

‘A Re-Specification of the Welfare State’: Conceptual Issues in ‘The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism’

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In his path-breaking account of ‘The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism’, Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990) aimed to provide a ‘re-specification of the welfare state’. This article examines the claim of Esping-Andersen that his account draws on the theoretical work of Polanyi, Marshall and Titmuss. It then explores the conceptual critique of Esping-Andersen which led to his 1999 revision, with its rather different theoretical underpinnings. It concludes that some of the theoretical underpinning of this work is unclear both in the work of Esping-Andersen and in subsequent accounts, resulting in a largely atheoretical debate. Concepts such as de-commodification do not appear to be clearly drawn from their stated ‘parent’ authors, and may not sum up the content or essence of welfare states. The ‘re-specification of the welfare state’ must be a larger part of the strategy of the welfare modelling business in the future.

Keywords: Welfare regimes, theory, de-commodification, stratification, welfare mix, social risk.

Introduction

The path-breaking and highly influential work of Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990) on *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (TWWC) has been subject to extensive critique and debate (for example, Abrahamson, 1999; Arts and Gelissen, 2002, 2010; Bambra, 2006a). However, much of this has focused on the number and composition of worlds, and debates on counting worlds and playing ‘hunt the Netherlands’ may run the risk of diminishing returns (Powell and Barrientos, 2011: 70–1). Pierson (2000) writes that much discussion has focused on whether there were more than three regimes and whether particular countries were correctly categorised, and less attention has been paid to the question of why it makes sense to talk about regimes or worlds of welfare at all. Scruggs and Allen (2006: 69) state that questions about the typology have, up to now, skimmed mostly around the edges, seeking to ‘expand’ or ‘explain away’ a particular pet case or outlier. According to Vail (2010: 313), critiques of Esping-Andersen’s approach often focused obsessively on classificatory minutia, at times more closely resembling arcane Talmudic disputes rather than debates that actually advanced our understanding of the underlying conceptual issues, and, as such, a proper theoretical discussion remained largely stillborn.

Esping-Andersen (1990: 2) stated that ‘existing theoretical models of the welfare state are inadequate’, and he aimed ‘to offer a reconceptualization and re-theorization on the basis of what we consider important’. The original 1990 account was said to be based on the theoretical foundations of Karl Polanyi, T. H. Marshall and Richard Titmuss, and on the criteria of de-commodification, social stratification and the (neglected, as admitted by

Esping-Andersen, 1999) welfare mix. Esping-Andersen's (1999) revision stressed social risk and de-familisation. This article critically discusses the theoretical underpinning of Esping-Andersen's original 1990 account. In particular, it examines to what extent the work of Polanyi, Marshall and Titmuss fits with Esping-Andersen's argument. It then explores the conceptual critique of Esping-Andersen which led to the 1999 revision, with its rather different theoretical underpinnings.

The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism

This section discusses Esping-Andersen's (1990) path-breaking *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (TWWC), focusing on his definition of welfare states and welfare regimes, and exploring the theoretical base of his main concepts. Esping-Andersen claims to approach the welfare state broadly (including employment, wages and overall macro-steering: the Keynesian Welfare State or 'welfare capitalism'), beginning with the issues of classical and modern political economy and focussing on the 'big picture' (ibid.: 1–2). He states that a common textbook definition is that it involves state responsibility for securing some basic modicum of welfare for its citizens (ibid.: 18–19). No source is given, but it is likely to be based on Briggs (1961) (which is cited in the bibliography). However, he earlier claimed that 'equality has always been what welfare states were supposed to produce' (ibid.: 3), and he tends to ignore the 'modicum' element in the aims of welfare states (see below). Equality is one of many 'reasons for welfare' (Goodin, 1988; Goodin *et al.*, 1999), and there are many different types of 'equality' (Le Grand, 1982; Powell, 1995).

The theoretical underpinning of Polanyi and Marshall will be examined in terms of de-commodification (below). Esping-Andersen argues that Titmuss's approach, based on his 'classical distinction between residual and institutional welfare states', forces researchers to move from the 'black box of expenditures to the content of welfare states', and the shift to welfare-state typologies makes simple linear welfare-state rankings difficult to sustain (1990: 20–1). However, as Abrahamson (1999) points out, it was Wilensky and Lebeaux (1958: 138) who differentiated between the 'two conceptions of social welfare [which] seem to be dominant in the United States today: the residual and the institutional'. Titmuss (1974: 30–1) adds a third model: the 'industrial achievement–performance model of social policy'. Abrahamson (1999) explains that while Wilensky and Lebeaux (1958) tend to regard the models as moving from residual to institutional forms over time, Titmuss described a simultaneous, but distinctly different way of organising welfare, where ideology rather than development determines which models apply. He points out that Esping-Andersen (1985) equated the three Scandinavian countries with 'institutional welfare states', and it was with the relaunching of Titmuss's three-model scheme (Esping-Andersen, 1990) that the welfare modelling business really took off, with the renaming of Titmuss's models into the Liberal (residual), the Conservative/Corporatist (performance–achievement) and the Social Democratic (institutional–redistributive) regimes. However, the origins of welfare modelling are far from clear (Abrahamson, 1999; Powell and Barrientos, 2011), and there are a number of other overlooked contributions, such as those of Mishra (1977) and Furniss and Tilton (1977).

De-commodification

Pintelon (2012) writes that de-commodification remains a highly contested and debated concept in social policy. Many commentators have seen de-commodification as the

central theoretical element in *TTWC* (for example, Room, 2000; Holden, 2003). Esping-Andersen writes that, inspired by the contributions of Karl Polanyi, social rights are seen in terms of their capacity for 'de-commodification'. The outstanding criterion for social rights must be the degree to which they permit people to make their living standards independent of pure market forces. It is in this sense that social rights diminish citizens' status as 'commodities' (1990: 3).

In his 're-specification of the welfare state' (1990: 21), Esping-Andersen draws on T. H. Marshall. He writes that 'Few can disagree with T. H. Marshall's (1950) proposition that social citizenship constitutes the core idea of a welfare state. It must involve the granting of social rights.' He continues that 'If social rights are given the legal and practical status of property rights, if they are inviolable, and if they are granted on the basis of citizenship rather than performance, they will entail a de-commodification of the status of individuals *vis-à-vis* the market' (1990: 21). He writes that de-commodification 'occurs when a service is rendered as a matter of right, and when a person can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market' (*ibid.*: 21–2). Finally, he writes that the *minimal* definition of de-commodification entails that 'citizens can freely, and without potential loss of job, income, or general welfare, opt out of work when they themselves consider it necessary' (*ibid.*: 23). Kleinman (2002: 30) comments that this is an astonishingly *maximal* definition: it is hard to imagine any welfare state in which it would be either desirable or feasible for citizens to opt out of work of their own volition without any loss of income or welfare. Hay and Wincott (2012: 49) ask if any states have actually come close to satisfying such a demanding definition?

Esping-Andersen, then, appears to define de-commodification in a number of different ways (see below). However, the issue here is that he equates 'de-commodification' with Marshallian citizenship and social rights (Powell, 2002). First, Marshall's (1963: 74) imprecise definition of social citizenship involves a range 'from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society' (emphasis added). In other words, the maximalist equality element is at best one part of social citizenship that also involves a minimalist element. Moreover, Marshall appears to be less concerned about particular types of equality than Esping-Andersen (1990), as Marshall (1963: 73) writes that citizenship was the architect of legitimate inequality.

Second, Marshall viewed equality more in terms of equality of status associated with services rather than greater equality of income, as implicit in replacement ratios of Esping-Andersen's de-commodification scores. Third, citizenship is associated with a 'progressive divorce between real and money incomes' which leads to the 'unified civilization which makes social inequalities acceptable ... The advantages obtained by having a larger money income do not disappear but they are confined to a limited area of consumption' (Marshall 1963: 125). De-commodification suggests that living standards should be independent of pure market forces. In contrast, Marshall argued that welfare should not be proportionate to the market. In statistical terms, de-commodification requires a zero correlation between market and welfare, while citizenship merely requires that the correlation is less than perfectly positive. For Marshall, citizenship and social class were 'at war', and citizenship rights restrict but do not replace the domain of the market. Fourth, Marshall did not consider that all services should be free or de-commodified. In short, Marshall is closer to Titmuss's (1974) industrial performance–achievement model than Esping-Andersen's de-commodification and Titmuss' institutional–redistributive model

(Powell, 2009: 33–4). There are good reasons to accept a ‘soft’ rather than a ‘hard’ version of Marshall’s social citizenship thesis, and of the equal welfare state thesis (Powell, 1995, 2009): E (equality) does not equal MC (Marshallian citizenship) (Powell, 2009).

Esping-Andersen briefly discusses de-commodification in terms of Marx, Polanyi and basic income. For Marx, the commodification of labour power implied alienation (1990: 35). He cites Polanyi (1944) that the pre-industrial Speenhamland system of income security guaranteed a *de facto* social wage (ibid.: 36), adding that the Factory Acts provided a degree of de-commodification (ibid.: 44). Finally, he states that a highly advanced case would be where a social wage is paid to citizens regardless of cause (ibid.: 47). In short, Esping-Andersen appears to present rather different definitions and operationalisations of de-commodification (Huo *et al.*, 2008; Hay and Wincott, 2012).

Commentators point to the roots of de-commodification in Marx (for example, Huo *et al.*, 2008), Polanyi (for example, Holden, 2003), or both (for example, Room, 2000; Pintelon, 2012). Commentators tend to discuss the ‘young Marx’, such as the 1844 *Manuscripts* that focus on alienation and self-creation through work (for example, Room, 2000). However, this ignores the ‘locus classicus of Marx’s treatment of distributive justice’ (Husami, 1978: 31) found in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* of 1875. Here Marx stresses that even in the ‘lower phase’ of a communist society (i.e. a ‘socialist society’), the principle of distributive justice is based on labour contribution or work. It is only in the ‘higher phase’ of a communist society that the principle becomes: ‘From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.’ It follows that it would certainly be unrealistic to expect the de-commodification of labour in a capitalist society.

Dale (2010) points to the problems of ‘reading’ Polanyi. In particular, he argues that crucially Polanyi does not equate de-commodification with re-embedding or with socialism. According to Dale, in *The Great Transformation* (1957: 177, 231, 252), Polanyi argues that the de-commodification of money had already been largely realised with ‘the creation of deposits’, and that ‘social legislation, factory laws, unemployment insurance, and, above all, trade unions’ have as their purpose the removal of human labour ‘from the orbit of the market’. He believed that labour in Britain prior to 1834 was de-commodified, as it was in fascist Italy, and in the USA in the early 1940s.

Commentators point to broad and narrow conceptions of de-commodification, and suggest that Esping-Andersen at times conflates different types, but generally focuses on too narrow a concept, essentially on cash benefits as the means to the end of opting out of the labour market, which does not reflect the original Marx and Polanyi concept (for example, Room, 2000; Papadopoulos, 2005; Vail, 2010; Pintelon, 2012). Pintelon (2012) contrasts ‘thin’ (‘opt-out’ of the labour market) and ‘broad’ definitions (relative dependence on market forces) of de-commodification, with the clearest example of an all-encompassing definition proposed by Vail (2010: 313): ‘de-commodification refers to any political, social, or cultural process that reduces the scope and influence of the market in everyday life’. Vail continues that the five processes of de-commodification are: boundary protection, enhanced public goods provision, de-commodified economic circuits, social protection and market transparency.

Pintelon (2012) argues that Esping-Andersen seems to mix both approaches (see also Huo *et al.*, 2008), referring to de-commodification as ‘the degree to which they permit people to make their living standards independent from pure market forces’ (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 3), which clearly encompasses more than opting-out of the labour

market. He later refers to the 'citizen's relative dependence from pure market forces' (Esping-Andersen, 2000: 353).

The term can be broadened in a number of ways. First, some labour market institutions have a de-commodifying potential which can be termed 'in-work de-commodification' (Papadopoulos; 2005, Pintelon, 2012). Pintelon (2012) argues that the broad approach relates more clearly to Polanyi (1944) as he refers to de-commodification as broad processes of 'socially embedding' the labour market. Moreover, it takes stock of 'functional equivalents', where strong employment protection legislation is sometimes intrinsically linked with low unemployment benefits (for example, in Southern European welfare states). Few studies have incorporated measures of employment protection into Esping-Andersen's worlds of welfare (but see Powell and Barrientos, 2004). These points have been recognised by Esping-Andersen (1999: 122), who writes that 'the package of regulations can be regarded as the labour market equivalent to social citizenship rights' and 'clearly, if we define de-commodification as a process of lessening individuals' dependency on the pure cash nexus, labour market regulation must occupy central stage' (2000: 358) (see Papadopoulos, 2005; Pintelon, 2012). Esping-Andersen also discusses Castles and Mitchell's (1993) 'wage earner's welfare state' in Australia, where strong and functionally equivalent welfare guarantees were implanted in the labour market via the wage arbitration system. There was little need for a welfare state because male full employment was *de facto* 'full', because earnings differences were highly compressed and because the employment relationship furnished general welfare guarantees, such as home-ownership and adequate pension income. He comments that, if valid, the argument is theoretically fundamental because it compels us to reconsider markets (Esping-Andersen, 1999: 89).

Second, de-commodification can be achieved through services (for example, Holden, 2003). Offe (1984) argues that institutions such as hospitals and schools effectively become de-commodified when they are provided by the state. Vail (2010) writes that public goods are central to a de-commodification strategy. The neglect of welfare services in the *TWWC* has been a major criticism (Jensen, 2008; Stoy, 2014). Esping-Andersen (1999: 46, 87) has admitted that regimes were too narrowly specified through income maintenance programmes. For example, the Dutch welfare state appears 'social democratic' in terms of income maintenance, but 'conservative' in terms of service delivery. Powell and Barrientos (2011: 79) write that services can be a major element in de-commodification (Marshall, 1963; Tawney, 1964; Le Grand, 1982; Powell, 1995, 2002) through the 'social wage' or 'strategy of equality'. For example, citizens in the UK and the USA with identical incomes face very different levels of de-commodification with respect to health care. In theory, it would be possible for a welfare state to provide cash transfers and no services, or services and no transfers. Esping-Andersen ignores the relationship between cash and kind, how different parts of the welfare state fit together. Moreover, different parts can be based on different principles and use different mechanisms. Furthermore, ignoring education as a major element of stratification within welfare states is a major gap (West and Nikolai, 2013; see below).

Jensen (2008) points out that there is little relationship between expenditures on transfers and services. However, Stoy (2014) argues that the typology by Esping-Andersen applies to the worlds of transfers and to the worlds of welfare services. Jensen (2008) argues that both de-commodification and de-familisation may be pursued through transfers and

services, the former predominantly corresponds to transfers and the latter to services (Jensen, 2008: 156–8).

Third, Room (2000) contrasts Esping-Andersen's narrow and 'strangely one-dimensional' 'de-commodification-for-consumption' with Marx and Polanyi's wider 'de-commodification-for-self-development'. Room adds that this wider notion is consistent with Esping-Andersen's more recent interest in life-long learning, social investment and human capital. In his reply to Room's criticisms, Esping-Andersen (2000) acknowledges that human self-development is increasingly integrated with labour market participation, and that this activation-based approach is also a key strategy in coping with emerging new social risks. Furthermore, he implies that this activation-based strategy of social protection cannot be effectively captured through the concept of de-commodification (Huo *et al.*, 2008).

Finally, it can be argued that Esping-Andersen misses the essentially political dimension of de-commodification. Pintelon (2012) argues that, for Polanyi, 'de-commodification' is linked with the 'double movement', referring to broad processes of 'socially embedding' the labour market. Similarly, Room (2000: 348–9, fn) points out that 'critical participation in society' (political reform, including collective working-class action) stands alongside the physical insecurity of the worker at the heart of Polanyi's analysis of commodification, but this element is ignored in Esping-Andersen's measurement of de-commodification. In short, Esping-Andersen's de-commodification can be seen as unclearly defined, but broadly narrow and not drawing clearly from Marx or Polanyi.

Stratification

In Chapter 3, Esping-Andersen discusses three models, or ideal types, of stratification and solidarity that closely parallel the regime-types that were identified with respect to de-commodification. For Conservative social policy, the unifying theme is that traditional status relations must be retained for the sake of social integration (1990: 58). Liberal social policy focuses on individual insurance in markets, with residual social assistance (*ibid.*: 61). Socialist social policy is associated with the universalism of the 'People's Home' (*ibid.*: 65).

However, this appears to reflect a rather different approach to de-commodification, where countries were scored against one objective. In the case of stratification, each cluster is examined against different objectives. It is not clear why there is one type of de-commodification (rather than, say, social democratic countries aiming for de-commodification, while Liberal countries aim for minimum standards) (see also Goodin *et al.*, 1999).

Moreover, it can be argued that different sectors are based on different types of 'equality'. For example, given its clear links with equality throughout the life course, it can be argued that education forms a crucial part of the welfare package (West and Nikolai, 2013). Education is arguably based more on equality of opportunity rather than on equality of condition. While studies very broadly produce groupings similar to Esping-Andersen's worlds, there are some differences between the different stages of education (see West and Nikolai, 2013). West and Nikolai (2013) found four clusters of EU countries for primary, secondary and tertiary education: Nordic, Continental, Mediterranean and English-speaking. This pattern is similar to that found by Beblavy

et al. (2011), suggesting that the difference between the Continental and Mediterranean countries is more significant than indicated by Esping-Andersen (1990).

Similarly, studies on health focus on equality of access and equality of outcome. While there is much variety in the findings of studies, some have pointed to the 'Nordic paradox', in that equality of health is not as high as may be expected in the social democratic Nordic countries (see Kim, 2014).

Finally, the different types of equality in different policy areas appear to produce some varying patterns. For example, Beblavy *et al.* (2011) explored social stratification in selected OECD countries for two specific policy areas: education (pre-school, primary and secondary) and pensions. They found four clusters in the public system: stratification in education and pensions (for example, Germany), education stratification and pension equalisation (for example, Belgium), education equalisation and pension stratification (for example, Sweden) and equalisation in both areas (for example, the UK).

State and market in the formation of pension regimes

Esping-Andersen (1990: chapter 4) discusses state and market, political power and cash nexus, or 'politics against markets' (Esping-Andersen, 1985). He writes that a particularly important element in the identification of welfare-state regimes will be related to the blend of publicly provided social rights and private initiative. In other words, regimes can be compared with respect to which essential human needs are relegated to private versus public responsibility. (1990: 80). However, he focuses on 'the interplay of public and private provision' (1990: 103), and tends to ignore the 'Mixed Economy of Welfare' (MEW) literature that differentiates provision, finance and regulation (for example, Goodin and Rein, 2001; Powell, 2007; Powell and Barrientos, 2011; Powell and Miller, forthcoming). For example, the regulatory functions of welfare states are largely ignored. A welfare state may pursue goals by means other than direct provision, such as rent control and specification of minimum standards (Powell, 2007).

In short, the theoretical base does not appear to fit closely with the named authors; concepts are not fully justified; nor are the relationships between them. Esping-Andersen claims that the 'salient features of welfare states' are social rights/de-commodification; social stratification and the nexus of state and market (which are elaborated in chapters 2–4) (1990: 3–4), and that the essential criteria for defining welfare states have to do with the quality of social rights, social stratification and the relationship between state, market and family (*ibid.*: 29). However, elsewhere he writes that issues of de-commodification, social stratification and *employment* are keys to a welfare state's identity (*ibid.*: 2–3). It is not clear whether the criteria are independent or causally linked. It is claimed that the clustering of de-commodification and stratification is 'strikingly parallel' (*ibid.*: 69) or 'very similar' (*ibid.*: 77). However, 'both social rights and social stratification are shaped by the nexus of state and market in the distribution system' (*ibid.*: 4) and 'the division of social protection between public and private provides the structural context for de-commodification, social rights and the stratificational nexus of welfare-state regimes' (*ibid.*: 80). Later, Esping-Andersen (1999: 75) adds that 'the private–public mix was the principal analytical axis that underpinned the "three worlds" typology; the key defining dimensions were degree of de-commodification and modes of stratification or, if you wish, solidarities' (Esping-Andersen, 1990). This implies that the public–private mix is the

dominant dimension (or independent variable?), but most commentators have focused on de-commodification scores (Powell and Barrientos, 2011: 77).

The Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies

In *The Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies (SFPE)*, Esping-Andersen (1999) focuses on social risk, particularly how risks are pooled and distributed between state, market and family. While the term 'risk' did not appear in the index of the 1990 text, the new emphasis on social risk appears to replace the political-economy, power resources approach to building welfare regimes in the three worlds, with a more functional response to perceived threats to welfare. However, these principles are never fully justified in either text (Powell and Barrientos, 2011).

Social risks

He claims that the foundations of welfare regimes can be seen in terms of risk management: social policy means public management of social risks (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 36–7); social risks are the building blocks of welfare regimes (ibid.: 40); and that how risks are pooled defines, in effect, a welfare regime (ibid.: 33). Where the state absorbs risks, the satisfaction of need is both 'defamilialized' (taken out of the family) and 'de-commodified' (taken out of the market). He distinguishes three distinct models of welfare-state solidarity that reflect historically dominant constellations of collective political mobilisation (Esping-Andersen 1990): a residual approach which limits its aid to targeted ('bad') risk strata; a corporatist approach that pools risks by status membership; and a universalistic approach that is based on the idea of pooling all individual risks, bad or good, under one umbrella (ibid.: 40).

Welfare regimes

Esping-Andersen (1999: 73) writes that the bases for typology construction are welfare regimes, not welfare states nor individual social policies. Some confusion may arise because the word 'regime' is often applied to all kinds of phenomena, such as 'poverty regimes', 'pension regimes' or 'male bread-winner regimes'. Some criticisms of *TWWC* are, in a sense, irrelevant, because they are not addressing welfare regimes but individual programmes. However, as Powell and Barrientos (2011: 75) point out, he uses terms such as 'pension regimes' and 'labour-market regimes' and 'policy regimes' himself, albeit in inverted commas (for example, Esping-Andersen, 1990: 85, 142, 164). Moreover, Hay and Wincott (2012: 37) point to the different labels used by commentators: worlds of welfare, regimes, types, clusters, social models, families of nations, welfare (state) regimes, social policy regimes, regime-types and regime-clusters. He now claims that a welfare regime can be defined as the combined, interdependent way in which welfare is produced and allocated between state, market and family. Welfare regimes must be identified much more systematically in terms of the inter-causal triad of state, market and family. (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 35).

'De-commodification reconsidered'

Esping-Andersen (1999: 43) writes that the concept of de-commodification, originally derived from Polanyi (1944) and later developed by Offe (1984), is meant to capture the degree to which welfare states weaken the cash nexus by granting entitlements independent of market participation, and is one way of specifying Marshall's notion of social citizenship rights.

He acknowledges 'the burgeoning feminist critique of "mainstream" male-centred welfare state theory', but argues that 'even when this critique is predominantly interested in the gender relations that are produced or reproduced by social policy, it inevitably leads us to reconsider the family' (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 49). He continues that his objective is 'not to debate with gender theories, but to understand the position of the (changing) family in the overall infrastructure of welfare production and consumption' (ibid.: 50). He admits that the assumption that individuals, or their welfare acquisitions, are already commodified has guided much subsequent criticism. While it may adequately describe the relationship between welfare states and the standard, full-career male worker, it is not easily applicable to women considering that their economic role is often non-commodified or at least only partially commodified. He revisits welfare regimes through the analytical lens of the family, admitting that welfare-state regimes were too narrowly specified through the duality of state and market, and through the lens of the standard male production worker (ibid.: 44). He writes that the concept of de-familialisation parallels the concept of de-commodification (p. 51) and the 'lack of systematic attention to households is painfully evident' in *TWWC*: 'It starts out by defining welfare regimes as the interaction of state, market, and family and subsequently pays hardly any notice to the latter' (ibid.: 71, fn).

Feminist critics have pointed out the neglect of gender in *TWWC*, the focus on the family rather than on gender *per se*, and the inaccurate definition and operationalisation of defamilialisation in *SFPE* (for example, Orloff, 1993, 2009; Bambra, 2006b). For example, Bambra (2006b) argues that Esping-Andersen (1999) inaccurately defined and operationalised the term as the extent to which welfare states support the family rather than the extent to which welfare states facilitate women's autonomy and independence, which closely matches Esping-Andersen's (1990) original 'androgynous' three worlds of welfare typology. Similarly, Orloff (2009: 320, fn) states that Esping-Andersen did not acknowledge the source of the term, and the radical edge of the concept, linked to relations of dominance and dependency in families, was blunted in his usage. However, the term has different meanings (and spellings) (see, for example, Kröger 2011); not all contributions use the term (for example, Orloff, 1993); and Esping-Andersen (1999) does cite at least some of his feminist critics (including Orloff, 1993).

'Comparative welfare regimes re-examined'

Esping-Andersen (1999: 81) argues that an alternative way to classify welfare regimes would be to pinpoint their dominant approach to managing social risks within labour markets (regulatory and non-regulatory approaches), the state (residual, universalist and social insurance models) and the family (whether families are meant to be the primary locus of welfare). This approach gives the following schematic nation classification

(indicating the three broadly accepted archetypal ‘three world’ nations, and ‘modal’ examples from Table 5.4):

- Labour market regulation: little regulation (for example, United States); medium regulation (for example, Sweden); and strong regulation (for example, Germany).
- Welfare states: residual (for example, United States); universalist (for example, Sweden); and social insurance (for example, Germany).
- Families: familialist: (for example, Germany) and non-familialist (for example, Sweden and the United States).

However, this appears a less clear solution, as it is not clear how these dominant approaches fit together, resulting in two triads and one dyad, with one group containing Sweden and the United States (non-familialist) and another group (medium regulation) containing a seemingly strange mix of Japan, Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden.

Esping-Andersen now considers that ‘income-transfer programmes capture but one side of the welfare state. The real essence of the social democratic (or the conservative) welfare states lies not so much in their de-commodifying income-maintenance guarantees as in their approach to services and sponsoring women’s careers’ (1990: 88). However, after exploring the case for a three or four world solution, he concludes that it is ‘inescapably true’ that Japan, like Australia and Southern Europe, manifests features that are not easily compatible with a simple trichotomy of welfare regimes. However, on the ground of analytical parsimony, neither Japan nor the Antipodes warrant additional regimes. The peculiarities of these cases are variations within a distinct overall logic, not the foundations of a wholly different logic *per se*. He continues that the case for a Southern Europe regime depends ultimately on the centrality of families, which was ‘the weak link in the original “three worlds” model’ (ibid.: 92). He concludes that a simple ‘three worlds’ typology may suffice for most of his purposes (ibid.: 94).

Conclusions

It has been argued here that the changing theoretical base of Esping-Andersen (1990, 1999) is not fully clear nor justified. Concepts such as de-commodification do not appear to be clearly drawn from their stated ‘parent’ authors, and may not sum up the content or essence of welfare states. However, this is more a criticism of the subsequent builders than the original architect, as most of the studies of the welfare modelling business have been empirical, with measurement issues (reliability) almost eclipsing theoretical issues (validity) (cf. Powell and Barrientos, 2011). Apart from the feminist critique and de-familisation, the conceptual and theoretical aspects which the typology was expected to facilitate remain under-developed. It is somewhat ironic that a work aiming to lay bare the ‘theoretical substance of welfare states’ (Esping-Andersen, 1990: 19) has led to a largely atheoretical debate (Powell and Barrientos, 2011: 81). The ‘re-specification of the welfare state’ must be a larger part of the strategy of the welfare modelling business in the future.

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