

## Social Construct under Multiculturalism

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**Abstract:** Since the early 1980s, it has been increasingly clear how important the ideal of functional systems is for the theory of society. This had already been a fundamental consideration in Talcott Parson's functionalism theory. Yet if we concede that society cannot be deduced from a principle or a basic norm, the theoretical importance of the system enlarges itself. In this essay, I probe into different theories proposed by Max Weber and Charles Taylor on the construct of belief systems. I will first discuss Weber's statements about the polynary structure of a system, introducing its origin, form, manifestation, and goal. I will then elaborate on the difference between two crucial aspects of the political system and academic life. Finally, I will move on to Taylor's form of belief system and the conflicts within the system. At the end of the article, I forward the differences between Weber and Taylor's belief systems caused by age differences to highlight the commonality proposed in both theories.

### 1. Introduction

The thesis of disenchantment by industrial revolutions postulates clear boundaries between modern and feudal societies. Evidently, Weber believed that value within our belief system was changing from a singular noun to a polynary complex due to scientific discoveries and the "disenchantment" social process. Weber asserts the humdrum once dominated humankind simply because in the early days, knowledge was controlled by prophets, wizards, and priests. These mages and their mystified interpretations of social histories have engulfed almost every tangible object, to be clear, every individual entity that is visible to the public. To our modern way of thinking everything is interpretable if we allow ourselves to become that "magician" as the disenchantment of the world or the alienation of man, the magician that often chooses to de-romanticize notions within the past. What Weber implies is that as humans evolved from small hunter-gatherer tribes into large agrarian cultures, our ancestors re-imagined the means to cooperation and production among relative strangers. In other words, the society developed from a mechanical prototype (an immaterial tribal system with low social cohesiveness) to an organic one differentiated by a relatively complex labor division.

### 2. A Weberian Perspective

Because of this modern emphasis upon revolutionary sequence, it has often been maintained by Weber that the origin of our historical consciousness lies in the Christian tradition. Of course, religion -along with the belief in a highly moralized God-was a cultural adaptation to the challenges arisen over segregation. Specifically, religious beliefs stimulated the cognitive process of self-control, which in turn contained social contingency. But before the advent of science, people appealed to magical hermeneutics means to master or implore the spirits, as did the salvage, for whom the mysterious force exists (maybe vice versa). Therefore on the one hand, knowledge became something sacred, governing the universe with supernatural forces; on the other hand, these forces further reified divinity.

Disenchantment yet doesn't mean that there is no god in modern times. Rather, it suggests an era of polytheism. As Weber wrote in his book:

*"The elder Mill, whose philosophy I will not praise otherwise, was on this point right when he said: If one proceeds from pure experience, one arrives at polytheism"*

As far as the term “religion” is concerned, Weber’s writings imply that instead of believing a singular deity, polytheism exemplifies the fetishism of multiple identities. It means that people can entail the same thing with different significance: you can think of academic or political life as either a way to make a living or an opportunity or a springboard to nourish your inner balance and self-feeling. For those who lived off their vocations, their practices reflected the separation between humans and the means of production after the Industrial Revolution, as Marx predicted so. This group of people became a solid part of a bureaucratic system, working to make a living instead of fulfilling the satisfactions from labor. Yet for the same group of people, secular work was unable to meet the demand of multiculturalism because of the presence of bureaucracy and the development of globalization.

### 3. The Conundrum

As long as we believe in the poly-system construction of current society, then we have to admit that the awkwardness of the academic and political community is inevitable. And the most desperate fact suffocates modernity in way that it shuns people from confiding sacred hopes in academic and political life. The connotation of the gospel “it is all or nothing” no longer applies to today’s world. Politicians, for example, hold the reverse position. Instead of following the ethic rule ‘resist not him that is evil with force,’ they claim that ‘thou shalt resist evil by force, or else you are responsible for the evil winning out.’ Today We realize that something can be sacred not only in spite of not being beautiful but rather because and in so far as it is not beautiful. It is commonplace to observe that something may be true although it is not beautiful and not holy. Beauty is no longer defined by a complete compliance with the aesthetic and ethical doctrines defined by religious forces but indicates the unity of political ethics and moral codes. This abrupt change in the definition of beauty has been led by the emergence of sub-cultural groups, opportunism, utilitarianism, along other new identities. What confounds us the most is that people still believe in the system despite its shift from absolute standards. The presence of ‘entrepreneurs’, like American bosses and English vote agents (p14) whose political morals naturally adjust to the average ethical standards of political conduct manifests the direct consequence of this change. Weber mentioned that the poly-system in which different gods struggle with one another will continue now and for all times to come:

*“The ultimately possible attitudes toward life are irreconcilable, and hence their struggle can never be brought to a final conclusion, science is a worthwhile ‘vocation’ for somebody, and whether science itself has an objectively valuable ‘vocation’ are again value judgments about which nothing can be said in the lecture-room. To affirm the value of science is a presupposition for teaching there. I personally by my very work answer in the affirmative.”*

Therefore, polytheism means that it is a time that we become our own God. Each individual can signify their own academic and political activities and entail them with new sets of meanings. Weber emphasized the construction of the poly-system because he wanted to point out that since supernatural power has been proved irrational, people need to grasp every opportunity and devote themselves to their own field:

*“Form this we want to draw the lesson that nothing is gained by yearning and tarrying alone, and we shall act differently. We shall set to work and meet the ‘demands of the day,’ in human relations as well as in our vocation.”*

Indeed, a rough glimpse at Weber’s writings suggests that the knowledge system and the political system both have changed fundamentally along with the disenchantment process and the development of the poly-system. However, in some ways, the two systems are diverse from one another if we employ Taylor’s framework.

### 4. A Revisit of Taylor’s Writings

But to be clear, both systems develop themselves for the sake of their members’ well-being and happiness. Though in the case of academia, while scholars turn to theoretical approaches to guide

the future, politicians took a different methodology. In reality, political association adapts the usage of physical force to overcome physical traumas and obstacles. In the past, the most varied institutions have known the use of physical force as quite normal. Today, however, we have to say that a state is a human community that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory, and the relation between the state and violence is an especially intimate one. The simple thesis: 'from good comes only good; but from evil only evil follows'(24) does not apply to the peculiarity of all ethical problems of politics. We are placed in various life-sphere, each of which is governed by different laws. Unlike moral and political issues, the tasks of politics can be solved by power only the struggle over that power. Therefore, we cannot simply conclude that because war advances violent means, it inevitably concurs evil. Sometimes the usage of violence can promote a highly bureaucratic belief system, improving administrative efficiency to face economic depression and political incompetence, and then maintain national unity.

Another fundamental difference between the two systems is that the knowledge system's value and teleological goal are more abstract than those of the political system. Weber more or less hinted at a more general discussion about the long-term development of academic life. Weber mentioned that because scientific work is chained to the course of progress, in science, each of us knows that what has been accomplished recently will be antiquated in ten, twenty, fifty years, hence the very meaning of scientific work. Moreover, amid the continuous enrichment of culture by ideas, knowledge, and problems, people may grow tired of life, incentivizing a passion to pursue something provisional but not definitive. On the contrary, the political system concerns more with current situations even though there ought to be perspective leaders and heroes who make tailor themselves to definitive decisions.

Therefore, while our belief system gradually got rid of the shackles bound by religious forces and people obtained their long-awaited "freedom", new problems accompany. In Charles Taylor's essays, one prominent problem arises over the conflict between two modes of politics: the politics of universalism and the politics of difference.

The politics of universalism as a mode was first created based on the idea that all humans are equally worthy of respect since we all possess universal human potential. Rousseau, as one of the supporters of this mode, stated that all virtuous citizens should be equally honored under the aegis of the general will (49). However, this political mode, along with Rousseau's system, was crucially flawed. For they asked us to give acknowledgment and status to something that is not universally shared, forging people into a homogeneous mold that is untrue to them. What's more, the supposedly neutral difference-blind principles were constructed based on hegemonic culture, which meant that they could be highly discriminatory towards minority groups. To avoid the homogenization caused by the recognition of universal capacities, we need to appropriately acknowledge the very distinctness at stake. It requires us to question the universal premise that we too often hold: we owe equal respect to all cultures. Taylor stated that:

*"There is no reason to believe that, for instance, the different art forms of given cultures should all be of equal, or even of considerable value; and every culture can go through phases of decadence."*

However, to determine the true worth of a cultural group requires actual and fundamental studies, which challenges we strangers unfamiliar to and with the culture to reconstruct our systems with that thought in mind. To reach a relatively short conclusion, we need to adjust our standard on a broader horizon. What has to happen is what Gadamer has called a "fusion of horizon"(67). Up till now, we are still far away from the ultimate horizon from which the relative worth of different cultures might be evident.

## **5. Conclusion**

In 1917, Max Weber claimed that modern society without God was characterized by a sense of disenchantment. Value system had developed into a polynary form due to the development of science and means of production, and the emergence of multiple identities would surely give infinite possibilities to the future of academic and political life. Half a century later, the article

“Politics as Recognition” written by Charles Taylor responding to the protest of French speakers in Quebec further discussed the conflicts and development under the multicultural background. The elapse of time shows that people nowadays pursue not only equality among identities but also a delicate balance between individual differences and absolute equality. At any rate, we may remember the Romans, the first people who took culture seriously, thought a cultivated perspective ought to be, one that knows how to choose company among man, among things, and among thoughts.

## **References**

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