

SOCIAL ORDER, DOMINATION AND BUREAUCRACY

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ABSTRACT:

In the Weberian conception, power exists only in relation to others. The power of an individual over a second means the ability of the former to cause the other to do something or not to take a certain action if the former does not intervene. Max Weber's analysis of forms of authority is considered one of the world's most important sociological contributions. In any domination, Weber demonstrates, there is a relationship between the agent of domination and the community.

KEYWORDS: *power, domination, social, order, bureaucracy.*

INTRODUCTION

J. Baudouin, in his Introduction to Political Sociology, mentions that M. Weber's sociology has been characterized as a sociology of domination in which meticulous conceptual classifications are found. Weber defines domination, on the one hand, by delimiting it from power and on the other hand, by associating it with the idea of legitimacy and then applying it to a special type of power, political power.¹

Weber's first distinction between power (Macht) and domination (Herrschaft) leads to the statement that power is "the chance to make one's own will triumph within a social relationship even in spite of resistance," and domination designates "the chance to find people who can be persuaded to obey an order (Befehl) with a concrete content". In the first situation the leader is not necessarily legitimate, obedience can be imposed, while in the case of the second situation, obedience is based on the recognition by those who obey of the legitimate nature of the orders given.

The author of the cited paper mentions that, although the boundaries between power and domination are sometimes poorly delimited, there is still an attribute that allows us to distinguish them and this is legitimacy. The relationship of domination has a legitimacy that the relationship of power does not necessarily possess.

The position that an individual holds also represents his entire power in a relationship, and when this power is recognized, accepted as valid, by intersubjective agreement, it acquires, in Weber's conception, the form of domination (authority), and when it is recognized we are talking about its legitimacy. In the work History of Sociology, Ilie Bădescu completes the

¹ Jean Boudin, *Introducere în Sociologie politică*, Ed. Amarcor, Timișoara 1999, p.30.

clarifications made by Baudouin stating that for Weber, the problem of social order is in fact the problem of domination or authority. Weber finds that the social order is based on the belief in its legitimacy and then it is recognized as a legitimate order, as valid. Also, the German sociologist finds that in any social relationship there is an agreement and at the same time a partial disagreement between subjectivities (the meanings targeted by the actors). It follows that, through and in a social relationship, the conditions of both order and domination are given. Thus, domination can be legitimate or illegitimate and then it is challenged.²

Weber postulates the idea that no domination is maintained as a type of order, unless it is recognized as valid. As such, the problem of order is largely identified with the problem of its legitimacy and forms of legitimation. The recognition of the validity of a certain social order is given by the respect given to certain ways of acting at the level of social interaction, of the relationship between institutions and social actors.

1. AUTHORITY (DOMINATION) AND POWER - LEGITIMACY OF POWER

In this context, the German sociologist, although he accepts the idea that the presence of social struggle and social conflict cannot be completely eliminated from social life, postulates that they do not characterize the social order but domination. Unlike situations of struggle or social conflict, those of domination are characterized by the fact that the dominant agent finds obedience to a certain group of individuals. It follows that what makes the social order possible is in fact domination because it necessarily presupposes both an administrative leadership and especially the belief in legitimacy.

Domination is thus classified according to the types of legitimacy, ie internal justifications based on which a certain domination is accepted as valid. In the Weberian conception there are three such justifications:

- the authority of the eternal “other time”, of the tradition consecrated as the right way through the very immemorial antiquity of its practice and through the habit that it created.
- the authority given by the “unusual grace” of a person (charisma), ie by his strictly personal endowment and by the trust of others in his qualities, in his clairvoyance, heroism or his leadership talents;
- domination by virtue of “legality”, of the belief in the validity of a legal status and of an effective competence based on rationally elaborated rules;

From these three grounds result the three types of domination:

- Traditional domination - its ideal-typical form is feudalism. To this belongs the domination based on everyday belief in the validity of traditions of all times.
- Charismatic domination - ideal-typical expressions: the prophet, the great leader. It is based on an extraordinary obedience, even of a sacred character, to the heroic virtue or indisputable value of a personality.
- Rational domination - the ideal-typical form is bureaucracy. It is based on the belief in the legality of the rules and the rights to give directives to those who are in a position to exercise domination. And in this case, says Weber, this type of domination is legal.³

Ilie Bădescu, specifies that the recourse to one type of legitimacy or another is a variable act, so that no authority is exclusive, permanent, definitive. Weber's notification is also mentioned that whenever a type of legitimacy tends to be perpetuated and generalized, it becomes irrational and, consequently, turns into its opposite.

The postulate is that authority is a source of order for the community, and the community is a source of legitimacy for the authority. The community makes possible the legitimacy of a domination, so that a power that is not recognized is not an efficient power

² Ilie Bădescu, *Istoria sociologiei-perioada marilor sisteme*, Ed. Porto-Franco, Galați, 1994, p.448.

³ Ștefan Costea, *Clasici ai sociologiei universale, ed. cit.*, p.186.

because it does not generate order but coercion, explains Bădescu. Force generates coercion (coercion), community generates legitimacy or validity, valid order.

In the process of ensuring order, power (macht) and authority (herrschaft) intervene, ie the existence of an actor who has a dominant position and another who gives him obedience. As such, power becomes a phenomenon of authority insofar as it is recognized and freely consented to. Otherwise, it manifests itself as a phenomenon of simple coercion (force). To explain the structures of capitalist social activity, it is necessary to return to the structure of social activity in general, as it appears in Max Weber's conception. What makes this structure possible and what it maintains, says the German sociologist, is the very validity of the social order.

Weber in no way excludes the reality of the social struggle, which he even calls a social relationship in which the activity is oriented by the intention to make his own will triumph against the resistance of the partners⁴. Although the struggle cannot be completely eliminated from social life, we must specify that it is not the social struggle that characterizes the social order, but the domination and especially the modern social structure. In fact, domination and not social conflict makes this social order possible, because it necessarily presupposed both an administrative leadership and, above all, a belief in legitimacy. Just as the main activities of social life are theoretical limit cases, so are the types of domination. These types of domination can transform into each other. More precisely, for example, charismatic domination supports a continuous process of erosion towards traditional or legal domination. The latter domination interests us in a special way because it is specific to modern society, whether we are talking about a capitalist or socialist society. Thus, the legal domination is characterized by activities with public functions, permanent and related to precise rules, by competencies, by a set of delimited and objective execution tasks. They require a high level of professional training in order to be able to apply the rules of competence in order to achieve a complete rationalization⁵. This rationalization is also achieved by the absence of appropriation by the civil servant and compliance with rules, which must be for the most part, written rules. Thus, Weber further states that the ideal type of legal (rational) domination is bureaucracy.

2. BUREAUCRACY, AS AN IDEAL TYPE OF LEGAL DOMINATION

Weber's sociological research on bureaucracy is still the main reference in this field. The German sociologist described bureaucracy in ten important ways, as follows:

- Officials are professionally free;
- Officials work in a hierarchy of solidly constituted function;
- Officials must respect the established competencies;
- Officials work on the basis of a contract and an open selection;
- Officials benefit from the agreement from the previous point, after a professional qualification which is verified by examination and attested by a certificate of competence in that field;
- Officials are paid fixed salaries;
- Officials must treat their position as their only and main profession;
- Officials pursue a professional career, and advancement depends on the appreciations of the superior;
- Officials must work separately from the means of administration and without approaching their position in any form;
- Officials are subject to particularly strict discipline and must be accountable to strict controls⁶

Today, bureaucracy has become inevitable for any model of managing people and property. The superiority of this mode of administration is given by the specialized savoir, by

⁴ Max Weber, *Economie et Societe*, p. 37, *apud* Ștefan Costea, *op. cit.*, p.186.

⁵ Ștefan Costea, *Clasici ai sociologiei universale*, Ed. Fundația de mâine, București 2008, p.186-187.

⁶ *Ibidem.*, p.187.

its efficiency. Thus, Weber says: the modern bureaucracy of capitalism represents the most rational economic foundation, thanks to which capitalism can exist in its most rational form, because the bureaucracy allows it, through taxation, to have the necessary financial means⁷.

The German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) is recognized for the most comprehensive classical formulation of the characteristics of bureaucracy. He not only issued new ideas about bureaucracy but covered a whole spectrum of historical, political, economic and social thought.

As Reinhard Bendix observes, Weber was "like a Renaissance man who considered all of humanity his competence." Studying the Hindu religion, the Old Testament, the cadastre in the Roman Empire, Prussian politics, medieval trading companies or Chinese public administration, he sought to objectively analyze the nature of human institutions and show the connection between ideas and the evolution of political, economic and social systems. One of his best works, "Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism," establishes the intellectual and critical connections between the emergence of Protestantism and capitalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Weber was constantly looking for answers to extremely complex problems. What is the interaction between ideas and institutions? What distinguishes Western culture and its ideas? Why does a certain society evolve in a certain way?

We cannot summarize here the many ideas formulated by the creative spirit of Max Weber, but we will examine some aspects of his thinking with a direct impact on his conception of bureaucracy. Weber believed that civilization evolved from primitive and mystical to rational and complex. He believes that human nature has gradually progressed from primitive religions and mythologies to an increasingly theoretical and technical experience. The evolution of the world presented itself, in Weber's conception in the 19th century, as a one-way street: he expected a progressive "demystification" of humanity and its ideas about the environment.

Consistent with this theory of progress through demystification, Weber describes three "ideal types" of authority that explain why individuals have submitted to rulers throughout history. One of the oldest types of authority, the traditional type of primitive society, was based on belief in the sacredness of tradition. If a family of leaders has always ruled, people consider it legitimate and listen to its members. Time, precedent and tradition legitimize leaders in the eyes of their subjects.

The second ideal type of authority, according to Weber, is charismatic authority, based on the personal qualities and attractiveness of leaders. Charismatic leaders are self-elected leaders who instill confidence because of their extraordinary, almost superhuman qualities. Military leaders, warlords, popular party presidents, and religious founders are examples of people whose heroic or miraculous deeds attract followers.

Weber postulated a third ideal type of authority that underlies modern civilizations, namely "legal-rational" authority. It is based on "trust in the legitimacy of the model of normative rules and the rights of those invested with authority within these rules in order to make provisions". Obedience is due to an impersonal set of legally established laws rather than a leader. The legal-rational authority invests more power in the position than in the person holding the position; thus anyone can drive as long as they reach office "according to the rules".

This type of authority underlies the concept of bureaucracy in Weber's doctrine. According to Weber, bureaucracy is the manifestation of legal-rational authority in institutional form; it plays an essential role in the regulation and control of modern societies. "It is," says Weber, "superior to any other form of authority in precision, stability, discipline and safety." Thus, the bureaucracy allows the calculation at a particularly high level of the results of the heads of organizations and those who interact with it. The bureaucracy is, in the end, superior in its operational efficiency and "formally, able to solve all types of administrative tasks." For

⁷ Max Weber, *Economie et Societe*, p.230, *apud*. Ștefan Costea, *Clasici ai sociologiei universale*, Ed. Fundația de mâine, București 2008, p.186.

Weber, bureaucracy is indispensable for maintaining civilization in modern society. In his view, "no matter how many people complain about the evil created by bureaucracy, it would be a pure illusion to believe for a moment that continuous administrative activity could be accomplished in any field other than through the office work of officials."

Much of Weber's analysis deals with the historical evolution of bureaucracy. He believes that modern bureaucracy emerged in the West in the Middle Ages, when the expansion of royal domains required officials to control these domains. The princes were forced to find rational administrative techniques to expand their authority, frequently borrowing ideas from the organization of the church, whose fields extended throughout Europe. "The ideal condition for administrative bureaucratization has always been the development of administrative tasks," writes Weber. The bureaucracy developed because society needed to do various things: build streets, educate young people, collect taxes, fight battles, share justice. Labor has been divided and specialized to achieve the goals of society.

Weber also identified monetary savings as an important ingredient in the development of bureaucracy. "Bureaucracy as a permanent structure presupposes a constant income for maintenance ... The existence of a stable taxation system is the precondition for the permanent existence of the bureaucratic administration." Other cultural factors that contribute to the emergence of bureaucracies with a high level of structuring are the development of education, higher religions, the emergence of science and rationality.

Weber listed in detail the most important elements of the formal structure of the bureaucracy. In his conception, three of the most important characteristics of the bureaucracy are the division of labor, the hierarchical order and the impersonal rules - cornerstones of any functional bureaucracy. The division of labor involves the rational division of labor into units that can be assumed by individuals or groups of individuals with competence in solving the respective tasks. Unlike traditional leaders, in bureaucracy the employees are not the owners of the offices but occupy a position due to their ability to perform the assigned work. Second, the hierarchical order of bureaucracy separates superiors from subordinates; based on this hierarchy, work is remunerated, authority is recognized, privileges and promotions are granted. Finally, impersonal rules are the driving force of the bureaucratic world. Bureaucrats cannot act as they wish, Weber remarks, because their choices are limited to precise patterns of behavior imposed by law. In contrast to "traditional" or "charismatic" authority, bureaucratic rules act in the sense of control of subordinates by superiors, thus limiting the possibility of manifestation of arbitrariness and personal favoritism.

CONCLUSIONS

Weber said the only way a modern society can function effectively is by training and retraining specialists in a bureaucracy. Although Max Weber considered bureaucracy to be permanent and indispensable to the modern world, he was horrified by what he believed to be a tendency toward loss of human dignity and freedom: *It is a terrible idea that the world could one day be full of petty servants, insignificant people clinging to petty jobs and fighting for more important ones - a situation that plays again, as in the Egyptian archives, a growing role in the spirit of our administrative system and, especially, of its children, the students. This passion for bureaucracy is enough to bring you to despair.*⁸

And although he was exasperated by the accentuated tendency towards bureaucratization in the modern world, Weber nevertheless observed the equalizing or democratizing effect of bureaucracy on society. Reinhard Bendix put it this way about Weber's view: "The development of bureaucracy removes... plutocratic privileges, replacing unpaid administration, made out of passion by prominent people with paid, full-time professionals regardless of their economic and social position.

⁸ Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* (New York: Doubleday and Co, 1960), p.464.

The authority is exercised according to the rules, and all the citizens subject to the respective authority have the same legal status⁹. For the past fifty years, certain elements of Weber's conception of bureaucracy have fueled academic debate and scholarly criticism. There are sociologists who criticize Weber's formulation of "ideal types" as deceptive. They argue that this theory does not describe any desirable state or empirical reality. Others suggest that Weber places too much emphasis on the formal elements of bureaucracy — for example, specialization, hierarchy, rules, division of labor, etc. — and does not appreciate the informal dimension — human relations, leadership, communication networks, etc. — as thus, if not more important by influencing bureaucratic performance and efficiency. However, some argue that Weber neglects the shortcomings of large bureaucracies, which can encourage the alienation of workers and other citizens, in contrast to the stimulation of creativity by small and mobile networks of specialists. The Weberian concept, according to some specialists, has a temporal and cultural connection with the German scientific heritage of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They claim that Weber idealized the German bureaucratic state that dominated at that time. The list of sociological criticisms could go on, and they are all eloquent to an extent.

And yet, the general line of classical Weberian formulation is generally accepted as true and significant. For those studying public administration, its concept is essential in understanding the formal institutional structure of public administration.

The natural question that arises is whether Weber was a defender of bureaucratic social organization. The answer is no, because to the extent that the German sociologist foresaw the fate and bureaucracy of the West towards a society in which bureaucratic organizations will be able to impose an authority on work. So that people have to submit helplessly even when they are offered one last but also one purely technical, ie rational value that is necessary to decide on how to solve their problems.¹⁰

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⁹ *Ibidem.*, p. 429.

¹⁰ Ștefan Costea, *Clasici ai sociologiei universale*, Ed. Fundația de mâine, București 2008, p.187.