

## Editorial

### *The Coming of Age of the Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe*

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How do we know when something has arrived? This is a peculiar question to pose for the Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe (Complete Works of Max Weber) whose output to date measures almost two metres of shelf space. Section 1 – the Writings and Speeches – has 18 volumes published. Section 2 – the Letters – will shortly have published all the letters from 1906 through to 1920. Section 3 has published five of a projected eight volumes of Weber’s lecture courses. For subscribers to the Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe (MWG) one can scarcely not be aware of its arrival. But now MWG has its own history and this signals its official coming of age.

Edith Hanke, Gangolf Hübinger and Wolfgang Schwentker, all volume editors, provide the first thorough and documented account of how the Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe came into being. It is a colourful story. Horst Baier was the moving spirit in the 1970s and was motivated to combat the political and expressive Marxism in German universities and at Frankfurt am Main where he was professor in sociology. The legendary hard man of the right (and little known classical philologist), Franz Josef Strauss, was a political sponsor of the project, before it was taken up by the Bavarian Academy of Sciences. Strauss was just one intermediary. Niklas Luhmann helped to gain support for the project from the Reimers Foundation, which funded six meetings of a foundation committee. Horst Baier wrote the report, which outlined the principles and purposes of the edition and this was widely canvassed. The sociologist Helmut Schelsky working on the policy commission of the CSU opened the way to the eventual support of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences. And in 1976, under the managership of M. Rainer Lepsius, a contract was reached between the Bavarian Academy, the Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe and the publisher Mohr Siebeck. The editorial rules of the edition had to be hammered out: on a

historical-critical basis (see *Max Weber Studies* 2000: 104-14), and the institutional structure of research centres established from where the individual volumes were produced. In 1982 Munich became the central research centre, and many international scholars have made the pilgrimage to Marstallplatz to benefit from the Winckelmann library and the warm hospitality of the redactors—first Karl-Ludwig Ay and now Edith Hanke. A bibliography was produced by Martin Riesebrodt in 1976 that revealed some 300 Weber titles which then had to be allocated to volumes. The founder editors had their battles not only getting the project off the ground but sometimes with each other. Johannes Winckelmann, who was the editorial heir to Marianne Weber, threatened at one point to blockade the use of his indispensable Weber archive and library to the new editorial project. Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Winckelmann were at daggers drawn over, respectively, the access to letter material and the interpretation of Weber's politics. No less important were the many editors of the separate volumes who were allowed a degree of independence in presenting their scholarly researches, though within the bounds of the rules of the edition.

Was the MWG in inception an anti-Marx project? Certainly the Marx-Engel-Gesamtausgabe was sprouting behind the East German dividing wall, and the case for an edition of superior scholarship could be made. But it always remains a mistake to use Weber as a stick with which to beat Marx. Weber's methodology, for instance, can be used to critique materialist conceptions of all sorts as well as the numerous epistemological marxisms of the twentieth century. But Weber's methodology is hardly a blunt instrument. It is through Weber's methodological structures that we are instructed how to combine both material and ideal elements in the determination of history. Friedrich Tenbruck, whose deep grasp of Weber's writings could certainly have qualified him for a place on the editorial board of the MWG, always thought that the scholarly exposition of the methodology would be the key to unlocking the secrets of the textually complicated 'Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft' (quoted below, p. 92).

On the autonomy of the academic faculty the wheel has rotated a full 180 degrees since Herbert Marcuse falsely called repressive tolerance and legitimised student rebellion. Universities are now faced by undisguised managerialism and instrumentalism and the loss of self-determination by the academic body. Weber now stands in the service of the defence of academic autonomy, though perhaps not as envisaged by Baier in the early 1970s.

M. Rainer Lepsius provides a lesson on the massive 'Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft' MWG edition—in a sense giving an answer to the Tenbruck question. Thanks to Guenther Roth, English readers of *Economy and Society* were adequately warned in the editorial introduction that the text was in two parts: a text revised by Weber after 1918 for publication, and a pre-war text that in Weber's lifetime remained unpublished and not finally revised. The MWG has gone further and published the 'old part', composed between 1909 and 1914, as five separate volumes. We cannot be certain what titles Weber would have used, or the sequential order of the major 'chapters', or where fragments within those chapters should be placed. It is clear that after the war Weber was set upon a radically shortened and systematized 'Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft' along the style lines of the German 'Handbuch'. That is to say, shortish definitional passages in large text followed by explanatory and illustrative material in small text. This was something of a return to the pandect tradition of Roman law, on which Weber had turned his back when he moved from law to economics in the early 1890s. He also regarded the final version of 'Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft' as his Sociology.

The five volumes of the 'old part' are now entitled: Communities, Religious Communities, Law, Domination, the City. They can and should be read as special sociologies on those themes. Take the volume on Law, which is given a specialist review by Hubert Treiber in this issue. Is this to be treated as a sociology of law? By the standards of self-contained juristic thinking, Weber opens up the whole subject to the processes of internal agency (law prophets, juriconsults, lay justice) and external determination by political and religious forces. In the manuscript for Law (one of the few that survives) one section is titled 'The Economy and the Orders' and in it we are presented with a somewhat agonized account of how to reach the defining characteristic of law and what separates it from custom and convention. The other, larger section has no overall title, and the editors Werner Gephart and Siegfried Hermes supply 'The Developmental Conditions of Law'. The editors provide no assurance that this second section constitutes a unity; indeed the contrary, for a close examination of the manuscript shows it to be a work continually in progress.

Lepsius reminds us that 'Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft' was always a commission for the multi-volume and encyclopaedic *Grundriß der Sozialökonomik* and was centred on the economy. Surveying Section 1 of MWG as well as the lecture notes of Section 3, it becomes

overwhelmingly apparent that Weber was relentlessly preoccupied with questions of economy. His 1890s lecture courses embraced Austrian marginalist economic theory and accepted the heuristic value of the 'constructed economic subject'. Weber himself did not pursue the dynamics of market theory but did see this as one leg of three-legged stool comprising economic theory, economic history and social economics. Law, culture, religion, politics and the state all impact on the future possibilities of economic actors. If, for example, states choose to run closed economies with regulated markets this decides the whole disposition of profit opportunities of various economic actors (classes and interest groups). And if states, which create credit money, choose to open markets and allow unregulated economic groups, then the power of disposition over economic opportunities is transformed. Lepsius, in conclusion, points to the emphasis placed by Weber on social economics and the remaining work to be done on the interpretation and application of Weber's approach.

Peter Ghosh in a *Historian reads the Protestant Ethic* (reviewed by Dirk Kaesler) calls for proper textual method, drawn from the discipline of the history of ideas, when approaching Weber texts. For the specialist historian of the 17th century, the Puritan movement does not meet Weber's exaggerated claims for it. The Protestant ethic thesis has to be related to Weber's ambitions within the framework of his interests and ambitions for social economics. The MWG now supplies textual accuracy in terms of temporal phases of work as well as the background history of the texts, so discipline in regard to the texts can now replace free-ranging interpretation of arbitrarily selected passages.

This 'neue Sachlichkeit' is observed by Larry Scaff's *Max Weber in America* (reviewed by Lutz Kaelber) which meticulously reconstructs Max and Marianne Weber's three month trip around the United States in 1904. Weber is revealed as intensively interested in a large range of topics: agriculture – his address at the St Louis Congress of Arts and Science, education, immigration, the Indian question and reservations, capitalism – brutal in the Chicago stock stockyards and meat processing, and pioneering in the oil exploration in Oklahoma, politics – federal and local, and religion – actual churches, congregations and sects. The American trip was undertaken between the first and second instalments of the 'Protestant Ethic' in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* and Scaff's book takes in the American reception and promotion of the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Hans Henrik Bruun's *Science, Values and Politics in Max Weber's Methodology* was a landmark publication, in 1972, for its careful analysis of Weber texts and Weber's relation to the epistemology of Heinrich Rickert. Gerhard Wagner reviews the second, expanded edition of the book and derives from Bruun's fine-grained exposition a move away from Rickert and history towards sociology and the typology of social action, a move paralleled by Weber's realization that the world had moved on from the status of bourgeois individual to the *homme moyen* of contemporary modernity.

Textual and methodological awareness benefits Niall Bond's article on Weber's assessment of Ferdinand Tönnies' sociology. As Lichtblau has already pointed out (*MWS* 10.2) and as Lepsius notes in his article, Weber's actual thinking about sociology centres on the 1913 published 'On some categories of interpretive sociology' and the 1920 Chapter One of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 'Basic Sociological Concepts'. The latter piece replaced the former and represented a new, and much clearer, phase in Weber's sociological thinking. Bond shows the substantive proximity of both Tönnies' and Weber's exposition of social groupings from the oikos to the nation state, but their epistemological opposition. Tönnies believed in a scientific enlightenment able to ground eudaemonism in modern society, Weber thought this belief in science able to deliver harmony was illusory and that value conflicts existed in their own realm.

In Heine, who died in 1859, we have a poetic anticipation of one of Weber's most powerful cultural idea: disenchantment. The poesis of the last few pages of the *Protestant Ethic* summons up the 'sensualists without spirit'. These for Heine are the 'coldly calculating... Bacchantes of reason' and as Robert Button writes 'the protagonists of "logical madness"'. The materialism of capitalism and calculation are the new idolatry and within the rational-methodic shell of modernity lurks demonic forces of self-destruction. In Heine's account of religion, Protestant 'spiritualism' bolsters rational authority but undermines Christianity in its creation of an enlightened humanity. In a similar vein it can be noted that a utilitarian 'ethic' by dispensing with transcendental notions of morality and personhood achieves social progress. There is a dark strain of thought in both Heine and Weber that the liberation of humanity achieved though rationality is illusory and itself a form self-perpetuating mythology. Weber wrote that Puritanism 'was the power "that perpetually wanted good and perpetually created evil"' (below: 111 to

115). Button's invocation of Heine reminds us that asceticism of any form has a purpose, even if forgotten, and never remains without affect.

Wagner make the point that to understand Weber it has to be realized that science, just like art, exists not only in its own realm but for its own sake. Also, as the methodology repeatedly insists, the world of evaluating judgements is separate to the scientific treatment of the empirical. Tenbruck reckoned that his question was answered by regarding modern civilization as a particular manifestation of culture. Gephart and Hermes have raised the controversial claim that Weber's 'sociology of law', or 'Recht', involves elements of 'Kultur-tatbestand', and it is uncontroversial to note that the process of the rationalization of modern law is a driver of disenchantment (and in the case of Franz Kafka, far worse). It is perhaps time to re-address the Tenbruck question now that the textual evidence is available through the MWG and the recent publication of the complete methodology in English. It is to be welcomed that Mohr Siebeck are to issue a student edition of the new 'Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft' and it is to be hoped that the German and international research community are able to engage with the full textual scholarship of Weber's writings, which have now reached the endgame. We should, therefore, be able to place with some precision the respective claims of sociology and culture—and indeed, politics, law, religion and economy—in the work of Max Weber.