

Editorial

Sam Whimster

We publish the last three papers coming out of the thought-provoking conference on translating Max Weber, which was organised by Johannes Weiss and Wilfried Nippel and held at the Max Weber College, Erfurt in July 2014. Jean-Pierre Grossein argues that scholarship has to be more critical of previous translations if the full depth and complexity of Weber's concepts are to be revealed. Marlene Dietrich makes an appearance to show how normal words do have quite technical senses. 'Falling in love again' is the English version of her famous song, with the German title more or less ignored: '*Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt*'. Tuning in to Marlene means getting close to the full allure of her use of German, something Weber translators have on occasions been reluctant to do. Sam Whimster engages phrase by phrase with key passages of Weber's economic sociology, showing Weber to be a more radical proposition than previously rendered; Weber did not use the translation terms 'means of production' and 'the division of labour' as usually supposed. Martin Fuchs argues that Weber's extensive use of 'Welt' and 'relationship to the world' is more complex than later textbook schematizations allow. Being in the world, interpreting the world, acting in the world are all involved, and if this is not recognized Weber's work is condemned to sterile ideal types. Markus Gabriel's *Why the World does not Exist* highlights what we take as a given is on reflection endlessly problematic. Different conceptualizations of 'world' can be referenced to different domains but it is illegitimate to assume an ontological entity—'world'—exists. And to point up how commentary is generated from the given Weber, the Max Weber Stiftung have published *Max Weber in der Welt*, the proceedings of a conference under that title held in the rheinische world of Bonn in 2012. Both books are reviewed in a full review section.

Omar Kassem argues that the plausibility of rationality in mainstream economics is predicated on economic actors knowing what

choices to make in a situational world. Max Weber was recruited by Lionel Robbins to add plausibility to this viewpoint. To make individual rational choice work Arrow and Debreu, in the early 1950s, sublimated the real to abstract mathematics. Likewise money: is the rational calculation made on basis of the physicality of money, or is it—as Weber said in *General Economic History*—based on unit of account, where to count comes before to calculate?

Kari Palonen opens the issue with a timely consideration of what are the processes that underlie academic freedom, which is seriously threatened by the conduct of academics themselves and their managerial masters. Scholarship can only reach truth through free debate for and against, and this follows a parliamentary model of rhetorical debate and the freedom to set agendas.

Finally, Guenther Roth reminds us what a massive undertaking it was to collect together all the extant English translations of different sections of *Economy and Society* for his and Wittich's 1968 edition. Some of those translations can be improved upon, but as Grossein observes, as Martin Luther observed of the Gospels: 'It requires a righteous, pious, industrious, fearsome, Christian, erudite and practised heart'.