

## Book Reviews

Kurt Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece* (trans. Renate Franciscano; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, rev. edn, 2004), pp. 427. ISBN 0226701018. \$55.00.

When Max Weber wrote in his celebrated lecture on the decline of the ancient world that the problems of the ancients and the moderns were so different that there was nothing to be learned about our current situation from ancient history, he can surely not have been thinking about the concept of freedom or liberty. Anglophone and non-Anglophone political thinking continues to derive much sustenance for its central concern with the nature of individual and collective freedom from an engagement with the ancient world, especially that of Greece and Rome. For the former, many find themselves attracted to Hannah Arendt's interpretation of the political nature of Greek *eleutheria*, culminating in her radical conclusion that, simply put, freedom is politics. In a different but related fashion, much recent work in the history of political thought and normative political theory has utilized the classical Roman law distinction between the *liber* and *servus*, the freeman and the slave, to illustrate a specifically republican conception of freedom that moves beyond the celebrated dichotomy of Isaiah Berlin's famous two concepts of liberty – the negative freedom from constraint, or the positive freedom of self-realization. Equally, studies of ideology combine various debates about the practical structure of Greek democracy itself, with specific empirical questions about the construction and extent of the democratic process and the institutions that upheld it, building on the work of such writers as Mogens Hansen and Josiah Ober, to name but two scholars well known to English language readers. Kurt Raaflaub has been a central protagonist in debates about the nature of freedom in ancient Greece for at least two decades (this book was originally published in German in 1985), and has long been concerned with delineating precise moments in the evolution of the concept.

In this newly revised translation, he offers a wealth of detail and rigorous argumentation, suggesting ultimately, in what amounts to a defence of historical context, that the concept of freedom needs to be studied and accounted for in each period of its evolution separately and distinctly, using both direct sources as well as those sources which intimate or seem to suggest a concern with something like freedom even before the concept itself was actually born. Raaflaub suggests that this is historically justified on the grounds of plausibility, though some will doubtless wonder about the utility of such an argument in the light of the predominance of particular modes of interpretation of the history of ideas in the course of the post-war period. Ultimately, he concludes, there was no 'political concept of freedom' before the fifth

century, and moreover, that 'The idea of a citizen's freedom within his community, initially seen in contrast solely to his oppression by tyranny, was given a positive content and associated with a constitution even much later' (p. 250). Thus, what is also being argued here is that the discovery of freedom is almost coterminous with the discovery of the political itself, in a recognizably modern sense, an argument which dovetails somewhat with the suggestions of Christian Meier in particular, whose work he extensively engages with. Much like the Roman arguments that have been resuscitated in recent years, though, for Raaflaub, the Greek conception of freedom becomes politically important when considered in terms of its antonym, namely servitude or the loss of political freedom. Subjection to a tyrant here, was the first formulation of what would become servitude. Its political character emerged through the challenge to tyranny from the whole of the population, not just the aristocrats, for if only the latter could fight tyranny then their interest in power could only hinder the development of a political concept of freedom. This too was tied up with something Weber was also quite concerned with, the idea of debt bondage. Solon's reforms, which abolished this, illustrate for Raaflaub the idea of freedom as an inalienable right of the citizen, as well as showing that the 'origin of the political concept of freedom is thus firmly anchored in the historical context of the Persian Wars' (p. 257). In much the same way as the late Bernard Williams argued for the necessity of history to philosophy in order to elucidate the genealogy of its central concepts, and to show that there is no such thing as a political concept of liberty that is eternal for it is always a constructed political value, Raaflaub undertakes a valuable work of under-labouring here to emphasize this very point. Even for the Greeks, archetypal founders of democracy for many in the history of Western political thought, the very concept of freedom, or of rights, developed historically for them as it has done so for us. The specific circumstances of its evolution are unique, and can only with some distortion and much confusion, be grafted on to other polities with different traditions and histories. This much Weber accepted in his thinking about the relationship between capitalism, democracy, and the Russian Revolutions. In an era of war on terror in the name of Western freedom, it is perhaps something we would do well to remember more strenuously in fact.

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Alan Sica, *Max Weber: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004), pp. 334. ISBN 0765802090. \$69.95.

This is a bibliography containing 4,888 items chiefly of writings *on* Weber – reviews in English of translations (pp. 23-25); reviews of 'Weberiana' (pp. 27-43); selected dissertations and theses (pp. 45-81); primary and secondary sources on Weber on rationality and rationalization (pp. 83-92; and works in English relating to Max Weber pp. 93-334); prefaced by an alphabetical listing of Weber's works in English translation (pp. 9-16). Sica notes in his introductory remarks that while in the pre-electronic age the lifetime of a standard bibliography could well run into decades, today an exhaustive printed bibliography already shows signs of its age as it appears on the market. Why, then, make the very considerable effort of compiling this bibliography?

The first and principle reason advanced is that there are a very great number of faulty citations and red herrings out there, and this bibliography sets out to provide a standard listing of names that are spelled correctly, of years of publication given accurately, and of journals that actually exist. For the student of Weber this provides an invaluable handlist to what really exists and where to find it. Secondly, it is precisely a handlist, a book that can be marked and annotated, and which is not a loose collection of A4 printed pages. Thirdly, it is strictly Anglophone, implicitly the language in which most people read Weber and in which most commentary is written. Fourthly, all the writings relating to the work of Max Weber by Bendix, Roth or even Giddens for that matter are grouped together in the main bibliography, which is organized alphabetically by author with no subsections to divert contributions to another part of the book. Sica also possesses copies of almost all of the entries – his garage must be bigger than mine – which has enabled him to make a physical check for the accuracy of each record.

The one criticism that could be made is that Sica opts to sort the English translations of Weber alphabetically by title. This does order them of course, but in my own efforts in this direction I have found that sorting by date of the translation's publication presents a more useful snapshot of the overall progress of Weber in English. Alternatively, if they were sorted by original year of publication the selectivity with which Weber has been presented in the English language would become strikingly evident. If this were an electronic bibliography this would not matter so much, and the limitations of a printed bibliography become most evident in this part of the book.

Bibliographic work on this scale is laborious and mind-numbingly tedious, and Alan Sica should be congratulated for having put a very considerable amount of time and effort into compiling this stunningly comprehensive listing of writings on Weber. At least no one will have to do this again...for a few years.

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Eckart Otto, *Max Webers Studien des Antiken Judentums. Historische Grundlegung einer Theorie der Moderne* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), pp. 377. ISBN 3161478975. €79.

In 1920, Adolf von Harnack remarked conversationally that, in an international perspective, Max Weber in the period from 1890 to 1920 had been the scholar with the highest 'capacity of consumption' (*Konsumtionskraft*) and an astonishing ability to make sense of anything. Carl Neumann (in his obituary of Ernst Troeltsch, 1923) wrote of Weber's intellectual imperialism, which fitted the results of diverse scholarly disciplines into a new synthesis. The ongoing publication of the *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* (MWG) has revealed the high degree to which Weber had made use of contemporary scholarship and how he transformed these raw materials in original theories of his own far beyond the perception of the specialists. But it has also become obvious that Weber had not always been able to meet his own standard to avoid plain mistakes in the eyes of these respective experts (see *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* I, 13).

Eckart Otto, editor of Weber's studies on ancient Judaism (MWG I/21, published in July 2005) has documented his thorough research on the genesis of Weber's treat-