



OXFORD JOURNALS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Review: [untitled]

Author(s): Massimo Paci

Source: *European Sociological Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Dec., 1985), pp. 249-250

Published by: [Oxford University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/522787>

Accessed: 31/10/2010 14:28

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=oup>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Oxford University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *European Sociological Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Marzio Barbagli: **Sotto lo stesso tetto. Mutamenti della famiglia in Italia dal XV al XX secolo**, Bologna: Il Mulino, 1984. 1–558 pp.

In spite of a growing literature on the history and sociology of the family, our knowledge in this field is still very unsatisfactory. We are far from having a definite picture of the processes which gave birth to the modern family in Western Europe. Peter Laslett and the Cambridge group have collected an impressive amount of data about the family in England and elsewhere in Europe, but their main thesis about the origins of the nuclear family has been the object of harsh criticisms and is still much debated. It is probably true that the structure of the English family was of the nuclear type well before the Industrial Revolution. What is doubtful, though, is Laslett's implicit assumption about the unilinear and continuous nature of the process out of which the nuclear family developed. Moreover, it is not sure at all that the modern type of intimate relations among family members followed the advent of the nuclear family. This is what Edward Shorter contends in his well known study of the effects of 'industrial capitalism' on working class families in late eighteenth century England. According to this author, a more individualistic and free behavior was conveyed to family relations from market relations. But this thesis has been rejected by several other authors, and particularly by Lawrence Stone, who has shown that the modern type of relations among family members (like romantic love and intimate and egalitarian behavior) was common within the English bourgeoisie well before the Industrial Revolution. The main trouble with all these studies is that, no matter how accurate they are, they very rarely take into account both the structure and the internal relations of the family. Moreover, very few of them cover the whole range of classes and social strata in urban as well as in rural areas.

Marzio Barbagli's book is the result of an extraordinary research effort. This monumental work (more than 550 pages) describes the long-term evolution of both the structure of the family and of relations among family members in Central and Northern Italy from the fifteenth century up to our days. The main social classes of society have been investigated from the aristocracy and the merchant bourgeoisie of the Florentine Renaissance, to the sharecroppers and day labourers of the nineteenth century Po Valley, up to the middle class and working class of today; and various sorts of data have been exploited: original census schedules and parish family lists, social inquiries by central and local authorities, folkloric and demographic studies and investigations, 'family books', autobiographies, treatises on domestic duties and child education, and a sample survey of 800 women born between 1890 and 1910. A very important source turns

out to be family collections of letters. No other source describes better the change which occurred in the relations among the members of the Italian family than the almost 250 collections of letters that Barbagli analyses.

The focus of Barbagli's analysis is the *authority relations* within the family and the long-term shift from the patriarchal to the 'conjugal intimate' family in the division of roles among family members. He is careful not to take the objective relations among family members as indicators of their subjective feelings and sentiments, and in this way successfully avoids one of the main pitfalls of many studies in this field; namely, to draw conclusions about the emotional experiences of family members from information about their objective relations.

It is difficult to summarize the richness of Barbagli's work, but some of the major results are the following. First of all, Barbagli has definitely ascertained that the nuclear and neolocal type of family was already common among the artisans and workers in Italian towns in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, particularly in Central and Northern Italy. In urban areas, the only persons to follow the patrilocal rule and spend most of their life after marriage within the extended family were those belonging to the aristocracy and to the upper layers of society. Since most of the Italian states were among the more urbanized regions in Europe until the early seventeenth century (when the great pestilence struck Italian cities), this means that the nuclear family was already common, if not dominant, in Italy well before industrial development. It does not mean, though, that modern relations among family members can also be traced back to the same early stage. The evidence collected by Barbagli shows that the conjugal-intimate type of family emerged first among the 'intellectual bourgeoisie' and the 'enlightened aristocracy' in the late eighteenth century. So, the nuclear structure of the family and conjugal-intimate relations emerged in different social classes and at very distant points in history: *the structure and the internal relations of the family do not vary together*.

In the countryside, the direction of development was different and almost opposite. Here the dominant position of the extended family did not start to be undermined until well into the last century, following the trend toward land colonization and scattered farm-settlement. It is only after the industrial development of the first decade of this century and, more massively, after the Second World War, that the nuclear family structure spread all over the country, gradually reaching also the rural parts of society. In consequence, it is

concluded that industrialization and economic growth did matter for the modernization of the Italian family. First of all, they accounted for the change which occurred in the structure of rural families, and, secondly, they favoured a shift toward a more egalitarian pattern of intra-family relations in the whole country.

To sum up, Barbagli demonstrates that it is not possible to describe the long-term changes of the family as a unilinear and continuous *evolution*. At several points in history, the 'modernization' process stepped back and the traditional forms of family life and

organization were reinforced. (This is what happened, for instance, in Italy during the twenty years of the Fascist regime). The advent of the modern family is a complex process which has many 'births' and any attempt to determine a single watershed between the 'traditional' and the 'modern' family is, in the end, futile and misleading.

Massimo Paci
University of Ancona, Italy

S. Andreski: **Max Weber Insights and Errors**. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.

Alessandro Dal Lago: **L'ordine infranto—Max Weber e i limiti del razionalismo**. Milano: Unicopli, 1983.

Gianfranco Poggi: **Calvinism and the Capitalist Spirit: Max Weber's Protestant Ethic**. London: Macmillan, 1984.

'What should we learn from Weber to advance farther?' is the question that underlies the book by Stanislav Andreski, who rightly wants to develop a critique of Weber falling neither into pure 'ancestor worship' nor into a kind of aggressive 'patricide'. This attitude could certainly be very stimulating, but Andreski's discussion more than once raises some perplexities.

It is of course well known that Weber's writings are often unclear and convoluted, that his language lacks precision, and that his works are far from systematic. There could be good reasons to try to set forth what constitutes the essential and more solid part of his contribution to sociological theory. In order to do this, however, it would be necessary not only to examine thoroughly the concepts used by Weber, but also to understand their meaning in relation to the historical and cultural context in which they were first formulated. In many parts of his essay, Andreski appears more interested in making his own methodological and theoretical positions clear than in reaching a deeper level of interpretation of Weber's thinking. Submitting the Weberian language to an analysis inspired by neo-positivism and operationalism, Andreski's insights are often lacking in historical and cultural sophistication. As a consequence, the reader is put in an ambivalent situation: on the one hand, Andreski's personal positions appear well founded, yet on the other, one cannot avoid the feeling that his interpretation of Weber is in many respects misleading and reductive. For example, Andreski criticises the Weberian concept of *Verstehen* by referring only very superficially to the distinction between *Geisteswissenschaften* and *Natur-*

wissenschaften and to the cultural context in which the distinction between *explain (Erklären)* and *to understand* was formulated, first by Droysen and then by Dilthey. This prevents him from giving adequate weight to the relationship between *understanding* and the problem of *meaning (Sinn)*, and between the latter and the objectivated products of culture. Andreski is absolutely right when he asserts that 'our ability to explain is the best criterion of our understanding in the sense of possession of adequate knowledge' (p. 28), but this doesn't in any sense clarify the reasons why it was so important to Weber to define his sociology as *verstehenden* in order to oppose it to the positivistic and organic approach, which was oriented to the finding of systemic causal laws.

To say that Weber had not clearly perceived that science 'begins where empathic comprehension no longer suffices' (p. 32) is to ignore the fact that Weber was the first to stress the inadequacy of Diltheyan *Einfühlung* in order to develop a scientific analysis of social action. It is also to underestimate his effort to establish the concepts of objectivity and of causality on a new basis. Perhaps if Andreski had given more attention to Weber's methodological essays on the problem of objectivity (1904) and on the categories of *verstehenden Soziologie* (1913), this important point would have received a more adequate treatment.

In the same way, Andreski's criticism of the Weberian distinction between *goal-rational* and *value-rational* seems to miss the point. It is true that Weber never explains clearly enough the difference between goal and value; but if Andreski is right in declaring that