

Editorial

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This issue of the journal revolves around the two themes of political sociology and the sociology of religion. Each of these themes pulls out new understandings of Weber's writings and also seeks new applications of his work in the contemporary world.

Christian Etzrodt ('A Systematic Summary of Max Weber's Sociology of Religion: Part I and Part II') offers a new systemization of Weber's framework for studying religions. As is so often the case with Weber, an initial theme is set down in one text, then pursued along different lines in subsequent texts. The overall summarization remains difficult to extract, which is why the work of scholarly interpreters like Kippenberg, Schluchter and – in this issue – Etzrodt are so valuable.

The initial engagement frequently overdetermines and even curtails further reading. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* achieved fame – and notoriety – as an historical explanation for the development of modern capitalism in Great Britain. Digging into the explanation, a seemingly unique religious conduct of life is isolated: innerworldly asceticism. This effaced the difference between religious professionals – the priests and theologians – and the laity; both were swept up in the search for salvation from an unknowable god. The resulting Protestant ethic has left its mark on the Occident's contribution to global history. The associated theme of theodicy – why 'the powers of light and truth, purity and goodness coexist and conflict with the powers of darkness and falsehood, impurity and evil' – presents as the problem of meaning, of making sense of blind injustice; especially in the existential sense of why me, why my family and my nation are damned and another group are so favoured.

Etzrodt argues that in a comprehensive framework the theodicy issue does not provide a sufficient basis and that salvation is the theoretical lynch pin. As Weber wrote in the 'Zwischenbetrachtung': 'At all times and in all places, the need for salvation – consciously cultivated as the substance of religiosity – has resulted from the endeavor of a systematic and practical rationalization of life's realities'. Classification proceeds

from how salvation is to be achieved. There is a fundamental divide between religions where a god or hero provides salvation as a gift and those where the believer has to put the work in, whether through ritual or through approved social conduct, or mystic 'ecstatic deification'. Each of these types will arrive at different accounts for theodicy.

The main challenge for a comprehensive framework is taking in the multitude of religions. Etzrodt tabulates his classification for Judaism, Catholicism, Lutheranism, ascetic Protestantism, and Islam in his Part One article, also including the cases Weber wished to cover such as Oriental Christianity, early Christianity the religions of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Persia, Islam and Talmudic Judaism. It becomes an interesting question why Weber tackled certain religions and their variant forms and left others for further treatment.

In a continuation article, Part Two, Etzrodt extends his analysis to take in the religions of East and South Asia: ancient Chinese religion, Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism (including Tantrism), Jainism, and Buddhism (early, Theravada, and Mahayana). An initial pattern of hedonistic festivals and ecstatic deification is connected to the later worship of goddesses. The rationalization process within these religions produces weaker ethical demands on the laity, compared to the rigour of Christian forms of religion. Again, Etzrodt's tabulation of specific religions and their epochs against the possible forms of salvation will be found to be greatly clarifying, with the proviso that the substance of each cell in the table contains its own intensive complexity still very much open to empirical analysis.

The challenge of a systematic classification is to account for religions that Weber did not have time to cover adequately and, of course, the richness of religious life in all its varieties that are open to our contemporary analysis—and the enduring necessity of humans to find, and to suppose, a common meaning in the world.

Juman Kim ('The Occasional Politician: Max Weber's Vocabulary of Despair') provides a crossover article, from the sociological categories of religious action to that of politics. Such is political regression in our contemporary world that we are vulnerable to being reduced to the state of occasional politicians. The phrase, not exclusive to Max Weber, is *Gelegenheitspolitiker*. In nominally democratic polities, we become onlookers with degraded voting rights. The political world at the ending of World War One was truly desperate and in Weber's public lecture for students, *Politik als Beruf*, Weber not only set out the character demands of the professional politician but warned that citizens could become participants only in an occasional sense. Students, who are now greatly

occasioned by politics, should beware of three psychological conditions: embitterment, banausic life, and mystic flight.

Kim does not treat these just as a typically stylistic flourish of Weber, which comes at the end of his lecture, but separates them into their own categories. He also exposes how this single sentence (in the German) presents a challenge for its many translators. Banausic, not a current English word, is an obtuse giving oneself over to routine occupation and, as Kim notes, carries with it the Aristotelian sense of indignation. Each of these three attitudes threatens to take the student away from politics and the inner capacity to engage with politics.

Gangolf Hübinger in his article 'Conflict Liberalism' return us to the world of muscular politics. Marianne Weber records her husband saying he preferred the politician Friedrich Naumann to the other-worldly poet Stefan George: 'Naumann, because he combines the world-penetrating power of brotherly love with a strong and vivid sense of reality. But fortunately we don't have to choose; the gospel of the artist lives in our souls in perfect harmony with the social.' As an intellectual historian, Hübinger characterizes Weber's milieu as a series of overlapping circles or networks. There was the anti-Bismarck circle of his father's generation, and Weber's dislike of his contemporaries for their cult of Bismarckian Caesarism. Then there was the circle of colleagues in the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*, committed to reform and, for Weber, over-attached to state paternalism. Hübinger identifies a circle around Weber himself, an idea seeded by the flood of remembrances that were penned soon after Weber's death. The translation of Bryce's *Modern Democracies* in 1923 was a shared idea of an optimist future open to democracy and the project of 'democratic capitalism'. This last concept, today still aglow in the troubled project of neoliberalism, was subject to the realism of the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*. Of this Hübinger writes:

For Max Weber himself, there was an indissoluble tension between the economic power of capitalism and the political order of democracy. In his area, and even more so after 1945, there was a heated debate about the social and economic interlocking of market and state. A brief summary of the impact of the Weber Circle in this regard can therefore be summarized under the heading of 'consensus liberalism' versus 'conflict liberalism'.

During the German Federal Republic of the 1950s 'social consensus liberalism' was to the fore and Ralf Dahrendorf was one of the few who still stood in the tradition of 'conflict liberalism'. 'Liberal democracy is government through conflict' he wrote in 1965. To which it may be added that liberal conflict is a survival skill for democracy.

In the review section Stephen Hanson and Jeffrey Klopstein's *Assault on the State. How the Global Attack on Modern Government Endangers Our Future* identifies Russia, Hungary, and Belarus not just as autocracies but also as 'models' for the transformation of state structures of government, law and administration into personalist patrimonial bureaucracies. Hanson and Klopstein see 'liberal democracy' in America as a complacent self-understanding in the image of progressive civil society, and which was sociologically underwritten in Talcott Parsons' modernization theory. Its vulnerability was demonstrated in the first Trump presidency with Viktor Orbán's Hungary showing how a European Union approved democracy and public administration could be dismantled in favour of crony capitalism and, in Iván Szelényi's reading, the prebendalization of offices. Hanson and Klopstein also sees this degradation of an impartial civil service, de-politicised education, an independent supreme court, and a professional military in the case of Israel, starting with prime minister Netanyahu in 2009. Hanson and Klopstein write: 'The gravest challenge and most shocking development of all has been the personalization of state authority in the erstwhile heartlands of the rule of law itself—the United Kingdom and the United States.' This is to be reminded that Weber's ideal type of the modern legitimacy of political power was that it was legal in construction and so rational for citizens to accept its authority. Charismatic and plebiscitary leader-authority threatens to displace the legal-rational state with an emotion-based legitimacy. If liberal politics is to survive it urgently needs to embody substantive values rather than institutional formalism, which was always the critique of party democracy by Roberto Michels. Substantive goals of justice, the idea of positive liberty in multi-cultural contexts, are achievable through democracy, as for example Harvard's Danielle Allen today argues.

Weber's contemporary Otto Hintze is the subject of renewed interest in two new books (*Otto Hintze. Werk und Wirkung in den historischen Sozialwissenschaften*, edited by Hans Joas and Wolfgang Neugebauer, and *Otto Hintzes Staatssoziologie. Historische Prozesse, theoretische Perspektiven*). The first mentioned book -on Hintze's place in the historical social sciences- seeks to shift the focus away from Max Weber. Hans Joas names three problem areas that could be studied more profitably with Hintze than with Weber: The historical sociology of modern bureaucracy, the turn from European to global history, and power-political realism in the analysis of international peace orders. Gangolf Hübinger in his review points out that in the matter of the state, Hintze and Weber overlap. It emerges that Hintze worked intensively on a general constitutional history of European states from late medieval feudalism to the modern state; more in the individualising tradition of Ranke than a typologising

method. Hintze's other uncompleted work was the study of 'politics or general theory of state and society'. Again, this was done on a historical basis and 'was systematically structured in a critical appropriation of Max Weber'. Both studies remained uncompleted and the extensive manuscripts were destroyed in the Second World War. However, his positions can be reconstructed from the three volumes of his *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*.

Neugebauer crystallizes Hintze's problematic with a contribution entitled 'Globality-Federation-Dictatorship'. The interstate rivalry, especially that between Prussia-Germany as a consolidated continental power and England as a maritime power seeking planetary domination, is the story of how European politics became world politics. We have to consult Weber's *General Economic History* to get less than equivalent answers. Weber was for English parliamentary democracy, Hintze was for a monarchical authoritarian state equipped with the best possible civil service and military. In grappling with the enormity of 20th century world politics, the imperializing tendencies of both need to be registered. Philip Gorski's in his contribution notes that contemporary events throws us back into this tradition. 'Great power politics is back, as is geopolitical competition.'

The second volume, edited by Andreas Anter and Hinnerk Bruhns, proceeds further into these issues. Using a key lecture from 1931 Hintze described the European state system as a balanced pentarchy becoming a new imperialist world state system. The bourgeois nation state would seemingly have no future, being overcome by the four zones of a new political world: the Western democracies, the communist Soviet Union, fascist Italy and the rest vacillating between the three principles. Hintze, at that point, saw Germany as weak. These two books with their wealth of new lines of inquiry, including seminal articles by Hintze himself, confirm that Hintze is back.

Victor Strazzeri's *The Young Max Weber and German Social Democracy. The 'Labour Question' and the Genesis of Social Theory in Imperial Germany* is a combative book and an outstanding example of how a younger generation of scholars are utilizing the full resources of the Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. In tracking Weber's liberalism, it is to the young Weber we need to turn. Firstly, because he was brought up amidst the ruins of the old liberalism of his father's generation -and with the Bismarckian circle there was no easy succession- and secondly, because he addressed the 'social question' early in his career. Strazzeri's use of the MWG *Briefe* reveals just how much of these debates were carried on within the extended Weber family. Weber was proud to be a member of the educated bourgeois class—but in a country with a decayed liberal

tradition and as a subject of the patriarchal *Obrigkeitsstaat*. For Wolfgang J. Mommsen this was the dilemma of the 'liberal in despair'. How then should liberals act in the face of the new—anti-gender & anti-race—authoritarianism?

Strazzeri upsets the assumption of Weber's social liberalism, interpreting some of his writings as 'racist' and as endorsing a 'normative' and hierarchical conception of Kultur. Scaff engages closely with the evidence for these assertions, and queries the validity of what is a Diltheyan approach to hermeneutics. A stand-out chapter is Strazzeri's analysis of Weber's review of a book on the colonial economy of Argentina as evidence of Weber's social imperialism. Strazzeri argues that Weber's perspective 'racializes' ethnic/national difference because he has a 'globalized view of culture and its structurally hierarchical nature'. Treating Argentina of the 1890s as less developed, culturally and economically, than the Kulturvölker of Europe is not justified. Again Scaff engages closely, making his review a compelling read of a deeply interesting book.

Overall, this issue of *Max Weber Studies* brings to the fore what it means to be a liberal, what questions liberals should ask themselves about their mixed legacies, and how liberalism should confront an authoritarian politics and state.