

Review of: "Carl Friedrich and the Cancellation of Pareto"

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It is somewhat difficult to situate the topic dealt with in this paper. Its author is not explicit about the broader aim pursued of the paper, and it might be useful and helpful to situate this case-study within a broader framework. Some of its underlying ambitions are important.

In historical research about the social sciences, the so-called founding fathers receive a lot of attention. In sociology, the lives and works of the 'Holy Trinity', namely, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, have already been the subject of hundreds of publications. By contrast, not much work has hitherto been invested in historical and sociological analyses of (changes in) the demarcation of the classical authors or the canon authors. We put so much emphasis on the quality of the work of the 'founding fathers' that it becomes highly unlikely to 'deconstruct' the way they acquired their reputation as a social process.

Obviously, Talcott Parsons at Harvard University played an important role in 'discovering' the classics. Throughout his entire career, he invested much effort in presenting and revisiting the work of these classics. Already in 1930, at the very beginning of his own career, he published an English translation of Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic. And The Structure of Social Action*, his first own book publication, which first appeared in 1937, contained detailed discussions of the work of both Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. But it is worthwhile to underline that this book also included presentations of two other 'classical' authors, namely Alfred Marshall, to whom one chapter was devoted, and Vilfredo Pareto, to whom three chapters were devoted. (Parsons also foresaw a discussion of Georg Simmel's work, but this discussion was not included in the final, published text.) One can read "Carl Friedrich and the Cancellation of Pareto" as a reflection on the selection of classical authors. Friedrich was a colleague of Parsons at Harvard University, but heavily attacked Pareto in work he wrote during and after the Second World War. The critique damaged Pareto's reputation – and both directly and indirectly led to the "cancellation of Pareto". As I read this paper, Stephen Turner tries to account for some of the serendipities associated with the process of defining and demarcating the sociological canon.

A second ambition, which might have motivated the choice for this case-study, has to do with shifting centers in the world of science. Science was largely organized at the national level in the late-nineteenth and the early-twentieth century, although global horizons did of course play a role. Germany and German science were 'leaders' in the late-nineteenth century, but the First and the Second World War clearly contributed to their demise. Talcott Parsons, for example, studied in the 1920s in Europe (both in London and Heidelberg), but in that period more academics from Europe also started to travel or flee to the USA. Carl Friedrich is an example: he studied under Alfred Weber, the brother of Max Weber, at the University of Heidelberg, but also came as a student to the USA. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Heidelberg

in 1930, but remained in the USA after Hitler had come to power in 1933. He was appointed Professor of Government at Harvard University in 1936 and played (along with Talcott Parsons) a prominent role in Harvard's and the US's participation in the war effort. As I read this paper, Stephen Turner also searches for ways to look more closely at changes in the world of the social sciences and in particular at its shifting center(s) in the period around the middle of the twentieth century, when Harvard and its scholars clearly started to strive for world leadership.

Altogether Turner's paper is not easy to read. It is mainly a theoretical discussion of (the limitations of) Carl Friedrich's treatment of Pareto, but I do think that the author also has other ambitions. The paper is interesting, but I also think that it would benefit from a more explicit discussion of the broader framework within which this case-study has to be situated.

References

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