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From Protestant Ethics to Catholic Ethics: Transformation of the Social Welfare Mindset

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Abstract: This study examines the transformation of the welfare mindset within a moral framework, thereby engendering a profound discourse concerning the shift from Protestant ethics to Catholic ethics. The advent of globalization has unleashed reverberations that have begun to unsettle the very foundations of the welfare state. Protestant ethics deems destitution as a moral failing and dismisses the notion of magnanimous individuals perceiving benevolence toward the indigent as a vehicle for personal salvation. Pivotal concepts such as solidarity, communal harmony, and the aspiration for an equitable society have become crucial in the transformation of the welfare mentality since the 1970s. The welfare state has undergone a transformation by seeking moral legitimacy informed by Catholic tradition, signaling a pronounced shift from the precepts of Protestant ethics toward those of Catholic ethics. Social welfare will now be orchestrated with recourse to the Catholic ethical framework of solidarity and mutual assistance rather than the Protestant work ethic. This inquiry traverses the epoch commencing with the welfare state crisis, not merely by alluding to processes such as the curtailment of state intervention and the emergence of novel actors within the domain of social welfare but by advancing the contention of a revival of Catholic ethics.

Keywords: Protestant ethics, Catholic ethics, Social catholicism, Transformation of social welfare mentality, Crisis of the welfare state.

Öz: Bu çalışma, refah zihniyetinin dönüşümünü ahlaki bir çerçeve içerisinde incelemekte ve böylece Protestan ahlâktan Katolik ahlâka geçişe dair derin bir söylem ortaya koymaktadır. Küreselleşmenin ortaya çıkışı, refah devletinin temellerini sarsmaya başlayan yankıları serbest bırakmıştır. Protestan ahlak, yoksulluğu ahlaki bir başarısızlık olarak kabul etmekte ve yüce gönüllü bireylerin, yoksullara karşı iyilik yapmayı kişisel kurtuluşun bir aracı olarak algılaması fikrini reddetmektedir. Dayanışma, toplumsal uyum ve eşitlikçi bir toplum arzusu gibi temel kavramlar, 1970'lerden bu yana refah anlayışının dönüşümünde hayati bir önem taşımaktadır. Refah devleti, Katolik gelenek içinde ahlaki meşruiyet arayarak bir dönüşüm geçirmiştir. Bu, Protestan ahlak kurallarından Katolik ahlak kurallarına doğru belirgin bir değişimin sinyalini vermektedir. Artık sosyal refah; Protestan çalışma etiği yerine, dayanışma ve karşılıklı yardımdan oluşan Katolik etik çerçevesine başvurularak düzenlenmeye başlamıştır. Bu araştırma, yalnızca devlet müdahalesinin kısıtlanması ve sosyal refah alanında yeni aktörlerin ortaya çıkması gibi süreçlere değinerek değil, aynı zamanda Katolik etiğin yeniden canlandığı iddiasını geliştirerek, refah devleti kriziyle başlayan dönemi ele almakta ve teorik bir tartışma penceresi açmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Protestan ahlak, Katolik ahlak, Sosyal katoliklik, Sosyal refah zihniyetinin dönüşümü, Refah devletinin krizi.

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Introduction

This scholarly investigation endeavors to elucidate the transformation of the social welfare mindset, tracing its historical trajectory from Protestant Morality to the sphere of Catholic Morality within the broader framework of the welfare state's emergence and subsequent crisis. The ascendancy of globalization and neoliberal economic policies since the late 1970s has exerted a dominant influence, precipitating a crisis and gradual erosion of the welfare state. These concerns have frequently been the focal point of Marxist critiques as scholars endeavor to comprehend the ramifications of globalization on welfare mindsets through disparate theoretical perspectives. Nevertheless, it becomes apparent that this transformation needs to be adequately subjected to the interpretive and hermeneutic analysis within a Weberian context.

Max Weber, diverging from Marx, approached the genesis of capitalism through a distinctive moral lens, seeking the foundations of capitalist accumulation within the Protestant worldview. Weber (2011) states, "Capital owners and employers, including the educated stratum of the working class, particularly individuals with advanced technical or commercial education within contemporary industries, bear discernible Protestant characteristics." Following Protestant Puritanism, the world is not conceived as a domain for frivolity and amusement but as a realm where individuals are called to serve God through diligent labor.

Weber established a robust connection between Protestant ethics, which underscored the importance of work and wealth accumulation, and the capitalist order. Despite interventions informed by Keynesian economic principles, this connection can persist within the framework of laissez-faire capitalism. The welfare state's commitment to providing welfare services for the entire populace aligns to attain full employment. Consequently, the primary emphasis of the welfare state lies in labor and the ethics thereof. Despite the foundational human and social rights derived from citizenship, the enduring influence of the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor, as delineated within Queen Elizabeth's Poor Laws in the early 17th century (codified from 1597–98), continues to bestow ideological legitimacy even in the epoch of the welfare state. The pivotal aspect lies not solely in deserving access to essential welfare services but in integrating individuals into the labor market.

The late 1970s witnessed the foundations of the welfare state beginning to tremor, a period that portended the swift erosion of the welfare state, predominantly due to the advent of globalization and the implementation of neoliberal policies. While Protestant Morality perceived poverty as a moral failing and eschewed the notion of philanthropists bestowing mercy upon the destitute as a means of attaining personal salvation (Nistor, 2018), concepts such as aid, solidarity, and community spirit (Kleinman, 2006) mercy, and the aspiration for a just society (Bellah et al., 1991) commenced assuming central roles in the transformation of the welfare mindset since the late 1970s.

The welfare state, undergoing a transformative process that reassigns the onus of welfare responsibilities to society itself, emboldens concepts such as solidarity, mercy, mutual assistance, and communal spirit. It now endeavors to secure its moral legitimacy from the tenets of the Catholic tradition, denoting a definite departure from Protestant Morality toward Catholic Morality. Consequently, social welfare organizations shall be guided by the Catholic ethics of solidarity and mutual assistance, supplanting the Protestant work ethic.

The primary objective of this study resides in the comprehensive exploration of the transformation of the social welfare mindset, navigating the transition from Protestant Morality to Catholic Morality within the contextual tapestry of the welfare state's historical trajectory, spanning from its inception to its ensuing crisis.

The Ideological and Moral Foundations of the Welfare State

From the post-medieval period to the onset of the Industrial Revolution, the economic and social structures of the world remained largely unchanged. This prolonged period of stasis can primarily be attributed to the lack of significant technological advancements that might have otherwise altered production structures and catalyzed profound transformations within the social fabric. Predominantly agrarian in nature, the populace was engaged in subsistence labor, with self-sufficiency being the norm. Individuals labored primarily for their sustenance, and artisans derived income from manual labor, fostering solidarity within guilds of their respective trades, thereby mitigating competition among themselves. Similarly, self-employed farmers established an economic framework based on subsistence. The limited scale and volume of market-oriented production impeded the conditions necessary for the emergence of a competitive environment (Gümüş, 2018, pp. 34-36). Consequently, the enrichment of specific individuals at the expense of others and the manifestation of socio-economic class distinctions were effectively curtailed.

The needs of vulnerable segments within society, such as the elderly, children, or those unable to engage in labor, were typically met by familial support, charitable organizations, guilds, or trade unions, and religious institutions. While the family unit served as the primary source of aid, guilds and charities would step in when familial resources proved insufficient, or families were absent altogether. Churches, which held considerable economic and social power, played a pivotal role in supporting various societal groups or individuals, driven by their capacities and religious tenets. The Catholic faith served as the moral bedrock for economic and social relations of the period, especially within the European context (Akalın, 2009, pp. 29-32).

The subsistence activities pursued by farmers and artisans, which constituted a significant portion of economic endeavors during this epoch, were inconducive to a competitive milieu. Moreover, guilds, particularly those of craftsmen, brooked no tolerance for avarice, calculative conduct, or individualistic self-interest. Catholic ethics, too, disapproved of and condemned actions motivated solely by profit-seeking greed. Merchants not engaged in farming or craftsmanship were similarly bound by these strictures, with a clear understanding that their earnings should merely correspond to the labor they invested. According to Catholic doctrine, all activities undertaken by individuals throughout their lives, including economic pursuits, were deemed moral acts that should be regarded as forms of worship. Thus, a spiritual purpose existed beyond the mere pursuit of profit and accumulation. In economic relationships, individuals were not to act solely based on economic criteria but were to ensure their actions remained in harmony with their spiritual purpose, which was to seek God's approval. Hence, activities generating social benefits always took precedence over purely economic endeavors. Within this framework, wealth acquisition or any other temporal objectives, according to Catholic belief, were not ultimate ends but means to achieve the ultimate goal of securing God's approval (Parks, 2005, p. 45).

Following the ethical principles of Catholic doctrine, the use of material possessions was primarily to serve the sustenance of individuals and their immediate kin. The inclination to amass wealth was permissible solely within the boundaries of this framework. Human beings were urged to harness this inclination for the betterment of those in need rather than for personal gain alone. Consequently, surplus goods were to be equitably distributed, and the rights of the less fortunate were to be upheld (Akalın, 2009, p. 32). The pursuit of affluence, ostentation, and extravagance distanced individuals from contentment and magnanimity, impeding the attainment of divine approbation. Within the context of the Catholic faith, this predicament engendered a sense of skepticism toward the affluent. Hence, significant responsibilities and obligations were incumbent upon the prosperous, who were to tend to the needs of the indigent in their vicinity. In this regard, the benevolence they extended to the destitute became how they gained access to the divine presence. According to Catholic ethics, the sharing of wealth assumed an imperative status, with wealth being perceived as a divine blessing and affluence as a consequence of worldly attachment. Consequently, to avoid transgressions, the possessor of wealth had to partake in its dissemination (Kohls & Christensen, 2002, pp. 228-229).

The possessions one held ought to be employed as acts of merciful benevolence and unconditional love to cater to the subsistence needs of those lacking material means. These individuals were dependent on sustenance in the form of nourishment, garments, and shelter to maintain their livelihoods. Ensuring that wealth was generously allocated to fulfill these exigencies was deemed an essential aspect of virtuous conduct. Economic activities were considered legitimate and indispensable within this ethos of mutual assistance and subsistence (Parks, 2005, p. 61). It was incumbent upon individuals to acquire the worldly possessions necessary for their survival and that of their immediate circle. Nonetheless, the legitimacy of such acquisition remained contingent upon the limitations mentioned above.

Catholic faith condemned the ceaseless pursuit of economic endeavors fueled by an insatiable yearning for boundless wealth. This condemnation formed the moral foundation of subsistence-driven economic activity. The trade ethos elucidated by Catholic ethics involved deriving benefits from the labor and products of others. This rationale justified the preference for agricultural pursuits and manual craftsmanship from an ethical and religious standpoint. In medieval Europe, commercial activities and merchants were held in low regard. However, subsequent periods witnessed a reformation of this perception, with commercial profit being regarded as commensurate with the merchant's labor or remuneration. Catholics, perceiving merchants as wage earners, contended that the profit arising from commercial ventures should be constrained by the cost of the service rendered. Within the doctrine of fair price, prohibitions on usury and an inability to accumulate wealth due to future concerns were additionally expounded. It was stressed that these regulations should apply uniformly to all parties involved in exchanging goods and services. The principles giving rise to the doctrine of fair price also engendered the concept of a just wage, necessitating employers to remunerate their workers fairly (Roover, 1974, p. 107).

During the historical epoch spanning from the aftermath of the Middle Ages to the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the emergence of subsistence-based economic activities can be attributed to both contextual physical conditions and the influence of moral and ethical values upon individuals. Such a state of affairs thwarted the development of economic and social disparities wherein certain groups and individuals amassed riches at the expense of others, thereby impeding the formation of an environment conducive to the welfare state, which sought to mitigate inequalities. Existing structures such as family units, foundations, guilds, or churches catered to the needs of the impoverished within society, guided by principles of solidarity, voluntary action, and philanthropy. These arguments found moral grounding in Catholic ethics, which served as the ethical compass of the era.

The rapid transformation of the social fabric brought about by the changing production structure and economic system during the Industrial Revolution precipitated a swift overhaul of the social, economic, and political landscape. By the late 19th century, nationalism, individualism, and democracy emerged as prominent trends that directly influenced the collective consciousness. Industrialization effectively dismantled the traditional agrarian economy, ushering in a transition period. Simultaneously, the era witnessed a surge in population growth, leading to significant rural-to-urban migration. As the agricultural sector receded and Industrialization gained momentum, the rural population dwindled while urbanization accelerated. The economic and social repercussions of Industrialization continued to escalate well into the 20th century, particularly within the early industrialized nations. The global population expanded unprecedentedly, and production levels reached unprecedented scales compared to the preceding eras. While the population farming in rural areas declined, the ranks of urban laborers swelled daily (Duiker & Spielvogel, 2008, p. 519).

With economic importance shifting from the family to the individual, the societal framework underwent a profound metamorphosis, transitioning from a family-centric society to an individual-centric one. Consequently, preexisting social mechanisms experienced a decline in efficacy. Traditional forms of solidarity-based institutions, such as families, foundations, guilds, or churches, weakened due to this paradigm shift. This transformation raised questions about the sustenance of individuals who could not work or secure employment despite their willingness to work or found themselves in other destitute circumstances. Moreover, as the nature of labor transformed, a shift occurred from working to sustain one's livelihood to working on behalf of others, catalyzed by Industrialization. This phenomenon placed individualization at the forefront and weakened solidarity-based institutions like families, foundations, guilds, or churches. In this new era, the individual supplanted the family unit as the fundamental economic entity of the preceding era (Gümüş, 2018, p. 44). This paradigmatic shift underscored the necessity of a welfare state, as the emergence of a novel economic and social structure brought forth challenges that traditional institutions like families, foundations, guilds, or churches were ill-equipped to address. Consequently, the duties and responsibilities of the state required a redefinition. The concept of the welfare state began to assert itself more prominently within economic and social spheres, with initial instances of its implementation observed in early industrialized nations such as Germany and the United Kingdom.

In the late 19th century, Germany witnessed widespread support for socialism as a prevailing ideology. The dire economic crisis and deplorable working conditions endured by laborers constituted the primary catalysts for this situation. During that era, Otto von Bismarck, the Chancellor of Germany, endeavored to rectify this state of affairs, aiming to ameliorate the prevailing conditions and address the grievances of various social groups, particularly the working class. Bismarck's overarching objective resided in seeking a delicate equilibrium between socialist ideology and capitalist principles. However, the absence of legislative or regulatory mechanisms protecting the laboring class left them susceptible to exploitation by capitalists. Consequently, the state assumed a pivotal role in safeguarding the rights of the laboring class, establishing a balance between capitalist and socialist ideologies, and providing a remedy for the socio-economic challenges (Hamann & Kelly, 2007, p. 101).

In 1880, Bismarck pioneered the introduction of a workers' compensation program in Germany. The primary objective of this initiative was to enhance the welfare of workers and address the mounting labor-related grievances. This measure gained rapid acceptance among the laboring population, evolving into an integral facet of social policies within the broader context of welfare state practices. By the late 19th century, state-enacted social policies began to exert an influence, albeit still limited in scope, on the societal landscape. Nonetheless, the prevailing political milieu predominantly adhered to the principle of a laissez-faire economic system, thereby resulting in the predominantly theoretical status of welfare state practices (Hamann & Kelly, 2007, p. 103).

In the United Kingdom, the inception of welfare state practices is historically traced to the passing of the National Insurance Act in 1911. This legislative measure signaled the nascent stages of formal welfare state policies within the country. This act's introduction marked a significant step towards establishing a more comprehensive framework for social protection and welfare. The National Insurance Act aimed to address the economic insecurities faced by workers and provide them with a safety net in the event of illness or unemployment. The passage of this act marked the early stages of state intervention in social welfare, laying the groundwork for subsequent developments in the welfare state.

The subsequent period witnessed the gradual expansion and consolidation of welfare state practices within both Germany and the United Kingdom, with various policies and programs being implemented to address the evolving socio-economic challenges of the time. These initiatives reflected the growing recognition of the state's role in ensuring social protection and welfare, marking a significant departure from the laissez-faire principles that had previously dominated economic and social policy.

The gradual development of welfare state practices in Germany and the United Kingdom exemplified the broader trend towards increased state intervention in social and economic affairs, driven by the need to address the socio-economic challenges arising from Industrialization and urbanization. These early welfare state measures laid the foundation for the more comprehensive welfare state systems that would emerge in the mid-20th century, significantly transforming the social and economic landscape of these nations.

The emergence of the welfare state can be viewed as a response to the changing socio-economic conditions brought about by Industrialization and urbanization. Two major economic theories, liberalism, and Marxism played significant roles in shaping the discourse around the welfare state and influencing its development.

Liberal economic theory, rooted in the principles of individual freedom, private property, and limited government intervention, initially emphasized the importance of laissez-faire policies and the self-regulating nature of markets. However, as Industrialization progressed, and socio-economic inequalities became more pronounced, liberal thinkers began to recognize the need for some degree of state intervention to address market failures and ensure social stability. This shift in perspective led to the development of social liberalism, which advocated for state policies aimed at protecting individuals from the adverse effects of economic fluctuations and ensuring a basic standard of living. Prominent liberal economists such as John Maynard Keynes argued for state intervention to mitigate economic downturns and provide social safety nets, laying the intellectual foundation for the welfare state (Keynes, 1936, p. 325).

On the other hand, Marxist economic theory, rooted in the critique of capitalism and the analysis of class struggle, viewed the welfare state as a response to the inherent contradictions of the capitalist system. According to Marxist theory, the welfare state emerged as a means for the capitalist class to manage and contain the social unrest and resistance of the working class. By providing social benefits and protections, the welfare state aimed to mitigate the exploitative nature of capitalism and prevent revolutionary upheaval. Marxist theorists argued that the welfare state served to legitimize and stabilize the capitalist system by addressing some of the most egregious inequalities and providing a semblance of social justice (Marx, 1867, p. 676).

The interplay between liberal and Marxist economic theories significantly shaped the development of the welfare state, with each theory offering distinct perspectives on the role of the state in addressing socio-economic challenges. While liberalism emphasized the need for state intervention to correct market failures and ensure individual welfare, Marxism viewed the welfare state as a mechanism for managing class conflict and preserving the capitalist system.

In conclusion, the evolution of economic and social structures from the post-medieval era to the Industrial Revolution, and the subsequent emergence of welfare state practices, were influenced by a complex interplay of historical, economic, and ideological factors. The transition from subsistence-based economic activities to industrial production brought about profound changes in the social fabric, necessitating new forms of social protection and state intervention. The development of welfare state practices in early industrialized nations such as Germany and the United Kingdom reflected the growing recognition of the state's role in ensuring social welfare and addressing the challenges of Industrialization. The intellectual contributions of liberal and Marxist economic theories further shaped the discourse around the welfare state, providing diverse perspectives on the role of the state in managing socio-economic inequalities and promoting social justice.

Crisis/Abrasion of the Welfare State

The post-World War II era, often heralded as the "golden age" of the welfare state, was characterized by unprecedented economic expansion that significantly underpinned the extensive array of services delivered within the welfare state framework. This period of economic prosperity facilitated a robust funding mechanism for the welfare state, which, in turn, was supported by a demographic structure that presented minimal financial challenges. However, the trajectory of economic growth and demographic dynamics experienced a pronounced shift by the 1970s. The deceleration of economic expansion, coupled with transformative demographic changes, necessitated a critical re-evaluation of the welfare state's size, scope, and operational modalities. This led to an intense discourse regarding the financial implications of welfare state practices and their funding mechanisms (Çelik, 2010, p. 308).

The 1970s heralded a series of crises that reverberated globally, precipitating substantial alterations in prevailing economic paradigms. The disintegration of the Bretton Woods system in 1971, followed by the oil crises of 1973 and 1979, precipitated a supply-side dilemma marked by high unemployment and inflation. OECD countries, which had enjoyed an average growth rate of 5% in the 1960s, witnessed a decline to 3% in the 1970s and 2% in the 1980s. These economic disruptions undermined support for Keynesian economic theories and exerted substantial pressure on governments to address critical aspects of the welfare state, including employment, social security, and equality (Gümüş, 2018, p. 56). This period engendered a "hysteria effect" regarding the welfare state, wherein the return to pre-crisis welfare state norms proved elusive even after economic conditions stabilized. The welfare state, which had thrived between 1945 and 1975, found itself compelled to undergo profound transformations to address the emergent crisis (Gümüş, 2018, p. 56).

The emergence of globalization in the 1980s marked a pivotal juncture, instigating radical shifts in both economic and social spheres and challenging entrenched notions of state intervention. Neoliberalism, as the dominant economic doctrine of the era, posited that welfare state practices impeded economic growth through high taxation and public expenditure. This ideological shift necessitated reductions in social spending, the privatization of public services, and a general curtailment of state intervention in the market (Holden, 2003, p. 306). The United Kingdom and the United States, under the aegis of neoliberal policies espoused by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, witnessed significant retrenchments in welfare state services, accompanied by a reformist approach targeting the social fabric (Starke, 2006, p. 106). Public expenditures faced increased scrutiny, privatizations were enacted, and measures to liberalize the labor market were introduced (Mitrovic, 2008, p. 182).

Countries embracing globalization and adopting neoliberal policies pursued a trajectory characterized by diminished state intervention and reduced social expenditures. Driven by aspirations for enhanced economic competitiveness, these nations experienced revenue losses due to reduced tax rates and grappled with unemployment challenges arising from labor cost pressures. Consequently, financial resources allocated to welfare state services dwindled, even as the demand for such services increased due to rising unemployment rates (Seeleib-Kaiser, 2007, p. 2). These dynamic highlights the complex interplay between globalization and the welfare state. Alternatively, some argue that globalization does not directly influence welfare state transformations, as empirical evidence on globalization's impact on state sovereignty remains limited. A third perspective suggests that globalization serves both as a consequence of the welfare state's crisis and as an opportunity for its resolution (Genschel, 2004, p. 613).

In addition to globalization, escalating costs associated with welfare services have been a significant factor influencing the welfare state's transformation. These cost increases are attributable to demographic shifts, reduced employment opportunities, and changes in the social fabric, which have amplified the welfare state's responsibilities and triggered debates about cost escalation. Particularly in Europe, the evolving employment landscape since the 1970s, coupled with pressures on labor costs, has led to reduced labor demand and a concomitant rise in unemployment rates. The average unemployment rate in European OECD member countries surged from 1.2 percent in the 1960s to 11 percent in the 1990s (OECD, 2011). Technological advancements and reduced labor demand have resulted in a bifurcation between skilled and unskilled labor.

The rise in unemployment has exacerbated wage disparities among the employed, thereby increasing income inequality. In response to escalating costs, countries have tightened eligibility criteria for accessing welfare services. For instance, Germany and Sweden have implemented reforms to restrict access to unemployment benefits and social assistance amidst growing demand for social protection (Swank, 2002, pp. 161-166).

The shifting demographic landscape has presented a confluence of challenges for the welfare state, manifested in both an expanded beneficiary pool and diminished revenue sources. The progressive aging of the population, due to increased life expectancy, has led to a rise in service beneficiaries. Conversely, declining birth rates have resulted in a shrinking cohort of economically active individuals contributing to state revenues. This demographic trend has disrupted the dependency ratio, exacerbating financial pressures on the welfare state. Generous social security benefits have also incentivized premature retirement and labor force exit, further intensifying fiscal strains. In response, policy measures have included raising the retirement age, curbing benefit provisions, imposing stricter eligibility criteria, and encouraging greater labor force participation among the elderly (Ferrera, 2013, pp. 90-93).

Moreover, the transformation of social structures since the 1970s has contributed to rising welfare state expenditures. The traditional gender-based division of labor, with men as primary breadwinners and women responsible for household duties, has shifted significantly, resulting in an increased female presence in the labor market. This surge in labor supply, coupled with technological advancements, has led to a decline in labor demand, resulting in reduced wages and increased unemployment. By the 1990s, a significant proportion of job seekers were forced into part-time or precarious work arrangements (Macintyre, 1999, pp. 130-133).

Efforts to sustain economic growth and enhance employment opportunities have necessitated substantial transformations in the welfare state, including cost reductions, labor market flexibility, and a reduction in social entitlements. These recalibrations reflect systemic restructuring aimed at addressing the welfare state's crisis. In the United Kingdom, for example, regulatory reforms have included the abolition of minimum wage requirements, the extension of working hours, and the restriction of trade union rights (Koçdemir, 1998, p. 69). Similar trends have emerged in other countries, with "unskilled" labor segments facing increasingly challenging working conditions.

Global competition, high unemployment rates, dwindling wages, and reduced purchasing power have driven the restructuring of the welfare state to address concerns related to cost and financing. However, attributing the welfare state's difficulties solely to fiscal and financial issues would be an oversimplification. Contemporary welfare services have often proven inadequate in addressing poverty and inequality, and the administrative costs associated with these initiatives continue to strain national economies (Poggi, 2019, p. 137). Despite robust growth rates, persistent challenges such as poverty, income inequality, and structural unemployment have remained resistant to resolution (Frankel, 1991, pp. 85-87).

During the so-called "golden age" of the welfare state, the public sector undertook significant responsibilities, leading to a gradual erosion of voluntarism, solidarity, and charity—concepts previously championed by Catholic ethics. The significance of familial, foundational, and ecclesiastical roles in addressing societal issues diminished. The era's economic prosperity saw the state prioritize full employment, shaping policies and services accordingly. The Protestant work ethic, which revered labor as a sacred duty, served as the moral compass during this period and its subsequent crisis. However, as economic growth slowed and welfare state resources dwindled, traditional social values and relationships experienced further deterioration. The evolving family structure, the dissolution of guilds and associations integral to the labor force, and the diminishing role of the church rendered traditional institutions increasingly ineffective in addressing the welfare state's challenges.

The modern state has undergone a process of centralization of power, emerging as the dominant institution governing the social sphere due to its association with economic expansion. Yet, state intervention alone has proven insufficient in addressing contemporary social challenges. The paradigm shift in economics has rendered the state increasingly dependent, with its expansive scope of intervention failing to remedy social predicaments. The transition from a state-centric model to one that emphasizes limited and effective governance reflects this new reality (Çelik, 2010, p. 311).

Mixed economies, which previously allowed for state intervention, have increasingly gravitated toward market-oriented systems due to the welfare state's crisis. Globalization has led to the emergence of international organizations regulating areas previously under state control. These organizations, coupled with privatization policies driven by market mechanisms, have diminished state authority and maneuverability (Bozkurt, 1998, p. 55). Consequently, global objectives formulated in response to international competition have become paramount, eclipsing national benchmarks. Efforts are underway to minimize disparities arising from economic systems in line with international standards. Centrally planned economies are also advocating for reduced state intervention, envisioning a transition to a model where the state establishes standards, promulgates regulations, and ensures oversight (Ekin et al., 1999, pp. 27-28).

In the twentieth century, the state cemented its role as the guardian of social rights. However, as the century closed, this understanding evolved into a more nuanced conception of the state, emphasizing limited yet effective governance. This shift has fostered a new approach to public administration, characterized by increased civil society and individual participation in governance processes. Laws and regulations have shifted focus from state-centric perspectives to ones centered around the individual and society. In a society marked by eroding social bonds, a diminished family unit, and an increase in solitary living, this new governance approach aims to foster social integration and counteract social alienation—objectives that the welfare state has struggled to achieve (Çelik, 2010, p. 314).

In conclusion, the role of the state in welfare services has become increasingly significant and scrutinized in the contemporary era, marked by financial constraints and a heightened emphasis on individual responsibility. The debate continues regarding whether responsibilities such as social security should be entrusted to individuals and their savings, or if the state should continue to safeguard the poverty threshold (Maydell, 1994, p. 503). The exclusion of individual pension insurance and private health insurance from state-provided welfare services underscores this shift. The state's new mandate involves regulating and supervising these practices, reflecting a broader trend toward limited yet effective governance in the face of evolving social and economic challenges.

Paradigm Shift in the Delivery of Social Welfare Services: Returning from Protestant Morality to the Catholic Morality

The economic crises of the 1970s, exacerbated by insufficient governmental responses to both social and economic upheavals, coupled with the declining credibility of Keynesian economic theories and the mounting skepticism towards an expansive role of the state, generated formidable challenges in terms of resource allocation and institutional reputation. These crises fostered a profound distrust in existing governance structures and spurred a search for innovative institutions and methodologies capable of stimulating economic growth and addressing societal demands. Bureaucratic inefficiencies and administrative rigidity were frequently cited as the principal factors undermining productivity and responsiveness (Ömürgönülşen, 1997, p. 527).

In response to these challenges, rather than simply advocating for a reduction in the size of the state, contemporary discussions have increasingly focused on enhancing public sector governance. Constrained by limited resources, the public sector has been compelled to explore and implement novel techniques, ideas, and organizational structures. This period marked a transformative shift in the latter half of the twentieth century, especially within developed nations, where traditional, rigid, and hierarchical bureaucracies began evolving into more flexible, market-oriented structures. The emergence of the new public management (NPM) approach, characterized by its emphasis on market principles and customer satisfaction, signified a fundamental reorientation in public sector administration (Özer, 2005, p. 3).

The NPM paradigm represents a seminal shift in the field of public administration, advocating for a departure from the limitations and inflexibilities of traditional bureaucratic structures. It posits that public sector organizations should be restructured around principles of efficiency, integrating market values and practices into their administrative frameworks. This approach prioritizes managerial practices akin to those in the private sector over conventional public administration models. It is crucial to recognize, however, that public administration and business management differ significantly. While public administration focuses on governance according to established rules and processes, business management encompasses broader considerations such as strategic goals, priorities, and performance metrics (Al, 2002, p. 112). Consequently, business management's scope is inherently more comprehensive than that of public administration, which traditionally emphasizes efficiency in task execution.

Two primary processes have facilitated the ascendancy of NPM, which prioritizes efficiency and effectiveness. First, institutional economics has emerged as a proponent of competition, transparency, and user preferences. Second, there has been a growing acceptance of applying economic management models, prevalent in the private sector, to public sector operations. These developments underscore the increasing importance of professionalism and technical expertise, which necessitate the delegation of authority within public administration (Hood, 1991, pp. 5-6).

Traditional public administration sought to optimize service delivery within existing resource constraints and minimize resource utilization. In contrast, NPM introduces a critical discourse on whether current services adequately ensure social equality. One of its core tenets is the imperative of equal treatment for all, emphasizing that managers are accountable for their decisions and must address citizen demands. While the classical approach advocated for the expansion and improvement of institutions addressing social issues, NPM calls for alternative institutions capable of problem-solving. This approach envisions a shift from the hierarchical, directive nature of traditional public administration to a more horizontal and collaborative relationship between political leaders and managers (Frederickson, 1977, pp. 6-9), thus emphasizing administrative effectiveness over political processes.

Central to NPM is the emphasis on performance measurement and the adoption of semi-autonomous structures rather than rigid bureaucratic organizations. It advocates for flexible and horizontal relationships grounded in market principles and citizen satisfaction (Dunsire, 1999, p. 369). The fundamental objectives of NPM include improving efficiency, enhancing political and administrative effectiveness, limiting control, granting managerial autonomy, ensuring transparency, delegating authority, and embracing contractualism. This entails empowering service delivery rather than direct provision, prioritizing service beneficiaries' needs over bureaucratic constraints, focusing on preventive measures rather than remedial treatment, and moving away from hierarchical structures towards participatory and collaborative approaches (Christensen-Legreid, 2002, p. 19). Such changes also necessitate a reevaluation of resource allocation and utilization, particularly concerning personnel and public expenditure. Leveraging local units and technology for service delivery and oversight are integral to enhancing efficiency (Hood, 1991, p. 3).

The challenges posed by resource scarcity, financial constraints, and eroding public trust have catalyzed the development of innovative methods and techniques for delivering public services. The decline in trust can be attributed to unmet expectations in social benefits, self-serving political behavior, and coercive bureaucratic pressures that undermine efficiency (Sezen, 1999, p. 55). The welfare state's comprehensive social services have particularly prompted the exploration of new distribution and delivery techniques. Due to diminished trust, citizens now demand greater transparency in the entire process, from the design to the implementation of services, as well as the disclosure of allocated resources. Administrators and policymakers have increasingly adopted these demands as integral to the NPM approach (Arslan, 2010, p. 29), thereby facilitating improvements in efficiency and administrative effectiveness.

The transparent disclosure of data and processes has created opportunities for quantitative assessment of public services. Establishing standardized metrics enables the evaluation of welfare services and managerial performance. Emphasizing factors such as expertise and competence, NPM supports the delegation of authority within centralized structures to enhance efficiency (Özer, 2005, pp. 23-24). Centralized structures, characterized by rigid rule-based approaches, partially offset their control limitations through authority delegation, thereby granting managerial autonomy to local units.

The proliferation and diversification of institutions engaged in public service delivery, particularly welfare programs, have yielded positive outcomes in service quality and cost reduction due to the competitive environment. The involvement of private sector entities and civil society organizations in service delivery can enhance service quality and reduce inefficiencies. However, comprehensive contracts with these external entities are crucial to mitigating the negative aspects of market mechanisms and ensuring that social benefits are preserved (Karcı, 2008, p. 47).

As a result, the state's role is shifting from direct service provision to the delegation of authority to service delivery entities. Coercive practices previously employed by bureaucratic structures are being replaced by approaches prioritizing the needs of service beneficiaries. By integrating private sector methodologies into welfare service provision, citizens are increasingly viewed as customers, with their demands shaping service implementation (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992, p. 20, cited in Arslan, 2010, p. 27).

The market-oriented perspective's influence on welfare service delivery is transforming the fundamental principles of the welfare state. Universal welfare services, initially provided under uniform conditions, are evolving into personalized applications based on individual evaluations. This approach differentiates individuals based on their unique characteristics and circumstances, determining the nature, scope, and extent of welfare services they receive. In contrast to the universal approach of traditional welfare state practices, a market-based perspective assigns obligations and responsibilities to individuals, making them prerequisites for accessing services (Eser et al., 2011, pp. 208-212). Active participation in the system and financial contributions are now essential for benefiting from welfare services, embodying an active welfare system focused on employment and workforce integration (Demircan, 2010, pp. 209-211).

The new public administration approach directly influences the necessary restructuring process to address the welfare state's crisis since the mid-1970s. This includes redistributing service provision responsibilities from the public sector to private sector and civil society organizations, prioritizing citizen demands, and evaluating local units closer to citizens as primary service providers. These transformations reflect a significant shift from centralist to decentralized approaches within public administration.

Examining the new public administration approach through the lens of Catholic and Protestant ethics reveals a dual evaluation. The market-oriented mechanism of service delivery aligns with the Protestant work ethic, which venerates industriousness and emphasizes labor as a prerequisite for welfare. In active welfare services, this perspective underscores employment as a core tenet. Conversely, the involvement of private sector and civil society organizations echoes the Catholic emphasis on informal structures and voluntary contributions. The inclusion of civil society organizations in welfare service provision highlights solidarity and voluntarism, resonating with Catholic ethics' emphasis on community support (Arslan, 2010, p. 27).

Conclusion

In the aftermath of the welfare state crisis, particularly prevalent in Anglo-Saxon nations, there has been a discernible reduction in the scope of the welfare state, giving rise to a residual welfare model. However, in social democratic welfare regimes, an alternative approach has emerged, eschewing the residual welfare mindset in favor of comprehensive social citizenship-based universal welfare practices. These practices blend elements of neoliberalism with traditional social democratic values and approaches. While the former exhibits a low level of decommodification, the latter embodies a higher degree of decommodification, thereby presenting a more egalitarian and libertarian model in terms of labor market dependency. The corporatist models found in Continental European and Southern European countries have introduced a novel pursuit that combines social insurance practices with substituting Social Catholic authority. These diverse trajectories were envisioned as promises to address the "social problem" and alleviate class inequalities rather than merely technical solutions for social security concerns.

According to Esping-Andersen and other scholars (2003), in this new era, competitive forces appear to be mobilizing their efforts toward creating an ideal "good society." The common objective among various responses to the welfare state crisis across different contexts is the pursuit of "solidarity" in forming an idealized "good society." This indicates a departure from the Third Way in the United Kingdom or the New Center in Germany.

The concept of solidarity finds its roots in the Roman Catholic socio-economic framework known as Social Catholicism in Europe. The process of secularization that followed the French Revolution sought to supplant the religious underpinnings of solidarity with the principle of fraternity (fraternité). However, even in a secular context, the doctrine of solidarity has not entirely divested itself from its Social Catholic characteristics. As Hyman (1999) suggests, Social Catholicism promoted a functionalist and organic vision of society, countering the socialist notion of class conflict. Solidarity served as a functional instrument to obfuscate the concept of class conflict.

After the welfare state crisis, Social Catholicism and solidarity reemerged in a "secular" Europe as they revived their religious origins. This phenomenon can be understood as a response to the global crisis of capitalism and the successful assimilation of Social Catholicism and social democracy into the governing mechanisms of capitalism.

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