periféricos, a mais perfeita relação especular com a definição

de modernidade e tradição, este último como apanágio da pré-modernidade, que Parsons e seus colaboradores realizariam mais tarde. Na versão original de Gilberto Freyre inexistia a influência de Max Weber, mas a versão mais poderosa e até hoje francamente hegemônica, se deve a uma reformulação –baseada em conceitos weberianos– levada a cabo por Sérgio Buarque a partir da interpretação Freyriana.

Desde a publicação do livro “A modernização seletiva” [16] defendi a tese de que a interpretação que se tornou dominante durante o século XX, da realidade social brasileira – certamente generalizável a diversas sociedades latino-americanas –, [17] envolve, na verdade, a articulação das noções de personalismo/patrimonialismo de modo a justificar uma suposta singularidade cultural e social pré-moderna entre nós. Essa “pré-modernidade” é o núcleo, nunca na verdade explicitado, de noções hoje correntes como “jeitinho brasileiro”; da visão do Brasil e das sociedades latino-americanas como funcionando a partir de uma hierarquia comandada pelo “capital social de relações pessoais.” Seria esse capital de relações com pessoas influentes que constituiria tanto o “personalismo,” ou seja, relações favor/proteção enquanto fundamento da hierarquia social como um todo; quanto o “patrimonialismo,” ou seja, uma vida institucional que tem como fundamento uma “elite estatal,” também pré-moderna, que parasitaria toda a sociedade.

Hoje em dia, essa tese da “singularidade cultural” brasileira, *pensada de modo absoluto* como um povo com características únicas e incomparáveis –para o bem e para o mal– é como uma “segunda pele” para todos os brasileiros intelectuais ou não. Essa singularidade é constituída pela junção e combinação das noções descritas acima de personalismo e patrimonialismo.

A figura de Gilberto Freyre é central neste tema posto que Freyre fundou, literalmente, a forma dominante como o Brasil contemporâneo percebe-se a si mesmo, não apenas neste “romance da identidade nacional” chamado “casa grande e senzala” [18], mas em toda a sua obra. Ainda que os temas recorrentes usados na imagem da “identidade” do brasileiro, como “o encontro de raças,” sejam tão velhos

quanto a independência do Brasil [19] —e consequentemente da necessidade prática de fontes alternativas de solidariedade social, além do poder local e pessoal dos donos de terra e gente, para a jovem nação que se constituía— foi apenas quando Freyre inverteu a fórmula “racista científica” que condenava a nação de mestiços a um futuro sombrio, que a “identidade nacional” passou a ser um elemento de extraordinário sucesso tomando coração e mentes de brasileiros de norte a sul. Foi Freyre, afinal, o primeiro a articular a tese do “mestiço is beautiful,” permitindo interpretar a miscigenação visível e palpável da sociedade brasileira como uma “virtude cultural” —quando durante todo o século XIX e até os anos 30 do século passado era considerado por todos como nosso principal defeito— e sinal, “empiricamente verificável nas ruas,” da suposta tolerância e abertura cultural brasileira. Foi Freyre, portanto, quem construiu o “vínculo afetivo” do brasileiro com uma ideia de Brasil, em alguma medida pelo menos, “positiva,” com a qual a nação e os seus indivíduos podiam se identificar e se autolegitimar.

Essa ideia caiu como uma luva nos interesses de arregimentação política do governo industrializante e modernizante de Getúlio Vargas e passou, como política de Estado, a ser ensinada nas escolas, e a ser cantada em prosa e verso como fundamento mesmo da “unidade morena” da nação brasileira. Afinal, a miscigenação racial funcionava como “reductor de todas as diferenças,” especialmente das de classe social e prestígio, além de permitir uma associação “espontânea” com ideias como “calor humano,” hospitalidade, sensualidade, cordialidade e todas as qualidades ambigualmente “pré-modernas” que hoje são patrimônio afetivo de todo brasileiro. Essa ideia é hoje, portanto, “evidência não passível de discussão,” tornada uma “segunda natureza” e incorporada à identidade individual de todo brasileiro que se imagina incorporar virtualidades do comportamento humano que só existiriam por essas bandas tropicais.

O mais interessante no nosso contexto é examinar o modo como o mito da brasilidade e sua celebração das virtudes ambíguas da pré-modernidade se transformam em “ciência” conservadora com toda a “aparência de ciência

crítica.” Isso nem Parsons e seus colaboradores lograram com tanto sucesso. Esse ponto é fundamental para compreendermos de que maneira as “ideias” dos intelectuais passa a afetar decisivamente a vida prática de uma sociedade legitimando e reproduzindo um cotidiano, como no caso brasileiro ainda hoje, de desigualdade e humilhação. Afinal, no mundo moderno, é a “ciência,” substituindo a função das religiões éticas nas sociedades pré-modernas, que detém a “autoridade legítima” para falar no espaço público sobre qualquer assunto relevante. A esfera política não é exceção. A forma dominante de se perceber a política no Brasil foi produto de intelectuais cujas “ideias” foram associadas, de modo intencional ou não, a “interesses” poderosos. Depois de institucionalizadas, essas ideias ganham vida própria e “esquecem” sua gênese e passam a influenciar a pauta dos jornais e a imaginação dos políticos e homens de ação. Se quisermos compreender de que modo percepções arbitrárias do mundo se tornam norma de conduta “legítima,” inclusive para aqueles que são oprimidos por ela, precisamos “relembrar” sua gênese.

Se pudemos dizer acima que Freyre é o pai-fundador da concepção dominante como o brasileiro se percebe no senso comum, então Sérgio Buarque é o pai-fundador das ciências sociais brasileiras do século XX, e, consequentemente —e muito mais importante— o autor da forma dominante como a “sociedade brasileira” contemporânea se compreende até hoje com a chancela e a autoridade “científica.” Sérgio Buarque fez sua obra-prima “Raízes do Brasil” em 1936, ou seja, três anos depois da publicação de *Casa-grande & senzala* em 1933. Como todos os brasileiros desse período, Buarque foi influenciado decisivamente por Freyre¹¹ nas ideias pioneiras que desenvolveu neste livro, que me parece, sem sombra de dúvida, o mais influente do pensamento social brasileiro no século XX na medida em que construiu a “ideia-força” (uma ideia articulada a interesses poderosos que permite mascará-los e justificá-los) mais importante da vida política do Brasil moderno.

Qual é a ideia-força que domina a vida política brasileira contemporânea? Minha tese é

a de que essa ideia força é uma espécie muito peculiar de perceber a relação entre mercado, Estado e sociedade, onde o Estado é visto, "a priori," como incompetente e inconfiável e o mercado como local da racionalidade e da virtude. O grande sistematizador dessa ideia foi precisamente Sérgio Buarque de Holanda. Buarque toma de Gilberto Freyre a ideia de que o Brasil produziu uma "civilização singular" e "inverte" o diagnóstico positivo de Freyre, defendendo que essa "civilização," e seu "tipo humano," o "homem cordial," é, na verdade, ao contrário de nossa maior virtude, o nosso maior problema social e político.

Na realidade, Buarque assume todos os pressupostos meta teóricos e teóricos da tese de uma sociedade pré-moderna e dominada pela emotividade e pessoalidade como formulada por Freyre. O que Buarque acrescenta de (aparentemente) novo é transformar a ênfase no personalismo –a emotividade como um dado psicossocial que guia as relações interpessoais de favor/proteção–típica da interpretação freyriana em ênfase no aspecto institucional e político, ou seja, supostamente patrimonial. O patrimonialismo é uma espécie de amálgama institucional do personalismo, de resto compartilhando literalmente todos os seus duvidosos pressupostos inseridos para fins pragmáticos na construção do "mito" freyriano. É isso que confere o aparente "charminho crítico" de sua tese. Afinal, o "homem cordial" é emotivo e particularista e tende a dividir o mundo entre "amigos," que merecem todos os privilégios, e "inimigos," que merecem a letra dura da lei. Quem exerce a crítica patrimonialista no Brasil o faz com "ar de denúncia," fazendo pose de "intelectual crítico." [20] O interessante no argumento de Buarque é que, apesar do "homem cordial" estar presente em todas as dimensões da vida, sua atenção se concentra apenas na ação do "homem cordial" no Estado. [21]

É o Estado dominado pelo homem cordial e particularista que se tornará o conceito mais importante da vida intelectual e política brasileira até hoje: o "patrimonialismo" do Estado e da "elite" corrupta. Nos inúmeros seguidores de Buarque, parte expressiva da intelectualidade brasileira até hoje, essa oposição se torna

ainda mais simplista. [22] O Mercado capitalista deixa de ser uma instituição ambivalente - fruto de longo aprendizado histórico, que permite tanto separar o interesse econômico de considerações éticas e com isso produzir riquezas em quantidades inauditas, mas, também, produzir e legitimar desigualdades injustas de todo tipo indefinidamente - para ser apenas o reino da "virtude" por excelência. O Estado, também ambivalente, podendo refletir interesses de todo tipo, sendo ele próprio um campo de lutas intestinas, é "congelado" no lado de uma suposta "elite privilegiada," a qual, como ninguém a define, se refere a todos e a ninguém e pode ser usada em qualquer contexto ao bel prazer do falante (quase sempre, ele próprio, de alguma "elite").

Mas o "toque de Midas" dessa ideologia, que vai explicar a sua adesão popular, é a associação, efetuada "por baixo do pano" e sem alarde, entre mercado e a sociedade como um todo, nos "convidando" a nos sentirmos tão virtuosos, puros e imaculados como o mercado. A partir daí, como a "recompensa narcísica" é o aspecto decisivo, a associação é tornada "afetiva" e, em grande medida, infensa à crítica racional. É precisamente este aspecto que permite a "adesão popular" de setores que não têm nada a ganhar com a "mercantilização" da sociedade como um todo. Desse modo, os partidos doutrinariamente liberais no Brasil –ainda que todos os partidos sem exceção estejam submetidos à sua hegemonia– que representam interesses de uma elite muito pequena, podem "universalizar" seus interesses particulares ao demonizar a intervenção estatal como sempre ineficiente e corrupta.

É a partir desse raciocínio que o tema da corrupção política passa a ser um dos temas mais centrais e recorrentes do debate acadêmico e político brasileiro. O que está em jogo, no entanto, não é a melhoria do combate à corrupção por meio do melhor aparelhamento dos órgãos de controle. O que existe é uma dramatização da oposição mercado (virtuoso) e Estado (corrupto) construída como uma suposta evidência da singularidade histórica e cultural brasileira. Como já observado, é apenas o "Estado" que passa a ser percebido como o fundamento material e simbólico do

patrimonialismo brasileiro. Ora, se todos somos “cordiais,” porque apenas quando estamos no Estado desenvolvemos as conseqüências patológicas dessa nossa “herança maldita”? Porque o mercado, por exemplo, não é percebido do mesmo modo? E, porque, ao contrário, o mercado é inclusive visto como a principal vítima da ação parasitária estatal?

É que de Max Weber, de onde se retira a autoridade científica e a “palavra” no sentido do “nome” – patrimonialismo– e não do “conceito científico,” para a legitimação científica dessa noção central para a auto-compreensão dos brasileiros, tem-se muito pouco. No Brasil, a influência do pensamento weberiano também é dominado pela mesma leitura liberal apologética que deu origem à teoria da modernização de inspiração parsoniana. É de Weber que se retira a autoridade científica e a “palavra,” no sentido do “nome” e não do “conceito científico,” para a legitimação científica da noção central, ainda hoje, da sociologia e da ciência política brasileira: a noção de “patrimonialismo,” para indicar uma suposta ação parasitária do Estado e de sua “elite” sobre a sociedade. Entre nós, no entanto, esse conceito perde qualquer contextualização histórica, fundamental no seu uso por Max Weber, e passa a designar uma espécie de “mal de origem” da atuação do Estado enquanto tal em qualquer período histórico. Na crítica à obra de Sérgio Buarque mais abaixo iremos reconstruir em detalhe o tema do patrimonialismo em Weber para criticar seu uso na sociologia brasileira.

Entre nós o uso dessa noção é sempre “político” e não “científico,” ou seja, a noção de patrimonialismo “simplifica” e “distorce” a realidade social de diversas maneiras e sempre em um único sentido: aquele que simplifica e “idealiza” o mercado e subjetiviza e “demoniza” o Estado. Para se amesquinhar ainda mais o horizonte reflexivo e retirar qualquer atenção aos consensos sociais e inarticulados que constituem a referência última de qualquer ação política, basta personalizar o debate político, de modo conseqüente, ao nível das telenovelas. À personalização, subjetivação e simplificação do Estado na noção de “estamento estatal” todo poderoso, é acrescentada uma teatralização da política como espetáculo bufo: deixamos de ter

“interesses e ideias em conflito” e passamos a ter um mundo político dividido entre “honestos” e “corruptos.” O tema do patrimonialismo não só oferece a semântica através da qual toda a sociedade compreende a si própria, mas também coloniza a forma peculiar como o próprio debate político se articula no Brasil e na América latina. O tema do patrimonialismo, precisamente por sua aparência de “crítica radical,” dramatiza um conflito aparente e falso, aquele entre mercado idealizado e um Estado “corrupto,” sob o preço de deixar na sombra todas as contradições sociais de uma sociedade –e nela incluindo tanto seu mercado quanto seu Estado– que naturaliza desigualdades sociais abissais e um cotidiano de carência e exclusão. [23] Essa é a efetiva função social da tese do patrimonialismo no Brasil.

O Racismo Culturalista Hoje

As páginas anteriores não são mera reconstrução de “história das ciências,” referindo-se a épocas passadas as quais, hoje em dia, lançaríamos um olhar cheio de compreensão histórica a quem não tinha nem poderia ter, dado a certo contexto cognitivo que se impunha a todos, o distanciamento que hoje desfrutaríamos. O contrário disso é verdade. A história que acabamos de resumir é, talvez, a maior história de sucesso das ciência sociais modernas. A teoria da modernização, o filho mais dileto da tradição weberiana apologética, não só não morreu na década de 60 como continua hoje, certamente com outras máscaras e roupagens, a dominar a discussão mundial.

Assim como se diz da ética protestante que ela se tornou a primeira religião a se tornar “profecia realizada” no mundo prático [24], e, ao se tornar realidade prática, “morre” enquanto religião, já que a religião ocidental pressupõe a tensão e não o amálgama com a realidade mundana, o mesmo pode se dizer da teoria da modernização. A teoria da modernização, como a realização mais consumada da leitura apologética da interpretação weberiana do ocidente, só “morre” para se transformar no pano de fundo não tematizado das grandes teorias sociais –e a partir delas da vida prática de todos nós– com pouquíssimas exceções,

[25] que tematizam a sociedade mundial ou a articulação entre sociedades avançadas e sociedades periféricas.

A leitura apologética weberiana tronou-se uma “segunda natureza” para a sociologia dominante e amplamente hegemônica em todo o planeta. Por “sociologia culturalista” eu não penso, portanto, em um ramo dentre outros dentre diversas sociologias, mas o fundo comum das sociologias, centrais e periféricas, que logram ocupar posição de hegemonia. Ela é, inclusive, o pano de fundo não tematizado de sociologias que reivindicam terem ultrapassado o culturalismo tradicional e ter adentrado em uma nova dimensão da reflexão sociológica como a reflexão de Niklas Luhmann por exemplo. Luhmann usa outro “vocabulário” mas a ideia de uma “corrupção estrutural” das sociedades periféricas, como se esta não existisse nas sociedades modernas centrais – que são portanto “idealizadas” e vistas como tendencialmente “perfeitas” de um modo muito próximo como a teoria da modernização clássica fazia – continua a estar presente em toda a sua argumentação. [26]

Isso para não falar em teorias que explicitamente continuam o legado dessa mesma teoria com grande sucesso de público e crítica como Fukuyama ou Ronald Inglehardt. [27] Também no Brasil de hoje os maiores “best sellers” das ciências sociais são aqueles que “atualizam” essa mesma leitura do mundo que separa os dignos de confiança e incorruptíveis das sociedades centrais dos corruptos e inconfiáveis das sociedades periféricas. No Brasil, as mesmas categorias, no entanto, servem para mostrar como as classes altas e médias são moral e cognitivamente superiores às classes populares, [28] reproduzindo uma oposição realizada em termos nacionais e regionais na sociologia mundial.

Na realidade, como a outra versão “reprimida” e “dominada” dentre as possíveis leituras do legado weberiano mostra, a modernidade ocidental é um todo ambíguo e contraditório, seja no centro seja na periferia do sistema, e que funciona segundo critérios que muito mais as aproximam do que as distanciam. É possível demonstrar que tanto a hierarquia social quanto a legitimação dessa mesma hierarquia

são realizados de modo muito semelhante em todas as sociedades modernas, sejam elas centrais ou periféricas. [29] Existe todo um caminho a ser percorrido para a construção de uma sociologia crítica contemporânea que seja capaz de ser fundada em outro terreno que não o do preconceito travestido de evidência científica. Nesse caminho, é o Weber crítico, precisamente o Weber que dedicou o melhor de seus esforços a tentar perceber os meandros da legitimação de toda forma de dominação social, quem pode nos ajudar. Talvez, ele percebesse que, hoje em dia, boa parte da legitimação dos interesses que não se podem exercer à luz do dia são legitimados pela própria ciência que deveria denunciá-los.

Endnotes

[1] Ver Taylor 1985.

[2] A palavra “racionalismo” para Weber significa a forma como uma determinada formação cultural percebe e avalia o mundo em todas as suas dimensões. Ver sobre isso Souza 1997 e, também, Schluchter 1979.

[3] Ver Souza 1997.

[4] De György Lukács até a escola de Frankfurt, passando por Jürgen Habermas e Pierre Bourdieu é difícil se pensar em um grande expoente da teoria social crítica não influenciado por Max Weber. Ver acerca dessa influência, Habermas 1986.

[5] O argumento que liga a herança platônica à hierarquia moral do ocidente talvez tenha sido melhor desenvolvido em todas as suas consequências por Taylor (1989) do que qualquer outro pensador.

[6] Habermas utilizou procedimento semelhante no seu *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* ao utilizar Nietzsche como “chave mestra” (Drehscheibe) do pensamento pós-moderno.

[7] Uso aqui uma adaptação livre do termo cunhado por Edward Said.

[8] Knöbl 2002.

[9] Como, por exemplo, Eisenstadt 1979.

[10] Stocking 1996.

[11] Parsons, ed. 1965.

[12] Ver Latham 2000 e Gilman 2007.

[13] Por exemplo, os livros clássicos de Banfield 1967 e Almond e Verba 1989.

[14] Weber 2011.

[15] Gilman 2007.

[16] Souza 2000a, tese desenvolvida depois em outros livros especialmente no Souza 2009.

[17] As obras de Octávio Paz no México e de Gino Germani na Argentina demonstram que esses temas não eram apenas brasileiros, mas, também, latino-americanos em sentido amplo.

[18] Freyre 1990.

[19] Maciel 2007.

[20] Em entrevistas empíricas que realizamos mais de 90% dos brasileiros tendem a identificar os problemas sociais brasileiros com a corrupção estatal. Souza, ed. 2000.

[21] Buarque 2001.

[22] Ver, por exemplo, Schwartzmann 1995 e Faoro 1984.

[23] O meu próprio trabalho recente se concentra na crítica de nossa tradição sociológica dominante e na construção de uma alternativa verdadeiramente crítica. Ver Souza 2006, 2012a, 2011 e 2012b.

[24] Por exemplo, Cohn 2002.

[25] Pierre Bourdieu seria, talvez, uma exceção parcial neste contexto. Infelizmente, Bourdieu não lançou as bases de uma sociologia efetivamente mundial.

[26] Ver, por exemplo, Luhmann 2008 and Luhmann 1995.

[27] Ver Inglehart 1990 e 1997. Ver Fukuyama 1992.

[28] Um exemplo recente é Lamounier e de Souza 2009. Ver também o "best seller" *A Cabeça do brasileiro* de de Almeida 2007.

[29] Ver Souza 2007, Souza 2012a, Souza 2011.

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Biografia do autor

Prof. de sociologia da Universidade ABC, São Paulo e da Universidade Sorbonne Paris I, se dedica a estudos teóricos e empíricos sobre desigualdade social, dominação política e simbólica, construção das classes sociais e racismo. É autor de mais de 30 livros em vários idiomas, incluindo os "best sellers," "A elite do Atraso," "A classe média no espelho," "A tolice da inteligência brasileira" e a "A ralé brasileira."

A recepção de Max Weber no pensamento de Fernando Henrique Cardoso e a legitimação intelectual do projeto de reforma do Estado no Brasil

MARCOS ABRAAO RIBEIRO (INSTITUTO FEDERAL FLUMINENSE)

Resumo

Este artigo analisa a recepção de Max Weber, realizada por Fernando Henrique Cardoso, com o objetivo de defender a centralidade do conceito de patrimonialismo para o sociólogo que o utilizou para interpretar o atraso brasileiro, resultante da dominação tradicional representada pela colonização de interesses privados no Estado. Desta forma, defendo a centralidade de Cardoso como o principal sistematizador político da tese do patrimonialismo no Brasil, pois esta foi central para o projeto de reforma do Estado desenvolvido durante o governo FHC.

Palavras-chave: FHC, Max Weber, reforma do Estado, atraso brasileiro.

Introdução

Ao assumir a Presidência de República, em 1995, Fernando Henrique Cardoso teve como objetivo central acabar com a chamada Era Vargas (Barboza Filho, *Os Paulistas no Poder*). Isto porque o modelo nacional-desenvolvimentista criado em 1930 seria o responsável por encastelar interesses privados no seio do Estado, fazendo com que este fosse o responsável por mazelas como a profunda desigualdade social existente no país. Paratanto, o governo FHC produziu um amplo programa de privatizações e de abertura econômica. Desta forma, poder-se-ia integrar o Brasil à economia globalizada, bem como extirpar os interesses privados presentes no Estado e construir um modelo de gestão gerencial.

Este objetivo de acerto de contas com a tradição política brasileira seria uma demonstração clara da dicotomia existente entre o intelectual e o político, pois o suposto passado marxista de Cardoso se contrapunha às medidas tomadas pelo seu governo. Bernardo Sorj talvez seja o autor a melhor articular a interpretação sobre a incoerência entre as instâncias do intelectual e do político em Cardoso. Isto porque o sociólogo seria um socialista declarado nos anos 1980, fazendo com que suas ações como político

fossem o reflexo de uma clara incoerência com o seu passado. Tal fato ocorreu porque Cardoso teria elaborado os seus projetos como político fora do marco teórico e ideológico em que transitara como sociólogo (Sorj, *Fernando Henrique Cardoso* 121). Portanto, Cardoso não seria coerente com o seu passado.

Como elemento auxiliar da dicotomia entre o intelectual e o político, existe a tese sobre a importância central de Raymundo Faoro como o pilar dos debates político-ideológicos sobre uma suposta tradição patrimonialista no Brasil (Campante, *Raymundo Faoro: Brasil*). Nesse sentido, Cardoso, cujo projeto político foi a proposição de uma revolução antipatrimonialista (Souza, *Para além de Raymundo Faoro?*), teria recepcionado a obra de Faoro na construção de seu projeto político com a criação do Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira (PSDB).

Esta interpretação foi sistematizada no Brasil a partir dos trabalhos de Luiz Werneck Vianna (*Weber e a Interpretação do Brasil, O presidente e a revolução passiva*). A tese de Werneck Vianna é fundamental, pois demonstra como além das questões conjunturais a interpretação *weberiana* do Brasil foi basilar para o processo de reforma do Estado. Este ponto é crucial pois, como defende Jessé Souza, as ideias produzidas pela ciência possuem um papel

central para a legitimação da dominação simbólica. A partir da relação de continuidade entre religião e ciência, Souza demonstra como ocorre a institucionalização das ideias e sua naturalização na vida cotidiana através da determinação do comportamento prático dos indivíduos (*A guerra contra o Brasil* 24). Para Souza, portanto, um processo de dominação material só pode ser plenamente compreendido quando analisamos a trama das ideias que legitima e justifica a dominação (*A guerra contra o Brasil*).

Para sustentar a força das ideias, Souza propõe uma cadeia funcional que nos permite compreender sua eficácia na vida cotidiana: “a) o nível da produção de ideias abstratas b), o nível dos operadores dessas ideias abstratas nas constelações de poder fático; e, finalmente, c) os divulgadores e popularizadores das ideias dominantes.” Essa cadeia é desdobrada, de forma concreta, nas disputas no campo intelectual, científico e universitário, nos operadores dos subsistemas da política, do direito e da economia e nos divulgadores existentes e na esfera pública maior (*A guerra contra o Brasil* 28).

Através da estrutura proposta por Souza, temos condições de sustentar a eficácia social das ideias, ou seja, como são justificadas e legitimadas na vida cotidiana. A citação a seguir vai ao encontro do argumento de Souza: “O conceito de patrimonialismo, na trilha de sua legitimação, difusão e solidificação acadêmica e social, sofreu essa espécie de ‘modificação’, criou aquele tipo de ‘vida própria’ – alheia e, em alguns momentos e elementos, até contrária à sua formulação original” (Campante, *Patrimonialismo no Brasil* 122).

Desta forma, a compreensão ampla do projeto de reforma do Estado no Brasil é alcançada quando transpassamos as questões conjunturais e procuramos entender como as ideias produzidas pelo sociólogo Fernando Henrique Cardoso se materializaram em um programa político nos anos 1990.

O artigo é dividido em três partes. Na primeira, apresento a recepção de Max Weber no Brasil para que eu possa demonstrar a importância do conceito de patrimonialismo para Cardoso. Na segunda parte, exponho

a metodologia de Florestan Fernandes para defender que tanto Karl Marx quanto Max Weber são fundamentais para a compreensão das teses de Cardoso, mesmo que a sociologia da dominação weberiana seja o fio condutor de suas interpretações sobre o Brasil. Na terceira, demonstro como Cardoso recepciona a sociologia weberiana para interpretar o Brasil entre as décadas de 1950 e 1980. Por fim, apresento como Cardoso mobiliza o conceito de patrimonialismo nos anos 1980 e 1990 para legitimar intelectualmente o projeto de reforma do Estado no Brasil. Nas considerações finais, defendo a necessidade da vinculação da obra de Cardoso com o projeto de reforma do Estado levado a cabo pelo PSDB.

A recepção de Max Weber no Brasil

Antes de demonstrar como Cardoso recepcionou a sociologia da dominação weberiana, apresento como o sociólogo alemão foi recepcionado em nosso pensamento social e político, bem como quais foram os principais autores a fazê-lo. De acordo com Dias, o primeiro trabalho sobre o sociólogo alemão foi elaborado por Emílio Willens, que publicou o artigo *Patrimonialismo e Administração* na Revista de Administração Pública, em 1945 (*Presença de Max Weber* 49). A partir da leitura pioneira de Willens, foram realizados outros trabalhos por intelectuais como Guerreiro Ramos, L.A. Costa Pinto e Florestan Fernandes, cujos temas giravam em torno da burocracia como tipo ideal, modalidades de poder e as dimensões e tipos de estratificação social (Dias, *Presença de Max Weber* 49). As primeiras leituras de Weber no Brasil, contudo, não foram realizadas em alemão, mas sim através das traduções em espanhol e inglês.

Todas essas leituras tinham como pano de fundo compreender o processo de mudança social no Brasil, que passava por um importante processo de mudança em torno da urbanização e da industrialização. Nesse sentido, Villas Bôas argumenta que durante longo período nossos intelectuais se debruçaram sobre o país com intuito de demarcar suas particularidades para apontar as possibilidades de desenvolvimento, uma vez que o Brasil seria marcado pela

perspectiva do descompasso em relação aos países centrais, *modernos e desenvolvidos* (*A recepção controversa de Max Weber*).

Como traço decisivo foi realizada uma interpretação que demarcava a dualidade entre tradição e modernidade (Villas Bôas, *A recepção controversa de Max Weber*). Com isso, parte dos sociólogos brasileiros reportou uma perspectiva normativa que possuía como elemento central a institucionalização da sociedade moderna, como supostamente existente nos países centrais (Villas Bôas, *A recepção controversa de Max Weber* 18). Portanto, a recepção de Weber tinha como interesse compreender o *atraso* da sociedade brasileira e lutar pela sua superação.

De acordo com Werneck Vianna (*Weber e a Interpretação do Brasil*), o Weber recepcionado no Brasil não fora aquele das patologias da modernidade, mas sim do acesso ao moderno. Para tanto, Werneck Vianna propõe duas formas de recepção do sociólogo alemão a partir de sua sociologia da dominação e da consequente perspectiva do *atraso*: o patrimonialismo estatal, que seria oriundo da herança ibérica, cujos autores principais são Raymundo Faoro (*Os Donos do Poder*) e Simon Schwarzman (*Bases do Autoritarismo Brasileiro*); e o patrimonialismo societal, oriundo das relações de produção no mundo agrário, cujos autores principais são Florestan Fernandes (*A revolução burguesa*) e Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco (*Homens livres na ordem escravocrata*).

Para a recepção de Weber denominada de *patrimonialismo de Estado*, o Brasil havia herdado uma cultura privatista com a transferência do Estado português, uma vez que o Estado antecede aos grupos de interesse, sendo o grande responsável por mazelas como a desigualdade social (Werneck Vianna, *Weber e a Interpretação do Brasil*). Ou seja, nossos males seriam provenientes da colonização ibérica. Essa interpretação teria como fim político-normativo a reforma do Estado, que poderia abri-lo à diversidade dos interesses existentes na sociedade civil. Desta forma, o sistema de representação seria imposto, bem como os interesses seriam libertos de qualquer razão tutelar (Werneck Vianna, *Weber e a Interpretação do Brasil* 36). Com a concessão de liberdade à diversidade de

interesses na sociedade haveria a constituição de uma dinâmica benfazeja, que teria como ponto central produzir maior igualdade social (Werneck Vianna, *Weber e a Interpretação do Brasil*).

Esta versão, portanto, tem como ponto fundamental a política como foco analítico, pois o Estado seria o grande entrave à consolidação da modernidade no Brasil (Sell, *As duas teorias do patrimonialismo*). Além destas características, esta ponta da recepção de Weber ainda seria a versão hegemônica na academia e na opinião pública brasileiras:

O Weber da versão hegemônica nas ciências sociais e na opinião pública sobre a controvérsia sobre a interpretação do Brasil tem sido aquele dos que apontam o nosso atraso como resultante de um vício de origem, em razão do tipo de colonização a que fomos sujeitos, a chamada herança do patrimonialismo ibérico, cujas estruturas teriam sido ainda mais reforçadas com o transplante, no começo do século XIX, do Estado português no solo americano. (Werneck Vianna, *Weber e a Interpretação do Brasil* 35)

Já a outra ponta da recepção de Weber tem na sociologia seu suporte. Esta interpretação afirma que nosso patrimonialismo é fruto das relações de produção no mundo agrário. Para a recepção de Weber que enfoca o patrimonialismo de origem societal, o Estado é considerado como instrumento da dominação de classes. Além disso, o Estado não se caracteriza como um Estado português prolongado, uma vez que houve uma combinação ambígua entre a ordem racional legal, advinda do Estado, e a patrimonial, oriunda da sociedade civil, que formaram desde a independência uma relação de compromisso. A ruptura não deveria ser feita ao nível do Estado, mas sim no âmbito das relações sociais de padrão patrimonial (Werneck Vianna, *Weber e a Interpretação do Brasil*).

Além de mapear a recepção de Weber, Werneck Vianna ainda advoga que estas interpretações foram incorporadas pelo Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) (a versão do patrimonialismo societal) e pelo PSDB (a versão

do patrimonialismo estatal), nos fornecendo uma importante tese sobre a vinculação entre a interpretação *weberiana* do Brasil e o projeto político de reforma do Estado:

Essas versões fizeram fortuna – embora nem sempre estivesse visível, em especial em fins da década de 80 e no começo da de 90, o que as singulariza irredutivelmente – e constituíram no suporte ideal das forças políticas que, após a promulgação da Constituição de 1988, se fizeram dominantes na opinião pública e nos segmentos organizados da sociedade, vindo mais tarde a assumir configuração partidária no PSDB e no PT, não por acaso originários do estado de São Paulo, o primeiro deles, como notório, ocupando a Presidência da República, e segundo o lugar de maior partido de oposição do país. (Werneck Vianna, *Weber e a Interpretação do Brasil* 45)

Como defendo neste artigo, Cardoso utiliza-se das duas pontas da recepção de Max Weber nos três momentos de sua produção intelectual para compreender o *atraso* brasileiro, pois o sociólogo inicia sua produção intelectual defendendo a existência de um patrimonialismo societal e termina advogando sobre a força de um patrimonialismo estatal oriundo da herança ibérica, o que marca uma importante inflexão em seu pensamento.

Antes de prosseguir, é importante apresentar os problemas existentes na recepção de Weber no Brasil. Sobre a questão, Carlos Sell argumenta que as interpretações brasileiras ignoram que o tema do patrimonialismo é baseado em dois modelos separados pela Primeira Guerra Mundial. Nos primeiros escritos de Weber, o patrimonialismo seria uma derivação do patriarcalismo (Sell, *As duas teorias do patrimonialismo* 9). Na produção do pós-guerra, Weber defende que a dominação patrimonial possui uma relação de descontinuidade em relação à dominação patriarcal (ibid. 11). No caso brasileiro existe a mistura dos dois modelos sem a devida atenção às descontinuidades (ibid. 11). Em virtude da não atenção às mudanças internas nas formulações de Weber em sua sociologia da dominação, as leituras brasileiras perdem validade teórica quando relacionadas à formulação original dos escritos do sociólogo alemão (*As duas teorias do patrimonialismo*).

A metodologia de Florestan e o marxismo em Cardoso

Quando nos referimos ao pensamento de Cardoso nos vem de imediato a ligação com a obra de Karl Marx, sobretudo porque o sociólogo, em 1958, fundou junto com outros intelectuais uspianos, como José Arthur Giannotti, Paul Singer, Fernando Novas, Ruth Cardoso e Octávio Ianni, um seminário para estudar *O Capital*, a obra magna do pensador alemão.

Schwarz (*Um Seminário de Marx*) argumenta que a composição do seminário era interdisciplinar, pois contava com representantes de história, filosofia, economia, sociologia e antropologia, que eram requisitados de acordo com os assuntos estudados. Estes intelectuais se reuniam quinzenalmente para discutir em torno de 20 páginas de *O Capital*. O interesse pela obra de Marx era de caráter puramente acadêmico, pois os intelectuais que fizeram parte deste seminário procuraram se afastar da cultura política da esquerda marxista que era dominada pelo Partido Comunista Brasileiro (PCB):

Dito isso, a contribuição específica do seminário veio por outro lado. Os jovens professores tinham pela frente o trabalho de tese o desafio de firmar o bom nome da dialética no terreno da ciência. De modo geral, escolheram assunto brasileiro, alinhados com a opção pelos de baixo que era própria à escola, onde se desenvolviam pesquisas sobre o negro, o caipira, imigrante, o folclore, a religião popular. (Schwarz, *Um Seminário de Marx* 7)

A ligação puramente teórica com o marxismo também é referendada por Cardoso, sobretudo ao se referir ao núcleo duro do seminário (Cardoso, *Fernando Henrique Cardoso*). Aliado ao caráter puramente acadêmico, que deslocara a utilização da dialética marxiana da política socialista, outro elemento que singularizou o relacionamento de Cardoso com o marxismo foi a sua utilização a partir da proposta metodológica levada a cabo por Florestan Fernandes. Esta se constituía na utilização conjunta dos métodos de Émile Durkheim,

Max Weber e Karl Marx, chamada por Gabriel Cohn de *eclétismo bem temperado*. Segundo Cardoso, o Marx ensinado por Florestan era aquele para o desenvolvimento de análises de longa duração (*Fernando Henrique Cardoso*).

Não descarto, portanto, a importância que a dialética marxiana possui para o pensamento de Cardoso que, sem ela, teria profundas dificuldades em analisar a própria formação do capitalismo e as relações resultantes do processo de dependência entre centro e periferia, que são baseadas em categorias fundamentalmente marxistas (Campante, *Patrimonialismo no Brasil* 148). Todavia, acredito que a utilização de Max Weber possui um papel de fio condutor do argumento, uma vez que aponta para o patrimonialismo como grande dilema a ser enfrentado e vencido pela sociedade brasileira.

Fernandes (*Fundamentos*) se debruça durante os anos 1950 sob a questão da indução na sociologia. Na proposição do autor, os métodos funcionalista (Émile Durkheim), compreensivo (Max Weber) e dialético (Karl Marx) poderiam ser utilizados de forma conjunta de acordo com os interesses de pesquisa. Cardoso afirma que aprendeu a utilizar os três grandes clássicos de acordo com o tipo de análise que iria ser desempenhada.

Tal proposição seria possível porque os métodos acima citados teriam limitações que seriam complementadas pela junção com os outros métodos. De acordo com Cohn (*O eclétismo bem temperado* 49), Florestan tem como questão central a proposição sobre como se poderia dar conta dos fenômenos na sua diferenciação interna e na sua multiplicidade. Ainda segundo Cohn, Fernandes propõe esse fazer sociológico através da generalização da noção de tipo (*O eclétismo bem temperado*).

Fernandes (*Fundamentos*) constrói uma proposta eclética, uma vez que haveria uma relação de complementaridade entre os métodos dos três pais fundadores da sociologia. Essa perspectiva eclética, todavia, não possui um caráter relativizador e estéril porque leva em consideração as discontinuidades existentes nas proposições dos clássicos: “Quer dizer: eu vou à realidade ou bem construindo tipos ideais, tipos médios ou tipos extremos. No interior deste universo é que se articulam as diferenças que

podem vir mais adiante no âmbito metodológico” (Cohn, *O eclétismo*).

A exposição da proposição metodológica de Fernandes é de fundamental importância para o argumento que defendo neste artigo, pois Cardoso incorpora esse fazer sociológico do mestre, como pode ser visto, por exemplo, em *Capitalismo e Escravidão no Brasil Meridional*, obra que, em princípio, seria a reprodutora de uma interpretação puramente marxista sobre a formação do capitalismo no Brasil:

Quando escrevi este livro, eu já havia lido muito Parsons, Merton (que eram funcionalistas) e Weber. Minha leitura de Marx foi posterior a estes autores, e eu não poderia desprezar a contribuição de seus modos de análise para obter uma visão mais diferenciada da sociedade escravocrata. A ideia do patriarcalismo escravista vem de Weber. A análise de “ajustamento entre expectativas”, de papel social ou da socialização incompleta vem dos funcionalistas. E, assim como essas, muitas outras análises e conceitos não provêm de Marx. Isso, que pode parecer “eclétismo” aos marxistas teológicos, era usual entre os que foram alunos e trabalharam com Florestan Fernandes. A paixão pelo saber, a pachorra da análise, os tormentos da síntese não respeitavam as “escolas” político-filosóficas. Podíamos até tê-las, mas éramos, como sou em quase tudo hoje, heréticos e antifuncionalistas. (12-13)

A citação acima demonstra como Cardoso incorporou o mesmo fazer sociológico de Florestan. Todavia, ao contrário do fio condutor marxista contido na obra do mestre, acredito que Cardoso terá em Max Weber e sua sociologia da dominação os elementos norteadores de sua interpretação do Brasil. Defendo este ponto abaixo, ao analisar a forma como Cardoso recepciona a sociologia da dominação weberiana para compreender a formação do capitalismo, da sociedade brasileira e dos seus dilemas mais importantes.

Max Weber e o pensamento de Cardoso

Meu objetivo nesta seção é construir uma interpretação abrangente do pensamento de Cardoso. Nesse sentido, analiso detidamente sua produção intelectual mais vigorosa, construída entre a segunda metade dos anos 1950 e o início dos anos 1980. Para tanto, utilizo como suporte metodológico o contextualismo linguístico de Quentin Skinner (*Significado y comprensión*). Através da metodologia de Skinner tenho uma importante ferramenta para dividir o pensamento de Cardoso em três momentos específicos: *estudos sobre as relações raciais e a mudança social; desenvolvimento e dependência; dependência e autoritarismo*. Com esta divisão consigo demonstrar quais eram os léxicos linguísticos que estruturavam o debate intelectual de cada uma dos momentos do pensamento do sociólogo, bem como as respectivas intenções de suas publicações.

O primeiro momento da produção intelectual de Cardoso dá-se na metade dos anos 1950 com suas pesquisas sobre as relações raciais no Sul do Brasil e seus textos sobre a mudança social. Tais investigações foram um desdobramento das pesquisas inicialmente feitas por Florestan Fernandes e Roger Bastide em São Paulo para o Projeto UNESCO. Até o início dos anos 1960 a temática das relações raciais possui centralidade na Cadeira de Sociologia I da Faculdade de Filosofia, Ciências e Letras da Universidade de São Paulo (USP), pois além dos trabalhos sistemáticos sobre a questão Florestan e o seu grupo publicaram alguns trabalhos sobre a mudança social. Neste momento, portanto, *mudança social e democracia racial, feudalismo, racionalização, secularização, modernização*, conformavam os léxicos principais do debate intelectual no qual Cardoso estava inserido sobre questão racial, sociedade escravista e mudança social.

Como meu objetivo é demonstrar a recepção e a importância do conceito de patrimonialismo para Cardoso, farei a exposição de *Capitalismo e Escravidão no Brasil Meridional*, obra na qual Max Weber e Karl Marx são utilizados conjuntamente para interpretar o Rio Grande do Sul escravocrata, e realizarei também uma

síntese dos trabalhos sobre a mudança social.

Estudos sobre relações raciais e mudança social

Cardoso havia feito a pesquisa sobre a sociedade escravista e as relações raciais em Santa Catarina juntamente com Octávio Ianni e Renato Jardim Moreira. O projeto, contudo, abrangia ainda os Estados do Paraná e Rio Grande do Sul. O Paraná ficou por conta de Ianni, e o Rio Grande foi estudado por Cardoso. Inicialmente, a pesquisa envolveria uma análise que ia desde a constituição da sociedade escravista até a década de 1950. [1] Todavia, a criação do *Seminário de Marx* fez com que o foco da pesquisa fosse modificado através da utilização da dialética como a metodologia mais importante. A partir desta utilização, a questão das relações raciais passou a ter um patamar subordinado na pesquisa levada a cabo por Cardoso:

O que o livro investiga em pormenor são as conexões efetivas entre capitalismo e escravidão numa área periférica do país, área com certa autonomia, mas dependente do que se passava nos âmbitos centrais e na vizinha Argentina, onde vigorava o trabalho assalariado. (Schwarz, *Um Seminário de Marx* 8)

Cardoso passou a analisar a constituição do capitalismo em uma ordem pautada pela escravidão e pelo profundo arbítrio. Nesse sentido, Max Weber ganhou centralidade uma vez que o conceito de patrimonialismo tornou-se elemento de crucial importância para demarcar a singularidade do capitalismo escravista, bem como do dilema referente à sua plena realização na ordem social competitiva.

O sociólogo afirma que a sociedade gaúcha se organizou nos moldes de uma estrutura patrimonialista, com a constituição de posições assimétricas na estrutura social. Nesta estrutura, as formas autocráticas de dominação, com apelo ao arbítrio e à força bruta, tinham peso decisivo para a manutenção do controle social. Isto fazia com que as normas formalmente estatuídas pelo Estado patrimonialista português fossem

desrespeitadas. Tal transgressão ocorria porque tanto a ordem militar estabelecida quanto a própria sociedade gaúcha não possuíam as condições necessárias para manterem o respeito à ordem jurídica estabelecida (Cardoso, *Capitalismo e escravidão*).

O regime instaurado no Rio Grande do Sul tinha como fatores estruturantes o sistema escravocrata, o latifúndio e o patrimonialismo patriarcal, que faziam com que o domínio da Coroa portuguesa fosse *corrigido* em nível local. O sistema escravocrata patrimonialista era o grande obstáculo para o desenvolvimento de forças produtivas que viessem a implantar de maneira plena o sistema capitalista no Rio Grande do Sul, constituindo-se como o grande fator de *atraso* da região. Cardoso (*Capitalismo e escravidão*) afirma que da escravidão derivaria uma concepção alienadora do trabalho, responsável por impedir a constituição de formas mais complexas de trabalho humano.

A escravidão possuía um caráter totalizador na sociedade gaúcha, na medida em que ela impunha uma série de avaliações sobre o papel do empreendedor, o trabalho, os homens livres, a sociedade e o destino humano (Cardoso *Capitalismo e escravidão*). Além destes pontos centrais, a escravidão ainda legava aos escravos um processo de não reconhecimento social, que fazia com que eles não fossem considerados como pessoas humanas, mas sim como coisas.

O malogro do regime escravocrata no Sul deu-se em virtude de dois fatores decisivos: a abolição da escravatura e a imigração. Estes movimentos, todavia, não representaram a constituição de uma nova ordem para os ex-escravos, bem como de outra representação destes estratos frente aos brancos. De acordo com Cardoso (*Capitalismo e escravidão*), os movimentos de abolição e imigração foram apropriados pelas camadas dominantes, que reorientaram a reintegração do negro na nova ordem de acordo com seus interesses. Havia, portanto, a perpetuação do *antigo regime* patrimonialista na nova ordem.

Esta ação dos homens brancos fazia com que os ex-escravos tivessem como únicas opções continuar trabalhando nas mesmas condições em que viviam no regime escravocrata, tendo o estatuto formal de homens livres, ou se rebelar

contra tudo o que o trabalho desqualificado significava, que faria com que os negros vivessem na ociosidade e no desregramento (Cardoso *Capitalismo e escravidão*). Cardoso afirma que esta nova etapa representou uma resignificação do preconceito sobre o negro.

Em síntese, a sociedade escravocrata analisada por Cardoso tinha como características centrais os grandes domínios rurais e a escravidão estruturada pela violência e o arbítrio, derivados do patrimonialismo societal, responsáveis por explicar o *atraso* da sociedade riograndense e o preconceito racial. O patrimonialismo instituído nas relações de produção era o elemento central, neste momento da obra de Cardoso, para explicar o *atraso* brasileiro.

Cardoso também publicou alguns trabalhos sobre o tema da mudança social, que enfocavam a questão agrária (Cardoso, *Mudanças Sociais*), o sistema educacional (Cardoso e Ianni, *As exigências educacionais*) e o comportamento do operariado (Cardoso e Ianni, *Tensões sociais*). Esses trabalhos têm uma ligação direta com suas pesquisas sobre a sociedade escravista e as relações raciais no Sul do Brasil, visto que são indissociáveis para um entendimento amplo dos dilemas da mudança social. Essa relação ocorre porque o processo de mudança social rumo a uma sociedade industrial, urbana e de classes só se completaria quando a herança patrimonialista herdada do *antigo regime* fosse derrotada plenamente. Desta forma, o autor defendeu que a sociedade brasileira dos anos 1950 e início dos anos 1960 ainda possuía uma presença marcante da sociedade escravista, patrimonial e tradicional, que deixava como consequência uma profunda desigualdade social e um *atraso* nas questões agrária, educacional e no comportamento do operariado.

Desenvolvimento e dependência

A temática do desenvolvimento possui um espaço fundamental no pensamento de Cardoso. O autor escreve alguns artigos sobre o assunto entre a segunda metade dos anos 1950 e o início dos anos 1960. Estes estudos, todavia, foram trabalhos periféricos em relação à temática central da Cadeira de Sociologia I

da FFCL da USP, que eram os estudos sobre as relações raciais e a sociedade escravista no Brasil. Além deste fato, os textos publicados por Cardoso nesse período não tinham o objetivo de adentrar de maneira sistemática no debate sobre o desenvolvimento brasileiro. Tal fato pode ser comprovado com o texto publicado pelo sociólogo sobre *desenvolvimento econômico e nacionalismo* na década de 1950 (Cardoso, *Desenvolvimento econômico*). Este texto possui uma visão completamente oposta àquela o autor terá sobre o nacionalismo após sua pesquisa sobre o empresariado brasileiro.

Assim, a temática do desenvolvimento se torna central na produção de Cardoso através da criação do Centro de Sociologia Industrial e do Trabalho, o CESIT. A partir deste momento a temática do desenvolvimento torna-se o tema de pesquisa principal para os pesquisadores vinculados à Cadeira de Sociologia I da FFCL (Romão).

A partir da criação do CESIT, Cardoso procura sistematicamente intervir nos debates intelectuais da época sobre o desenvolvimento brasileiro. Nesse segundo momento havia como léxicos fundamentais: *nacionalismo, imperialismo, nação-antinação, transplantação, dependência, desenvolvimento, emancipação, burguesia empreendedora*. A partir destes léxicos, aliados às agências intelectuais produtoras e disseminadoras, é que conseguimos compreender de forma ampliada este momento da produção intelectual de Cardoso. Neste segundo momento ele polemiza com as teses defendidas pelo PCB, pelo Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros (ISEB) e, posteriormente, pela Comissão Econômica para América Latina (CEPAL) sobre a possibilidade da construção de um desenvolvimento sobre bases autônomas e nacionais.

Em *Empresário Industrial e Desenvolvimento Econômico no Brasil*, Cardoso (*Empresário Industrial*) refuta a tese de que a burguesia brasileira poderia agir como um agente decisivo para instituir um desenvolvimento sobre bases autônomas e nacionais, como era amplamente defendido nos âmbitos do PCB e do ISEB. Para tanto, ele efetua um cuidadoso estudo sobre a mentalidade da burguesia brasileira a partir da continuação da junção entre o instrumental

marxista histórico-estrutural, que possibilitava a análise da realidade brasileira enquanto totalidade, e a sociologia compreensiva weberiana.

De Weber, ele procura compreender as ações da burguesia brasileira a partir da construção de dois tipos ideais: *homem de empresa* e *capitão de indústria*, além da caracterização do conceito de patrimonialismo como um dado estrutural para explicar o não protagonismo da burguesia no processo de desenvolvimento sobre bases autônomas, ou seja, o seu *atraso* civilizatório se comparada às burguesias dos países centrais. A partir da permanência do patrimonialismo de origem agrária, Cardoso caracteriza o sistema político brasileiro como tradicional, bem como explica o processo de exclusão das classes populares.

A construção dos tipos ideias, *capitão de indústria* e *homem de empresa*, foi importante para demonstrar como a burguesia nunca possuiu consciência de classe, e também como esta sempre agiu com relações de compromisso com a política patrimonialista, responsável pelo *atraso*. Esta visão e comportamento arcaico da maior parte da burguesia brasileira serviam como fatores para a negação das interpretações mais influentes sobre o papel dessa classe no processo de desenvolvimento brasileiro. Os *capitães de indústria* teriam um tipo de ação deformada pelo patrimonialismo, o que estiolava a possibilidade de consciência de seu papel no processo de desenvolvimento, fazendo com o que *atraso* prevalecesse.

Após os estudos sobre a burguesia empresarial brasileira e o seu compromisso com o *atraso* representado pelo patrimonialismo de origem agrária, Cardoso aprofunda suas teses sobre o desenvolvimento brasileiro e formula, junto com o sociólogo chileno Enzo Faletto, a teoria da dependência. Se na obra sobre o desenvolvimento brasileiro Cardoso teve como interlocutores mais importantes o PCB e o ISEB, em sua obra escrita junto com Faletto seus interlocutores principais estão no âmbito da CEPAL, que visualizava para a América Latina um processo de desenvolvimento sobre bases nacionais.

Assim como ocorrido em sua pesquisa sobre a atuação da burguesia, Cardoso também

demonstra com a teoria da dependência a impossibilidade da constituição de um processo de desenvolvimento autônomo na América Latina, na medida em que os países latino-americanos mantêm relações de dependência com os polos hegemônicos do sistema capitalista internacional.

Existe um elo de continuidade entre a tese sobre a burguesia brasileira e a teoria da dependência. Como vimos na seção anterior, Cardoso analisa o processo de desenvolvimento brasileiro a partir de componentes sociais e políticos radicados no comportamento da burguesia, de maneira a fugir da perspectiva economicista. De acordo com Cardoso e Faletto (*Dependência e desenvolvimento*) “A estrutura social e política vai-se modificando na medida em que diferentes classes e grupos sociais conseguem impor seus interesses, sua força e sua dominação ao conjunto da sociedade” (Cardoso e Faletto, *Dependência e desenvolvimento* 22). Assim como na análise sobre o empresariado brasileiro, a teoria da dependência tem nas estruturas de domínio um caráter central. Isto ocorre devido ao protagonismo da estrutura de dominação, através de sua interação com capitalismo central no sentido de encaminhar o processo de desenvolvimento latino-americano.

Portanto, a dinâmica referente ao sistema de relações entre as classes sociais nas nações dependentes torna-se o fator chave para se compreender o processo de desenvolvimento. Neste sentido, Cardoso e Faletto (*Dependência e desenvolvimento* 36) afirmam que o ponto central para a dinâmica do sistema econômico dependente “no âmbito da nação, está determinado - dentro de certos limites - pela capacidade dos sistemas internos de alianças para proporcionar-lhe capacidade de expansão”.

Como neste momento o objetivo central de Cardoso não é fazer nenhuma análise exegética sobre o Estado brasileiro, mas sim construir uma nova explicação macroestrutural para o processo de desenvolvimento latino-americano, a questão do patrimonialismo passa como algo sem maior importância na argumentação do autor. Nesse sentido, a condição de dependência parece funcionar como uma *variável independente* das mudanças ocorridas nos países latino-americanos, como o Brasil, e

de seus consequentes dilemas. É interessante notar como as relações de dominação, tão caras a Max Weber, são fundamentais para a teoria de Cardoso.

No lugar de constituir um processo de desenvolvimento sobre bases autônomas e nacionais como pregavam as teses do PCB, ISEB e da CEPAL, o caso latino-americano será caracterizado pela heteronomia e por um desenvolvimento parcial. A realidade latino-americana, portanto, é marcada pela existência de países periféricos, industrializados e dependentes (*Dependência e desenvolvimento* 127). Nesse sentido, a dependência estrutural a que estão submetidos os países latino-americanos deixa um espaço para a realização da dinâmica interna. É dentro deste espaço de autonomia relativa que a dominação patrimonialista era reproduzida no Brasil, através das correlações de forças que instituíam a dominação política nos diversos momentos históricos analisados pela teoria de Cardoso.

Dependência e autoritarismo

Como vimos na seção anterior, a grande temática da intelectualidade brasileira durante os anos 1960 foi referente à questão do desenvolvimento. Durante a década de 1970, todavia, o desenvolvimento dependente não será a única preocupação de Cardoso. Haverá também a preocupação em compreender a natureza do Estado brasileiro de forma a poder constituir um entendimento preciso do regime militar instaurado no Brasil.

O autoritarismo apenas torna-se uma questão decisiva para a intelectualidade brasileira durante os anos 1970, precisamente a partir de meados desta década. Neste momento, os léxicos linguísticos principais que vão conformar o debate intelectual são: *dualismo, estagnação, populismo, nacional-desenvolvimentismo, autoritarismo, sociedade civil, democracia, desenvolvimento, dependência, modernização conservadora, Estado burocrático, revolução socialista*. Analiso nesta seção a interpretação do Brasil formulada por Cardoso nos anos 1970, quando este modifica sua caracterização do patrimonialismo brasileiro de societal, oriundo do modo de produção escravocrata, para estatal,

resultante da herança ibérica patrimonial. Juntamente com essa significativa modificação na caracterização do patrimonialismo brasileiro, Cardoso circunscreve os dilemas brasileiros em torno da constituição de uma ordem democrática ao universo eminentemente institucional.

Cardoso afirma que nosso desenvolvimento econômico dependente é ancorado a uma estrutura política não democrática que foi plasmada em solo ibérico, sendo transplantada para o Brasil sem possuir traço efetivamente europeu, pois o desenvolvimento capitalista e a revolução burguesa não conseguiram modificá-la plenamente (Cardoso, *Autoritarismo e democratização* 12). Cardoso afirma que:

É que o Estado nacional independente no Brasil nasceu depois da transferência do Estado imperial português para este país. Foi a única situação na América Latina em que o Estado da Metrópole se deslocou, com D. João VI e toda a sua burocracia, para uma colônia. Por isso, o aparelho estatal brasileiro é extremamente complexo desde o século XIX. E quando se efetua o processo da independência o Estado nacional herda esse aparelho estatal do Império português. (*O Estado na América Latina* 84)

A tese da herança patrimonial teria o papel de um dos elementos explicativos dos vários momentos de autoritarismo existentes no país, como paternalismo autocrático do Império, a *democracia de elites* da República Velha, o populismo autoritário e o autoritarismo tecnocrático (Cardoso, *Autoritarismo e democratização* 13). Ou melhor, até a instituição do golpe de 1964 será o elemento fundamental do autoritarismo brasileiro, pois até então a dominação política no Brasil seria plenamente tradicional.

Outro ponto a ser notado é a afirmação de Cardoso de que no Brasil o liberalismo funcionou como algo de fachada, não possuindo autênticos liberais e também porque era fortemente derruído pela desigualdade (Cardoso, *Autoritarismo e democratização*). Tal proposição vai ao encontro da caracterização feita por Faoro (*Os Donos do Poder*) sobre o liberalismo no Brasil.

Cardoso (*Autoritarismo e democratização*)

inicia sua análise com o processo de formação das cidades na América Ibérica, que teriam como função atender as necessidades do mercantilismo ibérico e do Estado patrimonial português. Haveria uma dialética entre a vila agroindustrial e o Estado patrimonial, ou seja, entre os interesses dos senhores territoriais e os funcionários da Coroa, constituindo o pano de fundo da vida colonial (Cardoso, *Autoritarismo e democratização*). Para demonstrar o peso da burocracia no Brasil, Cardoso afirma que nas cidades coloniais os dois tipos que estruturavam as relações sociais eram o funcionário e o senhor de terras. Esta relação começou a ser modificada alguns anos antes do processo de independência através da reativação das cidades como foco de decisão política, com o fortalecimento dos mercados existentes nas cidades e também com a crescente influência das classes dominantes na vida política da Região (Cardoso, *Autoritarismo e democratização*). Com o processo de independência foi constituída a fase de dependência nacional. Cardoso afirma que este processo de independência levou prosperidade para várias partes da América Latina, mas sem romper com o *antigo regime* patrimonialista.

Durante o Império, o Estado patrimonialista brasileiro era regido por um rei-senhor, que derivava para o plano administrativo o sistema de patronato (Cardoso, *Autoritarismo e democratização*). Cardoso (*A construção da democracia*), fazendo referência direta a Faoro, fala sobre a existência de estamentos burocráticos durante o Império. Inclusive, a queda do Império será capitaneada, assim como defende Faoro, por um estamento burocrático militar que havia sido deixado de lado durante o Império. Cardoso (*A construção da democracia*) afirma que a mudança para a República foi bastante significativa no sistema de dominação e no nível das instituições. Todavia, não foi suficiente para romper com o domínio burocrático e patrimonialista.

Após este primeiro momento de domínio do estamento burocrático militar foi instituído o domínio oligárquico, que seria vigente até a instituição do golpe militar em 1964. As relações se constituíam numa base patrimonialista entre Estado e sociedade, entre poder central

e poder local, reforçando as características do Estado patrimonial (Cardoso, *Autoritarismo e democratização*). Neste sentido, Cardoso diverge de interpretações como a de Faoro ao considerar simplista e insatisfatória a caracterização do Estado como controlado unicamente por um estamento burocrático pairando sobre a nação.

Cardoso afirma que o patrimonialismo estaria enraizado na América Latina e que teria no catolicismo seu suporte cultural. Para tanto, o autor constrói uma relação dicotômica entre o catolicismo e o individualismo protestante para demonstrar como a religião seria responsável pela constituição do patrimonialismo católico. Este seria coletivista, menos responsável individualmente, sendo o Estado visto como pai benevolente (Cardoso, *Autoritarismo e democratização*). Nosso Estado patrimonialista teria uma feição católica, que seria reforçado pelo processo de mobilização das massas urbanas. Interessante a ser ressaltado é que a visão do patrimonialismo brasileiro como católico é similar à interpretação feita por Faoro, que também liga o patrimonialismo ao catolicismo (Santos Jr.).

Em virtude do domínio do patrimonialismo católico, teríamos um estilo de participação fortemente dependente do Estado, tendo pouco a ver com o sistema de representação e voto herdado do liberalismo individualista europeu (Cardoso, *Autoritarismo e democratização*). Como podemos perceber, o patrimonialismo estava enraizado em nossa realidade social, tendo peso decisivo para a interpretação dos dilemas do Brasil e da América Latina no que se refere à questão da sociabilidade. Cardoso (*Autoritarismo e democratização*) argumenta que o passado colonial e o patrimonialismo contínuo deixaram uma pesada herança nas sociedades brasileira e latino-americana.

Até o populismo teríamos o domínio do Estado patrimonial estruturado por um sistema político eminentemente tradicional. Este domínio, todavia, seria modificado com o regime instaurado em 1964. Segundo Cardoso (*A construção da democracia*), este teve consequências revolucionárias em nossa realidade social, pois colocou a burguesia junto ao desenvolvimento do capitalismo internacional

e também porque subordinou a economia nacional a formas mais modernas de dominação econômica. Além destes fatores, ainda possibilitou a modernização da máquina estatal e também lançou as bases para a implantação de um setor público da economia, chamado pelo autor de *burguesia de Estado*, que estava integrada ao capitalismo internacional (Cardoso, *Autoritarismo e democratização* 98). Com isso, teríamos a passagem do sistema patrimonialista tradicional para o regime autoritário corporativo, estruturado em termos civis e militares, e que teria no capitalismo oligopólico seu ponto central (Cardoso *Autoritarismo e democratização*).

Mesmo com as importantes modificações efetuadas, a tradição de Estado forte aliada a um controle político elitista fez com que o patrimonialismo ibérico fosse refeito nesse período. O *atraso* representado pelo patrimonialismo coexistira na nova ordem entrelaçado com a modernização do aparelho estatal e com o moderno desenvolvimento econômico.

De acordo com Cardoso houve neste momento o protagonismo da tecnocracia. A partir do protagonismo deste setor ocorreu um processo importante de modernização do aparelho do Estado (aliado à repressão social), bem como a adoção de medidas econômicas favoráveis à ação empresarial (Cardoso *Autoritarismo e democratização*). Este processo foi se intensificando até o ponto da constituição do regime burocrático-autoritário, regime estruturado em um processo de dependência internacional, que permitia certo dinamismo do crescimento econômico e mobilidade social, mesmo que apenas no âmbito urbano (Cardoso *Autoritarismo e democratização*).

Este regime, entretanto, não seria mais economicamente apenas dependente, mas possuiria como característica definidora o seu caráter dependente e associado. Neste sentido, teríamos como dois fatores importantes do regime burocrático-autoritário o caráter dependente de nossa economia aliado à tradição centralizadora, burocratizante e patrimonialista do Estado brasileiro, que foram responsáveis pela redefinição do quadro institucional (Cardoso *Autoritarismo e democratização*). Esta redefinição se deu com a gestação de um

sistema híbrido, que fortalecia os interesses das multinacionais e também a empresa pública, e ampliava a capacidade de controle do governo sobre a sociedade:

São alguns exemplos: o empresariado estatal constitui-se como camada significativa da classe dominante; a antiga burguesia nacional não desaparece, mas se incrusta entre a empresa estatal e a multinacional, tratando de reservar para si espaços econômicos relativamente importantes; o grande capital estrangeiro aparece socialmente como burocracia internacionalizada constituída por administradores profissionais, com forte 'presença estrutural' mas com enorme dificuldade para constituir-se, no plano da política local, como classe para si. (Cardoso, *Desenvolvimento dependente-associado* 458)

As relações travadas entre os componentes do regime burocrático-autoritário e a sociedade civil se davam através de *anéis burocráticos*, mecanismo de cooptação dos membros das classes dominantes nas cúpulas decisórias (Cardoso *Autoritarismo e democratização*). Cardoso afirma que utilizou o termo burocrático para demarcar a necessária localização no aparelho do Estado. Estes anéis demonstrariam como os interesses patrimonialistas estariam fortemente enraizados no Estado.

Este sistema de anéis foi responsável pela exclusão das massas como fontes legitimadoras do Estado. O sistema político brasileiro teria como ponto crucial um amálgama entre uma organização política baseada na existência de classes inseridas numa ordem de cunho industrial e monopólico, aliada a outra enraizada no patrimonialismo estatal originário do sistema capitalista colonial (Cardoso, *Autoritarismo e democratização* 236). Com isso, teríamos uma condução elitista e patrimonialista da vida política no Brasil, pautada pelas relações de compromisso entre a burguesia internacionalizada e os empresários públicos, coexistindo com uma sociedade de massas. Neste momento, Cardoso afirma que a teoria marxista seria insuficiente para compreender a complexidade do mundo, passando Max Weber

a ter maior atualidade (Lahuerta, *Intelectuais e a transição*).

Para combater o regime autoritário estruturado pelo patrimonialismo, Cardoso propõe a reativação da sociedade civil. Isto se daria pelo fortalecimento do Estado de Direito, pelo controle responsável do aparelho do Estado. Existiria uma tendência democratizadora na sociedade, mas que seria resistente ao nível do Estado (Cardoso, *A democracia na América Latina*). Neste sentido, a resistência democrática deveria se estruturar enquanto uma luta antiburocrática, no sentido de maior controle público da ação estatal. O processo de democratização com a reativação da sociedade civil seria responsável por fazer com que as associações profissionais, os sindicatos, as igrejas, os grêmios estudantis pudessem propor soluções, entrando em conflitos produtivos para o país (*A democracia na América Latina*). Cardoso afirma ainda que era necessário reconstituir a sociedade civil para que ela pudesse se expressar na ordem política e também para contrabalançar o Estado, tornando parte da realidade política da nação (*A democracia na América Latina*). Desta forma o Brasil poderia constituir uma democracia substantiva.

Como vimos até aqui, a condição estrutural de dependência não era o fator impeditivo da constituição de uma ordem democrática no Brasil, uma vez que o dilema democrático brasileiro era representado pelo patrimonialismo ibérico. Portanto, apenas reativando a sociedade civil e derruindo o patrimonialismo enraizado no seio do Estado é que conseguiríamos instituir uma ordem plenamente moderna, plural e democrática na qual os interesses existentes na sociedade pudessem ser livres e efetivamente representados, uma vez que a sociedade era vítima do autoritarismo exclusivo do Estado.

Max Weber, Cardoso e o projeto de reforma do Estado

Se durante os anos 1970 Cardoso colocou sua análise a serviço do dismantelamento do regime político burocrático-autoritário, a partir do final dos anos 1980 o sociólogo passa a ter como encaminhamento as proposições em torno da abertura econômica e da reforma do

Estado, sob uma perspectiva socialdemocrata representada pelo PSDB:

Dito isso, convém ressituar a social-democracia como a brecha que permite, *cum grano salis*, limitar os abusos do poder, tanto público quanto privado, para obter o que nas filosofias anteriores parecia impossível: que a mola individual (melhor dito, privada) da prosperidade pressione a eficiência da economia e que o interesse coletivo seja preservado, através da esfera pública democratizada, para que os deserdados deixem de sê-lo. (*Desafios da social-democracia* 42)

Cardoso afirma que desde os seminários de fundação do PSDB foi difundida a ideia de revisão dos papéis de Estado, sociedade e mercado no mundo globalizado. Ou seja, o partido representaria uma visão moderna e consentânea com as mudanças ocorridas no mundo, pois seria necessário refazer a *engenharia institucional* de forma a poder gerar práticas democráticas. Cardoso entendia que o mercado era uma realidade inescapável depois da queda do socialismo real. Sendo assim, seria necessário construir uma nova ordem através da conjugação entre mercado, Estado e sociedade a partir da ação nos seguintes pontos: retomada do crescimento econômico; diminuição das desigualdades; governabilidade. O crescimento econômico se daria através de uma política de internacionalização da economia e também de privatizações, que deixariam a capacidade estratégica do Estado para ativar a economia (*Congresso, desenvolvimento e democracia* 43).

Assim como já ocorrera no período anterior, o Estado passa a ser a fonte de todos os nossos dilemas mais importantes, como a profunda desigualdade social. Ao comparar a realidade brasileira com a existente na Europa e nos Estados Unidos, Cardoso aponta que nosso passado escravista, colonial, patrimonialista e clientelista fora elemento crucial para a reprodução da abissal desigualdade. Por isso, deveria haver uma luta social articulada “contra a imposição de mecanismos burocráticos-manipuladores, que tornam o Estado e as instituições representativas no oposto do que

devem ser numa democracia: a expressão da vontade da população socialmente organizada” (*Democracia e desigualdades sociais* 27).

Ao analisar as relações entre Estado, mercado e democracia, Cardoso aponta a nossa formação social escravista como o fator decisivo para a constituição de uma relação distorcida entre ambos, uma vez que as potencialidades do mercado, por exemplo, não puderam ser plenamente consolidadas:

A força do mercado sempre foi muito mais acanhada e constringida pela existência de fatores políticos, por um tipo de dominação política que nada tem a ver com a ação do Estado reformador do mercado, à europeia. O Estado aqui se acomodou à sociedade e ambos a um certo tipo de produção, guardando características mais do que conhecidas de patrimonialismo, de clientelismo etc. [...] Alguns autores fizeram uma análise mais culturalista dessas diferenças, em termos de uma tradição corporativista, de uma cultura católica, da tradição ibérica etc. A literatura sobre o tema é ampla. Não é o caso de fazermos a revisão dela, mas o fato é que, de alguma forma, a vinculação entre Estado, sociedade e democracia na América Latina deu-se a partir de outros pressupostos, outro background. (*Democracia e desigualdades sociais* 28)

Para Cardoso, a formação patrimonialista da sociedade brasileira fora o elemento crucial para gerar uma relação diferenciada entre Estado e sociedade ao compararmos às sociedades de típica formação capitalista, pois seria uma característica básica das sociedades de base latifundiário-patrimonialista (*Democracia e desigualdades sociais*). Portanto, o grande dilema no Brasil não estava nas lutas de classe ou na imposição do imperialismo, como defendem as interpretações marxistas, mas no patrimonialismo que havia se reproduzido de forma secular na realidade brasileira. De acordo com Campante, Cardoso faz parte do campo ideológico que defende o paradigma do mercado e, por consequência, interpreta o Estado como o grande vilão:

Na narrativa de Cardoso, ocupa lugar central a crítica ao Estado patrimonial, entendido como nacionalizante e estatizante, que teria se implantado contra as verdadeiras classes modernizantes do país, o complexo agrário-industrial paulista. Assim, a agenda de 'reforma do Estado' foi o *leitmotiv* do governo Cardoso. (*Patrimonialismo no Brasil* 145).

Por conta desse domínio, seria necessária a reforma do Estado para que este pudesse, de maneira efetiva, atender ao interesse público (Cardoso, *Democracia e desigualdades sociais*). Tendo em vista este quadro, o sociólogo coloca o melhor de sua produção intelectual e política em favor da abertura econômica e da reforma do Estado. Cardoso faz a defesa da socialdemocracia tendo como base sua interpretação do Brasil elaborada a partir dos anos 1970, acrescida dos seus diagnósticos da época (*Congresso, desenvolvimento e democracia*).

O sociólogo argumenta que o Estado havia sido privatizado na América Latina. Em virtude de tal privatização, a instituição de um mercado competitivo seria um elemento decisivo para derruir o patrimonialismo e o clientelismo enraizados, pois os dilemas brasileiros eram fenômenos exclusivos do Estado, como o autor já argumentara em suas proposições sobre o regime burocrático-autoritário:

Vejamos o fenômeno do patrimonialismo. Sabemos que ele sobreviveu a Vargas, progrediu sob o regime militar e, ainda hoje, se coloca no caminho da modernização do Estado. Cheguei a estudar o assunto durante os anos do autoritarismo. Falei na existência de "anéis burocráticos". Buscava representar o conluio que se dava no interior do Estado entre grandes empresários e a alta burocracia, para definir onde e como se dariam incentivos públicos. Foi uma das formas encontradas para o arbítrio perpetuar a gestão do bem público por interesses localizados. Com o retorno do Estado de Direito, o fenômeno assumiu novos contornos, mais transparentes, o que facilitou sua crítica. Os lobbies ganharam os corredores do

poder, à busca de subsídios e crédito fácil. O estamento se encastelou em nichos cartoriais para defender privilégios e regalias. (Cardoso, *A modernização do Brasil* 34)

Seria preciso a instituição de um Estado socialmente necessário, capaz de universalizar as vantagens sociais (Cardoso, Congresso, desenvolvimento e democracia). Desta forma, aumentaria o controle democrático sobre a gestão do Estado, fazendo com que este se tornasse sensível ao interesse público (*Congresso, desenvolvimento e democracia*). Para Cardoso, como temos demonstrado, o patrimonialismo seria o grande entrave para a modernização do Estado brasileiro e a consolidação da democracia.

As mudanças institucionais seriam responsáveis por gerar uma cultura democrática, institucionalizando as práticas de liberdade, criando-se no país o controle democrático do aparelho do Estado pela população e conseguindo, desta forma, vencer o *atraso*. O modelo de desenvolvimento dependente-associado não deveria ser modificado, pois seria o possível para o caso brasileiro. Não havia condições para escapar da ação do mercado (Cardoso, *Notas sobre a reforma*). E s t a s teses estarão presentes nos programas do PSDB, partido criado por Cardoso no final dos anos 1980. Sobre a relação entre as teses de Cardoso e os programas do partido, Sobrinho argumenta:

De sorte que as orientações propositivas de Cardoso —que estão referendadas nos primeiros programas do PSDB— enfatizam a descentralização do poder político e a organização autônoma da sociedade civil enquanto pressupostos básicos para o exercício da cidadania. Nessa direção, a reforma do estado teria que empreender a desprivatização do conjunto do estado e a superação do clientelismo, fisiologismo e corporativismo, através do estabelecimento de novos mecanismos de relacionamento entre estado e a sociedade. (*O pensamento político* 277)

Ao analisar o processo de reforma levado

a cabo por seu governo, Cardoso afirma que estava reconstruindo o Estado brasileiro. Nesse sentido, com a reforma “Substitui-se o antigo controle burocrático, frequentemente casado com interesses particularistas de clientelas patrimonialistas, por agências reguladoras com responsabilidade pública” (*Notas sobre a reforma* 10). Estas ações seriam fundamentais para modificar a tradição de centralização, cuja lógica era atender aos interesses dos grandes e ter pouca eficiência. Nesse sentido, seu governo ia de encontro a essa má tradição (Cardoso, *Notas sobre a reforma*).

No lugar da gestão burocrática e privatista seria criada a gestão gerencial, responsável por promover um espírito de mérito na burocracia, retirando os privilégios e universalizando o acesso à população. Assim, “... nas sociedades democráticas e de massas como a brasileira crescentemente será, o antigo Estado intervencionista e patrimonialista passou a ser um traje apertado” (Cardoso, *Notas sobre a reforma* 11). Com essas modificações em torno da reforma do Estado o *atraso* brasileiro, representado pelo patrimonialismo, seria vencido, uma vez que o Estado democratizado poderia finalmente atender a milhões de excluídos que viveriam em uma sociedade que não mais aceitaria a condição de penúria a que estavam submetidos. Dessa forma, derruindo-se a gestão patrimonialista do seio do Estado poderíamos constituir uma democracia efetiva no Brasil, segundo a interpretação *weberiana* de Cardoso.

Considerações finais

Cardoso baseou suas análises sobre o Estado brasileiro do final dos anos 1980 na interpretação do país produzida por ele nos anos 1970, acrescida, como demonstrei, aos seus diagnósticos de época. Ou seja, o político Cardoso norteou suas proposições a partir do seu pensamento político, esquecido pelos intérpretes que querem fazer uma vinculação entre a produção intelectual e a prática política ao analisarem apenas o tema da dependência, como são os casos, por exemplo, de Velasco e Cruz, Traspadini e Batista Jr.

A análise da parte esquecida da produção

intelectual de Cardoso nos mostra como seu pensamento político guarda *afinidades eletivas* com a interpretação liberal de Raymundo Faoro, considerado por Luiz Werneck Vianna como o grande sistematizador da interpretação que deu a justificação intelectual ao projeto de reforma do Estado.

Concordo com Werneck Vianna quando este afirma que a interpretação do Brasil baseada em Max Weber foi elemento crucial para a justificação intelectual do projeto de reforma do Estado. Todavia, considero Fernando Henrique Cardoso o intelectual que construiu a interpretação baseada que funcionou como justificação intelectual para o projeto levado a cabo pelo PSDB nos anos 1990. A partir da tese do patrimonialismo, portanto, podemos observar como as ações materiais só podem ser concretamente analisadas quando observamos o papel central das ideias e de sua eficácia social (Souza, *A guerra contra o Brasil*).

Nesse sentido, podemos entender porque Cardoso teve como um dos objetivos centrais de seu governo acabar com a chamada Era Vargas (Barboza Filho, *Os Paulistas no Poder*). Isto porque o *atraso* brasileiro estava circunscrito à dimensão institucional representada pela perpetuação do patrimonialismo no Estado, identificado por ele durante suas análises sobre o regime burocrático-autoritário. Não tenho o objetivo de analisar os oito anos de mandato de Cardoso, nem de discutir as continuidades e rupturas com a sua obra durante o período em que foi presidente do Brasil. Quero, no entanto, demonstrar como sua produção intelectual, especificamente o seu pensamento político, teve importância crucial para a elaboração do projeto de reforma do Estado.

Como vimos ao longo deste artigo, Max Weber possui um patamar de centralidade no pensamento de Cardoso, uma vez que foi utilizado para compreender o *atraso* brasileiro e balizar a ação política derivada deste diagnóstico. Com esta ligação, apresento de forma precisa a hipótese de Werneck Vianna sobre a relação entre a tese do patrimonialismo e o projeto de reforma do Estado no Brasil, pois defendo a necessidade de se unir aos fatores conjunturais explicativos do projeto, como a crise do Estado nacional-desenvolvimentista, a globalização,

o neoliberalismo, a queda do socialismo real, a interpretação *weberiana* do Brasil produzida pelo sociólogo Fernando Henrique.

Endnotes

[1] Em Ribeiro (2016), apresento a pesquisa de Cardoso sobre as relações raciais em seu sentido original, ou seja, como havia sido formulado previamente por Florestan Fernandes como desdobramentos das investigações em São Paulo, para o Projeto UNESCO.

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Biografia do autor

Doutor em Sociologia Política pela Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense Darcy Ribeiro (UENF) e professor e pesquisador do Instituto Federal Fluminense (IFF) campus Campos Centro. Email: olamarcos@yahoo.com.br.

Patrimonial Liberalism: A Weberian Approach to Early Latin American State-Making

FRANCISCO COLOM GONZÁLEZ (SPANISH NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL (CSIC))

Abstract

The attempts to create liberal institutions in the absence of a recognizable liberal political culture have traditionally disconcerted historians of the Iberian world. Liberal ideas not only legitimized the termination of the colonial bond with the metropolis, but also bolstered attempts to create modern state institutions on both sides of the Iberian Atlantic. At the same time, patrimonial practices were widespread and recurrent phenomena throughout the early period of state formation. The ritual invocation and the political functionality of liberal ideas in this context demand a more nuanced explanation than simply discarding them as mere propaganda or empty political rhetoric. However unstable or contradictory 19th-century Latin American politics were, they were systematically worded in the language of liberalism and enjoyed a latent legitimacy that reflected the normative universe of the old colonial society. This article tries to explain the background of the 'patrimonial' type of liberalism that spread throughout Latin America after the Atlantic Revolutions and the potential that Max Weber's theoretical framework offers for its interpretation.

Keywords: Max Weber, Patrimonialism, Liberalism, Latin America, State-making

Patrimonialism in Max Weber

For a long time, 'patrimonialism' was a term that critical social sciences loved to hate because, since the 1960s, it had been used by modernization theorists as a culturally biased and static concept to explain the alleged 'deviation' of Latin American societies from the unidirectional path of change from tradition to modernity (Schwartzman). [1] For Max Weber, patrimonialism was a type of 'traditional domination', that is, "when authority is claimed by it and believed in by virtue of the sanctity of age-old rules and norms" (226-7). Organized rule is based in this case on "personal loyalty which results from common upbringing" (Weber 226-7). Whereas the roots of traditional domination grow out of the master's authority over his household and the belief in the inviolability of traditional norms, under bureaucratic domination the norms are established rationally, appeal to a sense of abstract legality, and presuppose technical training. The application of such concepts to contemporary societies meant bringing them back into the traditional-modern dichotomy and

risked essentializing some of their features.

In fact, there is no single, universally accepted definition of 'patrimonialism'. The notion of a *Patrimonialstaat* (patrimonial state) was originally devised by the conservative jurist Karl Ludwig von Haller in the wake of the European Restoration in opposition to the contractual theories of the state disseminated by the French Revolution (von Haller). [2] According to him, patriarchal states were the most common ones in history and were derived from the aggregation of seigniorial house and land rights (*Haus- und Grundherrschaft*). Max Weber refined the term a century later, conveying a new meaning to it within the wider context of his theory of domination. For him, patrimonial conditions have had extraordinary importance as a historical platform for larger political structures. Patrimonialism, along with patriarchalism, was thus portrayed as a subtype of traditional domination that developed as a differentiation from the *oikos*, the household domain. It implied the legitimate exercise of jurisdictional power and of certain political rights as if they were private. A 'patrimonial state' emerged when the

ruler managed his political authority in the same discretionary way as he did his patriarchal power, i.e. as a personal instrument.

In Weberian terms, therefore, patrimonialism essentially refers to the mode in which power is exercised and distributed throughout society, but it also involves a certain type of legitimacy. The origin and limits of the patrimonial ruler's authority are viewed as legitimate insofar as they are 'traditional', that is, as long as they rely on the belief in the "inviolability of that which has existed from time out of mind" (Weber 1006). Patrimonial regimes are characterized by a continuous tension between the central authority and the centrifugal tendencies of the subordinate powers, as this mode of subjection is based on customary bonds of reciprocity between the ruler and his dependents. The difference between patriarchal and patrimonial authority was for Weber only one of degree for, unlike the former, patrimonialism includes an administrative cadre. Patrimonial rule could be exercised through the granting of feudal tenure to dependants, who could then transmit it to their heirs, or by bequeathing benefits to office-holders. The first case was typical of the European Middle Ages, whereas the prebendal mode is identified with ancient and Oriental societies.

Admittedly, Hegel's conception of the rational state (i.e. the state whose administrative body is based on the rationality of the law) as the dialectical culmination of *Sittlichkeit* (the ethical order of the community) looms large in Weber's legal-rational type of domination and its ascription to the modern bureaucratic state. However, Weber's categories were embedded in a larger conceptual network and used in complex historical descriptions that did not strictly imply an evolutionary outline. He recognized historical passages connecting one type of authority to the other. For instance, revolutionary movements guided by charismatic leaders could crystallize into a traditional order or bureaucratize into a rational formal organization. It was Talcott Parsons, the first translator of Weber's work into English and his most influential interpreter in the American academy, who transformed these 'ideal types' into a developmental process. After the Second World War, the notion of patrimonialism was reshaped by structural-

functionalist sociology and linked on the one hand to traditional society and, on the other hand, used as an explanation of why some countries were 'lagging behind' in the process of economic and social modernization.

Patrimonialism acquired new connotations in the 1960s, when the then emerging paradigm of *civic culture* promoted a behavioral approach to the study of politics. This perspective interpreted political change through social attitudes and led to the comparison of political cultures in the Americas, a task that was carried out with uneven skill and eventually transformed into an essentialist and culturalist interpretation of social agency. Drawing on Parsons' belief that Calvinist religiosity –with its egalitarian, individualistic ethos, and its skepticism of state power– had become institutionalized in the United States as a pattern of social values, some authors maintained that in Latin America the combined effects of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, patrimonial rule, and colonial dependence had inversely crystallized into a *monistic* political culture that had outlived its original background and continued projecting its influence on contemporary societies in the forms of charismatic rule, authoritarian corporatism, and bureaucratic paternalism.

The Patrimonial State in Spanish America

Though there are few explicit mentions of Latin America in Weber's work, his notion of patrimonialism is particularly helpful in describing some characteristics of the colonial regime. [3] The Spanish system of domination in America was originally devised to exploit mineral resources through forced labour and exact tribute from native peoples. The *Estado indiano*, the colonial state that emerged from this scheme, shows some resemblance to the ideal features of the patrimonial state depicted in Weber's work. Originally created by the private initiative of military entrepreneurs, the *Conquistadores*, who tried to impose patrimonial rule on domains gained for the Crown at their own expense, it soon developed –not without struggle– into a more cohesive and centralized structure of domination. Colonial society became ethnically organized into a caste system that differed from

the matrix society in the Iberian Peninsula. Spaniards and Indians were initially pressed by the Crown to live in their own *repúblicas* or communities, but Creole domination depended on the availability of indentured native labour. Unlike the fiefdom and the *corvée* institutions in Europe, the *encomienda* and the *repartimiento* – which had some indigenous precedents, like the *mita* system in the Inca Empire and the *coatequitl* among the Aztecs – were not modes of servitude entailed to land tenure. They were temporary grants of native workforce that were bestowed by the Crown either to private individuals for their personal service or to community-driven projects. Both types of service fell under royal discretion and could not be transmitted by the beneficiaries to their descendants. Despite the pressure of the American *encomenderos* on the Crown and their occasional display of violent protest, they were unable to transform their privileged status into that of European feudal nobility. By the mid-16th century the Indian tribute was monetized, formally putting the relationship between the natives and the *encomienda* holders on an equal footing with the *pecheros* (peasant tributaries) from Castile and their feudal lords, but with the significant difference that the tax was imposed on the Indians based on their ethnic status, whereas the Castilian commoners were taxed according to their property (Pollack).

This ethno-corporative system has sometimes been described as ‘tributary despotism’. [4] However, if some practices of the colonial regime showed patrimonial characteristics, other features, especially after the Bourbon reforms in the 18th century, brought it closer to what Weber labelled as a ‘rational’ type of bureaucratic domination. [5] With time, colonial rule was increasingly organized around a central authority, made use of *ad hoc* administrative bodies, like the Council of the Indies in the Peninsula and the *Audiencias* and *Cabildos* in America, and developed a corpus of specialized jurisprudence. According to Weber, bureaucratic domination presupposes a cadre of professionally trained administrators, as the enactment of norms is guided by permits and rules that appeal to some sense of abstract rationality and constitute the core of legal authority. Unlike patriarchal commands, which are predominantly value

oriented, bureaucratic norms are established according to instrumental purposes and have a formal-rational basis. Pressed by particular circumstances, like competition with rival powers and fiscal necessity, Weber admitted the possibility that patrimonial domination developed some rational administrative traits, as happened with modern capitalism in feudal Europe. Capitalism, however, had also been ‘advanced’ in Europe by the political and economic interests of the urban guilds and merchants, a role that the colonial cities and the Creole elites failed to play in Spanish America. The Spanish conquerors founded cities in order to legitimize their achievements and as instruments for the control of the territory, but the land-owning and mining interests that prevailed among these groups were linked to a seigniorial *ethos*, not to bourgeois entrepreneurship. [6]

The instructions emanating from the Crown were far from obtaining automatic obedience overseas; they had to be balanced against the interests of colonial society. In the absence of a substantial degree of political representation or a constitutional separation of powers, the combined effect of ill-defined competences, overlapping jurisdictions, and venal administrative practices helped the Crown to counterbalance different local interests and exercise some remote control of colonial authorities. The result was a malleable system of governance that allowed colonial society ample space for adaptation, bargaining, and outright corruption (Phelan). The maxim ‘*se acata, pero no se cumple*’ (the order is complied with, but not implemented), usually applied to laws arriving from the Peninsula which were deemed inappropriate for the American context or contradictory to the ‘real’ interests of the Crown, discloses the value-oriented rationality that underlay the whole colonial administrative system. This is a type of substantive rationality (*wertrationales Handeln*, in Weber’s terminology) that strives for goals that may not be formally rational in themselves, but that are nonetheless pursued by rational means. Its features are easily recognizable in the colonial legal corpus (the *Leyes de Indias* or *Derecho indiano*), which combined local and Castilian law, and was characterized by the lack of systematicity, a casuistic approach, and the ultimate reliance

on natural law. The reforms implemented by the Bourbons during the mid-18th century somewhat altered the administrative system of the American territories, but the reinforcement of central authority did not necessarily make the whole structure more homogeneous.

Latin American history in the 19th century has often been portrayed as a beleaguered attempt to erect state institutions legitimized by liberal doctrines in the societies that emerged from the demise of the colonial regime. [7] However, adjectives like 'imaginary,' 'chimerical,' 'incomplete,' or 'disenchanted' abound in the titles of many monographs on the political history of the region. Even if Latin American states belong to the earliest wave of constitutional polities that emerged from the Atlantic revolutions, the foundations of the new independent regimes took a long time to consolidate. When this occurred, the outcome was often weak and unstable governments. The old metropolis did not fare much better, and during most of the 19th century, insurreccional *juntas* and military *pronunciamientos* were the order of the day. [8] However, an explanation is still needed for the recurrent and ritual invocation of liberal ideas in this context. Liberalism not only legitimized the termination of the colonial bond but also flanked subsequent attempts to establish national institutions in the region and made a stormy return at the end of the 20th century under an economic, 'neoliberal' guise. Liberal ideas were not a mere ideological transplant in the region. Alongside the obvious imports from the European Enlightenment and the American and French Revolutions, they emerged from a specific Ibero-American debate. [9] For a long time, however, Latin American historiography remained confined between the narrow limits drawn by the hagiographic tone of the *historias patrias*, which conceived of the independence ideology as a 'continuation' of the French and American Revolutions, and a 'hispanicist' alternative associated with conservative positions. In fact, the conventional literature on the age of revolutions did not recognize such a continuity, [10] whereas both perspectives are seen nowadays as being out of tune with reality. It is generally accepted now that the European and Spanish references are not mutually exclusive.

Constitutional liberalism was an experience induced both from the metropolis (the drafting of the first Spanish Constitution in Cádiz in 1810 included Spanish American representatives) and by the first insurreccional movements.

The reasons for the contrast between the early constitutional experiences in the Iberian world and their political malfunctioning have been alternatively searched for in cultural characteristics, economic weakness, or in the insurmountable differences between contending factions. [11] Such interpretations are not necessarily incompatible, but they seem unable to provide an integrated view of the local political traditions, their institutional basis, and the social meanings attached to them.

Liberalism, Natural Law and Traditional Domination

A lasting matter of discussion between what we could call the 'Franco/American' and the 'Hispanicist' paradigms for the interpretation of the Spanish-American revolutions was the perceptible affinity between some political notions expressed in the early constitutions and Catholic natural law. This should be a surprise to no one, given that liberalism draws its normative sources from natural law theories and their political-theological background. The categories of natural law are nevertheless far from constituting a homogeneous body. Catholic and Protestant legal theorists defined individual rights, sovereign authority, and the constitution of society in recognisably different manners. The connections between natural law (a legitimation of 'traditional domination'), the contractual roots of liberalism (an ideology about the political and property rights of the individual) and patrimonialism cannot be understood without considering the background of feudalism and the rise of absolute monarchy.

European feudalism can be formally described as a network of transactional obligations within which the status of the King in relation to the nobles was little more than *primus inter pares* (the first among peers). Within this context, natural law emerged as a body of legal norms that attempted to settle feudal disputes and to organise the different layers of authority. In

order to reaffirm the power of the monarch as a right of its own, natural law theories codified royal sovereignty as a contractual system. Early modern Europe became the first region in the world with a pattern of political relations based on the legal control of sovereign power and on individual statutory rights. Constitutional rule was nevertheless the contingent result of a combination of elements, like the balance of powers between aristocracy and the Crown, the decentralisation of military structures, and the resilience of commoners' rights (Downing). Institutions like parliaments and charters draw their original roots from the contractual customs of an evanescent feudal world in tension with the emerging absolutist practices. The way in which these strains were resolved gave the different liberal traditions their particular brand.

English liberalism, the first to mark the historical path, emerged from the reaction of the gentry and its political allies against the prerogatives of the Crown. Texts like those written by John Locke basically depicted what political practice had established in England after the civil war in the mid-17th century. The English liberal matrix, permeated as it was by Protestant individualist values, viewed private property as a safeguard for civic autonomy and as the expression of social competence. [12] In France, the materialization of liberty as civil equality and popular sovereignty was mainly the result of a cultural process. Even if French theories on the popular origin of political authority can be dated back to the late 16th century, it was the rationalism of the Enlightenment that prepared the path for the *Rights of Men* and the Revolution. German liberalism was somehow belated in comparison to its English and French counterparts, due to a large extent to the tardy unification of the country. The theory of the *Rechtsstaat*, as established in Kantian and Hegelian legal philosophy, offered a juridical approach to political legitimacy. The formal generality of the law was seen as a bulwark against arbitrary rule, whereas the ethical responsibility of the state as agent of civil peace was brought to the fore. For Max Weber too the rationality of the law, both in procedural and substantial matters, was the benchmark of the legal-rational type of domination (Weber 656-7). This aspect of German liberal theory

conspicuously contrasts with the equivalent task attributed to the market by the Scottish Enlightenment and its "commercial humanism" (Pocock). Even today, German *Ordoliberalismus*, unlike Anglo-Saxon neoliberalism, emphasizes the juridical and political responsibility of the state for ensuring an adequate environment for economic competition.

The history of liberal ideas in the Iberian world is somewhat different. Spanish absolutism did not emerge from the suppression of internal religious wars, but from territorial expansion, first in the Peninsula and then in America. The repression and ultimate expulsion of religious dissenters spared the Spanish sovereigns many of the obstacles that hampered the full assertion of royal authority in other kingdoms. For centuries, scholasticism provided the framework for the moral and political self-interpretation of Iberian society. [13] The extemporaneous resort of Spanish political thought in the 16th century to Thomism (which is a medieval reformulation of Aristotelian philosophy) has been attributed to the particular situation of the country (Morse, *El Espejo de Próspero*). After the crisis of medieval universalism, the emerging Spanish monarchy needed to conciliate the political rationale of absolutism with a new ecumenical order that could incorporate the native peoples of the New World into Catholic civilisation. Natural law provided a propitious template for this task. The idea of the 'common good', as systematized by Thomas Aquinas and later developed by Iberian scholasticism, played a pivotal role. For Aquinas there are different types of laws (human, natural and divine), all of them accessible to human reason. Whereas natural law, which allows us to discern good from evil, is available to man through natural reason, human law is "nothing more than an ordinance of reason for the common good, made by him who has care of the community" (Aquinas art. 4). This is a normative self-description of patrimonial authority. To put it in Weberian terms, legal rationality has for Aquinas a material purpose, for the law must be addressed to the common good, but it also exudes a patrimonial character, since it is entrusted to the ruler of the community. The normative affinity of monarchical power to patriarchal authority is even more obvious in the

work of Jean Bodin and Robert Filmer, the earliest theorists of absolutism, who portrayed the just administration of the household as a model for the governance of the polity by the sovereign. [14] Spanish legal philosophers like Francisco Suárez, Francisco de Vitoria, Domingo de Soto, or Luis de Molina assumed the Aristotelian/Thomistic view of society as an organic hierarchy. Within this architectonic worldview, political authority does not emanate from naked force or arbitrary rule, but from its natural position in the hierarchical order of society. Similarly, subjective rights are not conceived as immanent to human beings; they depend on a substantive moral order that transcends them. This is the ultimate origin of the Catholic political tenet, according to which unjust law cannot arouse obedience and dissolves the moral bond of the community. This view had practical consequences, since for the political theory of the Spanish Golden Age,

“The legal order is not the result of a decision or a rule [...]. Rules and decisions do not create order. It is within a given, pre-established order that their ruling function is ascribed to them [...]. Social structure derives from natural law, and without it society cannot achieve its ends.” (Maravall 124-5, my translation)

Spanish Thomism rejected the Calvinist principle that made political authority dependent on the will of God. Even if the ultimate source of authority was to be found in divine law, sociability was conceived as a natural attribute of human beings, not as a heavenly grace. It is society as a whole, not the isolated individuals, which possesses the attributes for life in common through a ‘pact of association’. The common good, however, refers to something qualitatively different, if not quite opposite, to the numerical addition of individual interests. According to the doctrine established by Francisco Suárez, God did not bestow political authority directly on the sovereign but through the intermediation of civil society. The legitimacy of political authority originates in the natural capacity that human beings have to associate and make laws. This primordial capacity was conferred to the ruler by the community as a ‘pact of subordination’

that can be reversed if the sovereign betrays his natural function. In Catholic legal philosophy, then, political authority serves a clear purpose: the preservation of the common good, understood as the harmony of society with a natural moral order. Scholars and public officials in the Iberian world were usually trained in this legal tradition. It is no surprise that modern liberal tracts were often read and interpreted within this template. This social imaginary can be clearly recognized during the political crisis created by the forced abdication of the King in 1810 under Napoleon’s pressure, when the American *juntas* and *cabildos* claimed the reversion of sovereignty to them (Colom González, “El trono vacío”). Similarly, Betham’s utilitarian philosophy, whose introduction in Colombia was promoted very early by the *libertador* Francisco de Paula Santander, was taught under the traditional pattern of natural law, with the idea of ‘maximum utility’ swiftly transformed into the scholastic notion of the ‘common good’. [15]

Patrimonial Liberalism

Liberal institutions in Latin America had to adapt to the difficult circumstances under which the national states were built. The normative expectations aroused by the independence movements lay far ahead of the institutional capacity of the new regimes, whose social structures were still substantially the same as in the colonial period. Between 1810 and 1850, more than sixty constitutions were proclaimed in the new republics. Several of the attempted polities crumbled, like Grand Colombia and the Central American Union. Military uprisings and the ousting of governments followed one another. This turmoil reflected the inability of the new regimes to establish a legitimate and functioning political order. Insurgent actions often echoed territorial tensions and were inspired by an oligarchic spirit that had been present from the very inception of the independence movements. The *juntas* that originally repealed the Crown’s officials in 1810 were mostly composed of the landed and commercial groups of colonial society. In Bolívar’s famous speech in Angostura in 1819, in which he made public his plans for an independent republic in Venezuela, the

new political arrangement included a life-term presidency, an indirect representative system, and a hereditary senate. This was a more participatory model than the one the coastal planters who first seized power in Caracas had attempted in 1811. The first Venezuelan constitution, while admitting the natives and the *pardos* (mixed-race subjects of African ancestry) into citizenship, clearly biased the possibilities of political influence in favour of the landed gentry. This model offered a sharp contrast to the Mexican constitution of Apatzingán (1814), which removed caste distinctions and envisaged the incorporation of all male adults into the body politic.

Among the ‘founding fathers’ of the new republics, it was commonly believed that the constitutions were responsible for the happiness of the peoples. Good laws created fair institutions, and these in turn could elevate the moral and political standards of society. Military charisma, as expressed in *caudillo* rule, incarnated the desire of conveying a common purpose to the nation. This is why leaders like Santa Anna in Mexico described their access to power as a personal sacrifice for the sake of the country (Lomnitz-Adler 289ff). This type of vision overlooked the internal conditions of society as a key element to its governance and relied instead on the effects of applying an external normative pattern to it –a “constitutive outside,” to put it in Derrida’s terms. [16] Formal systems of neutral and legally enforceable rules that could foster political compromise between opposing views and interests –the Weberian type of legal-rational domination– were generally ignored. This was not too far from the worldview of traditional *iusnaturalism*, which conceived political integration in terms of a substantive moral order to which society should conform. Luis Díez del Corral, in his classic description of 19th century Spanish liberalism, maintained that

“The state, for an extreme liberal, could not consist of a combination of concrete or historical elements, but of the straight and immediate realization of an absolute logos. A logos which, for its absolute character, did not need social channels or the expression of support. A single

individual could proclaim it. The instigator of a political uprising did not have to try to convince. It sufficed with ‘pronouncing’ his opinion, as a prophecy that would shine in all its truth”. (Díez del Corral 481) [17]

Bolívar himself reproduced this normative intuition. His political language, emblazoned with the rhetoric of classical republicanism, expressed an idea of liberty that was closer to that of the ancient republics than to modern complex societies. For him, the new *patrias*, in order to fulfil their emancipating duty, had to be created *ex nihilo*, breaking with the past and leaning exclusively on the civic virtue of individuals. Much like the Jacobins during the *Terreur*, Bolívar attributed the failure of the new republics to the corrupting effect of the colonial legacy. Under such circumstances, a too liberal legislation could only create *repúblicas aéreas*, political bodies with no substantial hold. The only alternative was to instil the principles of freedom under the supervision of a ‘paternal government’, but for him personally it was too late. By the end of his life he bitterly confessed to General Flores in Ecuador that serving a revolution was like ploughing the seas, and declared Spanish America to be ungovernable, on the verge of falling “into the hands of the unrestrained multitudes, and then into the hands of tyrants of all races and colors” (Bolívar 146).

In Spain, the continued political function of the Crown during most of the 19th century made a difference with its former colonies. In this case, the problem derived from the need to fabricate parliamentary majorities that were favourable to the executive branch, whose head was appointed by the King. In 1833, upon the death of Ferdinand VII –the *felon King* who had first nominally accepted and then betrayed the first constitutional regime– his widow María Cristina de Borbón was appointed regent. She became the legal guardian of her underage daughter Isabella II, whose dynastic rights were challenged by her uncle Don Carlos, the brother of the deceased King supported by the absolutist, soon to be named *Carlist*, party. This legitimist opposition would stay at the margins of the institutional system for most of the century, a period during which it instigated two major

civil wars. On the other hand, the Regency established an alliance with the heads of the *moderate* liberal party, whose members were mostly in exile, but it excluded the *exalted* or *progressive* Liberals from the political circuit. This left the Progressives with the sole recourse of insurrection, with the occasional support of the army, in order to press the Crown to bring their faction into government. Once in power, the conditions for legitimizing a *de facto* situation were easily at hand. This scheme counted on the preventive reaction of the Crown, which anticipated every insurrectional assault on power by bestowing its confidence on the successful rebellious faction. With the calling of new elections and the fabrication of an *ad hoc* parliamentary majority, the constitutional system was reinstated, thus initiating a new cycle that in the long term tended to re-establish the hegemony of Moderate governments (Artola). This pattern repeated itself with little variation for over forty years, during which time it included a short-lived dynastical change and a failed republican experiment. The Restoration of the Bourbon dynasty in 1874 inaugurated a rotational spoils system by which the Liberals and the Conservatives, after a ritual of pre-arranged elections, peacefully took turns in government, bringing their clients to public office.

The first century of Ibero-American liberalism thus reveals a general blockade of the formal mechanisms for political succession. Rather than a system of rules for open political competition, what we usually find are extra-institutional modes of mobilization and informal agreements between the contending groups for the sharing of political power. Behind this patrimonial pattern, it is possible to recognize the rationale of a patronage system that prolonged some traditional practices. Violent political change and *ad hoc* legal rearrangements could be seen as legitimate from the perspective of the political and intellectual tradition in which Iberian liberalism was ingrained. Society was perceived as serving a collective purpose and as being something more than a mere aggregation of its individual components pursuing their private interests in the market; its internal structure had to correspond to certain principles of justice. In the absence of such conditions, the established

order became illegitimate and could be resisted. This was the normative logic running deep under the recurrent political uprisings. The *pronunciamientos* somehow reproduced the contractual basis upon which the new liberal order was imagined. Antonio Annino has shown how during most of the 19th century the Mexican *pueblos* felt free to break their subordination to the national governments whenever they saw fit. This view was fully coherent with the doctrine of Catholic natural law on intermediate 'moral bodies', which saw the municipalities as naturally self-sufficient communities that unite in order to create a larger body politic. From this perspective,

"The act of constituting the nation is not the sovereign act of a constituent assembly. The nation already exists in its natural state and expresses itself through other representative bodies, whose reciprocal contract predates the constitutional norm, and imposes an imperative mandate upon the constituents by means of the *plan* [insurrectional program]". (Annino 80, my translation).

The dependence of the new constitutional arrangements on the corporative imagination of traditional society may explain why political uprisings enjoyed such a high degree of legitimacy and were accompanied by an elaborate ritualization. A *pronunciamiento* typically denounced the existing state of affairs, publicly declared the commitment with a new political project, and invited the citizenry to join the initiative, which generally aimed at the 'reconstitution' of the nation. Economic decline and political turmoil prevented the creation of a professional civil service and stable state institutions, which in turn stimulated the proliferation of political machines, extra-institutional negotiations, and spoils systems. The role of elections within this scheme was to give public sanction to the pacts reached behind the scenes between the different elite groups, which exacerbated the old colonial syndrome of *empleomanía* (the drive for public jobs by political means). [18] Successful electoral bosses or *caciques* were able to organize extensive

patronage networks through the dispensation of favours and benefits in a process that mixed the private and the public spheres. [19] Voting was usually mobilized through clientelist networks or controlled by outright manipulation. Personal and territorial rivalries usually weighed more than doctrinal antagonism. Ideological borders were porous and political actors often interchangeable. Violence was a constitutive part of the whole process. As Hilda Sabato has described it,

“The exercise of violence was seen as something legitimate not only against an external enemy, but also internally [...] when it was considered that the central government violated the Constitution or the premises upon which its legitimacy was based [...] The participation in these types of actions involved large portions of the population, often substantially larger than those that took part in the elections”. (Sabato 25) [20]

This type of reaction replicated similar situations in the colonial times. The usual tactic involved rebelling against the ‘bad government’ in the name of the King. When Indian peasants in the villages considered the King’s officials abettors of infringements of natural law and custom, “in their eyes they became fair targets of action to restore justice, including violence” (Guardino 26). As a collateral reaction, beleaguered governments in the republican period systematically resorted to emergency powers that were constitutionally ill-defined, thereby placing the political agency of the state outside the law (Aguilar Rivera 43ff). [21]

Conclusions

With time, the liberal ideology of Iberian societies from both sides of the Atlantic assumed different itineraries. The old scholasticism was commonly perceived as a cultural burden that needed to be substituted in order to instil new airs in society. In Argentina, Juan Bautista Alberdi introduced the type of ‘doctrinarian liberalism’ that prevailed in France during the Bourbon Restoration, the same ideology that

supported in Spain the instauration of a Royal Charter –a limited, mixed form of constitutional government– by the Regency after the death of Ferdinand VII. In 1843, the Spanish government sponsored the study tour of Julián Sanz del Río, a university professor, to Germany, with the purpose of importing a new public philosophy that better suited the political needs of the nation. The long-term outcome of this initiative was somewhat ironic, for it resulted in the introduction of Krausism, a philosophical system developed by Karl Christian Krause, an obscure disciple of Hegel scarcely known in the rest of Europe. In Spain, however, Krausism became a civic pedagogy and a decisive instrument for the ideological revamping of liberal elites. It ultimately helped establish, against the fierce opposition of the Catholic Church, the foundations for the renovation of the educational system during the Second Republic (1931-1939). In Latin America, on the contrary, the desire to do away with cultural remnants of the colonial past moved the intellectual elites to adopt positivism as an official philosophy, a step that supplied them well into the 20th century with an ideological frame to deal with concerns about the modernization of their countries. Not surprisingly, Mexican positivistic liberalism soon developed a patrimonialist tinge, when the *científicos* –a political clique inspired by positivistic ideas– became the technocratic support of Porfirio Díaz’s long and allegedly modernizing dictatorship.

The regimes that emerged from the revolutionary cycle of independence in Latin America have sometimes been characterized as ‘constitutional oligarchies.’ In this respect, they were not really different from the type of representative government first established in the United States, France, or England. Moreover, by 1847, just before the revolutionary wave that shook the foundations of the European Restoration, suffrage in Mexico and El Salvador, for instance, was more widespread than in the United States and most European countries (Przeworski 296). On the whole, liberal ideas in the region helped to establish volatile constitutional regimes, declared a variable range of civil and political rights, and advanced representative forms of government. At a deeper level, though, political practices

retained many of the patrimonial features of the old traditional society. Appealing to the common good of the nation as a reason to delegitimize and overthrow an extant government, or seeking social harmony through norms sanctioned by a substantive moral order, were practices that were coherently ingrained in a worldview that had been hegemonic for several centuries. These types of practices extended to the 20th century, when urbanization, industrialization, and the upsurge of mass politics substantially changed Latin American societies. Here I have tried to explain how this normative universe endorsed the legitimacy of patrimonial practices during the early period of state formation, but I have not implied a reduction of the phenomenon to a cultural cause. Patrimonialism should not be understood as a fixed cultural trait, but there is certainly a cultural side to it, since it refers to the meanings of social action. There are also social, economic, and political reasons involved. Weak governments were often constrained to bargain with or were captured by powerful groups and local elites. With the turn of the century, the consolidation of large export economies and the arrival of foreign capital allowed governments in the region to increase their fiscal base, and with it their institutional sustainability and military muscle. However, some patrimonial features were reproduced by the new populist regimes that appeared in the subsequent decades.

The established idea that patrimonialism is confined to traditional or developing societies is being increasingly challenged. Patrimonialism is related, on the one hand, to weak state institutions and to different forms of patronage and personal rulership, but on the other hand elite conflict within capitalist, bureaucratic societies can also generate patrimonialism. [22] Bureaucracies are the battleground for interest groups and organizations trying to capture or influence public investments and state regulatory functions. Social and political capital is transmitted through family contacts and informal networks in modern pluralistic democracies. In a similar vein, new powerful forms of nationalism and populism – mostly hybrid variations of them indeed– have appeared in recent years at the core of the developed countries. The irrational legitimacy of these movements has little to do with the magic

or charismatic aura that surrounded equivalent mobilizations in traditional societies. In spite of this, Weber's typology keeps offering a fertile hermeneutic framework for social analysis. It is up to us to adapt it to the changing nature of contemporary societies.

Endnotes

[1] For a typical example of this culturalist view, see Wiarda 1974.

[2] See also Breuer 2006, p. 80-91.

[3] Max Weber's writings were made available to the Spanish-speaking public relatively early, thanks mainly to their precocious translation by a group of Spanish republican exiles in Mexico. The first (partial) translation of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* into Spanish was published in Mexico by Fondo de Cultura Económica in 1944, three years before the also incomplete English translation by Talcott Parsons. On this topic, see Álvaro Morcillo Laiz 2011. It took, however, several decades to engage the Weberian apparatus for the interpretation of Latin American society. See, for instance, Sarfatti 1966; Zabudovsky 1989; Pietschmann 1982.

[4] See Semo 1993.

[5] On the sale of public office, see Burkholder and Chandler 1972. Claudio Véliz (1980) has observed that centralist rule falls under the *rational* type of domination, whereas lineage, heritage and personalism typically are features of patrimonial rule; see his *The Centralist Tradition in Latin America*, p. 7.

[6] See Colom González 2016.

[7] See Jaksić and Posada Carbó (eds.) 2011; Peloso and Tenenbaum (eds.) 1996.

[8] See Escalante Gozalbo 1992; Aguilar Rivera 2000; Posada-Carbó 2006; Múnera 2011; and Rojas 2009.

[9] There is a vast and recent bibliography on the topic, mostly in Spanish and centered on the Cadiz Constitution as a pivotal reference. See, for instance, Guerra 1992; Cruz et al. 1993; Portillo et al. 2006; Breña 2006; Colomer Viadel (ed.) 2011; Varela Suanzes-Carpegna 2011; Fernández Sarasola 2011; and Gullón Abao and Gutiérrez Escudero (eds.) 2012.

[10] See, for instance, the classical work by Palmer 1959: *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760- 1800*. Its time span is so designed as to exclude the Latin American and Iberian revolutions.

[11] See Safford 1992; and Hale 1973.

[12] This normative core, which has attracted much of the Marxist critique of liberalism, was famously formulated by Macpherson 1962: *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*.

[13] Richard M. Morse, for instance, saw the 'Thomistic synthesis' between social order and the common good as the core of traditional Iberian ideology. See Morse 1954; and Morse 1982.

[14] See Filmer 1991 [1680], edited by Johann P. Sommerville; Bodin 1992 [1576], edited and translated by J. H. Franklin.

[15] See de Mora 1825: *Catecismo de Economía Política* (Londres: Ackermann).

[16] See Derrida 1988.

[17] My translation. A *pronunciamento* was the usual term to refer to a not necessarily violent military rebellion in the Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries during the 19th century. It consisted "in organizing the moment in which a military high rank, together with a group of patriots, would rebel in any part of the country and read a manifesto in favour of the Constitution. To their eyes, this gesture sufficed for igniting, like a trail of powder, the uprising of all the liberal focus ready for it. National insurrection would follow as a natural consequence of this public announcement" (Castells 81, my translation).

[18] See de Mora 1827.

[19] For an illustrative comparison of patronage practices in nineteenth-century Spain and Argentina, see Herrera and Ferraro 2013.

[20] For a reconstruction of the social dynamics that accompanied the electoral processes in Bolivia, see Irurozqui Victoriano 2000.

[21] As Diego Portales bluntly confessed in Chile, 'that lady that they call the Constitution has to be violated whenever the circumstances are extreme'. Letter to Antonio Garfias, December 6th, 1834.

[22] See Lachmann 2011.

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Author's biography

Francisco Colom González is Research Professor of the Centre for Humanities and Social Sciences at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) in Madrid. His work has mainly dealt with the normative relations between culture, political identity and social change. More recently, his research interests have turned towards the study of political spaces and urban theory. His last books are *Tristes patrias. Más allá del patriotismo y el cosmopolitismo* (2019) and (ed.) *Narrar las ciudades. El espacio urbano a través de los textos* (2020).

Book Review

The Persian Whitman: Beyond a Literary Reception, by Behnam M. Fomeshi, Leiden University Press, 2019. (Book Review)

MOSTAFA ABEDINIFARD (DEPARTMENT OF ASIAN STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA)

Behnam M. Fomeshi's *The Persian Whitman: Beyond a Literary Reception* is a welcome contribution to the fields of comparative literature as well as Persian and American literary studies. Using a *new historicist* methodology, and drawing on theories and concepts from several disciplines, Fomeshi delves into the cultural and sociopolitical contexts around the reception of Walt Whitman in Iran to show that the reception—be it translational, critical, or creative—has been more than “literary.” While impacting literary modernism in Iran, particularly by contributing to the emergence of New Poetry, Iranians’ reception of Whitman, Fomeshi argues, has also served sociopolitical and ideological purposes. Throughout the book, Fomeshi shows adequate mastery over both sides of his comparison and over his primary and secondary sources, while also showcasing overall insightful instances of socio-historically informed and contextualized close readings.

The Persian Whitman, excluding the Introduction and Conclusion, comprises nine chapters. In the Introduction, Fomeshi provides an accessible overview of the emergence of American literature through translations in Iran. He makes it clear that while arguing for the influence the reception of Whitman has had on Persian literary modernism in Iran, he mainly aims to render “the Persian Whitman Iranians *construe* and *construct* rather than the American Whitman’s travel to Iran” (6).

In Chapter 1, “Whitman’s Life and Works,” Fomeshi relies on numerous secondary sources on Whitman to provide an accessible overview of his life and poetic career. Chapter 2, “From Democratic Politics to Democratic Poetics,” celebrates Whitman’s political and cultural democracy, tracing it in his poetry and sociopolitical views. The emergent “democracy” in America during Whitman’s time, Fomeshi argues, encouraged the poet to create a new, “democratic” poetics and poetry. The chapter is

filled with laudatory statements on Whitman’s “democracy,” whereas I think readers would have benefited from a more nuanced perspective on Whitman’s vision of democracy. For instance, according to Fomeshi, Whitman

believed in democracy not just as a political phenomenon but also a cultural one. He overlooked any hierarchies and social boundaries; that led to the inclusion of all Americans regardless of sex, colour, ethnicity and social class. He created a little America in his poetry through covering all ethnic groups of his country. (32)

Not all readers are so sure. Some attention to critical attitudes towards Whitman’s more complicated “democracy,” as seen in previous and ongoing research on the poet’s views of African and Native Americans, would have been helpful. As George Hutchinson and David Drews state, “Whitman’s attitudes to people of African descent must be distinguished from his attitudes toward slavery” (567). They remind us,

Whitman has commonly been perceived as one of the few white American writers who transcended the racial attitudes of his time, a great prophet celebrating ethnic and racial diversity and embodying egalitarian ideals. He has been adopted as a poetic father by poets of Native American, Asian, African, European, and Chicano descent. Nonetheless, the truth is that Whitman in person largely, though confusedly and idiosyncratically, internalized typical white racial attitudes of his time, place, and class. (567) [1]

In Chapter 3, “Democracy and Nationalism Intertwined,” after arguing for the intermingling of American nationalism and American democracy, Fomeshi argues for the existence of “literary democracy” in 19th-century American

nationalism, focusing on an extended discussion of chapters from Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1840). According to Fomeshi, American nationalism –its defying and exiting the British rule– as well as America's yearning for democracy required a literary/poetic counterpart, a “democratic national poetry,” which manifested in Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. In this chapter, too, Fomeshi could have avoided uncritically reproducing colonial narratives of democracy and nationalism in America by inserting alternative narratives or marginalized knowledges. ‘Whose nation and whose democracy?’ one could ask. [2]

In Chapter 4, “A Persian Translation of Whitman,” Fomeshi takes us to the Constitutional era Iran, to historically contextualize the first Persian translation, by Yusof Etesami (1874-1938), of Whitman –an excerpt of a poem which the translator titles “The Great City.” Fomeshi masterfully places the translation within a discussion of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the role of Persian translations from other (mainly European) languages in advancing Iranian modernity. While the reading of the previous chapters could tire some readers already familiar with the topic, this chapter contains fascinating and shrewdly historicized close readings and comparisons of Etesami's translation of Whitman with the original. Fomeshi compellingly shows how Whitman was first introduced to Iranians via an ideologically charged translation. Through deliberate translational choices, he proves, Etesami indigenized Whitman's “individual” poem, re-writing it as one that spoke to collective, “nation-building” purposes in Iran. In Etesami's translated/re-written version, “The Great City” promoted the “democratic ideas of human rights, freedom and equality, hygiene and healthy citizens” (87-88). Fomeshi then shows how later, in 1940s, when reprinted under Reza Shah, Etesami's translation of “The Great City” would serve a different purpose, i.e., that of “lament[ing] the loss of the city's history, memory and sense of identity” (88) due to the Shah's modernization project. In advancing the argument in this and the next chapters, Fomeshi illustrates how “world literature” is sometimes ironically chosen to be received, and serve, as

national(ist) literature.

In Chapter 5, Fomeshi attends to the “Critical Reception of Whitman” in Iran, foregrounding the first critical debate on the poet in Persian by the father of New Poetry in Iran, i.e., Nima Yushij. Published in a music journal, Nima's debate on Whitman was more intended to justify the necessity Nima saw for the emergence of a “modern poetic movement” (97) in Iran as well as to respond to other Iranian poets and critics who opposed Nima's views on Persian poetry –rather than to introduce Whitman or American poetry to Iranians. In this chapter, too, Fomeshi advances a strong and readable argument.

Chapter 6, “Creative Reception of Whitman,” argues for Whitman's having influenced Parvin Etesami (1907-1941) through the former's poem “A Noiseless Patient Spider.” Etesami's creative involvement with Whitman in her own poem “God's Weaver,” Fomeshi contends, resulted in the creation of a symbolic “spider” in Iranian poetry, also finding its way to fiction and cinema. While this alleged influence is never actually proved by irrefutable evidence, some informed and plausible insinuations are offered as circumstantial evidence. Moreover, while Fomeshi introduces Whitman's “spider” as one among many “new poetic characters” employed by an Iranian literary figure to “modernise Persian poetry” (113), he does not discuss or cite any other such “characters.”

In Chapter 7, “Political Reception of Whitman,” Fomeshi demonstrates that primarily through a leftist Tudeh Party's founder, Ehsan Tabari's (1917-1989) writings on, and translations on, Nima and Whitman, the leftist movement in Iran not only connected both poets but also played an important role in orienting Iranians' interpretations of both Whitman and of (Nima's) New Poetry in Iran. Missing in this chapter is a more analytical discussion of the relationship between Tabari and Nima, which, as Nima's lengthy response letter to Tabari (only partially discussed by Fomeshi) suggests, may not have been as smooth as Fomeshi claims. [3] Moreover, while Fomeshi concludes that among other things, Tabari's connection with Nima “resulted in the leftist revolutionary reading of the two modernist poets in Modern Iran in the decades to come” (130), this remains only an

unwarranted conclusion in the chapter.

Chapter 8, “A Persian Translation of Whitman’s Image,” jumps forward in time to scrutinize Whitman’s “image,” both literal and figurative, in contemporary Iran. Closely reading and contextualizing the front cover images of two Persian book translations of Whitman’s poetry, Fomeshi demonstrates that the translators portray him as a mystical poet—a simultaneously bodied and disembodied wise poet-prophet. Fomeshi’s argument could have been further refined, as an unresolved tension remains in the reasons found in his chapter for the translators’ said depiction of Whitman: post-1979 Revolution cultural policies (e.g., Islamic Republic’s censorship apparatus as well as its tendency to politically neutralize potentially dissentious literary voices) on the one hand, and an alleged post-2009 tendency towards mysticism in Iran on the other.

Finally, Chapter 9, “A Post-2009 Reception of Whitman,” argues that in contemporary Iran, Whitman has been used as a safe haven to write back to the Islamic Republic’s oppressive acts and policies. In doing so, Whitman is deployed as a catalyst within an intertwined ideological endeavor by Iranian authors, translators, and/or publishers, in order to voice the unspeakable. A main aim of Fomeshi’s in this chapter is to demonstrate that “[c]ontemporary Iran is not a monolithic, univocal, homogeneous theocracy as often depicted in the Western media. Although many discourses are being suppressed in the country particularly in the post-1979 period, it still provides a plurivocal site of opposing voices” (159).

Many a time while reading the book, I thought it could have enjoyed a more thorough copy editing at the structural level, as it contains numerous unnecessary repetitions of ideas in most chapters. Also, as previously mentioned, I wish Fomeshi had been attentive to decolonial perspectives on modernity, particularly because he wishes more and more Iranians to welcome Whitman as a harbinger of “democracy” (171). Overall, however, *The Persian Whitman* was an enjoyable and enlightening read, not least due to Fomeshi’s enthusiastic interest in a *new historicist* methodology, an arduous and thus lesser practiced—yet often immensely

rewarding—way to study literature. Indeed, in the face of a dangerously increasing, de-historicized, text-and-only-text-based cultural and literary analyses among many Iran-based critics, Fomeshi’s monograph offers an excellent model of historically contextualized readings of texts—readings of which one desires to see more particularly in Iranian/Persian literary studies.

Endnotes

[1] For another critical, yet balanced, view of Whitman’s racial attitudes, see Porter.

[2] For recent critical engagements with Whitman by black scholars and poets, including debates that problematize Whitman’s conception of democracy, see Wilson.

[3] For a reprinted version of the letter, online, see Amirj Hakimi’s “Do-L” blog entry of April 26th, 2010.

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Author’s biography

Mostafa Abedinifard is an assistant Professor of Persian Literary Culture and Civilization. He is a literary and cultural critic and historian, with a special focus on Persian literature and the Iranian culture and cinema, within his broader interests in comparative and world literature.