

Iván Jaksic and Eduardo Posada Carbó (eds.), *Liberalismo y poder: Latinoamérica en el siglo XIX* (Santiago: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2011), pp. 340, pb.

Much of nineteenth-century Latin American historiography is contained within guidelines defined by the discussion of the exogenous, inadequate or failed character of Latin American liberalism. This debate is frequently focused on settling whether the Hispanic cultural tradition did, or did not, contain a significant liberal potential, the latter being considered an essential element of political and social modernisation. The proposal advanced by Jaksic and Posada Carbó is distinctive in moving away from this debate to place themselves within a larger and more stimulating discussion centred on the 'diversities within liberalism' (p. 25). The editors have developed a much more complex and flexible vision of liberalism from the perspective of the history of ideas, which avoids stereotypes and allows for the integration of issues and processes traditionally considered 'illiberal' or incompatible with liberalism. Thus, liberalism is no longer treated as an 'expression confined to one school of thought or a particular political party', but as a 'political style' embracing 'multiple meanings in the approach to the horizon of freedom' (p. 13). The analysis of historical expressions of liberalism in nineteenth-century Latin America is undertaken – and this is remarkable – with reference to recent revisions of liberal traditions previously considered genuine, that is, the Anglo-Saxon and French ones. In this sense, the chapter by H. S. Jones brings together key historiographical contributions of European liberalism that question, among other things, the presumption of its aggressively secular character, or its incompatibility with republicanism or corporatism. From here arises a very sophisticated insight into liberalism that regains the solid ethical (generally religious) foundation on which it was built, highlights the existence of the heterogeneous, individualistic and corporative logics that shaped modern society, and recognises the multiple nature of the challenges faced by constitutional states.

The major contributions of the book point out the different 'languages' that constructed liberal diversity according to the contextualizing and particularities of Latin American regions. Two issues emerge from the book's chapters: the complex relationship of the different liberalisms to the values of classical republicanism, in the context of the construction of the new Latin American republics, and liberalism's inherent tension between the principle of individual freedom and the role of the state as regards safeguarding such freedom. This latter aspect reflects the difficulty of reaching consensus on the way public authorities are institutionalised, as well as the dual role of such authorities as representatives of popular sovereignty and as guarantors against potential intrusions that may jeopardise subjective freedom.

After the crisis of 1808 and the reformulation of the political order that resulted from it, difficulties arose in some contexts in reconciling the local scenarios and the most recent political heritage with liberal language. According to Roberto Breña, Spanish liberalism itself was strongly influenced by different traditions of Spanish political thought, and particularly by the intense context of war, which at the beginning gave it an ambiguous appearance. Also, Bolívar's republicanism left a conservative trace in Venezuelan liberalism (Tomás Straka) from which it would be hard to escape at least until the creation of the Liberal Party in 1840. In Peru (Carmen McEvoy), liberalism had to compete with a hegemonic military republicanism that originated in the persistence after independence of military authorities at the head of the regional autonomies. In a context of permanent war, the concepts of both

'republic' and 'armed citizen' had been deeply absorbed by the popular sectors during anarchy; in the 1860s, *asociacionismo* managed to detach the belligerent content from the notion of 'citizen', and to drive it towards other forms of civic engagement more in line with liberal ideals. In contrast, in Argentina (Paula Alonso and Marcela Ternavasio) the prevalence of republicanism in the first half of the century did not result in a predominantly conservative approach. At the constituent moment the principles of political representation and limited government prevailed, the ideological conflict being focused here on the definition of the sovereign subject on a twofold basis: communities' autonomy on the one hand and centralisation, raised by the concept of indivisible 'nation', on the other. In the second half of the century, republicanism became more liberal, and disputes developed among the already established authorities in relation to the distribution of power in two dimensions, territorial and functional.

Other experiences directly refer to the challenges posed by the identification of core social values and the institutionalisation of powers as defined by liberalism. The ideology of consensus after Mexican independence (José Antonio Aguilar Rivera) was aristocratic conservative liberalism – influenced by Benjamin Constant – in which differences were expressed as to which system of power division best suited the country. A split between radical liberalism and conservatism would occur at mid-century, when proponents of the latter questioned the relevance of the principle of popular sovereignty and the representative government system. In Colombia (Eduardo Posada Carbo), an initially moderate liberalism born in response to Bolívar's dictatorial projects and particularly concerned about safety combined Benthamism and iusnaturalism. Mid-century radicalisation influenced by the 1848 revolution and by French theorists gave priority to the defence of freedom and opted for the limitation of the executive power and a strong federalism. At the end of the century it was the influence of Spencer (and not Comte) that marked the specificity of Colombian liberalism. Iván Jaksić and Sol Serrano demonstrate that in Chile liberalism was the ideology of the state that prevailed through reforms, not revolutions. This was reflected in different ways, but mostly through the state's recognition of religion and the Catholic Church. The problem of the division of powers was also crucial in the Brazilian case (Jeffrey D. Needell) as a result of the prominence of royalist logic in its foundational context. All parties formed between 1822 and 1899 were liberal, and their differences were focused mainly on the level of state authority and on the role of the monarch.

Overall, this volume offers a thought-provoking approach to liberalism, which is portrayed in its historical dimension, with the challenges and differences faced in each region. It points to the need to investigate thoroughly the influences and exchanges among these diverse Latin American experiences. Perhaps the book's most important achievement lies in bringing the peripheral status of Latin American liberalism to the core of theoretical discussion, making its study an essential reference for general enquiry into its constituent variables and into the way that historically it found institutional expression. It is a fine tribute to Charles Hale, who told me once that the history of ideas was an undervalued discipline in his country. This book is a challenge to this view and shows some as yet unexplored paths.

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