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Weber's Nationalism vs. Weberian Methodological Individualism: Implications for Contemporary Social Theory

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ABSTRACT

Most contemporary sociologists' aversion towards nationalism contrasts with the alleged nationalist views of one of the key classics of sociology, Max Weber. The considerable accumulated scholarship on the issue presents a unified belief that Weber was indeed a nationalist yet varies considerably in the significance attributed to the issue. Most authors entrench Weber's nationalism within biographical studies of Weber's political views as an individual beyond Weberian sociological theorizing. A different approach suggests that the notions of nationality in Weber's works do have certain theoretical value as potentially capable of enriching the current understanding of the nation. The present article aims to bring together the notions of nationality dispersed within Weber's various writings with the Weberian methodological individualism. The main argument of the article is that individualism and nationalism in Weber's thought are not a contradiction despite the collectivism associated with the essentialist view of the nation. Instead, they represent a reflection of the fundamental shift from an earlier view of society as a meganthropos towards the pluralist problematization of the micro-macro link definitive for the modern social theory. Analyzing the internal logic of this change provides new insights into the currently debated issue of retraditionalization, especially in relation to the ongoing renaissance of nationalism.

Introduction

The current upsurge in nationalism in the public political discourse and, according to certain indicators, in public opinion brings to mind B. Anderson's insightful observation about the contradiction in the fate of nationalism. According to Anderson, although we live in the world of nations and thus should recognize nationalism as the most successful of the competing ideologies generated in the nineteenth century, it is also the only ideology unrelated to an input of a major thinker of the period. It is also true that there is no comprehensive theory of nationalism unlike other key concepts, such as democracy, political culture, or even society itself, but a multitude of theoretical approaches dedicated to specific aspects of the issue, primarily to the origins of nations and nationalism. It is this emphasis on the past and, more importantly, these twin lacunas that might bear at least some responsibility for the present rebirth of nationalism remains not only unpredicted but also mostly unexplained. The quest for explanation poses anew Anderson's unanswered question why there are no big theory and no big theorists of nationalism (Anderson, 2012). Did they underestimate the significance of nationalism? Or might they avoid the issue because of too acute personal involvement with nationalist belief pervasive in the Zeitgeist for a critical distance sufficient for an value-free academic scrutiny?

These considerations put a not so small and remarkably diverse body of research on Max Weber's nationalism into a much wider perspective than a minor issue in a major classic's biography. While any insight into life and views of a figure of Weber's caliber is arguably important for its own sake, in the case of nationalism something more might be at stake. What matters most in this regard is the intention to separate Weber as one of the three founders of sociology and his theoretical legacy from the unsavory underpinnings of what is generally qualified as nationalist views of Weber as an individual. This task is especially salient considering the brand of nationalism prevalent in the later nineteenth – and early twentieth century Germany. On the other hand, if notions of nations and nationality dispersed in Weber's writings might contain something more than a mere reproduction of the doxa of the period and instead offer certain new insight and inspirations to nations and nationalism studies.

Against this background, this article adopts a more universalist perspective by daring to explore the relation of Weber's nationalism to a key Weberian concept.

Moreover, the concept in question is not one from Webers' many contributions to political sociology and political theory, apparently more obviously relevant to the nationalism issue, but the very core of Weberianism – its methodological individualism. Following in Anderson's footsteps, I consider that since nation-state is a prevalent and prototypical form of the modern society, the study of nationalism is not merely about politics but about society in general – what it ultimately is and how it should be studied.

The key question this study seeks to answer is, to what extent was Weber's nationalism Weberian? In other words, to what extent, if any, were Weber's nationalist political inclinations merely reflective of the prevailing opinions in the society in general, in the academia, or in the nascent sociology – and to what extent were they relevant to his original contributions to social theory? The conclusion that Weberian nationalism does constitute a part of his theoretical legacy, and not merely a biographical detail can be made if at least two conditions are observed. First, Weber's notion of nationalism and approach to the issue must be substantively different from those characteristics of his contemporaries, academics, and especially other classical sociological theorists. Second, this originality must provide sufficient grounds to be defined not only negatively as dissimilarity from others, but also positively as corresponding to at least some of the key concepts and principles of Weberianism. The crux of the matter is how did Weber address the apparent contradiction between the collectivist essence of nationalism and the principle of methodological individualism? Not surprisingly, this question echoes the contemporary tensions between individual national vs. other kinds of identities and between an individual's national self-identification and the external institutional and normative restrictions. During the ongoing new upsurge of nationalism, unpredicted by social scientists, it is particularly interesting to reexamine the place of nationalism studies in the "big" social theory by focusing of one of its founders.

The article is structured as follows. The first section contains a review of the existing scholarship on the evidence and meaning of Weber's nationalism. The second section puts these findings against a broader background by comparing them to the period-specific notions of nations and national identities, especially among Weber's fellow academics. The third section zooms in and focuses on the views on nationalism espoused by Weber's three contemporaries and, in retrospect, fellow sociological classics – Simmel, Durkheim, and Sombart – as compared to the Weber's own position. Based on the results of this comparison, the fourth section of the article elaborates on the implications of the identified manifestations of Weber's nationalism with various degrees of originality for methodological individualism. The concluding section discusses the output of the study that the juxtaposition of methodological individualism and nationalism in Weber's thought reflects the fundamental shift from an earlier view of society as a meganthropos towards the pluralist problematization of the micro-macro link definitive for the modern social theory.

Weber's Nationalism: What Does It Mean and Why Should It Matter?

Most studies specifically dedicated to the essence and impact of Weber's nationalist views start with the assumption that Weber indeed was a nationalist and then proceed

to question the meaning of this notion, implications, and scope of significance, but not the notion itself. The reason for this apparent consensus is that Weber's nationalist views have by now not only been well documented (Mommsen, 1974) but also strongly advocated by such authoritative scholars as R. Dahrendorf (1992) and P. Anderson (1992). Momsen's book was the first and still remains the most comprehensive exposure of Weber's nationalist views expressed in various sources. When the book first appeared, it posed a major challenge to an image of Weber as an advocate of liberalism and rationality that had been created by American sociologists, most notably Parsons. Instead, it drew on multiple sources to portray Weber as an ardent champion of German imperialism and power politics in general. Since then, the image of Weber regarding his politics has been split and never devoid of sinister undertones. Some contemporary scholarship even goes so far as to claim that Weber's nationalism was not only ethically unacceptable in itself, but also exercised bad influence on Naumann, an initially non-nationalist thinker (Kedar, 2010) and provided not entirely justified yet plausible source of legitimization for a much more compromised political theorist C. Schmitt (Engelbrekt, 2009). And yet most publications on Weber's nationalism of the last decades attempt what is essentially a kind of apologetics aimed at rehabilitating Weber's scholarship, liberal political views, or both. The three line of this apologetics run as follows.

The first and also undoubtedly quite Weberian way of limiting the significance of Weber's nationalism is drawing a sharp division line between Weber as an individual and Weber as a scholar. Roth goes so far as to make this distinction chronological by claiming that Weber as a politician in the 1890s entered the public sphere as a politician using nationalist rhetoric for populist reasons and only later, after a personal crisis, reemerged as a scholar interested in pure theory as opposed to practical politics (Roth, 1993). Yet this view fails to account for the evidence that manifestations of Weber's nationalism, let alone Weber's political concerns and involvement, are dispersed throughout his writings. According to Bellamy, Weber did not abandon his interest in the national issue but rather modified it significantly by becoming more critical of nationalism, especially as Germany entered the First World war with the claims of which Weber rather disapproved (Bellamy, 1992). The central point of this line of apology is not the chronological limits, but the implied notion that nationalist views expressed by Weber should not be qualified as a product of his original thinking, unlike his theoretical heritage, which thus remains untainted, but merely reflect the prevailing beliefs of the society where he belonged (see also Ay, 2004).

The second line of apology confronts this statement by regarding Weber's nationalism as occupying a significant place in his views on social and political dynamics yet playing a secondary role as derivatives from issues of primary concern. Some of this scholarship advocates the need to abandon anachronistic imposition of the contemporary view on liberalism and nationalism as mutually exclusive and antagonistic ideologies onto the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Germany. Nationalism thus appears a logical, albeit not the only possible consequence, first, of Weber's belief, decidedly ethnocentric by contemporary standards, in the ultimate value of what he saw as the Western civilization embodying the ideals of liberalism

and rationalism, and second, by a social Darwinist view on the mode of promoting the interests of the West, which in contemporary terms amounts to the belief in the zero sum game. The central point of in this relation between nationalism and liberalism is not an essentialist belief in the spirit of the nation, but a struggle over limited and therefore contested economic resources, especially as Weber famously referred to himself as an "economic nationalist" (Kim, 2002). A different argument derives Weber's nationalism not from his alleged ultra-rationalism and Machiavellianism but, on the contrary, from placing too much trust in the necessity and potential beneficence of the irrational. Thus, Pfaff portrays Weber not as a *Realpolitisch* technocrat, but as a proponent of a nationalist charismatic leadership as a path towards popular support of liberal democracy, lacking of the multiple illustrations from the twentieth-century of how this assumption may prove disastrously wrong (Pfaff, 2002). The contemporary relevance of technocratic geopolitics in relation to internal political liberalism and the use of nationalism to make democratization appealing to the majority is transparent. It can be argued that both these positions owe its relevance to the contrast between their rejection by most, even though not all, academic scholars and these notions' continuing appeal to many political actors – very much as nationalism itself. Unlike in the first line of apologetics, this kind of reasoning places Weber's nationalism among his theoretical heritage yet, unlike its major part, points its out as secondary, derivative, and essentially wrong.

The third line of apology regards Weber's views on nations and national identities as having an intrinsic theoretical value. Its representatives are concerned not so much with morality or veracity of Weber's nationalism but with its heuristic potential for the contemporary understanding of nationality. Palonen regards the issue from the views of the history of concepts and attributes the apparent inconsistency between Weber's views on nationalism by an in complete deconstruction. According to Palonen, Weber, especially in his post-WWI writings, demonstrates a critical self-distancing from nationalism understood as chauvinism, and nevertheless remains a nationalist in the broadest definition of the term widespread in the contemporary nations and nationalism studies – as a believer in the objective and necessary existence of nations (Palonen, 2001). Thus, Weber's case is regarded as instrumental in broadening the current views on the relations between the concepts of nation and nationalism. Norkus, on the contrary, emphasizes the constructivist as well as essentialist views on the nation found in Weber's writings and their relevance to the contemporary theory – first, by countering the prevalence of new nation states over old ex-empires in the modernist approaches to the origins of nations, and second, by applying the notion of rent-seeking to international relations (Norkus, 2004). In this logic, Weber's nationalism is relativized largely because of its conceptual inconsistency. A decided nationalism would espouse a single and relatively simple definition of the nation and adhere to it without further theoretical alterations.

Taken together, these three views reflect a considerable variety of opinions in the scholarship on Weber's nationalism and even to its historical context. Apparently, all the interpretations of Weber's views on the nation, instrumentalist as well as genuine, objectivist as well as chauvinist, civic as well as ethnic, and

even constructivist as well as primordialist, can be and are in some way traced back to some part of the conceptual imagery in the Wilhelmine Germany. It is therefore necessary to transcend the information on the issue found in the relevant part of Weber studies and take a direct and closer look at the understanding of nations and national identities existing in the period.

Notions of Nations and Nationalism in Weber's Germany

The nineteenth century is generally regarded as the age of nationalism. The "long nineteenth century" started with the event most theorist agree manifested the birth of the idea of the nation in its modern sense, the French Revolution, continued with Romantics' turn to turn to "national roots" and a number of national liberation uprisings in various parts of Europe including the famous Spring of Nations in 1848, and ended with the new nation-states emerging in the centers as well as peripheries of the old empires and the principle of national self-determination acquiring the normative status in the Treaty of Versailles. According to the author of the term "long nineteenth century", sometime in the middle of this period the idea of nationalism drastically and apparently for good changed its political belonging. The early nineteenth century, according to Hobsbawm, was liberal and revolutionary and was perceived as such by its champions and opponents alike. Later, however, as the old aristocratic and religious grounds of the dynastic power starting to lose credibility, the ruling dynasties saw nationalism as a new source of their legitimization and adopted it accordingly (Hobsbawm, 2012). It is mainly to this conservative turn that Hobsbawm mainly attributes the diffusion of the then new nationalism with the old interethnic hatred that surpassed the idea of the national liberation struggle "for your freedom and ours" and ultimately brought Europe to the WWI.

The nineteenth century Germany appears the most obvious case of this conservative turn. Already in 1808 in his famous "Addresses to the German nation" J. Fichte developed not merely an advocacy of German rather than French superiority but a comprehensive system of beliefs containing all the key components of what later became known as ethnic nationalism (Fichte, 1978). Most notably, these components include orientation towards the past, long history as the source of legitimacy, the value of authenticity understood as lack of exposure to foreign influence, and the central role of the national language. Later, F. Meinecke named this type of nation, where culture tales precedence over statehood not only in time but also in priority a *Kulturnation* with Germany as its prototypical case opposed to *Staatsnation* primarily represented with France (Meinecke, 2015). By the end of the century, the ethnic kind of nationalism apparently became mainstream in Germany no longer as a self-definition but as a general understanding of any nation (Bärenbrinker & Jakubowski, 1995). That is how this understanding is elaborated in the entry "Nation" of *Meyers Konsersations-Lexicon*, an authoritative encyclopedic dictionary (*Meyers Konversations-Lexikon*, 1888, pp. 2–3):

> ***Nation*** (lat., Völkerschaft), ein nach Abstammung und Geburt, nach Sitte und Sprache zusammengehöriger Teil der Menschheit; Nationalität, die

Zugehörigkeit zu diesem. Nach heutigem deutschen Sprachgebrauch decken sich die Begriffe N. und Volk keineswegs, man versteht vielmehr unter "Volk" die unter einer gemeinsamen Regierung vereinigten Angehörigen eines bestimmten Staats. Wie sich aber die Bevölkerung eines solchen aus verschiedenen Nationalitäten zusammensetzen kann, so können auch umgekehrt aus einer und derselben N. verschiedene Staatswesen gebildet werden. Denn manche Nationen, und so namentlich die deutsche, sind kräftig genug, um für mehrere Staatskörper Material zu liefern. Das Wort N. bezeichnet, wie Bluntschli sagt, einen Kulturbegriff, das Wort "Volk" einen Staatsbegriff. Man kann also z. B. sehr wohl von einem österreichischen Volk, nicht aber von einer österreichischen N. sprechen. Zu beachten ist ferner, daß nach englischem und französischem Sprachgebrauch der Ausdruck N. gerade umgekehrt das Staatsvolk (die sogen. politische Nationalität) bezeichnet, während für die N. im deutschen Sinn des Wortes, für das Naturvolk (die sogen. natürliche Nationalität), die Worte Peuple (franz.) und People (engl.) gebräuchlich sind[1].

This extended definition reveals the self-conscious rather than naïve upholding of the ethnic view of the nation, the awareness of an alternative, and the word other than nation reserved for this alternative. Moreover, this distinction is attributed to the language rather than to a country-specific tradition of thought, thus implying the highest degree of consensus. The four criteria of a nation all constitute an ascribed rather than achieved identity. Later in the entry, there is no reference to self-determination in the sense of Renan's everyday plebiscite (Renan, 2002). The subjective side of nationality is restricted to emotions such as the national feeling (*Nationalgefühl*) understood as national affinity or national pride (*Nationalehre*) and the national character (*Nationalcharakter*). The latter and even to some extent the former reflects an important point – the understanding of the nation as a personalized entity. It echoes the initial definition of the nation as "a part of humanity" where "a group of people" would seem more natural to a contemporary reader. This view of nation as a meganthropos was typical for the early nineteenth century German Romanticism (Hübner, 1991), and the cited source gives evidence of the prevalence of this view in the popular discourse in Weber's formative years.

The uncritically assumed single unity of the nation is scrutinized and challenged by one of the most prominent philosophers of the Wilhelmine Germany, Hermann Cohen. According to Cohen, the nation constitutes a plurality (*Mehrheit*) as opposed

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[1] *Nation* (lat. *Peoplehood*), a part of humanity united by shared ancestry and birth, custom and language; nationality, belonging to a nation. In the contemporary German usage, the notions of the nation and the people do not overlap; the people signify the members of a given state united under the same government. The population of the people can consist of multiple nationalities, and, the other way around, the multiple peoples may come from the same nation, because some nations, and notably Germans, are strong enough to lend material for many state entities. The word nation means, as Bluntschli says, a cultural concept, and the word the people, a state concept. For example, it is possible to speak of the Austrian people but not the Austrian nation. It is further important to notice that in English and French usage, the word nation, quite on the contrary, refers to the people of the state (the so-called political nationality) while for the nation in the German sense, the natural people (the so-called natural nationality) the words people (in French) and people (in English) are used (translated by the author of the article).

to unity, "allness" (*Allheit*). Yet, again contrary to what a contemporary reader might expect, Cohen does not refer to the plurality of individuals. Instead, he understands nation as a plurality of nationalities defined as religious entities forming a political union under the auspices of a shared state. A model nation for Cohen, unlike for the authors of the entry cited earlier, therefore was not Germany but Austria. Another important point is the deliberate rather than "natural" character of the union (Wiedebach, 2012). Thus, with the internal plurality of the nation and the constitutive role of self-determination, the only element missing from the present-day idea of the nation is its individual members.

This important omission interestingly resonates with the central principle of the Weberian approach to sociology – its methodological individualism, especially as it is closely related to the interpretative sociology (*verstehende Soziologie*), which Weber developed under the influence of Neo-Kantianism, albeit primarily its Southwestern school, not the Marburg school to which Cohen belonged. More generally, nationalism as such presupposing a certain collectivism, especially in Weber's time as seen in the afore cited definition, appears distinctly at odds with methodological, as well and probably even more consistently so than political individualism. Yet this contradiction is not discussed even by L. Greenfeld who starts her programmatic book on the varieties of nationalism by defining herself as a Weberian precisely regarding methodological individualism. The next section presents an attempt of such a discussion based on Weber's key texts dedicated to nations and nationalism – lecture "The Nation State and Economic Policy" and the part 2 of "Economy and Society".

National Issue in Simmel, Durkheim, and Sombart

A theoretical concept from Weber's times that can be considered the most influential or at least the most frequently present in the contemporary literature on nationalism is George Simmel's notion of a stranger. According to Simmel's famous essay, the figure of a stranger is characteristic for modernity and thus represents yet another breakup from tradition – in this case, from the unequivocal overlap between spatial and substantive proximity (Simmel, 1999). The stranger is defined as a permanent other who is there to stay and nevertheless would not become more similar to the main body of the society he lives in no matter how long he stays. This dialectics of proximity and distance appears disturbing to a premodern or antimodern mind, and that it what sound a familiar note in the ongoing debate on migration and xenophobia, especially with the emphasis on the implication that the stranger is constructed as such by the society. Therefore, despite the logical sequence unfolding at the microlevel, the story centers primarily not on the stranger himself, but on the society as a whole dealing with the challenge of a permanent ambiguous otherness. This challenge is not considered as an abstract possibility, but has its obvious historical prototype in the so-called Jewish issue, also, and somewhat similarly, addressed by Simmel with regard to the economic modernity (Simmel, 2004). It could be argued that at that period, the national issue, if not the nation itself, was conceived as modern when related to the Jewish issue, as seen in the works of two other Weber's contemporaries.

Another case of the individual vs. the nation controversy, but addressed and resolved in a very different way, is found in Emile Durkheim's work dealing with the anti-Dreyfussards (Durkheim, 1970). According to Durkheim, their view on individualism as posing a threat to the nation' s unity is valid insofar as the question mark remains. Unlike Simmel, however, Durkheim does not see this controversy as inherent and dialectic. Instead, he proposes to resolve it by recognizing that the kind of individualism anti-Dreyfussards were attacking was essentially a straw man – not the only, not the proper, and not even the most popular one. While recognizing the economic egotism as potentially disruptive to society but also obsolete, Durkheim not only approves of a more "spiritual" idea of individualism but also considers its power of uniting society as well as any socially shared idea can and even proposes it as what can be somewhat anachronistically called the national idea of France. Thus, even more obviously than the "strangeness", individualism is a collective attribute, a social fact.

Another way of defining the "national idea", much more extreme and also much more significant in its use as a general explanatory tool, can be found in the works of Werner Sombart. His theoretical constructions on the alleged peculiarly Jewish rationalism as a driving force behind the emergence of the modern capitalism bear obvious resemblance to Weber's protestant ethic, except the different relations between nationality and religion (Sombart, 2001). Sombart was writing his work at the times when the new racial theory led to redefinition of the Jewish identity from religious to racial – hence the "Jewish issue" could no longer be resolved by religious conversion and assimilation. On the contrary the assimilated yet "racially different" Jew was turned into an ominous figure, a disguised "stranger" among "us", as demonstrated in the Dreyfus case. Later, the propaganda used by all sides during the WWI, showed that the racialized notion of nationality originally applied to an ethnic minority came to define major European nations. In a work by Sombart published in 1915 with a self-explanatory title "Traders and Heroes", the military clash between, respectively, the English and Germans was presented as a conflict between two essentially opposing "national characters" (Sombart, 1915).

This essentialist idea of the national automatically extrapolated on all its members as micromodels was by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as seen in the previously quoted definitions, already anachronistic. Yet what unites this seeming relapse to premodern unproblematic collective identities with the challenges of modernity conceptualized by Simmel and Durkheim is the implication that nationality originally exists at the collective level and is reflected in the individuals only insofar as they either represent or become socialized into a collective entity. Let us now see whether this notion was also shared by Weber.

Is Weber's Nationalism Individualist?

One of Weber's works most frequently analyzed in detail when discussing his nationalist views is the inaugural lecture "The Nation State and Economic Policy" ("Die Nationalstaat und die Volkswirtschaftspolitik") delivered and published in 1895 – during the period that supposedly marks the pinnacle of Weber's nationalism

(Weber, 1921–1994). It is unsurprising considering that the single empirical case the lecture build on is the economic situation in the borderline region of the West Prussia framed by Weber as a struggle for power between the two nationalities – Germans and Poles – understood exactly in the same way the nation is defined in the entry on the nation cited earlier and, in relation nationality to religion, similar to Cohen. Moreover, Weber refers to the two nationalities as either collective entities – *Polentum* and *Deutschtum* (Polish and German populations respectively) – or even as abstract principles or uncountable substances, such as "the polish element".

This archaic way of description contrasts with quite modern-looking mode of introducing the issues unrelated to nationalism, such as social stratification and demographic dynamics. The question Weber asks is why the Polish nationality seems to him to be winning the power in the region even though "high level of economic sophistication *(Kultur)* and a relatively high standard of living are identical with the *German people and character (Deutschtum)* in West Prussia" (Weber, 1994, p. 5). Weber poses the question in the following way: "Yet the two nationalities have competed for centuries on the same soil and with essentially the same chances. What is it, then, that distinguishes them?" (Weber, 1994, p. 5). The suggested answer is this: "One is immediately tempted to believe that psychological and physical racial characteristics make the two nationalities differ in their *ability to adapt* to the varying economic and social conditions of existence. This is indeed the explanation and the proof of it is to be found in the trend made apparent by a *shift* in the population and its nationalist structure. This tendency also makes clear just how fateful that difference in adaptability has proved to be for the German race in the east" (Weber, 1994, p. 5). In a nutshell, according to Weber, the German population of the region was emigrating and the Polish population, multiplying despite Poles primarily belonging to a lower social stratum with lower living standards because Poles have lower expectations that there and then was able to deliver higher level of life satisfaction than Germans' superior ability to improve their living standards. Weber argues that "the two races seem to have had this difference in adaptability from the very outset, as a fixed element in their make-up. It could perhaps shift again as a result of further generations of breeding of the kind which may have produced the difference in the first place) but at present it simply has to be taken account of as a fixed given for the purposes of analysis" (Weber, 1994, p. 10).

The contradiction between the seemingly archaic and modern rhetoric reflects Weber's attempt to explain a sociological phenomenon – a close relation between national belonging and social stratification – from the outside, by means of psychological rather than sociological phenomena. The understanding of nationalities as distinct entities with shared psychological traits belongs to the psychology of the peoples (*Völkerpsychologie*) established several decades earlier (the journal dedicated to advancing this field – *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft* – appeared in 1859), not to the emerging sociology. It looks almost as if Weber struggled with the internal plurality and flexibility of society as captured in the notion of social stratification and has to get this new *explanandum* firmly rooted in the familiar *explanans* of essentialist nationalities and national

characters. The ultimate reasons are attributed to agency, not structure, yet this agency resides not in individuals but in collective entities endowed with distinct personalities.

Another Weber's text focused on nations and nationalism is the chapter five of the part two of "Economy and Society" (Weber, 1922–1978). Already its title "Ethnic groups" suggests a different approach to the one found in "The Nation State and Economic Policy" because the ethnicity is no longer presented as a single entity but as a group of individuals. This expectation is confirmed throughout the text. That is how Weber defines an ethnic group: "The belief in group affinity, regardless of whether it has any objective foundation, can have important consequences especially for the formation of a political community. We shall call "ethnic groups" those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists. Ethnic membership (*Gemeinsamkeit*) differs from the kinship group precisely by being a presumed identity, not a group with concrete social action, like the latter" (Weber, 1978, p. 389). As Norkus (2004) justly remarked, this definition captures nearly all the key part of Anderson's theory of nations as "imagined communities" – and also obviously echo the so-called Thomas's theorem about objective consequences of subjective beliefs regardless of their initial objective grounds. What concerns the key point of this study is not so much the emphasis on subjectivity and the formative role of imagery in the emergence of an ethnic group but the shift of agency from the ethnicity to an individual, who provide the creative subjectivity and essentially doing the imagery. The question as to how the apparently uncoordinated yet similar "presumed identities" of multiple individuals merge into a single shared structure is given rather less attention. Instead, the issue of coordination between the social actors participating in the process of the ethnic identity construction is described from the individual perspective via the basic mechanisms of attraction and imitation.

This gap in dealing with the issue of coordination gets a paradoxical solution: ethnic identities are positioned not as socially shared but as emerging from the social actions that are not widely shared. "This artificial origin of the belief in common ethnicity follows the previously described pattern […] of rational association, turning into personal relationships. If rationally regulated action is not widespread, almost any association, even the most rational one, creates an overarching communal consciousness; this takes the form of a brotherhood on the basis of the belief in common ethnicity" (Weber, 1978, p. 389). Unlike in "The Nation State and Economic Policy", ethnicity is no longer a primary irrational cause for more modern and rational social phenomena, but a secondary subjective consequence of at least partly rational and even purely pragmatic decisions. The multitude of these origins capable of turning into potential subjectively ascribed grounds for a shared identity is so large and chaotic that Weber concludes that ethnicity is too much of an umbrella term to be of much academic use: "It is

certain that in this process the collective term 'ethnic' would be abandoned, for it is unsuitable for a really rigorous analysis. […] The concept of the 'ethnic' group, which dissolves if we define our terns exactly, corresponds in this regard to one of the most vexing, since emotionally charged concepts: the nation, as soon as we attempt a sociological definition" (Weber, 1978, p. 395).

Attempting to define the nation, Weber decisively departs with what it refers to as a "vague connotation" (Weber, 1978, p. 395) of various kind of common ground preceding the nation itself. Having considered and rejected each of these grounds, such as religion, language, customs and so on, Weber concludes that the concept "nation" directs us to political power/Hence, the concept seems to refer – if it refers at all to a uniform phenomenon – to a specific kind of pathos which is linked to the idea of a powerful political community of people who share a common language, or religion, or common customs, or political memories; such a state may already exist or it may be desired (Weber, 1978, p. 398).

It could be argued that here again, the nation is explained by means of psychological phenomena – the need for emotional stimulation as captured in the notion of pathos, the quest for positive self-esteem, which Weber refers to as "pathetic pride" (Weber, 1978, p. 395), and the striving for power. Unlike the proponents of the view of nations as subjective and socially constructed, Weber does not attempt to tie the emergence of nations to a specific historical period with its specific macrolevel context. Instead he relies upon what he believes to be universals of human nature – the tendency to produce personal and emotionally charged meanings for the initially purely pragmatic events as long as the latter are not universally shared. Yet, unlike in the earlier definition, the psychological part is no longer played by static traits ascribed to collective agencies, but to dynamic mechanisms repeatedly occurring in the behavior of individuals engaged in the social action.

Discussion

Weber's nationalism is amenable to a number of meaningful interpretations – as a minor yet curious biographical idiosyncrasy, as a prompt for critical reconsideration of a major social scientist as a role model, as an insight into the history of concepts, or as a source as inspiration for the contemporary nations and nationalism studies. The approach presented in this article suggest yet another interpretation of Weber's nationalism – as a frontier issue testing the limits and possibly also the limitations of Weberian sociology.

In the introductory section of this paper, the main question whether there exists a Weberian view on nationality Weber's nationalism was broken into two parts – first, on the originality of the ides of the nation in Weber's writings and second, on its relevance to major themes in Weberianism, in particular the apparent contradiction with the principle of methodological individualism. Based on the present study, several important differences between Weber's approach and that of his contemporaries become clear. First, unlike Simmel, Durkheim, and especially Sombart, in his later works Weber focuses not on the ways the national entity reproduces itself via

individuals but on the individuals developing national identities in response to their basic social needs. Second, unlike these three classics, Weber changed his views on nationality so much that while the earlier texts seem both old-fashioned and unoriginal, the subsequent ones, on the contrary, could have almost been written by somebody working not earlier than in the 1980s.

In Weber's earlier works, his views on nationality appear a kind of a blind spot borrowed from more archaic schools of thought, not sociological and due to its direct contradiction to the principle of methodological individualism, emphatically not Weberian. His mature views on nations, however, appear not only consistent with his approach to other social groups, but also very close to the currently mainstream academic understanding of nationality developed more than half a century later and not nationalist or even to some extent, due to its emphasis on the social construction of nations, anti-nationalist. To simplify the matter, it could be said that Weber's views cease to be nationalist according to the contemporary understanding of nationalism as soon as they become Weberian.

This analysis thus yields the main conclusion that individualism and nationalism in Weber's thought are not a contradiction despite the apparent association of collectivism with the essentialist view of the nation. On the contrary, Weber's work on integrating nationalism into his general theory of the social sphere reflects of the fundamental shift from an earlier view of society as a meganthropos towards the pluralist problematization of the micro-macro link definitive for the modern social theory. Analyzing the internal logic of this change provides new insights into the currently debated issue of the alleged retraditionalization of the late modernity, especially in relation to the ongoing renaissance of nationalism. It demonstrates the possible necessity to bring the agency back into the picture currently dominated with the clash between proponents of structural and cultural explanations of social phenomena including nations and nationalism. The transformation of Weber's works on nationalism suggests that explicitly defining the agency (in general terms, not reduced to the images of populist politicians abusing nationalist rhetoric for their own rather transparent ends) is crucial for understanding and deliberately choosing the implied mechanisms used for explaining social dynamics.

To sum up, the question raised in this paper can be answered in the affirmative. Weber apparently started off burdened with nationalist views characteristic of his milieu and developed views on nationality that seem closer to the contemporary nations and nationalism studies than to his own epoch. This trajectory makes Weber stand out from other classics in social theory, and it is too tempting to conclude that in his later writings on nationality, Weber was "ahead of his own times". Yet I would argue that the similarity is at best superficial in one important respect: the research subject outlined by Weber does not truly match the focus of the contemporary empirical research. We know a lot about the ways collective identities of various nations are constructed, quite a lot on how individuals react to the challenges posed by the external request for national self-identification and reenact socially shared meanings. We still know little on how individuals act in ways that eventually affect the world of nations. The main takeaway from the study on the notions on

nationality in Weber's writings appear to be not theoretical, since his later views have already albeit much letter been reproduced, but methodological: the shift towards methodological individualism in the nations and nationalism studies would make the area much more balanced and its subject slightly more predictable to the contemporary social scientists.

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