

Editorial

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The articles in this edition all raise the issue, in different ways, of how one proceeds with and works with ideal types. Matti Peltonen suggests that the differing ways in which they are used reflect different research styles, traceable back to the divergent traditions of Anglo-America and Germany. The former tradition has been far more vigorous in prosecuting the Protestant-ethic thesis. Had Weber correctly identified the significant causal factor in the 'take-off' of the early modern world? In testing this hypothesis (to destruction), economic historians in the Anglo-American tradition subjected something that Peltonen terms 'the Weber Thesis' to massive empirical inquiry of a highly critical nature. Unfortunately, what was tested – and found severely deficient – was not what Weber had written about the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. Economic historians, driven by their own methodological standards, were unable to discern just what Weber was saying and instead adopted a hypothesis for investigation that at its crudest asked whether the European Reformation was responsible for the rise of modern capitalism. The German tradition, by contrast, did not produce their Tawney, Robertson or Kurt Samuelsson; for it, the issue was one more densely rooted in hermeneutics, where *Geist* was not subsumable to a factor of historical development.

Christian Etzrodt, informed by Popperian standards of scientific logic, demonstrates that a significant amount of conceptual elucidation has to be carried out before the Protestant-ethic thesis can be falsified. The linkages in Weber's argument are numerous, and testing one link does not imply that one has tested the whole thesis. Besides this, each separate test can only be resolved at the level of the interpretation of meaning. The debate, initiated by MacKinnon's critique of Weber's account of Calvinism, turns into an interpretative dispute about how providence was regarded by particular groups

of people. Etzrodt proposes a way forward by grouping the behavioural expectations of ascetic Protestantism as Neo-Calvinism. These traits motivate Adam Smith's economic actors. If Smith is taken to be the definitive theorist of economic modernity, then the continuity between Weber's behavioural criteria and Smith's theory of rational economic activity requires us to accept that the Protestant ethic thesis is not defective in this regard. (When the Weberian oeuvre is further explored, back to his lectures in the 1890s on economics, it is almost certain that Weber had comprehended Smith, who was a staple item in German and Austrian *Nationalökonomie*. Hence an understanding of Adam Smith was probably a given in Weber's writing of his Protestant-ethic essays.)

Stephen Fleming offers a pregnant research note on the empirical evidence of American Quakers' propensity to save and their wealth accumulation. Should this be seen as further evidence in favour of the Protestant-ethic thesis, and if so, how is this evidence to be assessed in relation to the thesis? Or/and, is there a suggestive hermeneutic that Quaker religious observance has trouble sustaining itself within families over generations?

Stefan Breuer proposes an ideal-type of fascism that has four elements: a party organization oriented to an image of charismatic leadership and capable of wielding violence; and a party able to satisfy through patronage a range of interest groups and whose membership exhibit conservative convictions. Breuer argues that an ideal type is less fallible than the checklist criteria with which historians, like Ernst Nolte, proceed. History rarely obliges in offering up neat lists against which the characteristics of something as chaotic, revolutionary and monstrous as fascism can be assigned. Ideal types have to be intelligently and creatively constructed – not by following Weber on charisma – but by using his typology on parties linked to the interpretation of what is taken to be charismatic. Equally, one might observe that political sociologists should today be examining the trend toward mass society under conditions of 'propagandistic simulation' of leadership – a phenomenon that could be analysed through the deployment of Weber's ideal type of 'leader-democracy'.

Duncan Kelly reviews the important new work by Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*. The concept of the imaginary has a likeness to Weber's concept of *Ordnung* when the latter is considered

not just as a legalistic, top-down imposition on a population but to the extent that a population thinks in the categories of an order – an imaginary – and accordingly orientates their behaviour. Imaginaries/orders change – most notably from martial feudalistic to soft-bellied commercialism. Capturing these switches is akin to Foucauldian archaeology, or to a comparative enterprise along the lines of Weber's *Weltreligionen* studies.

Christa Schäfer-Lichtenberger reviews the new volume of the *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* on ancient Judaism, which is edited by Eckart Otto. The review brings out just how thorough the MWG volumes are. The scholarly apparatus starts with a list of symbols, signs and abbreviations. This is followed by an introduction that charts the history of the work and the origins of the writings, to which is appended a chronology of ancient oriental and biblical history. Facsimiles are printed of some of the manuscript material. Weber's writings are presented in chronological order with an editorial report preceding each. The text printed is that of 'the final hand', remembering that the studies were published in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* before being revised for publication in the 'Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religion'. The scholarly apparatus indicates the differences between the two versions, and spelling and substantive errors are noted. The edition concludes with a list of people named by Weber, a glossary, a bibliography of works used by Weber, and finally, an index of people mentioned in the commentary and a subject index. The whole undertaking amounts to over 630 pages, printed in two volumes whose price will not be advertised here.

Weber's writings on ancient Judaism have a chronology and history that scholars need to appreciate. Weber's interest in ancient Judaism first surfaces in his 1909 encyclopaedia article for the *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften* – an article on the subject of the ancient world, including an outline of the organizational stages of the Jewish community. Werner Sombart, Weber's sparring partner, published *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* in 1911. Sombart had always disputed the priority Weber gave to Puritans, arguing instead that modern commercial life owed more to Jewish origins. This new book caused Weber to take a closer look at the Jewish religion. He did this in a manuscript entitled 'Ethik und Mythik/rituelle Absonderung'. This is published here for the first time. Weber argues that the Jewish religion shaped the development of Jewish society. The belief in Jahweh acted not only as a guarantor of the Jewish *Bund* and social order, but

the Jewish god also formed a contract with the people. The prevailing cultic religions succumb to this new ethical religion, and in its everyday practice, upheld by priests, there develops a ritual separation of the Jew from other groups of people. This in turn sets limits on the rationalization of economic life. Marginal notes on the manuscript make clear that this is Weber's riposte to Sombart's argument. An urban pariah people had limited economic potential.

These themes re-appear in his *Sociology of Religion* (to use the title of the English translation). In its first sections the history of Jewish religion is considered as a paradigmatic study in the rationalization potential of religions. In the second section Judaism is considered as a traditional ethic with no tendency towards an inner-worldly ethic. In the post-exilic period a ritualistic community excludes itself from any wider community. This is not unrelated to Nietzsche's theory of *ressentiment* and its eschatological satisfactions. Weber re-works this as a distinction between an in-group and an out-group ethic – that prohibits any systematic economic integration with other groups.

These pre-war treatments are re-worked in *Ancient Judaism*, which was written between 1916 and 1919 at a time when Weber was pursuing the reciprocal causal relationships between ideas/worldviews/ideal interests and economic/political conditions. This is a train of thought that leads Weber to consider the origins of occidental rationalism. In the context of the Jewish people's associational oath to Jahwe, Weber interprets Law as it occurs in the Bible as a reflection of the political conflicts. Law is not given as revelation but is the outcome of legal praxis as the opposing interests of town and countryside, between the plebeian towns of Israel and the agricultural communities of Judea, come into conflict. The second part of *Ancient Judaism* examines the part of prophecy in the exilic period, where the Jewish community's political subjection is, according to the prophets, the result of the people's disobedience in not adhering to the contract with Jahwe. And in the post-exile period the ritual exclusiveness of the Jewish people is strengthened under the leadership of the Pharisees. Certain aspects of Law and prophecy and the Levitical concern for the soul become part of the Christian reception and enter into the history of occidental rationalism. Other aspects – the ritual exclusion and the Talmudic interpretation – remain apart from occidental rationalism. In a separate and related monograph, *Max Webers Studien des Antiken Judentum. Historische Grundlegung einer Theorie der Moderne*, Eckart expands on these themes and also includes the research history of the reception of Weber's ideas.