

Editorial

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Milieu Analysis: A Plaque on All Your Houses?

Milieu analysis is one of the stated aims of *Max Weber Studies*, so it is good to report that this theme is to be found in the majority of the papers collected together in this issue. Milieu analysis involves a range of methods and data. Here Weber is placed at the centre of a web of relations and surroundings, and he is made the significant point in the multiple histories that connect to his location. Many studies contribute to the analysis of milieu and there is a need to define more exactly the field of enquiry. Questions include: by what means, through what channels, by what modes of mediation, and with what people, books, ideas and all manner of material objects was Weber related to his surroundings, and how do those very surroundings impact on our understanding of the life and the work? Further, how are these connections to be uncovered and traced, weighted, interpreted, recorded for posterity and, where surviving in material form, made available to fellow researchers?

This issue starts with a presentation of the Heidelberg reactions to Weber's death and, in the debate between Rickert and Jaspers, assessments of his role as philosopher. Then, we are led to reconsider the continuities and the discontinuities between the scientific vocation and the external constraints which provide the limiting contexts for scientific work in Weber's time and in our own. We are invited back to the milieu of the first hearers of Weber's *Einleitung* and to experience the full force of Weber's language and concepts as he explored the concept of religiosity. The most significant contribution to the analysis of the milieu of generations of the Weber family – Guenther Roth's massive *Familiengeschichte* – is extensively reviewed by Wolfgang Mommsen. And we have a further essay from Roth on Weber's position on issues of Jewish assimilation in the United States, Germany, and the proposals for a Zionist state – issues of whether one milieu chooses, or refuses, to accept another milieu alongside it or within itself.

The importance of William James to Weber's conceptualisation of religiosity is receiving not inconsiderable attention in recent scholarship,

as we shall in Sam Whimster's Note further below. Here let me introduce more of the theme of this editorial through the help of his younger brother, Henry James.

It is necessary always to proceed cautiously, to be aware of the limitations as well as the promise of milieu analysis. We must even be prepared to be disappointed. Could we perhaps be as disappointed as the character of Gedge in Henry James' short story of 1902 on the fate of the new curators of the Shakespeare birthplace in Stratford? Mr Gedge, at first charmed and thrilled to be able to touch what Shakespeare touched, and to breathe the air that Shakespeare must have breathed, is led to consider that the spirit of Shakespeare can actually only be felt where there are no material remains at all, but only the space, the birth room, in the 'holy of holies'. But even here he begins to suspect that it is all a sham and he begins to demythologise to the extent that the existence of Shakespeare himself, whether he was born at all, becomes his firm belief. Such a quest for the historical Weber might also be disappointed if one was to visit the Fallenstein villa on the Neckar, and exclaim, along with Mr Gedge, that there 'are no relics'. One may well feel that emptiness if one compared the house to that of John Ruskin at Brantwood on Lake Coniston, in the North West of England. Yet, we must not deal with this cognitive dissonance in the way that Gedge does; he sacrifices all truth for the sake of having something to say that a public may enjoy hearing. It is just as important to 'own up' and say 'we just don't know' as it is to make full use of all the materials that survive, and not to squander our chances.

Like the adventurous publisher and biographer in Henry James' *The Aspern Papers*, the desire to touch a human hand that touched the hand of the great poet Jeffrey Aspern, whose love letters to 'Juliana', now the elderly Miss Bordereau, he thinks he has traced – to look into the eyes of someone the poet too gazed at – can result only in frustration and cynicism and self-protection. After the death by natural causes of 'Juliana', the letters are used by the younger Miss Bordereau, the spinster niece of the elder Miss Bordereau, who hopes to trap the publisher into marriage. But it is the letters to Juliana that are venerated by the publisher, who consumed in his lust for the letters shows no real regard for the niece. He refuses to marry her, and as an act of liberation she burns all the letters and the Aspern papers are lost forever.

But we need not be so pessimistic. Perhaps our attitude should be nearer to that experienced by Rilke in Munich in 1918. Rilke got close to seeing Weber in a full-blooded context, in the milieu of the political excitement of pre-armistice Munich.

Rilke wrote to Clara Rilke on the 7 November 1918: 'I also was one of the thousands on Monday evening in the rooms of the Hotel Wagner.

Professor Max Weber of Heidelberg was speaking, a political economist considered to be one of the best heads'. Rilke is part of the milieu, and shows himself as a discriminating participant. He recalls that the atmosphere did not inhibit his experience of the important happenings during that night: 'the fog of beer, and smoke and people did not strike you as uncomfortable' so momentous were the topics being debated.

It was in Munich that Jaspers last saw Weber alive, at Seestrasse close by the Englischer Garten (where there is a *Gedanktafel* recording the fact of Weber's occupancy). But the backdrop to the interrelations of Rickert, Jaspers and Weber (and of course a host of other academics and personalities) was Heidelberg. Michael Buselmeier in his *Literarische Führungen durch Heidelberg*, introduces us to the public and private spaces of the city on the Neckar. Rickert's house in Heidelberg, Scheffelstrasse 4, a street in the vicinity of the Weber's villa on the Ziegelhäuserstrasse, was his home for over 20 years from 1916 to 1936. There were probably far more interactions and visits than any extant materials can tell us. Jaspers lived in various houses, and indeed his first encounters with Weber would have been in the Hauptstrasse apartment before the Webers, on the death of Adolf Hausrath, moved into a part of the Fallenstein villa. From 1923 to 1948 the Jaspers lived in Plöck 66, in the close vicinity of the University buildings. It was in this house that Jaspers wrote his well-known essays on Weber. Whilst the spirit of Weber may not walk in the Fallenstein villa, since there are no objects around which an aura can hover, and whilst there is only a room with a view, Heidelberg still proves essential for milieu analysis.

The intricate network of streets, unaltered in basic design for centuries, and the close proximity of residents of intellectual distinction, is a map of the academic village that was (and is?) Heidelberg where lives and ideas could readily meet, get acquainted and settle down. Heidelberg is a town which has succumbed to the prophecy, to borrow a pun from Michael Holroyd, of 'a plaque on all your houses!' The sense of the past, and tradition, often marked by *Gedanktafeln* and the annual and decennial academic and public rituals, serve to create a milieu worthy of anthropological study and suggests the ways in which the 'myth of Heidelberg' – both Max Weber himself, and the town itself – could so easily be sustained.

Buselmeier informs the literary-philosophical pilgrim, as part of the introduction to the Rickert house that 'Nach Webers Tod kam es zum Streit zwischen Jaspers und Rickert über Webers Bedeutung als Philosoph' (230). It is the nature of that dispute, and the various texts in which the dispute was carried, refined and defended that is the subject of Adair-Toteff's paper. The estrangement of Rickert and Jaspers occa-

sioned by their confrontation over Max Weber was no doubt the more keenly demarcated through the avoidance of one another in the streets of Heidelberg.

Adair-Totefff concludes, perhaps rightly, that Weber is 'beyond classification'. Rickert consistently argued, often against Jaspers, that Weber 'was no philosopher' whereas Jaspers held that Weber's life itself constituted a philosophy. What is striking and salutary is the realisation that even those close to Weber, those who were welcome in his house and who could claim him as friend, colleague and supporter, were able to reach such differing conclusions about his meaning and purpose. With this example in mind, perhaps the social researcher working at some space removed from the milieu is actually better able to assess the meaning of Weber, given the opportunity to assess numerous interpretations against evidence and data not available to persons like Rickert and Jaspers. As Ann Thwaite has observed, 'the trouble with real people in everyday life is that we don't know them... we can't read their diaries or their letters (Thwaite 1988: 17).

One can find a *Gedanktafel* to the development of the natural sciences in Heidelberg at the house of Max Wolf (1863–1932), Weber's contemporary, and the developer of the first observatory in the city – in the garden of his parents' house at Märzgasse 16. Later, the University supported the colonisation of the plateau of the Königstuhl for the furtherance of this research. Grand-Duke Friedrich I of Baden unveiled the observatory in June 1898, and at one time over 250 people were employed. Karl Schaifers underlines Wolf's commitment to the scientific vocation: 'Sein Name steht nicht als Synonym für eine Konstante, eine Formel, ein Gesetz oder eine Theorie, er gehört zu den Grossen der Wissenschaft, die durch ihr ganzes wissenschaftliches Leben Vorbild sind' (quoted in J. von Esenwein and Michel Utz, *Folg' ich meinem Genius*, [1998: 199]). The development of natural sciences at Heidelberg was a central preoccupation of the University during the turn of the century. However, the practice of natural science did not figure overly in Weber's discussion of *Science as a Vocation* (he had moved to Munich, after Vienna, by then), though of course he was aware of scientific advances and did not exclude natural science from his account. It is left to contemporary researchers, here by Mark Erikson, to apply Weber's ideas to teams of natural scientists.

In this article, milieu analysis takes on the more circumspect but apparently more concrete dimension of external conditions and constraints. Erikson's article moves from the milieu of the organisation of science in Weber's time to consider the situation in the UK today. Erikson operationalizes Weber's approach to understanding the scope and nature of the academic vocation, by taking Weber's 'method' in *Science as*

a Vocation as positing a dual focus on external conditions and inner motivations. He applies this approach to present day natural scientists to highlight the particularities of the pursuit of science in UK universities and the degree to which a notion of vocation can still be found. The analysis of the external conditions, which emphasizes the detrimental role of increasing audit and centralization of research and its funding, underlines that only certain types of scientist and only certain types of science can be produced in particular circumstances. It is argued that contemporary conditions are not favourable to free enquiry. Erikson suggests that despite poor job security and increasing public suspicion of natural scientific practice, scientists maintain their 'faith in science'. He attributes this to the survival of the scientific vocation. Interestingly, the organisation of natural science in the cases studied shows the importance of shared laboratory space, team projects and general collegiality in maintaining the faith in science reported. As such, one wonders whether Weber's lack of explicit focus on teams of scientists in *Science as a Vocation*, means that ideas developed in relation to sects and the group maintenance of faith in the face of hostile forces might not provide further concepts to be utilized in this area.

Through a new translation of the *Einleitung* SamWhimster endeavours not only to bring Weber's text into readable, lucid English but also to recapture some of the startling freshness that those first hearers of the essay experienced when it was read out to them in Heidelberg. Not that our responses are to repeat the responses of those of that time, in that milieu, but that our responses should be to a text a little less familiar than what has nowadays become routine. A key part of this re-orientation is ensuring that the text is properly located in its rightful bibliographical milieu. Whimster re-enlivens the text and recaptures its radicalness in a number of ways, not least of which is to consider the full materiality of many of Weber's concepts such as *Heilsgüter*. Materiality, in the actual force of Weber's deliberate choice and construction of words and, secondly, the way that choice links with Weber's insistence that ideal interests have a significant weight and force in the development of the history of civilizations.

Roth's recently published, *Max Webers deutsch-englische Familiengeschichte 1800–1950* places Max and Marianne Weber in the cultural traditions of various branches of the family in order to show not only the background to the debates that occasioned responses, interventions and informed reactions to the issues of the time from the extended Weber family, but also the degree of inheritance, tradition, and the weight of the past that Weber either bore, worked within and renewed, or rejected. Roth recreates the context, the milieu of the Weber family through

official and private documents, letters, diaries, postcards, photographs, paintings, and always a heightened sense of place. Mommsen's review demonstrates one of the potential dangers of milieu analysis: the more detail we apply to our picture of his surroundings, the more problematic becomes the interpretation of context. This is no more so than in the matter of various related families' involvement in – and arguments over – German nation-building. Mommsen sees an unambiguous German nationalism in Weber's writings, whereas Roth presents a more attenuated and cosmopolitan nationalism. Intimacy with the family milieu brings these arguments alive, but it does not however settle them.

Just a few houses along from the Jaspers' house on Plöck, at number 68, on the corner opposite St Peterskirche, one finds a *Gedanktafel* to Johann Casper Bluntschli (1808-81), the legal historian. He makes an appearance in Guenther Roth's article (as well as in Duncan Kelly's review of recent books on Georg Jellinek), as a dinner guest, along with Erdmannsdörffer, at the home of Ida and Georg Weber (no relation) who lived on the Neuenheim side of the river) where, Helene Weber observes, one topic of conversation was the Jewish question. This was during 1882, and by a process of comparison between that period and two separate occasions in Weber's life, Professor Roth is able to show the continuities and discontinuities between the generations – the weight of tradition and heritage – with respect to the Jewish question, in an effort to specify Max Weber's attitude to Jewish assimilation at home and abroad and the prospects for a Zionist homeland.

Unlike the experience of Henry James' custodians of the Shakespeare birthplace, we do not have to confess that there is spirit only, 'and no relics'. On the contrary, there is an embarrassment of riches, with still more to be uncovered and closely examined. Indeed, progress in these lines of research cannot be better served than by the public availability of many of these materials. It would seem foolhardy to suggest that given such closely sustained attention to the reconstruction of the milieu of Max and Marianne Weber that Roth has undertaken so indefatigably to suggest that there will not be more to do and more yet to uncover. But researchers from this point onward will have a much clearer idea of the lie of the land, and they will still have the freedom to differ about the interpretation of milieu. I make just three brief observations to illustrate this point.

First, it is certainly the case that Adolf Hausrath, Weber's uncle on his mother side, and Professor of Church History at Heidelberg is a mysterious figure. In Professor Roth's account, in both book and his article below, Hausrath appears in all his misanthropy, and the narrative, provided in the main from the letters and exchanges of the Fallenstein sis-

ters, and which can be further reinforced by Marianne Weber as well as by Ernst Troeltsch, appears to be objective or at least to have considerable evidence to support it. In Hausrath's defence of Treitschke and his anti-Jewish sensibility it appears that there is little that can be said to balance the very negative impression. But once we move beyond the sisterhood and the friends of Max Weber to explore other personages, we face some contradictory evidence worthy of further enquiry. Indeed, in the wider milieu of Heidelberg, and amongst networks of friends that included Georg Weber and Adalbert Merx the image of Hausrath and the warmth felt to flow from him is of totally different genre. The web of Heidelberg relations is also to be noted here in so far as Merx's daughter was married to the pioneer astronomer Max Wolf, whom we have met above. It was Adalbert Merx who died from a heart attack during the funeral oration he was making at Hausrath's grave-side – an attack brought on apparently by the full emotion of Merx's losing such a close and dear friend.

Secondly, Hausrath too connects the Weber family to a host of artistic, literary and theological connections that still await further exploration – often from a theological and literary perspective. Professor Roth has done the most to begin to unravel the theological beliefs and preferences of the Weber family, and his attention to Theodore Parker, Channing, Henry Crabb Robinson and F.W. Robertson are exemplary. Equally, he has drawn attention to the literary likes and dislikes of the Webers. We await, however for a detailed analysis of the theological writing of Wilhelm Benecke, and, for example, the significance of Heidelberg pastors for the Weber family from the famous Richard Rothe (Hausrath was his biographer) to the more workaday ministrations of Pastor Schwarz, and even Hausrath himself at an earlier period – enquiries equivalent to the type Roth has admirably carried out for Karl Zittel and Pastor Riff, for example.

Finally, perhaps the most significant advancement in understanding Weber's own relation to the milieu, in the sense of his actual surroundings – artistic, natural and social – are to be found in the analysis of Weber's own letters, postcards and other textual fragments that relate to his experience of travel. These accounts, I would suggest, are now of increasing significance in the attempt to paint as full a picture as possible of Weber's milieu. We may well find a Max Weber sensitive to his surroundings that show at least some comparison with those more celebrated for their powers of observation and record.

To conclude: I have in my possession, and this was an item discovered by chance in an antique book shop in Heidelberg (and placed into context, I should add, only by close study of Roth's work), a copy of an origi-

nal German edition of Wilhelm Benecke's *Epistle to the Romans*, which was a gift to the young Friedrich Schwarz in the early 1850s, from Benecke's second wife, Luise Falcke (1782–1876). It contains an inscription in her hand to him. Schwarz served the spiritual needs of the city of Heidelberg for over 40 years until his death in 1910. In his time, he personally knew, for example, Bluntschli, Daniel Schenke, Ludwig Häusser, Heinrich Holtzmann and Karl Holsten: all leading Heidelberg academics and theologians. In this instance, a trace of Weber's family and its embeddedness in the milieu of Heidelberg, was found outside any archive and I at least could say, unlike the failed editor of Jeffrey Aspern's papers, 'I held in my hands a book that a relative of Weber's had held'. But others had held it too: on the reverse of the hard board cover, an *ex libris* label from one Carl Winter (an early member of the Heidelberg book publishing empire, who perhaps appreciated its significance) placed this particular book in more than one milieu, and the meaning of the book was not to be exhausted by reference to its original context.

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