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THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF COMPARATIVE REGIME THEORY: AN AUSTRIAN CRITIQUE

MA Thesis in Political Science.

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Abstract

Since the so-called third wave of democratization, transitology and conceptualization of non-democratic regimes have piqued considerable scholarly interest, bringing about a proliferation of concepts, regime typologies and corresponding theoretical advancements. As these developments have also caused a great deal of confusion in the literature, I offer two mechanisms in my thesis, which can be used to criticize badly formulated concepts and create better ones. I show how some of comparative regime theory's concepts, like diminished subtypes, can be criticized by the means of logic (first mechanism) and some, like continuous measures, by the insights of the Austrian school of economics, particularly the frequently misunderstood praxeology of Ludwig von Mises (second mechanism). Re-evaluating the inductive and empiricist method of concept formation of comparative regime theory, I offer a new epistemological synthesis with praxeology, aiming at avoiding future fallacies and making the development of comparative regime theory more systemic and less *ad hoc*.

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Introduction

While conceptualization is probably the most essential part of comparative politics, this part has been afflicted with most confusion in the last three decades. First we saw what may be called the "phase of transitology" with raging conceptual debates about the proper understanding of the alleged movement of newly liberated polities from dictatorship to democracy (Bunce, 1995a, 1995b; Schmitter and Karl, 1995, 1994). This was followed by the "phase of hybrid regimes" at the turn of the millennium. This was, and has been, the period when scholars rejected the transition paradigm and attempted to conceptualize regimes in the so-called "grey zone" between democracy and authoritarianism (Carothers, 2002; Levitsky and Way, 2002; Ottaway, 2003; Schedler, 2002).

In spite of the innovative approaches introduced by this comparative regime theory (e.g. Collier and Mahon, 1993; Levitsky and Way, 2010), meta-analyses have drawn a generally gloomy picture. The developments of the first phase were summarized as a "Babel" (Armony and Schamis, 2005) and a "conceptual mess" (Kopecký and Mudde, 2000). The "conceptual divergences" created by the proliferation of regime typologies in the second were said to potentially "hamper the mechanism of accumulation of knowledge" (Cassani, 2014, pp. 546–548). Such criticisms highlight the fact that comparative regime theory is still a hotbed of conceptual debates and it is very much in need of effective mechanisms or clear criteria to differentiate good and useful concepts from bad ones which only enhance confusion.

The aim of my thesis is to offer such mechanisms, applying them to the existing concepts of comparative regime theory and showing how they can improve our thinking about regimes and politics in general. As opposed to such customary criteria as

operationalizability or empirical relevance which can help concept selection for a specific research (Collier and Adcock, 1999; Gerring, 1999), the mechanisms I offer deal with concepts on the meta-level, that is, with the concepts' logical structure stemming from the way of their formation and also the logical prerequisites and consequences they necessarily bear. The former can be analyzed by what is to be called "the means of logic," which basically refers to the theory of conceptualization, and the latter by what is called praxeology, which is a universal science of human action. The means of logic is a mechanism which is widely used in social science but praxeology has been used distinctively by the Austrian school of economics and was first elaborated by one of the leading Austrians, Ludwig von Mises.[1] Thus praxeology is fringe at best in social science in general and in political science in particular, and I shall make a careful case for using it as a second mechanism, after the means of logic, in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the logical and praxeological critique of concepts in comparative regime theory including diminished subtypes, regime change, and several others related to those two. This meta-analysis is obviously *ex post*, meaning it analyzes the existing concepts of the already written literature. But the two mechanisms can also be used *ex ante*, that is, as a foundation or guideline for new conceptualization. What this would mean in case of the means of logic has already been outlined by Sartori (1984) whose insights I mostly build on throughout my thesis and also defend them against alternative methods of concept formation. But praxeology indeed rests on different epistemological foundations from the current positivist standpoint of comparative regime theory. How it can still be a useful mechanism *ex ante* will be explained in Chapter 3. In that last chapter, I examine the epistemological fundamentals

[1] In fact, there are more than one streams within the Austrian school and some of them, such as the more famous Hayekian branch, reject praxeology (Rothbard, 1997a; Salerno, 1993). However it is conventional to refer to Misesians as "Austrians," hence I use the terms synonymously in my thesis.

of comparative regime theory, point out its difficulties, and show how a new epistemological synthesis integrating praxeology into political science is possible. In short, I argue in my thesis that the means of logic and praxeology are not only powerful mechanisms to criticize the existing literature but also that both of them should become part of the everyday tool kit of concept formers and theoreticians.

1. Ruling out Concepts in Social Science: From Logic to Praxeology

1.1. Concept Evaluation and the Means of Logic

Concepts are crucial to empirical research because a concept is, as Sartori (1984) puts it, "the basic unit of thinking" which defines what we look for and how we differentiate that from what we do not look for (Mair, 2008, pp. 179–182). When it comes to concept selection, the primary objective for an empirical researcher is utility. A concept may be used if it can be used (parsimony and operationalizability) and may be rejected if it fails to explain an adequate range of facts (comprehensiveness). It follows that a concept should be accepted if it is more useful than its alternatives—if it is relatively better in either or both of the previous criteria (Halperin and Heath, 2012, pp. 148–153).

This direct approach applies to concept selection for specific cases, for its criteria can be evaluated only in light of the concrete empirics. Gerring (1999) proposes a more general criterion as well, coherence, which refers to the internal consistency (logical connectedness) of the concept's attributes. But even if the linkage between the concept's attributes is properly justified the concept's definition itself may be fallacious, that is, constructed in an illogical way which renders the concept unclear or contradictory and thus essentially unusable. We may call analyzing concepts from this respect the use of "the means of logic" which is the first mechanism of concept selection I offer.

Generally, the means of logic can point out non-compliance to the laws of formal logic. However, as Bueno (2010) warns, while formal logic is universally applicable it is not trivial *a priori* which principles of it are adequate to the domain under

consideration. As far as social science concepts are concerned, the classical logic is the theory of exclusive and exhaustive classification lined out by Sartori (1984, 1970). His principles hold that social science concepts can be created along the lines of a hierarchical order (taxonomy) using the principle of *per genus et differentiam*. This principle holds that every object can be defined by its *genus*—the class of objects which it belongs to—and by its *differentia*—the particular attributes that make it different from all the other objects in the same class (Mair, 2008, p. 182). Here, from the point of view of the *genus*, the elements belonging to it are homogeneous for they all share the same characteristic feature which defines the *genus*. However, as we add *differenia* to the certain elements, they will become heterogeneous while remaining in the same class. Hence, whereas the *genus* includes an N number of objects, its elements, the concepts, will only refer to a part ($n < N$) of them. This is what Sartori calls different levels of abstraction, and as he notes, a concept's intension/connotation—the number of its attributes—and extension/denotation—the cases it is applicable to—are inversely related (Sartori, 1984, p. 44). A classification created along these lines can always be exhaustive, for no item or phenomenon has to be left without a concept defined *per genus et differentiam*, and its concepts will always be exclusive, for no item or phenomenon shall belong to more than one class (Mair, 2008, pp. 182–186; cf. Lazarsfeld and Barton, 1951).

There exist some other, competing theories of concept formation in social science (Goertz, 2005) and some of them have made their way to comparative regime theory as well (Collier and Levitsky, 1997; Collier and Mahon, 1993). I will describe and engage with concepts of the latter kind in detail in the next chapter, focusing primarily on the objective of exclusivity. I submit this criterion is the most important one in evaluating comparative regime theory concepts, for two general reasons and a specific one. First, if

exclusivity is violated by that a phenomenon bears the different set of attributes defining two or more classes then A will not be distinguishable from not-A and that makes any meaningful comparison impossible. Second, if exclusivity is violated by that two or more classes are defined with the same attributes and a phenomenon thus belongs to all of them then the method is not parsimonious and thus to be rejected (Occam's razor). Finally, exclusivity is of particular importance to comparative regime theory because one of the main objectives of this field's scholars has been to categorize regimes. If a regime type concept is not exclusive it either commits the mistake pointed out in my first general reason or the one in my second one and thus loses its utility as a category, adding to confusion in the field rather than to conceptual clarity.

There are two advantages of using the means of logic to evaluate concepts. The first one is practicality, for it is easier to check the logicality of one concept than to check its empirical relevance or to analyze several concepts and compare them on the basis of many criteria. The second reason is that logic is more fundamental than direct tests. A concept which is not comprehensive enough may be rejected for a concrete case but a logically unsound concept should be abandoned generally as it can never, by virtue of its logical structure, bring genuine clarity.

1.2. Praxeology and the Fundamentals of Human Action

The means of logic can be used for every concept of comparative regime theory because it is universally valid. No matter what phenomenon the concept refers to or what the specific context of that phenomenon is, the way it is conceptualized must always comply with the rules of formal logic. The second mechanism I offer has similar universal validity and yet it makes more substantive claims about concepts, submitting

that whatever social phenomenon they describe it must have certain prerequisites and consequences by its nature.

This mechanism is called praxeology which is the deductive science of human action. As its chief theoretician, the Austrian economist Mises (2014, pp. 13–18) explains, this "science of human action that strives for universally valid knowledge is […] a priori, not empirical. Like logic and mathematics, it is not derived from experience; it is prior to experience. It is […] the logic of action and deed." As a second mechanism of concept selection, praxeology provides a universal tool to point out even in the case of a logically sound concept the concept's apparent incongruences, as another Austrian put it, with "the inherent nature of man and of the universe" (Rothbard, 2011, p. 1297).

There are two questions to be answered. First, how praxeology is conceivable, that is, what it actually says and how it can be built in a philosophically sound way. Second, what its utility is in social science or particularly in comparative regime theory.

Praxeology can be best understood by first considering why such a universal social science may not be possible. According to the positivist or post-positivist epistemological standpoint (see Porta and Keating, 2008), scientific knowledge in social science is gained *a posteriori*, by generalizing the facts of history or experience. What prevents us from constructing a universal social science this way is the problem of human action, that is, that the people to be analyzed are not inorganic matter, nor plants, which cannot change their mind and act differently than they did yesterday. Inorganic matter, like a planet in the Solar System, is led exclusively by the laws of physics which do not change arbitrarily. Therefore such objects can be observed countless times and

their movements are both calculable and predictable.[2] Human behavior can also be observed and we can note certain behavioral regularities, but a regularity is not a law—it is not universally valid or necessarily true even under the same circumstances because people can decide to act differently. As Mises puts it, we lack human "behavior constants" (Mises, 2007, pp. 10–11):

> "[The] quantities we observe in the field of human action […] are manifestly variable. […] The econometrician is unable to disprove this fact, which cuts the ground from under his reasoning. He cannot help admitting that there are no 'behavior constants.' Nonetheless, he wants to introduce some numbers, arbitrarily chosen on the basis of historical fact, as 'unknown behavior constants.' The sole excuse he advances is that his hypotheses are 'saying only that these unknown numbers remain reasonably constant through a period of years.' Now whether such a period of supposed constancy of a definite number is still lasting or whether a change in the number has already occurred can only be established later on. In retrospect it may be possible, although in rare cases only, to declare that over a (probably rather short) period an approximately stable ratio—which the econometrician chooses to call a 'reasonably' constant ratio—prevailed between the numerical values of two factors. But this is something fundamentally different from the constants of physics. It is the assertion of a historical fact, not of a constant that can be resorted […] to predict future events."

The lack of behavior constants is the reason why, from a positivist-historicist point of view, it is "a waste of effort to search after universally valid regularities that would be independent of time, place, […] and culture" (Mises, 2014, pp. 5–6). But Mises points out that even if we renounce behavior constants, the fact of behavior itself is constant. Hence what we can certainly know is that people, unlike inorganic matter, act: they, as individuals, have ends which they want to achieve and this desire constitutes their motive for instituting their actions (Rothbard, 2011, pp. 1–3). This is what Austrian economists call the "action axiom" which refers to the existence of purposeful human action, as opposed to any "reactive response to stimuli on the part of the bodily organs

[2] On the epistemology of natural sciences vis-à-vis social sciences and praxeology in particular, see Rothbard (1997b).

and instincts which cannot be controlled by the volition of the person concerned" (Mises, 2010, p. 20).

That purposeful action exists is a fact, the denial of which would be performative contradiction (Hoppe, 2006, pp. 274–276).[3] Mises argues that praxeology can be constructed by, first, deducing the formal implications of the action axiom, and second, continuing deduction by adding minor postulates, empirically testable presumptions such as "people are not identical" and "labor is a disutility," one by one in order to delimit the range of actions we are interested in (Mises, 2014, pp. 15–16). And as we know the action axiom is true, its logical implications must also be true (Rothbard, 2011, p. 72) whereas the propositions deduced after adding the minor postulates "hold to the extent that the conditions that they presuppose and precisely delimit are given" (Mises, 2014, p. 26). In other words, praxeology follows the structure of formal theories like mathematics or game theory (see Diesing, 1972, pp. 29–41) with the addition that it regards the truth of its basic axiom as well as a handful of minor postulates apodictic in the realm of social sciences (Mises, 2014, pp. 16–18).

Some immediate formal implications of the action axiom are deduced by Rothbard (1997d) as follows:

> "[The] fact of [a person's] action implies that he has consciously chosen certain means to reach his goals. Since he wishes to attain these goals, they must be valuable to him; accordingly he must have values that govern his choices. That he employs means implies that he believes he has the technological knowledge that certain means will achieve his desired ends. […] All that praxeology asserts is that the individual actor adopts goals and believes, whether erroneously or correctly, that he can arrive at them by the employment of certain means.
>
> All action in the real world, furthermore, must take place through time; all action takes place in some present and is directed toward the future

[3] On the epistemological status of the action axiom, see Rothbard (1997c) and Hoppe (2006) for an Aristotelean and a Kantian approach, respectively.

> (immediate or remote) attainment of an end. If all of a person's desires could be instantaneously realized, there would be no reason for him to act at all. […] Accordingly, we may amend our analysis of action to say that a man chooses to employ means according to a technological plan in the present because he expects to arrive at his goals at some future time.
>
> The fact that people act necessarily implies that the means employed are scarce in relation to the desired ends; for, if all means were not scarce but superabundant, the ends would already have been attained, and there would be no need for action."

To sum it up, the notions of (i) value, (ii) means, (iii) technological knowledge, (iv) time, and (v) scarcity are corollaries of purposeful action and therefore they must exist with it.[4] Another praxeological truth to be discovered is that human action is always undertaken by individuals (actors), given only they—humans—have goals which they wish to attain. One can speak of "groups," "societies," or "regimes" as actors for the sake of practicality or because group action turns out to be *sui generis* in the sense that it comes into existence only by the existence of the group. But even in such cases what happens is that certain individuals make up their minds and act, for every group operates through the intermediary of one or several individuals whose actions are related to it (Mises, 2010, pp. 41–44). Group action is determined by individual action accordingly.[5] As Rothbard (2011, p. 3) points out, "[the] existence of an institution such as government becomes meaningful only through influencing the actions of those individuals who are and those who are not considered as members."

The fact that purposeful behavior can always be traced back to the individuals who decided to undertake it does not follow that individuals make up their minds alone. On the contrary, men find themselves in a certain environment which may include not only factors (iv-vi) but also other acting individuals. If we add the minor postulates "there are

[4] I focus only on those implications which are directly relevant to my thesis. For further implications and also a more detailed deduction, see Mises (2010, pp. 72–118) and Rothbard (2011, pp. 1–21).

[5] That an entity's upper-level properties are determined by the properties of its lower-level elements is called supervenience (McLaughlin and Bennett, 2018). In theory, we could pursue it further and start describing human action in terms of biology, chemistry or physics but praxeology can already make meaningful statements about humans via deduction starting from the action axiom.

more than one humans" and "people are not identical" into our discussion we can start deducing the universal laws of interpersonal action which necessarily depend on the goals of the individuals involved, or more precisely the relationship between their goals (Rothbard, 2011, pp. 79–185).

The previous paragraphs showed how praxeological deduction starts and how it can be pursued further by adding minor postulates. For it starts from the notion of human action which is the very subject of all social sciences, praxeology is a universal social science, the best elaborated branch of which is economics as exemplified by the lengthy treatises of Mises (2010) and Rothbard (2011). What delimits the economics branch of praxeology is precisely a set of minor postulates specific to economic action but it should be noticed that at least the two minor postulates mentioned above are also valid in all fields of social sciences. And if we imputed further minor postulates but ones specific to politics we could also delimit the realm of political science just as the above mentioned treatises delimited economics (Apăvăloaei, 2015; Bragues, 2015).

How a fully developed praxeological political science looks like remains to be seen. But we know precisely how it will start: from the action axiom, the deduction of its already outlined consequences, and the assertion of the two above mentioned minor postulates. And as I will show in Part 2.2, even in its embryotic form praxeology offers useful insights to understanding political phenomena.

In sum, the Misesian standpoint holds that the variability of human ends makes deduction starting from the action axiom the only way to discover universal laws about human action.[6] And as these laws must always be true, they must be taken into account

[6] According to Rothbard, even Michels' famous Iron Law of Oligarchy is praxeological, for the existence of oligarchic elites is a direct result of two factors "inherent to the nature" of mankind: diversity in

in whatever theory or concept we form concerning human action—or the resultant social or political institutions thereof.

1.3. The Difficulties of Apriorism: The Falsification Problem

Unlike the means of logic which is hardly ever questioned by scholars (cf. Behrens and Rosen, 2005), praxeology has almost generally been declared invalid and unscientific. For "apriorism does not conform to the standard vision of scientific method. True scientists subject their hypotheses to testing and never claim to have discovered hypotheses that are always and certainly true" (Caldwell, 1984, p. 367). This is an informal restatement of the falsification principle of Popper (2002) which holds that the line that divides real science and pseudoscience is the possibility of falsification. According to this positivist position, a theory which is aprioristic, independent of empirical experience and therefore not subject to testing against the facts of the real world cannot be a meaningful science or a "picture of reality" as Wittgenstein puts it but only a fraudulent set of tautologies (Sedláček, 2013, pp. 223–226).

Defenders of praxeology usually go philosophical to justify aprioristic knowledge as valid and proper (Caldwell, 1984, pp. 368–373; Hoppe, 2006, pp. 266–278; Long, 2008; Mises, 2010, pp. 32–41; Rothbard, 1997c; Selgin, 1988, pp. 20–23). But as the main objective of an empirical researcher is utility, I shall examine the positivist charge, and give a reply to it, from that respect.[7]

individuals' abilities and interests both within and between occupations, and the division of labor (Rothbard, 2006, pp. 60–61, 2000, pp. 280–286). See also Salerno (2008, p. 449).

[7] There have been further charges levelled against the Misesian standpoint, including that praxeology is unintelligible and dogmatic (Caldwell, 1984). However these claims can be ignored for the purposes of my thesis because, first, they often stem from a superficial understanding of Mises' writings (Caldwell, 1984, pp. 365–367), second, the main reason praxeology has been a fringe method is its non-positivist epistemology, and third, only the falsification problem raises relevant questions about using praxeology as a mechanism of concept selection.

From the point of view of utility, the violation of the falsification principle would be a real problem if I wanted to use praxeology to make predictions or esteem the exact form or value of certain empirical factors on the grounds that they, as prerequisites or consequences of an object in question, must exist by virtue of praxeological laws. For praxeology is in abstract terms, that is, it only speaks about "things" which fulfil certain roles and it points out the connections between the holders of these roles. But in the real world anything can be a "goal" and anything can be a "means," for example, therefore we can make any number of different predictions of equal logical status by 'filling up' the notions of goal and means with different objects. Even when the empirical minor postulates are introduced they only delimit the range in which the concepts stemming from the action axiom take on more specific functions (such as "money" in Austrian monetary theory) but the exact substances which fulfil these functions are not defined.

However the way I propose using praxeology is a concept selection mechanism. In *ex post* analysis praxeology is used to make negative statements about concepts, as opposed to the positive statements empirical claims would be. Obviously, if man can have any goal, A as well as not-A, then any formally logical concept and theory[8] can be congruent with praxeology as they can always be interpreted in terms of corresponding goals and minor postulates. This is particularly possible when a concept induced from empirical evidence is examined, for praxeological concepts can literally encompass any such evidence (regarding human action). Thus praxeology is, unlike the means of logic, not a strong selection mechanism as we cannot rule out concepts by using it *per se*. But it can be used to criticize concepts and thus open the possibility to rule them out, for interpreting a concept or theory in the praxeological framework reveals its praxeological prerequisites and consequences. And because praxeological claims are not pure

[8] "Theory" here refers to the theory which includes the concept and shapes and renders it meaningful (Mair, 2008, p. 179).

inventions but indeed absolutely true until the empirical minor postulates as well as the broadly empirical axiom of human action holds (see Rothbard, 1997c), the prerequisites and consequences must be present in one form or another. Asking to make these elements, in line with praxeological truths, explicit may also make the mistakes of the idea manifest or otherwise it reveals claims which can be tested, and falsified, empirically. This is why praxeology provides an effective mechanism of concept selection, even if it is not as direct as using the means of logic.[9]

[9] Explicit praxeological criticisms of the concepts of existing economic literature were made by Rothbard (2011, pp. 776–798, 1297–1356, and *passim*). Implicit criticisms, whose authors do not claim to be Austrians but do use praxeological truths, are also present (for a recent example, see Watkins and Brook, 2016, pp. 8–10).

2. Problems in Comparative Regime Theory

In this chapter I use the two offered mechanisms of concept selection, the means of logic and praxeology, to criticize current approaches in comparative regime theory. I analyze one logical problem, the fallacy of diminished subtypes, and one praxeological problem, the fallacy of regime change. The two concepts were chosen, first, by their relative popularity in comparative regime theory (e.g. Bogaards, 2009; Bosch, 2014; Cassani, 2014; Gilbert and Mohseni, 2011; Wahman et al., 2013), and second, by the fact that they are connected to several other (popular) concepts and ideas which I will also engage with.

Along with the aim of clarifying comparative regime theory, this chapter is also an illustration of using the means of logic and praxeology in selecting social science concepts. Thus although I intend to cover a large part of the literature on comparative regime theory, any concept that is left out or will only be formulated in the future can also be criticized along the lines of my meta-analysis.

2.1. A Logical Problem: The Fallacy of Diminished Subtypes

Dating back to O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986)'s early notions of "democradura" and "dictablanda" and getting a more formal structure by Collier and Mahon (1993), diminished subtypes are among the first and most successful conceptual innovations to describe the polities of newly liberated regimes after the so-called "third wave of democratization" (Huntington, 1993). Since that, the basic idea of analyzing these new polities as to some extent twisted versions of established democracies and authoritarian regimes has survived the phase of transitology (Collier and Levitsky, 1997) and is still widely used in the phase of hybrid regimes (Bogaards, 2009; Cassani, 2014).

Unfortunately, these concepts bear some inherent logical problems as a consequence of the fallacious way of their formation.

2.1.1. The Absurdity of Radial Categories

According to Collier and Mahon (1993, p. 845), the Sartorian *per genus et differentiam* method is the "classical" approach to concept formation which may not be satisfactory for comparative regime theory. An alternative way they propose is forming so-called "radial categories." The authors explain this method as the reverse of the Sartorian. The classical method, the authors say, forms concepts from the *genus* (or "secondary categories" from the "primary category") by adding further differentiating characteristics. Radial categories are created in the opposite way, by taking away characteristics. The differentiating characteristics of the secondary categories are therefore "contained within" the primary category instead of being added. Hence, while "populist authoritarianism" is a classical category, being defined as authoritarianism with substantial mobilization of the working class and/or the middle class, "popular democracy" is a radial category as it bears the components of democracy except the limitation of state power (Collier and Mahon, 1993, p. 850).

Møller and Skaaning (2010, p. 267) submit that "there is absolutely nothing wrong with this logic" which indeed "sharpens the general tools available for our conceptual endeavors." However its absurdity becomes clear if we look at it through the lenses of the means of logic or the objective of exclusivity in particular. In the Sartorian approach, it will be recalled, we know precisely why a specific object belongs to its *genus*: because it shares all of its features. It is true that a *genus* can be defined according to any of the object's properties—taking Goertz (2005, p. 27)'s example, copper can be classified both according to its color and its atomic structure—but when these

classifications are contrasted, they can easily be merged into a single system—copper is an element, a metal, which is red. Thus the Sartorian way always allows for exclusive classification.

However in case of radial categories classification is done not on the basis of similarity but on the basis of dissimilarity between the object and the primary category. There may be one feature the secondary category shares with the primary one, like effective political participation in case of democracy and its diminished subtypes (Collier and Mahon, 1993, p. 850), but the secondary category is called a "subtype" because it does not share the first one's other features. It should be obvious that this way, since everything has something in common with everything on a high enough level of abstraction, anything can be regarded as a diminished subtype of anything. An elephant can be a diminished subtype of a fish—as a vertebrate without gills and fins—just as a diminished subtype of a kangaroo—as a mammal without fur and pouch.[10]

It is worth noticing that the terms "vertebrate" and "mammal" originate from biological taxonomy which uses the same *per genus et differentiam* logic as Sartori does, allowing for exclusive classification accordingly (Richards, 2016). However, staying within the framework of radial categories, it is impossible to decide whether an elephant should be a diminished subtype of a fish or a kangaroo for the logical status of the two options is the same. Therefore an exclusive classification cannot be done. Indeed, with radial categories we are left in a barren situation because all claims about being the subtype of A or not-A are equally valid since the very criterion to be classified with something is not to be similar to it.[11]

[10] I am indebted to Bálint Magyar for this metaphor.
[11] The same critique applies to conceptualizations using the notion of "mutation" instead of diminished subtype (cf. Ungváry, 2014).

2.1.2. From Diminished to Normal: How Radial Categories Can Be Justified

The statement that radial categories are inherently illogical contradicts their intuitive value. Understanding a hitherto unseen juxtaposition of regime components as a variant of something we already know gives a readily available analytical framework in which it can be interpreted in terms of congruence and deviance. As a matter of fact, diminished subtypes have proven rather useful to scholars in mapping out the machinery of non-democratic politics (Beichelt, 2004; Case, 2011; Croissant, 2004; Henderson, 2004; Langston and Morgenstern, 2009; Levitsky and Way, 2010; Merkel et al., 2006; Reich, 2002; Schedler, 2006).

The problem is that the root concept and hence its analytical framework is unjustified. Due to the logical form of diminished subtypes, any root concept can be chosen with equal validity. A non-democratic regime, for example, can be classified both as a "diminished democracy" and as a "diminished authoritarianism" and the two options have the same logical status, that is, we cannot decide which one should be accepted and which one, rejected.

It is true that the diminished subtypes for a specific case will, if carefully created, be substantially identical, that is, they will arrive at a description of the same phenomenon, notwithstanding the different starting points. Therefore exclusivity is not violated in its first sense, as no regime shall belong to two or more categories bearing different sets of attributes. But as anything can be chosen as a root concept, there are an infinite number of possible substantially identical diminished subtypes. This may also create confusion between the users of different root concepts but the real problem, by the means of logic, is that this proliferation of diminished subtypes is redundant. In other words, such

method of concept formation is dispreferred to more parsimonious methods, particularly to those which achieve exclusivity in the sense they assign only one name to one phenomenon (cf. Baker, 2016).[12]

An obvious solution to this problem is employing the principle of closeness, that is, choosing the root concept we believe is the closest to our research object (e.g. Levitsky and Way, 2002, p. 52). The first problem with this solution is that there is no way closeness can be defined justifiably within the framework of radial categories. For radial categories are by definition remote from the root concept. It cannot be claimed validly that a regime should be associated with one root concept over the other on the basis it does not share enough of its features for that is precisely the reason it is a diminished subtype.

It may be argued that if closeness cannot be derived from the theory of radial categories then it should be added as a subsidiary principle. In comparative regime theory that would mean choosing for every case the closest of potential root concepts, either from the two classical types (democracy and authoritarianism) or from all the types which fulfill the definition of political regime.[13] This can be satisfactory for more obvious cases but here we run into the second problem with the principle of closeness and that is the problem of equal distance, that is, the ambiguity of classifying regimes with equal distance to all root concepts. It should be noted that, if distance is measured by the (weighed) number of features to be diminished from the root, more than one regime composition can be of equal distance to the root concepts. Therefore there is more than one regime type which cannot be classified exclusively. But even if there was

[12] Although that is not a logical necessity, Bogaards (2009, pp. 413–415) points out that the fact that a regime is classified as the diminished subtype of either democracy or authoritarianism indeed brings different connotations to scholars who formulate different research questions and recommend different ways of "democracy promotion" accordingly.

[13] This idea may be hindered by the praxeological difficulties of defining "political regime" for comparative theory. See Part 2.2.1.

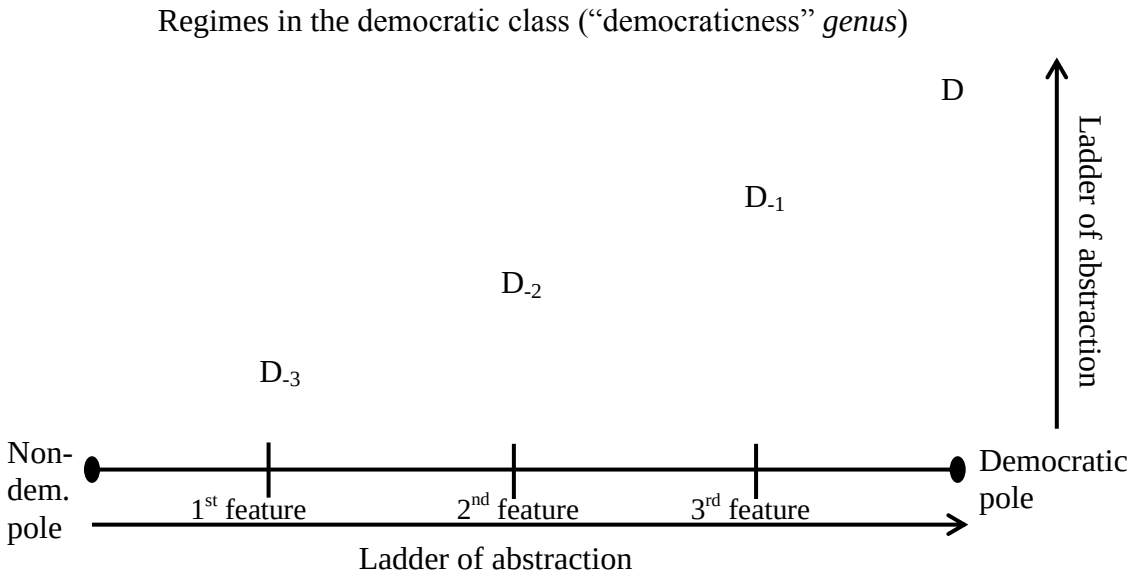
only one 'odd' type, no partial solutions should be accepted for classification should be exhaustive, too.

A general solution for justifiably choosing one root concepts above all others must therefore avoid the problem of equal distance and classify every phenomenon exclusively. This can be achieved if and only if the root concept meets two criteria. First, it must have a "definitive" feature (either a concrete component or a quality of a set of components) that holds even when another element of the root concept is diminished. Such a definitive feature would be a necessary condition to a regime to become a diminished subtype and therefore the range which radial categories ought to be formed in would be delimited. This is a criterion Møller and Skaaning (2010, p. 268) achieve by saying the presence of elections *ipso facto* indicates a democracy quality.[14] However, there is also a second criterion, namely that the root concept, among the regimes bearing that definitive feature, must be the one on the lowest level of abstraction. For in any other case the concepts with larger intension—the "augmented subtypes" of the root concept—would be equally valid candidates to become root concepts and that would spoil exclusivity.

However the unique quality of "democraticness" is none other but a Sartorian *genus*. The diminished subtype illiberal democracy here is the equivalent of a normal subtype of an imaginary regime bearing only the democraticness criterion. The fact the latter root concept may not be empirically meaningful does not mean it is not a useful theoretical device—its normal subtypes can classify empirical cases and it leads to exclusive and exhaustive classification. Thus, in sum, the prudent way of creating diminished subtypes indeed starts from a *per genus et differentiam* classification, after

[14] Whether this claim is theoretically or normatively valid is beyond the subject of my thesis.

which one class of objects is re-defined as the diminished subtypes of the category on the lowest level of abstraction within that class (Figure 1).



Legend:
D: democracy (root concept)
D_{-1}: 1st diminished subtype of D = 3rd normal subtype of democraticness *genus*
D_{-2}: 2nd diminished subtype of D = 2nd normal subtype of democraticness *genus*
D_{-3}: 3rd diminished subtype of D = 1st normal subtype of democraticness *genus*

1. Figure: The theoretical structure of prudent diminished subtypes of democracy.

2.1.3. The Fruitless Debate of Democratic and Authoritarian Paradigms

Although the method outlined above is prudent it may not be very practical, or obvious—indeed, this is not the usual way these subtypes are created. Indeed, the Sartorian method is generally rejected for that of radial categories, starting from a root concept and continuing by diminishing its features. Collier himself creates his concepts this way and also illustrates the bewilderment caused by this method: in both of his articles with Levitsky, he notes that it may be problematic that "in cases of gross violations of civil liberties and/or severe restrictions on electoral competition" a regime can still be logically considered a diminished subtype of democracy whereas it is

obviously closer to authoritarianism (Collier and Levitsky, 2009, p. 276, 1997, pp. 441–442).

The explicit realization of the pivotal role of a *genus* raises the question whether we should bother creating diminished subtypes or just use normal ones. The standard argument why we should bother stems from what may be called the "developmental approach," that is, the study of evolution and de-evolution of regimes on the democracy-authoritarianism axis. This position holds that the interesting research question is not whether a country belongs to the class of democracies or autocracies *per se* but how far it is from each institutional setting: which components they have already and which ones are still missing.

What this position presupposes is that the development of these regimes can actually be put on the democracy-authoritarianism axis; that these ideal types meet the criteria to become prudent root concepts; and also in the phase of transitology when diminished subtypes were first formulated it was added that these regimes are just "unfinished" but indeed gravitate toward democracy (democratization hypothesis). These presumptions cannot be refuted by the means of logic and they belong to the realm of praxeology.[15] At this point it is suffice to say that the developmental approach has rarely produced prudent diminished subtypes. As I mentioned, the importance of a Sartorian genus has rarely been recognized and, as a matter of fact, most of the diminished subtypes in comparative regime theory have simply aimed at dividing the "grey zone" between democracy and authoritarianism to somehow make sense of the new empirical cases which did not fit the aforementioned ideal types adequately (cf. Schneider, 2010). Therefore diminished subtypes have been simple radial categories, bringing the exact confusion in the literature the logical structure of such concepts suggests.

[15] See Part 2.2.3.

The confusion has been palpable in the rise of, and occasional debates between, the so-called democratic and authoritarian paradigms. The democratic paradigm has seen several "democracies with adjectives" (Collier and Levitsky, 1997) including but not limited to "illiberal democracy" (Bell et al., 1995; Zakaria, 2007), "electoral democracy" (Diamond, 2002), "delegative democracy" (O'Donnell, 1994), "tutelary democracy" (Kanol, 2014; Rabkin, 1992), and "managed democracy" (Hahn, 2004; Petrov, 2005). The authoritarian paradigm is similarly rich, having diminished subtypes like "electoral authoritarianism" (Mackow, 2000; Schedler, 2006), "closed authoritarianism" (Howard and Roessler, 2006), and "competitive authoritarianism" (Levitsky and Way, 2010, 2002). "Defective democracy" (Croissant, 2004; Lauth, 1997; Merkel, 2004), "semi-democracy" (Bowman et al., 2005; Mainwaring et al., 2007; Reich, 2002) and "semi-authoritarianism" (Ottaway, 2003) are not diminished subtypes by the strict meaning of the term but instead they cover all diminished subtypes of their paradigms, committing the same fallacy as they do.[16]

Naturally, the exact sets of features assigned to these categories—and also to each diminished subtype—are different and that makes it somewhat easier to distinguish and eventually render them according to Sartorian *genera*. But since that is not an objective of most scholars, we can see many overlaps between the two paradigms. The same polities are described, often on the basis of the same dataset, as democratic regimes with certain flaws by one scholar and as autocratic regimes with certain flaws by another (Bogaards, 2009, p. 410; Cassani, 2014, pp. 546–548; Gilbert and Mohseni, 2011, pp. 273–275). What is more, the above mentioned overarching categories are also used in parallel with the more exact diminished subtypes of their paradigms (cf. Merkel, 2004) which increases the number of overlapping categories and enhances confusion and

[16] At first, Zakaria (1997) also used "illiberal democracy" in such a broad sense, occasionally even using the term "semi-democracy" for even procedurally not-so-democratic regimes like Iran and Belarus.

conceptual redundancy accordingly. A good example for this is the case of the scholarly treatment of the Russian Federation. Being widely considered as a "grey-zone regime," Putin's Russia has been classified as illiberal democracy (Merkel, 2004; Zakaria, 1997), managed democracy (Krastev and Holmes, 2012), competitive authoritarianism (Levitsky and Way, 2010), and electoral authoritarianism (Golosov, 2011; Schedler, 2006) as well.

In short, diminished subtypes of both have been mushrooming in the literature using democracy and authoritarianism as root concepts—often without taking note of each other and overlapping each other's definitions and cases. And until these categories stay purely radial and do not follow the prudent method I outlined above, the awkwardness of the situation cannot be eliminated in principle. For the subtypes of the two paradigms have the same logical status and hence they are equally valid for the given cases.

2.1.4. Proposed Alternatives: Double-Root Strategy, Family Resemblance, and Hybridization

Partially as a result of recognizing the above analyzed confusion, numerous refinements and alternatives were proposed to diminished subtypes. I have selected, on the basis of direct relevance and inventiveness and for the sake of parsimony, three of these proposals: the double-root strategy, family resemblance, and hybridization. I analyze them below in that order.[17]

Double-root strategy. A logic of regime classification proposed by Bogaards (2009), the double-root strategy is an ingenious return to Sartorian principles in Collier's disguise. What the author observes is the tendency that scholars from one paradigm usually ignore the other paradigm and *vice versa*, producing categories which overlap

[17] One further alternative is going to be discussed, but only in the next part, for it can be criticized praxeologically rather than by the means of logic. See Part 2.2.3.

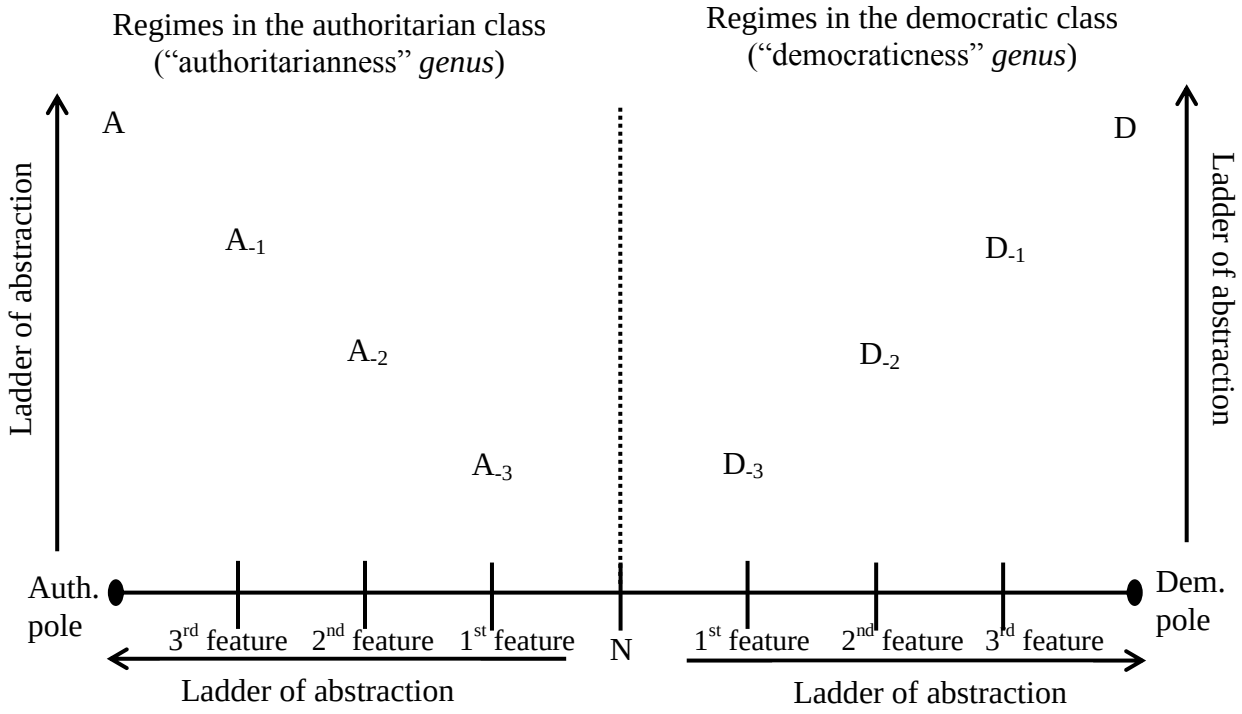
instead of being complementary. His solution is that we should use both paradigms simultaneously with "the root concepts of democracy and autocracy […] defined in relation to each other and cases […] classified with a view to both" (Bogaards, 2009, p. 410). Building on theoretical considerations from the works of Lauth (1997) and Merkel et al. (2003), Bogaards enumerates the components ("partial regimes") of democracy, defines the democracy root concept as having all of them and the autocracy, none, and then he proposes ways to distinguish the diminished subtypes of both root concepts from one pole of the axis to the other.

The problem with this logic is that in order to use both roots justifiably one has to define two *genera*, one for "democraticness" and one for "authoritarianness," following the prudent way of creating diminished subtypes (Figure 2).[18] By defining autocracy as zero democracy, the *genus* for the former restricts the range its diminished subtypes ought to be created to zero and the "democraticness" *genus* covers the entire grey zone between the two roots. In other words, only the diminished subtypes of democracy are justified by this method which delimits their range to every regime except autocracy itself. Incidentally, this method returns to Sartorian principles as it does define a valid *genus,* getting out of the fallacy of diminished subtypes. But this is not what Bogaards aims at as his *genus* rules out the authoritarian paradigm—indeed a refined single-root strategy instead of a double-root one.

The point at which the proposed double-root strategy goes astray is precisely when diminished subtypes of authoritarianism are integrated into its framework. This integration is made logically possible by focusing on distinguishing diminished subtypes instead of distinguishing the root concepts (see Bogaards, 2009, pp. 413–414).

[18] This task can also be understood as drawing a line between democracy and autocracy which is both a philosophical issue (Kis, 2016) and a practical issue (Bogaards, 2012).

It must be seen those two processes are not the same. In the existing democratic paradigm, a diminished democracy is *not* a democracy for it is defined—radially—as not bearing all of a democracy's components. The same is true for diminished autocracy.



Legend:

A: authoritarianism (root concept)
A_{-1}: 1st d. subt. of A = 3rd normal subt. of auth. *gen*.
A_{-2}: 2nd d. subt. of A = 2nd normal subt. of auth. *gen*.
A_{-3}: 3rd d. subt. of A = 1st normal subt. of auth. *gen*.

D: democracy (root concept)
D_{-1}: 1st d. subt. of D = 3rd normal subt. of dem. *gen*.
D_{-2}: 2nd d. subt. of D = 2nd normal subt. of dem. *gen*.
D_{-3}: 3rd d. subt. of D = 1st normal subt. of dem. *gen*.

N: regime on the dividing line between *genera*; not possible (because *genera* are mutually exclusive)

2. Figure: A prudent double-root strategy.

And because both are defined as not being totally similar to their root concepts, any dividing line between them will be equally justified. For the whole "grey zone" spectrum can be encompassed by the democratic paradigm alone as well as by the authoritarian paradigm alone. In other words, the project to distinguish diminished subtypes is hindered by non-exclusivity stemming from the fallacy of radial categories, as explained above.[19] On the other hand, distinguishing the root concepts means none other but defining *genera* for both "democraticness" and "authoritarianness" which

[19] That scholars define diminished subtypes with different characteristics and hence the actual types in circulation can be distinguished does not matter, for any set of characteristics for a radial concept is equally justified to another one.

afterwards delimit the range which diminished subtypes of the maximal intension variant of "democraticness" regimes and of "authoritarianness" regimes ought to be formed in. If a double-root strategy promotes the latter option there can be no objection to it, at least by the means of logic. But otherwise it ultimately enhances the confusion instead of showing a way out of it.

Family resemblance. Collier and Mahon (1993), in the same article which introduced diminished subtypes, offered another type of non-Sartorian concepts called "family resemblance categories." Such categories are very much different from each other in their actual characteristics (that is, they do not belong to the same *genus* as they do not share a core set of attributes) but still there is a homogenizing factor which puts them in the same "family of cases" rather than the same class. The difference between such a homogenizing factor and a Sartorian *genus* is that the former is not a necessary and sufficient condition for all elements of the "family" like a *genus* would be (Mair, 2008, p. 194).

In comparative regime theory, family resemblance has become popular not as an alternative to diminished subtypes but in defining democracy. As Bogaards (2012, p. 702) notes in his meta-analysis of measures of democracy, "although researchers define, explicitly or implicitly, democracy in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, the indexes of democracy they use are constructed on the principle of family resemblance, whereby high scores in one respect may compensate for low scores in another respect." Theoretically a similar strategy could be applied as a substitute for my prudent way of creating diminished subtypes, putting regime concepts in the same family instead of the same class.

However family resemblance categories indeed commit a very similar fallacy to that of diminished subtypes. The logical problem with the principle of family resemblance is pointed out brilliantly by Mair (2008, pp. 194–195):

> "In the case of family resemblances […] the defining properties are 'necessary or sufficient', and hence the greater the number of properties – added in a logical process as OR, OR, OR – the greater is the range of cases. [Hence] to follow the family resemblance approach is to find that more attributes mean more cases rather than fewer cases, and hence that intension and extension vary together rather than inversely. The problem we then confront is establishing where this process should stop. From a comparative social science perspective, the end point is reached when we have both a universe of cases and a universe of properties, and hence when we have the complete elimination of variation. This clearly cannot work, and hence the conceptual boundaries have to be established at a much earlier stage. Since the number of cases we are observing serves to define the properties that are collectively shared by the cases, it is difficult to find a rule that works for inclusion and exclusion. As in the film *Wedding Crashers*, anybody or anything can be claimed to have some family connection to those at the centre of the action, and hence boundaries, like wedding invitations, ultimately lose their utility."

In short, although theoretically it may provide an alternative to diminished subtypes, family resemblance is equally erroneous and to be rejected.

Hybridization. There are two variants of this alternative method. The first one is accurately described by Magyar (2016, p. 58) who says it "no longer seeks to define the respective establishment in correlation to one or the other [root concept]" but instead gathers all diminished subtypes of autocracy and democracy into the class of hybrid regimes, that is, regimes combining elements of both roots (Bozóki and Hegedűs, 2018; Cassani, 2014; Diamond, 2002; Morlino, 2009). Bunce and Wolchik (2008, pp. 5–9) use the term "mixed regime" in the same meaning and argue that, for the regime compositions they want to catch are moving targets, a looser category is preferable to the "misleadingly precise" diminished subtypes.

Thinking in the framework of the democracy-authoritarianism axis, this notion of mixed or hybrid regime is definitely an exclusive category, defined as everything not purely democratic or authoritarian, and combined with democracy and authoritarianism it also allows for an exhaustive classification of political regimes. But this could be achieved by introducing an "Other" category as well and indeed this method does not mean progress from the notion of "grey zone." Thus although this method is valid by the means of logic it provides too vague a label for a rather heterogeneous grey zone which could be divided by categories covering more homogeneous sets of cases.

This division is what the second variant of hybridization strategy aims at, proposing normal subtypes of hybrid regimes instead of diminished subtypes of the two traditional types. Bunce and Wolchik (2011, pp. 9–12)'s approach already points to this direction since it focuses on mixed regimes only in the post-communist region and defines two traits, competitive elections and authoritarian political leadership, specific to the polities of its interest. More systemic proposals have been made by Wigell (2008) who creates a two-dimensional framework, classifying regimes by two axes of electoralism and constitutionalism, and Gilbert and Mohseni (2011) who offer a three-dimensional one with competitiveness, civil liberties and tutelary interference as aspects of categorization.

This approach means a total rejection of radial concept formation in favor of the classical, Sartorian way.[20] Accordingly, the sound way of such conceptualization would be to label regimes according to the attributes they bear, perhaps calling the polar types (with all or none of the attributes) "democracy" and "authoritarianism" whereas all the others a kind of hybrid regime. In the above mentioned three-dimensional framework

[20] Morlino (2009, p. 276), constructing his definition of hybrid regime, does indeed return to Sartori's language and uses the term "genus" as well as "species."

this would mean eight categories: democracy; competitive hybrid regime; liberal hybrid regime; tutelary hybrid regime; liberal competitive hybrid regime; tutelary competitive hybrid regime; liberal tutelary hybrid regime; and authoritarianism. However Gilbert and Mohseni do not use these categories but label all regimes without competition "authoritarian" and call other regimes without civil liberties "illiberal" (thus they say "illiberal tutelary hybrid regime" instead of "tutelary competitive hybrid regime"). This process, while still perfectly in line with Sartorian classification rules, is seemingly more confusing, and also it homogenizes the four regime types without competition which is not consistent with the rest of the method, forming categories on uneven levels of abstraction.

2.2. A Praxeological Problem: The Fallacy of Regime Change

A praxeological critique of comparative regime theory can only be rather basic, for no systemic praxeological political science has been developed yet. However as political science is too a social science and deals with human action, the fundamentals explained in Part 1.2. apply to it up to the minor postulates that "there are more than one humans" and "people are not identical."

This limited framework of praxeological truths is adequate to interpret, show the prerequisites and consequences, of numerous concepts in comparative regime theory which I summarize by the term "regime change." By regime change, I do not primarily mean the historic event when communist dictatorships in the Eastern Bloc ended (see Bokros, 2013; Rupnik, 2013). Indeed, I use regime change as an umbrella term for all ideas referring to the movement of political regimes on the democracy-authoriarianism axis, be it democratization of a dictatorship or authoritarian backsliding of a formerly democratic country. In other words, regime change concepts are used for temporal

comparison between the past and present states of a given polity as opposed to spatial comparisons between more polities at a given point of time (Bartolini, 1993).

Actual definitions of the terms defining such regime changes vary widely in the literature and it would not be possible to analyze them all within the limits of my thesis (see Boix and Svolik, 2013; Brownlee, 2009; Bunce and Wolchik, 2010; Dresden and Howard, 2016; Epstein et al., 2006; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2006; Gerschewski, 2013; Hadenius and Teorell, 2006; Howard and Roessler, 2006; Kis, 2016; Lawson, 1993; Lindberg, 2006; Munck, 1996; Schneider and Schmitter, 2004). However although the exact definitions of regime change concepts differ, there are two components of them which are constant: regime and change. A regime change concept or theory must have, at least implicitly, a definition of political regime to know what to measure; and it must also have a stable set of indicators producing comparable datasets of the synchronic states of polities to be able to describe their diachronic movement. For the latter, usually continuous measures are used, that is, time series showing the (aggregate) state of certain regime components. Such continuous measures are also often utilized in spatial comparison to describe and compare the prevailing states of polities hence my criticism shall apply to those static analyses as well.

2.2.1. Arbitrary Delimitation of the Political Sphere

Definitions of political regime vary from scholar to scholar who include different components and/or put different emphases on them. Some of them focus on the political actors and argue that elite groups constitute the basic distinctions to be made among the political systems of all countries (Higley and Pakulski, 2012; Mann, 2012; Pempel, 1998). Others underline the exceptional importance of institutions, be they formal-legal rules (Ostrom, 1986) or informal ones (Helmke and Levitsky, 2004). A third group

brings civil liberties into the picture (Collier and Collier, 1991; Fishman, 1990) and a fourth one, the internal relations among the branches of power or the different parts of the political power center (Cardoso and Font, 2001; Merkel, 1999).

For a meta-analysis of every regime definition of regime change theories cannot be done here, I shall use a definition which combines them all and therefore allows the analysis of the big picture of the literature. Skaaning (2006) provides such a meta-definition, integrating the insights of the four above described groups. Thus political regime in his understanding is "designated to be an institutionalized set of fundamental formal and informal rules structuring the interaction in the political power center (horizontal relation) and its relation with the broader society (vertical relation)" (Skaaning, 2006, p. 13).

Skaaning's research aim was to create "a coherent conceptual framework" for regime description which he correctly believes to be "a necessary step prior to the development of specific theories and the deduction of hypotheses" (Skaaning, 2006, p. 1). His definition is indeed by far the fullest and most coherent in comparative regime theory, others using only its diminished subtypes (Table 1).

Although it is rather clear we must start from the notion of political power to define a regime,[21] it is a prerequisite of regime change analysis to delimit the entire political sphere by enumerating certain predefined components. For to compare the synchronic states of a polity those states must be presumed to be of the same kind, lest we compare apples and oranges (Sartori, 1991; cf. Mair, 2008, pp. 177–178). However making this delimitation before the research and then presuming it holds throughout the examined

[21] This is true from the standpoint of praxeology as well. See Apăvăloaei (2015, pp. 108–110).

period is not justified *a priori*. For treating the thus delimited political sphere separately is justified only if the factors left out from the regime definition are exogenous, that is,

	Access to power	Vertical power constraints	Horizontal power constraints	Character of ruler(s)
Cardoso and Font (2001)	X	X	X	
Collier and Collier (1991)	X	X		
Fishman (1990)		X		(X)
Lawson (1993)	X	X	X	
Macridis (1986)	X	X	X	
Merkel (1999)	X	X	X	(X)
Munck (1996)	X	(X)	X	X
O'Donnell and Schmitter, (2013)	X		(X)	X
Plasser et al. (2016)	X	X	X	
Schmitter and Karl (2008)	X	(X)	X	X

1. Table: Regime definitions according to their defining principles (X indicates emphasis, bracketed X indicates lack of clarity). Source: Skaaning (2006).

if the internal logic of the political regime is autonomous and not dependent on the aforementioned factors. What praxeology reveals is that this criterion holds with certainty only in case of inorganic matter which always behaves according to the same laws of physics. As far as humans are concerned, they act; as Rothbard (1997c) puts it, they choose, can change their minds, and choose again. Social, cultural, economic and also political factors are results of such individual human action, the actual purpose of which cannot be determined *a priori*. Consequently, if a social concept such as a definition of regime concerns the interaction of humans, it cannot predetermine the scope of this interaction—and cannot presuppose that that scope will be different from integration into politics in some polities (cf. Hale, 2015; Holcombe, 2015; Magyar, 2016). As a matter of fact, we know from praxeology that acting humans use scarce

means or resources, most of which usually happen to be exchangeable or monetary goods in case of modern political regimes (see Rothbard, 2011, pp. 1062–1065). This immediately indicates an integration of the political and the economic spheres.

Skaaning (2006, p. 3) argues that he treats cultural, economic and other broadly social factors as mere "causes or effects" of the political regime type only because, should they be seen as integral parts, "interesting research questions concerning the relationship between the political regime and other aspects of the political system and the overall society risk to be obscured." Yet this is circular reasoning for it attempts to justify his choice of regime elements by presupposing it is justified.

It should be observed that even a proper justification of a regime definition holds only for one point of time, for it is precisely the passage of time through which every human action, including possible changes in the regime composition, takes place. Therefore a theory of regime change could be justified only if it proves empirically that in the entire period it analyzes integration of further elements (besides the components it has chosen) into the political system does not exist. In other words, synchronic comprehensiveness—which has been the concern of the previous paragraphs—must be accompanied by diachronic stability to regard a regime change concept justified.

One may argue that the already mentioned variable of "tutelary interference" can properly deal with these criteria as it indicated precisely that whether the chosen regime composition is being overridden by a "normally" external actor. However, while it indeed is a step forward, tutelary interference is a simple dummy variable which does not describe the structural role of the normally external actor(s). And as the structural role can take, by virtue of the variability of human action, many different forms every case cannot be captured adequately by a single uniform variable.

Alternatively, a scholar can say that even if the regime composition has not been totally stable in the given period the chosen regime elements have formed a sufficiently stable system, capable of self-regeneration, and therefore further components need not be considered (Kis, 2016; cf. Morlino, 2009). Deciding about what counts as "sufficient" stability and "infinitesimal" influence can only be arbitrary but indeed such claims may be the only ones which can make a compromise between praxeology's calling for refinement, or taking all possibilities into account, and the practicality concerns of a researcher. It follows there is a trade-off between these two objectives and also that different analyses of the same regime change can be contrasted on the basis of the comprehensiveness of their regime definitions.

Nevertheless these prerequisites of synchronic comprehensiveness and diachronic stability, which were revealed by praxeological analysis and the implications of the action axiom, are practically never made explicit in the literature, let alone empirically examined or justified (cf. Hale, 2015, pp. 6–7).

2.2.2. The Hidden Presumptions of Continuous Measures

While regime delimitation is about the relationship between the political regime and the rest of the society, continuous measures deal with the internal structure of regimes and are used to give quantitative description of its changes. Ultimately, continuous measures are plagued by the same kind of problem as regime delimitation, also stemming from the fundamentals of human action. But to avoid being too abstract, I shall start by describing actual scales used in comparative regime theory. Nevertheless, my criticism of these concrete scales does not limit to them but is valid for any such scales of any composition.

In general, continuous measures assess the state and trend of "democraticness" of the countries of the world quantitatively, selecting a range of institutions or criteria and ranking them on continuous scales. These measures are then aggregated and the country is classified according to this cumulative score. The two most popular continuous measures are those of the Freedom House and the Polity (Bogaards, 2012; Bosch, 2014). As for the former, the Freedom House (2017) assesses independent countries according to civil and political rights on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 to 2.5 being free, 3 to 5, free, and 5.5 to 7, not free. In contrast, Polity (2016) classifies countries on a scale from -10 to 10, as follows: autocracies (-10 to -6), closed anocracies (-5 to 1), open anocracies (2 to 5), and democracies (6 to 10).

Critics of these scales usually complain about arbitrary coding rules (Bosch, 2014, p. 114; Cheibub et al., 2010, pp. 9–11; Giannone, 2010) and similar arbitrariness in cut-off points between regime categories (Bogaards, 2012). But interpreting the method of continuous measures in the praxeological framework reveals another, more fundamental arbitrariness as well. For every country, the same uniform set of variables is collected, and they are aggregated according to the same algorithm—otherwise comparison itself of the results would be unjustified. But similarly to the exact composition of a regime, the relationship of the components is too dependent on human action. Consequently, uniform coding would be justified if and only if these relationships would be the same in every polity across spatial and temporal dimensions. In other words, the presupposition of uniform coding is, first, that every regime has the same connections between their components, and second, that those components or variables (sub-regimes) are all structured in the same way with the same pattern of emphases (and then their corresponding dynamics is the same, accordingly). Obviously the easiest way to achieve such uniformity is presuming that the indicators are uncorrelated (see Magyar, 2016, pp.

58–59; Völkel, 2015) but the above described measures usually employ intricate aggregation methods (Marshall et al., 2017) which does presume a certain, uniform, pattern of relationship for all examined countries.

Empirically this presumption of uniformity is quite unlikely. This is well exemplified by the classifications of Freedom House and Polity which, besides working with diminished subtypes, classify seemingly rather dissimilar countries into the same class. In the Polity (2016) report, the same 10 (full democracy) scores were given to Chile, the United Kingdom, Japan, Poland and Hungary, whereas these polities do not look the same at a cursory glance. However praxeology cannot prove uniformity is not the actual case in the real world. It can only make this claim explicit, and demand a justification for it. For without justification, indeed the results of a temporal or spatial comparison using continuous measures can be misleading or even nonsensical if the polities in question do not meet, at least to a level chosen as sufficient, the above described presumption.

In sum, the fallacy of regime change refers to two gaping holes in the concepts and theories connected to regime movements. By the means of logic these presumptions could not have been revealed. Obviously, praxeology itself uses formal logic but it is different from the means of logic explained in Part 1.1. Conceptually it would have been perfectly fine to delimit a set of features (concepts) and label them "political regime" just as measuring regime components on continuous scales while comparing the specific instances of this political regime concept. But praxeology, by taking the fact of human action as well as its logical implications into account, could provide a theoretical framework in which the hidden prerequisites of regime change theory came to light.

2.2.3. Regime Types Revisited: Polychotomous Measures and a Praxeological Critique of the Democratization Hypothesis

The praxeological method also empowers us to criticize two further concepts in comparative regime theory which could not have been discussed in detail by the means of logic. The first one is a type of regime typology which Bosch (2014) calls "polychotomous measures." He does not give an exact definition for this term but the name and his examples let us conclude that it refers to typologies which define several independent categories on the basis of the alteration of a single constitutive element. To take one example, Geddes et al. (2014) focus on the power holders and define military, monarchy, party, and personalist authoritarian regimes accordingly.

The problem with such categories is already implied by the praxeological critique of continuous measures. For if connections of regime elements is not trivial and needs justification, than so is appointing one as a constitutive element and putting it into the center of the analytical framework. This is especially problematic since other elements and their relative positions to each other or the constitutive element are not taken into consideration either. As Bosch (2014, p. 120) notices, the work of the above mentioned Geddes et al. (2014) does not deal with the presence of elections, whereas Hadenius and Teorell (2007) do not focus on leadership at all. Praxeology cannot tell us whether there is a real world relationship between these components or what its exact form is. But if there is some kind of connection, polychotomous measures are either defective or erroneous for they do not take into account the ripple effects the alteration of the arbitrarily chosen constitutive element causes in other regime constituting factors.

Finally, I return to the democratization hypothesis mentioned in Part 2.1.3. This hypothesis, it will be recalled, states three things: first, that the development of regimes

can actually be put on the democracy-authoritarianism axis; that the ideal types of democracy and autocracy meet the criteria to become root concepts for prudently formed diminished subtypes; and that every not full-fledged dictatorship actually gravitate toward the democratic end.

The praxeological argument we have to recall here is that of arbitrary delimitation, so that regime composition cannot be determined *a priori* and any chosen composition requires justification. For if the political sphere is delimited arbitrarily, then so is choosing specific sets of institutions, democracy and authoritarianism, for polar types of the scale. Yet the first statement of the hypothesis is correct, assuming there is no political power structure which lacks every element of the two polar types and is still considered a regime. The statement is correct because if that latter postulate holds every regime which has every element of either polar type belongs to that category, regardless of what other elements it might have, whereas the regimes not meeting the exact criteria of the polar types can be classified as hybrid or mixed regimes. It is true that if the regimes to be classified have more components which have not been regarded as political regime components when defining the polar types the resultant classes of regimes will be rather heterogeneous. This is not a logical problem, until the classes are Sartorian, but it becomes a praxeological problem as soon as one wants to make comparative analysis of these heterogeneous classes. This indicates that a wider regime definition encompassing more social spheres can be beneficial for an empirical scientist who could then define *sui generis* subtypes, and carry out regime comparison, more accurately (cf. Magyar, 2016, pp. 67–71).[22]

[22] Indeed, Guliyev (2011) has already proposed a typology mixing political („Dahlian") and sociological („Weberian") aspects, albeit he used diminished subtypes, the ones proposed by Howard and Roessler (2006), as representative political categories.

The praxeological argument renders the second statement of the hypothesis dubious. For if a regime can have more components and thus augmented subtypes of democracy and authoritarianism are possible then those types of a lower level of abstraction will be ideal to become root concepts in the prudent way of forming diminished subtypes. What makes such a case actually possible is if one derives the democracy and authoritarianism root concepts from normative political philosophy. This approach is preposterous when these normatively chosen categories are applied to empirical regimes for there is no objective reason for a regime to act or behave in accordance with subjectively selected categories. Indeed this is very much the problem seen in comparative regime theory when its concepts, often borrowed from normative theory, have to be adjusted to empirically relevant situations (Sartori, 1970).[23]

As for the last claim, there are two variants of the argument for gravitation towards democracy in the literature. The first one is the context dependent version which claims that regimes gravitate toward democracy because of their international environment. In the phase of transitology, this argument was popularized by Fukuyama (1992) in his article and book about the "end of the history." In his understanding, the collapse of the Soviet Bloc at the end of the Cold War marked the decisive, historical victory of the idea of liberal democracy over all possible alternatives. Using Hegelian logic, Fukuyama argues that liberal democracy is the apex of the evolution of regimes and history thus has ended on the front of ideologies. And if history has ended, the argument goes, then every non-democracies should be described as diminished democracies because they are going to become full-fledged democracies at some (maybe distant) point in the future. As Collier and Levitsky (1997, pp. 437–438) put it, democracies

[23] A quote by Diamond (2002, p. 24) is telling: "Linz does not identify, among his seven principal authoritarian regime types, anything like the 'competitive authoritarian' regime type discussed by Levitsky and Way—and for good reason. This type of hybrid regime, which is now so common, is very much a product of the contemporary world." See also Schneider (2010).

with adjectives should be seen as "less than complete instances of democracy" and "in using these subtypes the analyst makes [a] modest claim about the extent of democratization."

Simply put, the "end of the history" argument is trivially nonsensical for it presumes a definite and determinable way, or set of (ideological) goals, of social action which defies the action axiom and the known decision making ability of humans embodied in it. Indeed, the very word "gravitation" stems from the natural sciences and suggests social movements are led by similar empirically observable and unchanging laws to the laws of physics, which however is true only for the "behavior" of inorganic matter. In short, no determinism for regime movement is justified for determinism would be possible only by the elimination of action—which would also eliminate the meaning of democracy, and politics as well.

In fact, the "end of the history" argument is none other but the transition paradigm which has been rejected by scholars as soon as they realized it failed to describe the prevailing world order (Carothers, 2002; Huntington, 1996; Zakaria, 1997). Not rejecting the diminished subtypes which had been justified primarily by this argument shows a curious path dependency of comparative regime theory which however is beyond the subject of my thesis (cf. Kopecký and Mudde, 2000, pp. 517–518).

The context dependent argument has more complex variants, hypothesizing actual drivers of democratization like Western linkage and leverage (Levitsky and Way, 2010, pp. 23–24). This is a historicistic argument, that is, one created as a generalization of experience and it builds on the actual goals of human action it observed (Mises, 2014, pp. 5–8) thus it is finely formulated and no praxeological criticism can be levelled against it.

Not the same is true for the second, context independent version of the gravitation claim, arguing that one can attribute to the institutional features of a liberal democracy an inherently "democratic" or democratizing quality (Diamond et al., 1989; Engelbrekt, 1997). As the praxeological argument about continuous measures has shown, one cannot presuppose a scheme of emphases or dynamics among regime elements therefore there can be no such thing as universal democratizing quality. Democratizing effect, that is, whether the implementation of one or more institutions brings about democracy is a question of empirical research in every non-democratic polity and it is to be proved or falsified as such (Bogaards, 2016; Margulies, 2018).

3. The Mechanisms as Guidelines: Towards a New Epistemological Synthesis

3.1. From *Ex Post* to *Ex Ante*

The two mechanisms I offered have proven powerful critical tools when applied to the existing concepts of comparative regime theory. But in order to avoid such problems as what the mechanisms identified *ex post*, they can also be used *ex ante*, that is, already in the formation process of concepts and corresponding theories.

As for the means of logic, *ex ante* means none other but following the Sartorian rules of conceptualization. Different, non-Sartorian methods such as radial category formation may also be used but only if they meet some Sartorian requirements, the most important of which is exclusivity. For exclusivity is not simply a "classical" but a logical requirement, the rejection of which opens the door for conceptual redundancy and ambiguity which make productive research and comparative analysis difficult if not impossible.

In spite of the occasional advantages of alternative methods, it is worth considering using Sartorian classification only for two reasons. First, categories created *per genus et differentiam* necessarily fulfill the exclusivity criterion by virtue of the logical structure of the formation process. Second, the Sartorian method is always able to conceptualize new empirical phenomena (such as a new regime type) in a way that it will be compatible with existing Sartorian categories, allowing for the sound comparison of previously and newly classified phenomena. Compatibility is achieved by that whenever a new phenomenon with certain features is observed it becomes clear, first, on what level of abstraction it shares the same *genus* with the previously classified phenomena, and second, what their differentia are. And even if classifications are not immediately

contrasted this way—for instance because they are not from the same scholar—they can be contrasted and merged into a single system at any time. Thus "the mechanism of accumulation of knowledge," using Cassani (2014)'s words, is not hampered but advanced by every (carefully created) Sartorian concept.

The route from *ex post* to *ex ante* in case of praxeology is less straightforward, because its integration into our theoretical arsenal requires reconciliation of comparative regime theory's positivism and the apriorism of the Austrian method. The rest of this chapter is devoted to explaining this new epistemological synthesis, starting from a critical presentation of the current epistemology of comparative regime theory and then elaborating on the advantages and concrete form of the synthesis.

3.2. The *Ad Hoc* Nature of the Current Epistemology

The development of comparative regime theory has mostly been *ad hoc* since the third wave of democratization. It had borrowed several concepts from political philosophy such as democracy and dictatorship but they have been adjusted to the prevailing real world situations (Sartori, 1970, pp. 1033–1034). A good example for this is the case of diminished subtypes. The scholars who have formulated such subtypes have heavily relied on the theoretical considerations of political philosophy but also used its language and concepts in a conveniently distorted way to be able to encompass the actual situations at hand (e.g. Merkel et al., 2003; Møller and Skaaning, 2010). Indeed, the term "hybrid regime" already marks a shift in research from normatively founded regime categories to positive ones, that is, to concept formation that is purely inductive. But as the politico-philosophical labels have been used only to the extent they fit to existing regime types the current typologies can rightfully be recognized as essentially inductive.

Inductive concept formation gathers historical facts about existing constructs and forms so-called "ideal types" out of them. As Weber (1949, p. 90) writes, ideal types are "formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete* individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *analytical* construct" (emphasis original). In other words, ideal types are created *ad hoc*, for one certain context and also with arbitrary emphases on the components according to the personal judgment of the researcher.[24]

Further arbitrariness is introduced when it comes to deciding about what to include in, and what to leave out from, the ideal type. As we have seen in Part 2.2.1, there is a trade-off between precision and practicality and therefore the researcher has to make a decision about what counts as a significant factor and what, as an infinitesimal factor. This decision cannot be else but arbitrary, nevertheless it is necessary if we want to use a definition of political regime (cf. Bogaards, 2010, p. 476). However it should be noted that not only the ratio of precision and practicality is determined arbitrarily but its content, too. A scholar may have certain theoretical or practical ideas as to what he should or should not include in the ideal type but there are no binding constraints for his decision (except, perhaps, that he looks for some kind of political power structure in general). This is a direct consequence of the epistemology of comparative regime theory for it builds on induction, that is, empirical, *a posteriori* knowledge with no *a priori* limitations.

This room for arbitrariness leads to the well-known traveling problem. This problem was pointed out by Sartori (1970) who says our concepts have a limited ability to travel,

[24] According to Mises (2010, pp. 59–64), an ideal type is "not a class concept" because "not all its characteristics need to be present in any one example." But if the absence of a feature does not prevent association with the ideal type then the fallacy of diminished subtypes is committed.

that is, to be applicable in different parts of the world. The reason for this is that we theoretically can leave anything out from our definition of political regime and therefore we necessarily allow for the existence of elements which were not regarded politically salient when the ideal type was created but turn out to be such in the newly examined polity. And because spatially and temporally different polities are trivially different, these contextual effects will too be different everywhere which renders our concepts unreliable.

Sartori (1970, pp. 1033–1036)'s solution to this problem was to move up on the ladder of abstraction. If we "say less," that is, narrow the intension of a concept, its extension must grow and should be able to encompass more empirical cases, eventually all of which we want to research. However it should be noted that, since accentuation was too arbitrary when our concept was created, the internal structure of the concept should also be adjusted to the new phenomena and its context—which practically leads us back to Weber's method of creating *ad hoc* ideal types.

In sum, the epistemology of comparative regime theory starts from knowing essentially nothing and creates concepts via induction, providing no general guideline for what to look for in specific cases.[25] As comparative regime theory is already a well-developed science, best practices have matured and scholars rarely start creating ideal types independently from the already established regime concepts (but see Fabry, 2017). However, as Part 2.2. has shown, there has been a great deal of imprudence in concept formation and adaptation, stemming from using unjustified presuppositions which remained implicit precisely because the scholars focused only on inducing from the

[25] Hoppe (2006, pp. 271–274) argues that even empiricism must—and indeed does—accept a certain apriorism not to be self-contradictory. On empirically untestable axioms in logical empiricist theories, see Hempel (1959, 1958).

empirics they saw. This clearly raises questions about the adequacy of the ad hoc epistemology of comparative regime theory.

3.3. The Benefits of a Praxeological Foundation

Using Mises' terminology, comparative regime theory is a historicist science, gathering its knowledge from historical experience. Mises (2006, p. 96)'s words about political science of his days seem appropriate for today's comparative regime theory: "that branch of history that deals with the history of political institutions and with the history of political thought as manifested in the writings of authors who disserted about political institutions and sketched plans for their alternations."

As opposed to this aposteriorism, the logical character of praxeology is that of an *a priori* formal theory. As Mises (2006, pp. 44–45) writes:

> "Praxeology is a priori. All its theorems are products of deductive reasoning that starts from the category of action. […] What praxeology asserts with regard to human action in general is strictly valid without any exception for every action. […] Every theorem of praxeology is deduced by logical reasoning from the category of action. It partakes of the apodictic certainty provided by logical reasoning that starts from an a priori category.
>
> Into the chain of praxeological reasoning the praxeologist introduces certain assumptions concerning the conditions of the environment in which an action takes place. Then he tries to find out how these special conditions affect the result to which his reasoning must lead. The question whether or not the real conditions of the external world correspond to these assumptions is to be answered by experience. But if the answer is in the affirmative, all the conclusions drawn by logically correct praxeological reasoning strictly describe what is going on in reality."

The universal applicability of praxeology's action axiom and its logical consequences made it a useful tool in the previous chapter to interpret concepts and find their praxeological prerequisites and consequences. However, as Mises writes above, praxeology can be pursued much further by adding empirical minor postulates by which

a much broader and coherent praxeological narrative can be built and used to analyze the specific cases for which the minor postulates hold (see Rothbard, 2011).

Such a praxeological narrative, developed for political action, could precisely be the guideline that comparative regime theory misses. For praxeology provides valid *a priori* statements about the necessary prerequisites and consequences of concepts and thus tell the scholar what kind of elements, or elements fulfilling what roles, he must include in his ideal types. In the basic state it was used in, praxeology makes only rather general statements which may indeed seem somewhat trivial. But as soon as more minor postulates are added, more specific praxeological laws can be deduced which shall reveal less obvious prerequisites and consequences accordingly. In conceptualization, the scholar can use the already identifiable elements (the empirical facts he observes) of the given phenomenon to be able to decide which minor postulates hold in its case and thus which praxeological prerequisites and consequences should be looked for. Furthermore, praxeological deduction can always be expanded by adding new postulates, in case we want more specific insights than what praxeology can provide in its prevailing status.

As already mentioned in Part 1.3, does not tell us how the prerequisites and consequences actually look like (i.e. what their empirical form is), only that they must exist should the inputted minor postulates be true. This way no prerequisites of an ideal type shall remain implicit if it is interpreted in the praxeological framework. And the scholar should then be obliged to say something about these prerequisites, which makes concepts and conceptualization more grounded, theories created out of the concepts more logically sound, and realizing mistakes easier. As Horwitz (2012) aptly writes about the benefits of the Austrian method:

> "Rendering human action intelligible means telling better stories about what happened and why. [Praxeological] theory provides the framework for organizing the plot, and the richness of the human experience […] provides the particulars that make for a complete and empirically relevant story. Basing it all on realistic and empirically relevant assumptions about human knowledge and choice makes it not just valid, but sound […] reasoning.
>
> Austrian economics is not, despite what critics argue, anti-empirical. The core of its theory emerges from what we can know empirically about human beings, both universally and in the particulars of a context of application. That theory is then used to offer a better understanding of history and contemporary events by organizing a wide range of empirical data into a coherent narrative that renders those events intelligible […] so the best we can do as [social scientists] is tell better-organized, more richly empirical, and more logically valid stories."

Naturally the facts of history do change all the time and thus no single praxeology can be created to have a narrative for every phenomenon on the lowest level of abstraction. However a praxeology with the usually relevant empirical facts for the given field, such as political science or particularly comparative regime theory, can be developed, which researchers can use and also build further—including the new empirics into a sound and coherent edifice instead of uncoordinated, *ad hoc* conceptualization.

In short, what a praxeological theory of politics can provide is, first, an *ex post* mechanism to criticize concepts and theories, and second, an *ex ante* mechanism to form future concepts and theories using a stable narrative of logical prerequisites and consequences instead of an *ad hoc* epistemology.

3.4. The Roles of Empiricism and the New Epistemological Synthesis

In the previous part it could be seen that praxeology is offered not as a substitute for empiricism but as a supplement. While the best practices of empirical political science are kept they do not have to start from knowing nothing a priori. This adumbrates a new

epistemological synthesis between praxeology and positivism, both having its own specific roles.

The range of praxeological knowledge is delimited by Rothbard (2011, p. 74) as follows. Praxeology is the science of "the formal implications of the fact that men use means to attain various chosen ends." But it does not say anything about why man chooses various ends (psychology); what men's ends should be (philosophy of ethics or aesthetics); how to use means to arrive at ends (technology); or what man's ends are and have been and how means were used to attain them (history). All of these disciplines, which have been incorporated in certain forms into political science, are beyond the reach of simple praxeological deduction and require either ethical statements or empirics.

To be able to use praxeology we must be able to determine which laws of it are adequate to the situation at hand, which requires gathering empirical data. Also the praxeological narrative is only a guideline or a "skeleton" (Diesing, 1972, p. 63) not the actual theory of the given phenomena for that must be made operationally meaningful by the exact empirical data of the given case. This is, it will be recalled, one of the reasons why more than one praxeologically sound theory for the same phenomenon or set of phenomena is possible. In case of more than one theories, they can be tested empirically (like the above mentioned Western leverage theory of Levitsky and Way [2010]) or we can use other traditional methods of empirical theory selection, such as comprehensiveness and parsimony (Eichner, 1983). Finally, as I mentioned in Part 1.3, the logical structure of praxeology prevents it from making predictions which can be done by the use of empirics.

In sum, while a praxeological theory of politics, once developed, could be used to criticize existing concepts and theories and form new ones in a systemic way, empirical research and testing should provide all the data that praxeology furnishes. This is the abstract model of the new epistemological synthesis, vis-à-vis the current positivism-inspired epistemology described earlier, capable of exploiting the benefits of praxeology and making comparative regime theory more systemic and less ad hoc.

Conclusion

Although scholars have proved very creative in regime conceptualization since the third wave of democratization, conceptual innovations have brought both deeper understanding and raging confusion. Revealing and minimizing the latter is the primary step toward a sounder comparative regime theory. Aiming at this, my thesis offered two mechanisms of criticizing social science concepts: the means of logic, and praxeology. The former is basically a guarded restatement and application of Sartori's concept formation principles, vis-à-vis the radial categories propagated by Collier and becoming popular tools of regime conceptualization. Diminished subtypes, which were first proposed in a formal way by Collier and Mahon's early article, are generally problematic as their basic logical structure violates the exclusivity criterion—bringing about a plethora of overlapping labels and also a real Babel in the literature. Several scholars have provided ingenious corrections or alternatives to diminished subtypes, but only those ones were really successful which indeed rejected radial categories in favor of normal, Sartorian categories.

Besides being critical, I also outlined a prudent way of forming diminished subtypes, based on Sartorian principles, but it may not be very practical or worth the effort. For the primary justification of diminished subtypes, namely the democratization hypothesis, is inaccurate and dubious at best. I made a more detailed argument about this using the second mechanism I offered: praxeology, the deductive science of human action.

The distinctive method of von Mises' Austrian school of economics, praxeology is much less a well-known and accepted standpoint than it should be. Indeed, general understanding of praxeology has been hampered by some Austrians as well who did not face the problems of its application properly (e.g. Rothbard, 1951) and offered it as a

substitute for empiricism and logical positivism (cf. Caplan, 1997). However the proper way it can be used is two. First, it is a powerful tool of criticizing concepts, making their necessary prerequisites explicit. Even its most basic insights, stemming from the universally valid action axiom and two minor postulates, were enough to present a general criticism of regime change theories, pointing out two problems which the current literature rarely recognizes or given an answer to.

The second application of praxeology is *ex ante*, meaning it could provide a guideline for empirical research. Alongside the Sartorian means of logic which are already established, such a praxeological guideline could also be integrated into the theoretical arsenal of comparative regime theory. In the last chapter I explained how this is both possible and beneficial, and why it could lead a new epistemological synthesis, re-bridging mainstream positivism and the marginalized, aprioristic Austrian method.

It follows the aforementioned last chapter that praxeology should be more developed to make more use of it in comparative regime theory, or in political science in general. Such development may be modeled after Austrian economic treatises such as that of Rothbard (2011) which deduced economic theory in line with the praxeological method. For the deduction of such an intricate theoretical edifice would require a coherent and orderly inclusion of relevant minor postulates and long chains of reasoning, even a sketch of a more developed praxeological political science would go way beyond the limits of my thesis. But one minor postulate may be mentioned which could be included near the beginning of the deduction to delimit it from the praxeological theory of economics. This can be that political action employs the "political means" as defined by Oppenheimer (1998).

The idea of using this minor postulate to delimit the political realm was first brought up by Apăvăloaei (2015) and then taken on in a short paper by Bragues (2015). "A praxeological theory of politics," writes Apăvăloaei (2015, pp. 108–110), "starts from the simple fact that actors can choose to alleviate the uneasiness brought about by scarcity by employing either the economic means [labor and voluntary exchange] or the political means [coercive exchange], *tertium non datur*. […] Politics analyzes the logic of coercion as it emerges from the interaction between an aggressor (bandit or state) and a victim."[26] From this starting point, several conclusions and laws of human action can be deduced, and expanding it with further relevant minor postulates may provide a sound praxeological narrative of political phenomena (cf. Hoppe, 2001).

Praxeology has been fringe in, and sometimes even ostracized from, the mainstream which is the first weakness of my thesis. Paraphrasing Gerring (1999) who says a good concept should be familiar to the academic audience, I can say that praxeology is anything but widely familiar—particularly among political scientist. Thus the reader might only know it from my interpretation which may make following my arguments more difficult than it should be. Second, my meta-analysis could only include a selection of the existing concepts of comparative regime theory. Most obviously the branch I dealt with only cursorily was that of regime change theories, having analyzed not its specific concepts but rather some of their fundamental components.

Finally, it may well be a weakness that my thesis is purely theoretical, whereas even meta-analyses in comparative regime theory tend to have both a theoretical part and an empirical part based on the proposed theory. Indeed, I could have formed a series of prudent diminished subtypes, either using one or two root concepts and corresponding

[26] On the praxeological non-difference between legitimate and illegitimate coercion, see Rothbard (2011, pp. 1149–1150).

genera, and showed how existing polities can be classified by them. However this might have shifted the focus from the two mechanisms and the aim of my thesis was to present them, using the meta-analysis as a demonstration of their utility in comparative regime theory.

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