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Book Review

— *Pensadores rebeldes*, by Cristóbal Kay, Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2023

Social scientists are often quick to accuse others, like electoral constituencies, or even more in general societies as a whole, of forgetfulness. Blaming them for forgetting how treacherous, or corrupt, a politician or party turned out to be, the former time he (not often she) governed. Or even forgetting the fact a politician earlier turned out despotic, or cruelly vindictive towards opponents. Social scientists would be offended and even accuse the electorate of being "stupid" if people would, a few years later, again vote for him. But social scientists themselves are also forgetful. I realized this reading a compilation done by Cristobal Kay, of articles on "rebellious thinkers". In it, Kay reviews the work of scholars on whom he published biographic articles in earlier years. Now, Kay brought these pieces together, and they turn out to be a more than worthwhile reminder for many a social scientist on Latin America, that may have forgotten these facts: "Hey, you stood on the shoulders of predecessors you may have forgotten about….". Kay's message: remember them. Not to simply honour them, but to recall the important things they contributed to your own thinking now.

Most impacting are the chapters on the scholars who, in the 1960s and 1970s, gave voice to Latin America's protest against its alleged matter-of-fact poverty and underdevelopment. In their own ways, authors like Raúl Prebisch, Celso Furtado, André Gunder Frank and Theotônio dos Santos (chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4) all demystified the idea that Latin America (and other "Southern Countries", for that matter) was poor, because it "lagged behind" or simply "had not developed yet". Based on solid historic and economic data, Prebisch began to reveal how the unequal exchange between "the centre" and "the periphery" produced and reproduced the economic backlog of Latin America. A range of structural conditions, he argued, perpetuated and aggravated the cleavage between growth rates of the different poles. Here, the first contours of the Dependency Theory emerged. The earlier publications of Celso Furtado in the mid-1960s built on Prebisch's work and demonstrated how low incomes in the South inhibited industrial developments and thus contributed to a deepening inequality and economic stagnation in Latin America. Policies like Import Substitution

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Industrialization and Agrarian Reform became increasingly convincing suggestions to undo the ongoing "development of underdevelopment". And that was exactly the thing that needed to be stressed again and again: underdevelopment is not a fact of life; it is made.

It is a reminder, I believe, that many scholars of the generations of the 1990s and 2000s and later, desperately need. Today, absorbed by the many dramatic events both in Latin America and worldwide, it is easy to forget the crucial insight that still today shape and also should shape, our analyses of global and local developments. Let's remember, and let's include, how structural unequal and unjust exchanges and information access shape our, and peoples', perceptions of their realities and their interests.

In chapter 3 and 4, André Gunder Frank and Theotônio dos Santos, two other representatives and contributors to currents of Dependency Theories, are addressed. Here too, their inspirations, the developments of their thinking, their trajectories of institutional affiliations, and their contributions to the elaborations of Dependency Theories and affiliated analyses, are well expounded by Kay. In chapter 5, Solon Barraclough's story is told. Born in the United States but working mainly in Latin America, he was less interested in "politically charged" theorizing. But he contributed both scholarly and in action to agrarian reform insights and practices. Although possibly less known, he certainly deserved this tribute to his contribution. Last but not least, chapter 6 is dedicated to Willem Assies, who died in 2010, way too young. I knew him well. And was delighted to see him amongst these renown scholars. Kay beautifully portrays his work on agrarian issues, on citizenship and democratization, on social movements and the vicissitudes of indigenous peoples and their activism, both in Bolivia and other Latin American countries.

One could argue that the combination of these biographies is a bit disperse. The first four still embody an interconnected theme where they portray the emergence of the Dependency-paradigm and it's follow-up turnings. The story on Barraclough, on the other hand, is only loosely connected, and it remains a bit unclear why he, being less politically outspoken, also was a "rebel". Willem Assies may have been more a very engaged and solidary fellow-thinker with "rebels" like social movements and marginalized groups fighting for a voice, than a thinker that knocked over established or dominant theories. And of course he was of another generation. So, a minor point might be the selection of these "rebels", and the absence of a female rebel – they were there! But these really are minor issues. On the whole, this book was for me an aide-mémoire, a re-enlivened enormous knowledge deposit, and also a realization of "what remained of me as a scholar after much of what I had studied earlier, had faded", as my paraphrase of the old saying goes. The reminder was more than worth it. And once over, I learned a lot.

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