

GUEST EDITOR'S LETTER

Every aspect of human life or segment of society is permeated by legitimation. From single statements, to complex structures and mechanisms, legitimation is at the very surface of social affairs providing us with insight into realities people live in, and with contexts individual and collective experiences across societies and cultures are set in. And while many authors have used or relied on some sort of a concept of legitimation or justification, or developed theories and methods to explore aspects of social life, the concept of legitimation itself seems to remain somewhat underexposed and underappreciated. Whether it is considered crucial for institutional integration, required to justify a particular social order and type of authority, provide legitimacy for a law and underlying principles, explain and provide meaning for the world as a whole, or whether it plays a major role in social cohesion, or suggests and justifies actions in defined social contexts, legitimation is a concept of great value for sociology. This omnipresence of legitimation has been reflected in a variety of theoretical and methodological conceptualizations, suited to a particular logical problem or practical issue an author is concerned with, where the notion of legitimation plays an important descriptive and explanatory role. With this issue of *Facta Universitatis* we wanted to capture and present this theoretical and empirical richness, which will potentially be a good starting point for a discussion about one of the fundamental concepts in sociology.

In the first paper, *Labor as Assumption of Reality: Milestones toward a Theory of Legitimation*, professor Gbikpi points at the initial distinction between political science and sociology which are concerned with legitimation as empirical fact on the one hand, and political philosophy which is concerned with the normative aspect of legitimation on the other. Claiming that a normative basis for legitimation can sufficiently be disputed by disputing theoretical foundations, the paper discusses Hobbs' and Hegel's political theories arguing that the idea of assumed natural state from which social structure is derived is itself problematic. A particular point where problem arises in both theories is the relationship between governors and the governed, or the lord and the bondsman, and the principles on which this relationship and mutual legitimation is founded. In order to make a transition from ideology to political theory two conditions must be met: master and bondmen must not pervert the superior principle which their relationship is based on; and the superior principle must be accurately represented in theory. The way to construct a theory of legitimate and economic order is by inviting exploration into practical use of the superior principle and its reach.

The second paper, *(De)Legitimization as the Discursive Strategy of Ideology*, presents a discussion about legitimizing discourses as the contributing element of social technologies of management. Ideological discourses are articulations of specific rationality and technology related to certain practices. The paper argues that processes of (de)legitimation are practices without presuppositions, there are no essential qualities behind them, they are what they appear to be. Ideology is a form of knowledge and it is articulated as a specific discursive order, and socially communicated as a number of

legitimizing acts. This discursive order also represents a link between ideological discourse and actual social effects.

The third paper, *Challenging the Legitimacy of Normative Positivism: Institutional Alternatives to Dominant Analyses of Economic Action*, deals with what is often referred to as neo-liberalism, its legitimation foundations and possibilities for delegitimation. The paper discusses normative and descriptive aspects of legitimation where positivist epistemology in the form of General Linear Reality is generalized and presented as undisputed economic reality. The paper further argues that in order to create an alternative to the dominant economic practice, social scientists should rely on institutionalism, as institutionalism, especially the more recent variants, offers multiple rather than a single alternative. It is argued that due to heterogeneity of institutionalist epistemologies the premises of normative positivism as well as the support it lends to political capitalism can be effectively challenged in the process of delegitimation.

I believe that the papers published in this issue of *Facta Universitatis* present interesting, informative, and thought provoking reading for both professionals who are familiar with the subject, but also for newcomers to the field. I am grateful to the contributing authors, and to the editorial board of *Facta Universitatis*, series: *Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology and History* for making this publication possible.

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