



Partecipazione e Conflitto
* *The Open Journal of Sociopolitical Studies*
<http://siba-ese.unisalento.it/index.php/paco>
ISSN: 1972-7623 (print version)
ISSN: 2035-6609 (electronic version)
PACO, Issue 8(2) 2015: 620-624
DOI: 10.1285/i20356609v8i2p620

Published in July 15, 2015

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BOOK REVIEWS

MASSIMO PENDENZA (ED.), CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGY BEYOND METHODOLOGICAL NATIONALISM, LEIDEN-BOSTON, BRILLE, ISBN: 978 90 04 272194 (HARDBACK) ISBN 978 90 04 27221 7 (E-BOOK), P. 238: 2014

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In a context of worldwide interconnection, nation states are no more the “containers” of social relations. Due to the stretching of global relations and activities across regions, a shift in the spatial reach of social relations toward a transnational dimension is occurring. This change represents a major challenge for social scientists, as nation state has traditionally been the empirical referent for society. Contemporary sociology widely acknowledges the importance of a critical revision of concepts and toolbox related to the idea of globalization. Sociologists are asked to rethink and critically revise their analytical tools, as founder fathers of sociology formed their theories in the national context. The concept of “methodological nationalism” describes the - supposed - intrinsic relationship between classical sociology and nation-states. In other words, it defines the attitude of social scientist to approach society as equivalent to the nation-state, and to focus on internal structure and process, in spite of concentrating on the global dynamics. According to Ulrich Beck, as founding fathers shared a territorial definition of society centered on the national-state, social sciences need to be deeply re-conceptualized within a cosmopolitan framework, in order to meaningfully contribute

to the understanding of the contemporary global society. Even, the less radical critics do not merely deal with the question about “whether” the classical theories can be usefully applied to deal with contemporary society. Indeed, the focus shifts on assessing “the extent to which” and under which condition they they are pertinent for the analysis of contemporary societies. The book “Classical Sociology Beyond Nationalism” offers a brilliant contribution to this debate, and rejects the accusation of methodological nationalism. The book, edited by Massimo Pendenza (Professor of Sociology at the University of Salerno, Italy), involves leading European sociologists and young social theorists - Vittorio Cotesta (full Professor of Sociology at the University Roma Tre, Italy), Austin Harrington (reader in sociology at the University of Leeds, UK), David Inglis (Professor of Sociology at the University of Exeter, UK), Michael Schillmeier (Professor of Sociology at Exeter University, UK), Emanuela Susca (researcher at the University of Urbino, Italy) Federico Trocini (MA in Contemporary History, PhD in Political Thought), Dario Verderame (post-doc researcher at the University of Salerno, Italy). The authors, from different perspectives, share the stimulating challenge of examining classic sociology for concepts and theories that can be relevant for the analysis of contemporary transnational-global society.

The overall underlying question focuses on whether classical sociology is still able to provide tools to grasp global society or it fails to deal with the interconnected global world. The authors adopt a clear position in favor of the first position. They claim the necessity of a critical problematization of the relationship between the social and the geopolitical space of a nation. They, however, also prove that classical sociologists were above all committed to grasp the “social” than the “national”, and for this reasons they did not fall in methodological nationalism. As Massimo Pendenza states in his introduction, classical sociological categories need to be critically revised in order to identify which concepts and analytical tools still work and which are affected by methodological nationalism. However, this type of critical examinations “have to come about *within and not outside* the intellectual tradition of classical sociology”. “It is possible to detect in classical sociology, and *within the programme of modernity*, both analytical categories that go beyond the ontology of the nation-state, and also reflections on new socio-political forms defined within the trajectory of modernity under the pressure of globalization processes”. In other words, the critical assessment of the limits and the criticism characterizing the inherited theories and empirical tools can be addressed inside classic sociology, without leaving aside founding fathers. In the last decade, much literature on transnationalism has been produced. Indeed, as Massimo Pendenza suggests us, the transnational approach also can be detected in much of the classical sociology: founding fathers, “often unintentionally - have worked on catego-

ries that were not centred on the nation- state at all, but on the contrary, based on transnational society”. Even if they do not explicitly refuse the centrality of the nation, as empirical reference for the analysis of society, nations are not so relevant in their analysis. Following this approach, the contributions collected in the first part of the book provide a rich and in-depth exploration of classical sociologists, which goal is to identify traces or strands of research on the sociology of globalization. The in-depth analysis of the theories of Simmel, Tönnies, Pareto, made by Cotesta, Inglis and Susca confirm that the founding fathers did not fall into the conceptual trap of methodological nationalism. According to Simmel, sociology “is different from other discourses on society because of its object, the interaction (*Wechselwirkung*) between individuals”. Simmel is a “sociologist of the global society”, who, according to Vittorio Cotesta, defines society as an “ideal structure which is not given, but which transformations depends on its historical materialisation”. Inglis argues that the *Gesellschaft* concept provides us with an interesting analysis of the genesis of world-level cosmopolitan conditions, alternative to marxian theory. Furthermore, the sociology of Tönnies can provide important tools to understand the emergence of a global public sphere and the making of “counter-hegemonic transnational forces, as expressed in the inter- and transnational trades union movement”; besides the development of the cosmopolitan culture in the global cities. Emanuela Susca finds evidence that also Pareto’s methodological approach is not characterized by any form of methodological nationalism. Pareto’s theory is still able to “throw light on the ambiguous relationships that, even now, often combine altruism and selfishness, cosmopolitanism and nationalism, aspirations for peace and desires for hegemony”. Furthermore, his idea that collective beliefs are stronger globalizing forces than economics and politics still provides a useful point of view, in the age of globalization. These findings provide strong elements in favor of the argument that a critical revision of sociological toolbox can be made not outside but inside classical sociology. The contributions collected in the second part are committed to distinguish, within classical theories, the notion of the “social” (that is inherently transnational) from the notion of the “national”. The conclusion is that, in classical sociology, the “social” clearly predominate over the “national”, and that is independent from the latter. As a result, “the reality to study is above all that of the relations between individuals”. This does not mean that classical sociology did not deal with the formation and the evolution of nation-states, or with the ideology of nationalism. It just proves that analyzing nation-states, or more generally studying society, in a context where nation-states are central, do not imply remaining entangled in the conceptual trap of methodological nationalism (conversely, in the era of globalization, we could state that analyzing the making of global society do not imply fall in a kind of

“methodological globalism”). Michael Schillmeier claims that it’s the notion of “socialness” that renders classical sociology “cosmopolitan”: “nation-state” are “socio-historical effects of human relations and not natural givens”. Classical sociology is committed to the understanding of the social, adopting a methodological sociologism that “links old and new forms of cosmopolitanism”. The second section of the book is concluded by the contribution of Dario Verderame on the “social” as reciprocity in the anthropology of Marcel Mauss, whose theory allows to the understanding of the “recognition of networks of relations that amplify the systemic unity of interdependencies”. The contributions collected in the third section - opened by the contribution of Massimo Pendenza “Merging the national with the human ideal”, devoted to the analysis of Durkheim’s theory - clearly state that even when classical sociology was devoted to the study of the nation-states, the nation has never been conceived as a entity rigidly defined by its political borders. In his chapter, Massimo Pendenza argues that the analysis of the French sociologist provides us with the instruments to analyze the emergence of forms of loyalty and identity that go beyond the nation-state. Durkheim is nowadays increasingly considered as a pioneer in the making of a “cosmopolitan sociology”. The book is completed with an original and in-depth analysis of Michels’s theory on nation and nationalism - carried out by Federico Trocini, who analyzes the authors’ un-published works and correspondence - and by a short essay by Austin Harrington on the “Concepts of Nationhood in German Liberal Social Thought of the Weimar Years”, that, starting from the analysis of Plessner’s theory, highlights how left-liberal German social theorists, in the Weimar years, conceptualized nationhood.

“Classical Sociology Beyond Methodological Nationalism” is a very inspiring book, which provides a systematic analysis on the relations between classical sociology and methodological nationalism. The conclusion reached by the authors is that classical sociologists did not fall into the methodological nationalism trap, as they were mainly committed to grasp the “social”, more that the “national”. They were concerned by the analysis of nation and nationalism just as nowadays we are committed to analyze global society and globalization. The fact that “classical sociologists have dealt with the nation and nationalism, as the emergent issues of their time [...] did not always come about by confusing the geographical space”. Only a superficial analysis of the classics can lead to identify a closed and static relationship between the society and the nation. As Pendenza observes, this conclusion suggests the need of returning to the great tradition of *historical sociology*, in order to “reconsider the historical and dynamic links between the levels of the individual, the relational, the national and the transnational in a broader vision that does not end in crystallizing such linkages in a linear trajectory or some even worse way, flattened onto the concerns of the present”. The book can be

of interest for both social sciences students and researchers, as it provides a valiant instrument of self-reflexion for all readers interested in classic and contemporary sociology.