

Editorial

Sam Whimster

This issue of Max Weber Studies opens with the first instalment—the second to follow in MWS 24.1—of the ‘Planned Introduction to Weber’s *Outline of the Universal Social and Economic History*, translated in 1927 as the *General Economic History*, and here shortened to *Economic History*. The Introduction, by the internationally renowned economist Bertram Schefold, is the first comprehensive account of how the *Economic History* came into existence, against the extremely volatile and dangerous political background of Munich in 1919, where Weber delivered his lecture course on the subject. The Introduction is vital to the understanding of Weber’s late creative period and his lifelong career as an economist, reaching as far back as his attendance as an undergraduate at Karl Knies’s economic lectures—Knies of the older historical school and its closeness to classical economics. Weber’s first professorial lecture course was on general ‘theoretical’ economics, his knowledge of which surfaced again in this late period as he pursued the joint project of finishing writing *Economy and Society* for the *Outline of Social-Economics* and giving a lecture course on economic history. Because the first chapter of *E&S* is devoted to an exact formulation of his sociology, perhaps we should call the project a tri-partite undertaking. This is reflected in Weber’s title as professor of science of society, economic history, and economics at Munich University.

Figuring out how these three headings are configured and bearing in mind that we now also have his 1890’s lectures on General ‘Theoretical’ Economics, edited by Wolfgang J. Mommsen and published in the Gesamtausgabe III/1 (some 800 pages), Bertram Schefold, ably helped in this complex scholarly enterprise by Joachim Schröder, is to be congratulated for his detailed explication of the many strands in play. We are also indebted to Professor Schefold, who as an applied and theoretical economist places Weber within the traditions and evolution of dogmatic/theoretical economics. The linkage to the Austrian school is well known, but here more commonalities appear; likewise, the major issue of why Weber fell out of the canon of economic thought and the supportive role

played by Chicago's Frank Knight (who did the first translation of the *Economic History* in 1927). Chicago's later reductionism of economics to monetary quanta and the closing of the economic mind are well known, but Lionel Robbins also played his part in his misinterpretation of Weber and the wider social and cultural impulses of the pre-1918 Austrian school. We are left today with the alarming convulsions of contemporary capitalism in its major dimensions—externalities, distribution, inflation, capital theory and credit money—with orthodox economics confined to technical analysis and the public sphere excluded by the esoteria of the discipline. The *Outline of Social Economics* should have remained an ongoing publication, like an encyclopaedia, giving the public an up-to-date and authoritative overview of the world of economic activity.

The publication of the *Economic History* in 2011 in the Max Weber Gesamtausgabe (III/6) appeared *without* Professor Schefold's Introduction (for undisclosed reasons), hence its publication here in *Max Weber Studies* and in parallel, in German in *Zyklus* Bd. 8, is a major publishing event.

Dr. Margaret Moussa takes a close look at Weber's methodology in relation to Rickert and J.S. Mill. The literature on Heinrich Rickert has increased considerably over the last two decades enabling a greater clarification of Rickert's own position and his influence on Weber. Neo-Kantianism in this context is usually glossed as culture and values acting as a framing device for scientific investigation in the empirical arena of normativity. What is not appreciated, writes Moussa, is 'the Baden School's distinction between epistemology, methodology and the scientific explanation of empirical events'. When it comes to science Rickert treats events as endless and this sheer facticity is the case for both natural and social science. Explanation demands ascertainment of causes in these endless chains of cause and effect, and an 'imputation procedure in which nomological knowledge is applied to identify contributing causes'. Causes in the cultural sciences include the reasons for human actions. The ultimate grounds for causes 'cannot but proceed from induction'. This places Rickert, in this respect, and Weber more so, on the same page as J.S. Mill. To step off this page in search for a little extra help in the form of some metaphysical necessity, is to enter the philosophical realm of transcendental idealism.

Dr. Ulrich Arnswald unearths the curious case of Otto Neurath accusing Max Weber of transcendental idealism in his Protestant Ethic essay. Arnswald establishes Weber's 'imputation procedure'; namely, the heuristic concept of inner-worldly asceticism as a motivating cause of types of empirical behaviour of certain religious groups and sects. The curious, indeed almost fraudulent, procedure of Neurath was to

accuse Weber of something he knew to be false. He did this through a positive review of a book by Johann Kraus, which set out the case for the role of the Catholic religion in the rise of capitalism. Neurath titled his review 'Marxism of a Jesuit', using Kraus as a 'front man' to discredit the Protestant Ethic thesis on religious and ideological grounds. Neurath, seemingly without ever having read the Protestant Ethic, took Weber's use of 'spirit' to be a metaphysical construct. The 'irony' of this situation was that Neurath's own importance as a methodologist, in particular his

Empirical Sociology of 1931, adopted an ideal type approach. Dr. Arnswald notes that as early as 1911 Neurath held that 'ideal types can indeed go hand in hand with an empirical sociology'. This dispute is to be reminded of a point emphasized by Professor Joshua Derman in his *Max Weber in Politics and Social Thought* (2012) that the cultural struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism was still alive and virulent in the 1930s. Confessional differences mattered for the reception of Weber's PE in the 1920s and 1930s. Weber's *Protestant Ethic* was cited by writers as evidence that *their own* confession was not responsible for the depredations of modern capitalism. Lutherans held Calvinism to be responsible for the awfulness of modern capitalism, and Catholics held Protestantism as responsible. At least one Jewish critic, Max Brod, saw the *Protestant Ethic* as proof that Christianity in general was to blame for capitalism, rather than Judaism. This was the context within which Otto Neurath was distorting Weber in order to discredit bourgeois critics of Marxism.

This is to be reminded that the Protestant Ethic thesis is not just a controversial topic within the historiography of economic and cultural history. Rather, it stands as a signifier, both positive and negative, for eruptive moments in politico-intellectual thought. As raised in the special issue of *Max Weber Studies* (2017, 17.2), was the essay on Hinduism and Buddhism an attempt to blame South Asia's lack of economic dynamism on the economic ethics of its religions with the Protestant Ethic standing as an implicit justification of western imperialism? Just as today, Max Weber's espousal of W.E.B du Bois's sociology of race becomes, somehow, the grounds for accusing him of neglecting slavery and colonialism. Weber did not neglect slavery. See his brutal description of plantation slavery, cited by Schefold below p. xxx. Weber's reading of slavery and colonialism held that it enabled a huge accumulation of wealth and the creation of a class of annuitants, especially in England, but its manner of exploitation did not further the form of European market capitalism and its organization of labour. Weber was arguing against Werner Sombart, and recent empirical research at University College London on the legacies of slavery show the debate is still open.

Gregor Fitzi in his review of Stephen Kalberg's *Max Weber's Sociology of Civilizations* notes that Weber has been taken up for any number of causes and interpretations and also discarded. The semiotics of intellectual/academic communication does not function on scholarly interchange alone. Despite this, Fitzi concludes: 'Kalberg encourages scholars to engage in research on the development of different human civilizations by relying on the conceptual structuration of their field of research that the Weberian episteme allows. For research praxis, this means taking into account the alterity and the uneven development speeds of different sectors of society that characterise particular civilizations, without succumbing to the ideological suggestion of evolutionary simplifications or theorems about the clash of civilizations.'

Larry Ray reviews an interesting collection of essays edited Robert Yelle and Lorenz Trein (*Narratives of Disenchantment and Secularization: Critiquing Max Weber's Idea of Modernity*) which question the nature of the enchantment assumed to have preceded and co-existed with Christian puritanism. Puritans themselves would have been aghast that their salvation beliefs could be transposed into the spirit of capitalism. Echoing Kalberg's book, rationalization is not confined to Christianity, but is applicable in its own way to Judaism and other religions, which then gives rise to different forms of disenchantment. Secularism as the purging of magic and religion is not without difficulties, even in the sphere of natural science. Also, where should illiberal secular theologies, like Carl Schmitt's be placed? Monika Wohlrab-Sahr argues that in the context non-Christian colonial settings a totalizing secularism fails to grasp the finer distinctions of decline of belief, differentiation into cultural value spheres, and the relations between religion and its others. Weberian categories of thought should not be over-rigidly interpreted if the more subtle, but no less experiential, currents of social reality are to be investigated.