

## Editorial

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Is there a Weber paradigm? *Das Weber-Paradigma* is the title of a new collection of essays reviewed by Lawrence Scaff. The subtitle of the collection indicates that a Weber paradigm is possible as a 'further development of his research programme'. A further subtitle might have run, the 'Heidelberg Weber research programme'. Its two central figures are M. Rainer Lepsius and Wolfgang Schluchter, both unrivalled in their knowledge of Weber's writings. Weber's writings can be argued to have at its centre a three-bit edifice, comprising *Economy and Society*, the world religion studies, and the methodology. None of these very large bits were completed by Weber. Had he lived longer he probably would have written more critical methodological essays, he certainly would have pushed the final version of *Economy and Society* to completion, and he might have composed more essays on world religions – on early Christianity, and Islam, for example. It is valid to ask at the outset how integrated were these bits in Weber's own mind. *Economy and Society* was going to be a book, but one that would act as a crucial link in the encyclopaedic *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik*. The methodology and world religion studies all appeared initially as journal articles rather than books. Did Weber see himself, therefore, as an essayist? Certainly not of the Simmel short and heavily stylized variety, but perhaps as a lone distance swimmer making his own line for some distant island of a research problem. The idea and the form of the essay would have been entirely intelligible to Weber, the idea of the research programme less so.

Research programmes and paradigms are, in part, a product of a rationalized research culture and, in part, a product of the philosophy of science, deriving from Kuhn and Lakatos. While Weber may not have systematically interlinked the various bits of his writings, to do so subsequently is one of the most challenging and potentially most rewarding enterprises to be undertaken. All of the contributors to the

Weber-paradigm book re-shape and re-assemble the various bits of Weber's writings in order to construct a paradigm. For Lepsius the building blocks for analysis of dynamic social processes are action, structure and meaning, each a separable element. This creates a formidable research paradigm which if pursued on a school basis would produce a body of work more than equal to competing programmes started by Michael Mann or Shmuel Eisenstadt. Schluchter collects all the cards in the Weberian hand – ideal types, *Verstehen*, rationality, value orientations and life-orders, and so on – and deploys them in the pursuit of an empirical science, on the understanding that the researcher is a cultural being taking a position towards the world. This raises the immediate question of what are the great cultural problems of our time? And in the era of think-tanks and the managerialist university, who will pursue these questions with the pertinacity, speed and passion of a Max Weber?

The new biography of Weber, by Joachim Radkau, reminds us why Weber himself never created a school or even a body of students. Weber had a temperament and personality gloriously unsuited to such team-building. He was a man easily distracted: by another discipline, an academic rival, an insult, the foolishness of an emperor, another woman, another holiday destination, and always another research question. How does one make sense of such an unprogrammatic polymath? As Andreas Anter notes in his review, one option is to give up on the question – Max Weber was *sui generis*. Radkau is drawn to Weber's sexual dysfunctions as a key, though in a post-Foucault era this would involve empathizing with the body of Max Weber. Flagellation – Else Jaffé indulged him – can be a bodily praxis not a sexual foible. The letters, when they are fully published, will show a man intelligently aware of his own dysfunctions. For example, in the clinic at Lake Constance where he was being treated for physical and sexual disorders, his letters express a wry and unembarrassed amusement at his predicament – in the face of Marianne's intrusive questioning.

The ethic of conviction and the ethic of responsibility both figure in the articles by Christopher Adair-Toteff, Nicholas Hopkins, Yuko Takahashi, and Ágnes Erdélyi. Adair-Toteff takes up the place of the Greek political demagogue Pericles in Weber's thought. His authority derived neither from religion nor military prowess but from oratory. Pericles' authority (*Herrschaft*) was not legitimate nor even legal, but rather charismatic – a charisma of spirit and speech. Adair-Toteff notes Weber's admiration of Pericles' rhetorical skills

and his objective and realistic analysis of political situations; above all that Pericles accepted the consequences of his own decisions.

Hopkins follows the footsteps of Kurt Eisner across Munich in late 1918 until he was gunned him down outside the parliament building in February 1919. Eisner was a charismatic by virtue of intellectual and political courage and his open-air oratory. He was guided by a conviction ethic. Weber analysed him, disapproved of him politically and possibly resented his success, brief though it was. Weber could have chosen to see Eisner as a socialist Pericles – someone who expanded the footprint of democracy and political discourse in the face of constraint and emergency.

Takahashi contrasts the Israelite prophets as political demagogues, who are motivated by religion and the new sense of god's punishment as a result of a people's sin, and the urban based Greek demagogue whose outlook was primarily secular. The contrast relates to differences in stratification. In Greece the capability to fight was more widely spread and with this came political rights, whereas in Israel after Solomon the free peasantry lost the capability to fight following the rise of the knight and chariot-based tactics.

Erdélyi picks out the distinctive place of conviction ethics in the 'Sociology of Religion'. Weber's broad argument turns on the efforts of humankind to gain a favourable response from gods in preserving the social order and well-being. Magical propitiation is one way of securing this, religious entreaty through prayer another. Ethical conduct is intrinsic to the latter and the role of the priests systematizes conduct of the laity in this respect. But the ethical moment was first attained by prophets, and where prophecy is established through exemplary conduct it can be said to be a virtuoso achievement that establishes a conviction ethic. Erdélyi argues that the sense of conviction in the exemplary behaviour of the prophet is driven by a will that stands beyond any sense of duty or convention, both of which belong to the external world. This is not Kantian ethics where will should engender duty, and hence would presuppose a notion of responsibility. Instead it is the expression of will in an extraordinary moment; whatever the consequences, the exemplary prophet would always have willed his actions in the same way. This inserts Nietzsche not Kant as the begetter of conviction ethics.

All the above articles track Weber's thinking on ethics across a diverse range of his writings and no common 'paradigm' can account for their different articulation and interpretation. The two ethics are variously ambivalent, complementary, and incommensurate. This

leads us to consider that the ethics are situationally dependent; in addition, Weber could be deploying the two ethics in a contrarian manner or as a kind of Socratic discourse.

A further issue with the reception of Weber and how he is taught is what texts are to be included and what fall outside contemporary interest. The Note by Stephen Parsons, commenting on this journal's recent special edition – *Max Weber's Economics* (2007) – reminds us that Weber lectured in the field of national-economy. Parsons calls for an engagement with Weber's use of marginal utility theory, as outlined by the Austrian economists of his day, and how this affected his interpretative sociology. In the reviews Keith Tribe outlines the arguments linking Weber to the historical economics of Werner Sombart and the historical school of Schmoller. Also reviewed are important works on Carl Schmitt (by Duncan Kelly and by Ellen Kennedy) and these raise the question of how far should be extended what might be termed Weber's discourse on power and how power is held and exercised by political figures. On this matter, opinions will divide and in doing so will reveal a critical praxis in the reading of Weber.

In the same vein, Paul Cartledge in a review of Mohammad Nafissi's *Ancient Athens and Modern Ideology: Theory and Evidence in Historical Sciences. Max Weber, Karl Polanyi and Moses Finley* points out that little has been made of Weber's writings on the ancient world. The 'utopian' appeal of political Athens and direct democracy has to be viewed in the light of the authors discussed by Nafissi and, by extension, through the lens of social economics and its debates. Was the Attic cultural achievement non-reconcilable with its mode of production (Marx's view), was it permitted because of the constraints on capitalism (Rodbertus and Karl Bücher), or did it exist alongside an economy that permitted markets to flourish (Finley – who learned much from Weber)?

Is social-economics the recurring pattern whenever the kaleidoscope of Weber's writings are shaken and put to the eye? Or is a post-Weber paradigm to be assembled from his scattered writings? Both are compatible – as different research styles – and go to the heart of how Weber can be taught, understood and researched today.