

Book Reviews

Max Weber's Two Sociologies

Max Weber Gesamtausgabe I/22-1: Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte. Nachlass. 1. Gemeinschaften (ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen in collaboration with Michael Meyer; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 2001), pp. xxvi + 402. ISBN 3-16-147558-5 (hb).

The new edition of 'Economy and Society' in the *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* raises questions that remind us of a long history of controversy. Among these are the question of whether 'Economy and Society' is at all the correct title for the texts assembled under this name, and of whether these texts form a unitary work, and if so, whether *this is to be seen as Weber's principal sociological opus*. The editors of the *Gesamtausgabe* have been at great pains to resolve this difficult puzzle.

It has never been disputed that Weber did not originally intend these texts to be a free-standing publication. Instead, they were to be a contribution to his own co-edited handbook, the 'Outline of Social Economics'. This collaborative project, involving numerous authors under Weber's general editorial direction, as agreed with his Tübingen publisher Paul Siebeck in 1909, was to give a comprehensive overview of the contemporary state of research among members of the German historical school of political economy. We now know that Weber wrote two quite distinct versions of his contribution to this 'Outline': an earlier version dating from before the First World War, contained in the *Nachlass*, and a later version from 1919-20 which Weber prepared for final printing shortly before his death. Marianne Weber then supplemented the first four chapters of this definitive version of 'Economy and Society' with the texts she found in her husband's *Nachlass*, thereby significantly contributing to the myth of a single unitary work (Mommsen 2000).

The editors of the *Gesamtausgabe* have set out to definitively correct this highly questionable editorial practice by publishing the earlier and later versions of 'Economy and Society' in two separate volumes, each carrying a different subtitle. They have thereby sought to underline the fact that two quite distinct versions of Weber's contribution to the 'Outline of Social Economics' have been handed down to us, of which Weber prepared only the latter version for final printing. The status of the texts in the *Nachlass* must therefore be regarded as to this extent still unclarified. Five sub-volumes are planned for the *Nachlass* of 'Economy and Society' in the *Gesamtausgabe*, together with a volume of editorial notes. Of these, the sub-volumes 'Gemeinschaften' (MWG I/22-1), 'Religiöse Gemeinschaften' (MWG I/22-2) and 'Die Stadt' (MWG I/22-5) have so far appeared.

The sub-volume 'Gemeinschaften', edited by Wolfgang J. Mommsen in collabo-

ration with Michael Meyer, carries particular significance because it comprises the first texts Weber wrote for his work on the 'Outline', presumably in 1910-12. But it is also of interest because the separate publication of these texts as a sub-volume goes against a thesis recently put forward by Hiroshi Orihara. Orihara (1999; 2003) contends that *at least the Nachlass* of 'Economy and Society' is an 'integral whole', and that this unity should be the leading consideration for publication in the *Gesamtausgabe*. Orihara emphasizes the importance of the internal references between these posthumous texts which allow us to reconstruct their original sequence of composition. Further, he argues that the essay Weber published separately in 1913, 'On Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology', is an inseparable component of the *Nachlass* for 'Economy and Society' because it was in this essay that Weber defined the basic sociological concepts he employed in his posthumous texts. It was also for this reason that several passages from the essay were included in the English edition of 'Economy and Society' under the title 'Types of Social Action and Groups' – to familiarize uninitiated readers with Weber's terminology (Weber 1978: 1375-80).

In contrast, the *Gesamtausgabe* edition seeks to demonstrate the fragmentary character of the *Nachlass*, viewing as meaningless any search for a 'head' to the whole corpus. Wolfgang J. Mommsen has eschewed including the 'Categories' essay of 1913 in the 'Gemeinschaften' sub-volume, without denying its fundamental importance for Weber's understanding of sociology. His reason for this is that Weber heavily revised the original version of the essay between the end of 1912 and the beginning of 1913, so that it is more appropriate that the essay be published in another volume devoted to Weber's methodological writings. Another omission is the text 'The Economy and Social Norms' (Weber 1978: 311-39), which is equally important for our understanding of the basic sociological concepts Weber deployed at this time. This will appear in sub-volume I/22-3, together with the chapter on the sociology of law in 'Economy and Society', on the grounds that Weber himself later intended an arrangement of this kind in his publication plans for the sociology of law. The selection and sequence of texts in 'Gemeinschaften' are based on two criteria, which Orihara also underlines: first, fidelity to the structure of internal references between individual texts and, second, fidelity to the 'Plan of the Entire Project', or 'Disposition' (*Einteilung des Gesamtwerkes*), as printed in the first volume of the 'Outline' from June 1914, which shows Weber's intended division of contents for his own contribution at this time (Mommsen 2000: 377).

In line with these criteria, the 'Gemeinschaften' volume consists of the following texts: 'The Economic Relationships of Organized Groups' (Weber 1978: 339-56), 'Household, Neighborhood and Kin Group' and 'Household, Enterprise and Oikos' ('Hausgemeinschaften') (Weber 1978: 356-85), 'Ethnic Groups' (Weber 1978: 385-99), 'The Market: Its Impersonality and Ethic' (Weber 1978: 635-40), 'Political Communities' (Weber 1978: 901-10), 'Power Prestige and the "Great Powers"' (Weber 1978: 910-26) and 'The Distribution of Power within the Political Community: Class, Status and Party' (Weber 1978: 926-40). These are all texts familiar from previous editions of 'Economy and Society' which have now been purged of errors and supported with numerous informative commentaries that considerably facilitate our understanding. The only truly new item is the keyword manuscript 'Hausverband, Sippe und Nachbarschaft', which probably dates from as early as 1906 but whose exact context of composition cannot be determined with certainty. In this previously unpublished manuscript, topics are discussed that later found their way into the

chapter on 'Hausgemeinschaften' (divided into two different chapters by Roth and Wittich) (Weber 1978: 356-85), and these topics are also treated extensively in Marianne Weber's book from 1907, *Ehefrau und Mutter in der Rechtsentwicklung* ('Wife and Mother in the Development of Law'). The chapter on the sociology of religion from the *Nachlass*, however, is not included in this volume. It is published separately as 'Religiöse Gemeinschaften' (MWG I/22-2) because its scope and contents clearly stretch beyond the framework of the present volume.

What is the relationship of these early texts to the other parts of 'Economy and Society'? And what is the conception of sociology they express? In his Introduction, Wolfgang J. Mommsen distinguishes three distinct phases of Weber's work for 'Economy and Society': the period of 1910-12 for the early texts on 'Gemeinschaften'; the period of 1913-14 for the sociology of religion, the sociology of law and the earlier version of the sociology of domination; and the period of 1919-20 when Weber began to revise his contribution to the 'Outline of Social Economics' and prepared the first four chapters of 'Economy and Society' for printing. Mommsen maintains that the early texts are still overwhelmingly concerned with the thematic of 'Gemeinschaft'. He argues that Weber's intention at this time was to give a fully comprehensive representation of all the main forms of community and their relationship to economy, and that it was only in the second phase of 1913-14 that the idea of the rationalization of all spheres of life became the central theme. He holds that this shift is recognizable in the fact that it was not until this second phase that Weber made full use of the terminology of the basic sociological concepts laid out in the 'Categories' essay from 1913. In the texts from the first phase, the central concepts are still *Gemeinschaft* ('community'), *Gemeinschaftshandeln* ('communal action') and *Vergemeinschaftung* ('formation of community'), whereas in the second phase the emphasis shifts to the counterparts of *Gesellschaft* ('formation of association'), *Gesellschaftshandeln* ('societal action') and *Vergesellschaftung* ('societal association'). Mommsen interprets this as an anticipation of Weber's later use of language in the definitive version of the 'Basic Sociological Terms' from 1919-20, where Weber redefines the terms *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* previously used by Ferdinand Tönnies. Mommsen insists, however, that in his later work Weber did not fundamentally alter the understanding of sociology reached in his second phase, which is also why the 1913 'Categories' essay may be seen as anticipating the definitive version of his *verstehende Soziologie* from 1919-20.

Thus Mommsen here contributes a new thesis to Weber scholarship. While previous interpreters have been of the view that Weber's 'Basic Sociological Terms' of 1919-20 are not identical with those of the 'Categories' essay, Mommsen relativizes the conceptual and terminological innovations of Weber's third phase. Instead, he strongly differentiates the early texts on 'Gemeinschaften' from the texts of the 1913-14 period. However, it can be argued that he differentiates them *too strongly*. Strictly speaking, his argumentation implies not only three different phases of work for the 'Outline' but also three different conceptions of sociology relevant to 'Economy and Society' — as Stefan Breuer (2002) has suspected. This appears to me to be an over-dramatization of the differences of Weber's pre-war manuscripts. Mommsen is right to say that Weber's work on the sociology of religion, law and domination represents a development beyond the 'Gemeinschaften' texts. This is undoubtedly true of the universal-historical perspective expounded in Weber's work on religion, law and domination. However, it is not true of the basic sociological terms Weber used at this time because in his first phase Weber already made use of the terminology he

developed later in the 'Categories' essay. *Gemeinschaft*-terminology is certainly more present in the early texts than *Gesellschaft*-terminology, but this is only because Weber at this time still used the terms *Gemeinschaft*, *Gemeinschaftshandeln* and *Vergemeinschaftung* in a quite neutral sense as generic concepts, while using the terms *Gesellschaft*, *Gesellschaftshandeln* and *Vergesellschaftung* much more narrowly to refer to different manifestations of a process of rationalization of social life. This was the perspective Weber had in mind already in his doctoral dissertation of 1889 when he sought to explain the emergence of independent trading companies in the Middle Ages in terms of a particular historical form of development of the *Hausgemeinschaft*. In the text on 'Hausgemeinschaften' in the *Nachlass*, Weber speaks of two different universal-historical developmental forms of the original house community: the *oikos*, which leads to patrimonial domination, and the capitalistic firm. The former represents the economic basis of a specifically traditional form of domination, whereas the latter marks the transition to modern economic forms of need-fulfilment.

In his early 'Gemeinschaften' texts, then, Weber definitely did propound developmental historical sequences reaching across different epochs – even if he did not do so in as differentiated and elaborated a form as in his sociology of religion, law and domination from 1913. Indeed, in his Introduction, Mommsen himself notes that these early texts still belong within the tradition of nineteenth-century evolutionary thought and the tradition of theories of stages in political economy – even though Weber avoided every form of dogmatic philosophy of history and only ever spoke of different developmental possibilities at particular times under particular conditions. Guenther Roth (1987) has rightly interpreted this universal-historical outlook in Weber's work as a specific variant of the kind of 'developmental history' (*Entwicklungsgeschichte*) that enjoyed intellectual popularity around Weber's time in German-speaking countries. The basic sociological concepts of the 'Categories' essay rely on this developmental-historical framework to the extent that they describe the relation between *Gemeinschaftshandeln* ('communal action'), *Einverständnishandeln* ('consensual action') and *Gesellschaftshandeln* ('societal action') in terms of a process of increasing rationalization of social life. In my view, therefore, these basic concepts and the developmental-historical framework underlying them represent the real connecting link between the individual texts of the *Nachlass* of 'Economy and Society', even though Weber altered their scope over time (Lichtblau 2000).

The decisive change in the development of Weber's contribution to the 'Outline of Social Economics' must be sought in a different place from the one adduced by Mommsen. In fact, the change is to be found in the 'Categories' essay itself. The essay divides into two distinct parts: an earlier 'terminological' part, which Weber subsequently heavily revised for his *verstehende Soziologie* (Weber 1985: 441-74), and a later 'methodological' part, which he placed at the beginning (Weber 1985: 427-40). These two parts embody two different variants of Weber's sociology: an earlier 'developmental-historical' variant, and a later 'individualist' variant that anticipates the 'Basic Sociological Terms' of 1919-20 and that has come to be known in the secondary literature under the rubric of 'methodological individualism'. In addition, we must assume that those parts of 'Economy and Society' which Weber wrote between 1910 and 1914 do not yet follow the premises of this 'methodological individualism' but rather follow the concept of 'developmental history'. This also seems to be the reason why Weber incorporated the methodological reflections of the

'Categories' essay without change in 1919–20 but both completely redefined his basic sociological concepts and began to revise the earlier part of 'Economy and Society'. Thus the question often discussed by secondary commentators as to why Weber did not follow the principles of methodological individualism in the earlier part of 'Economy and Society' can only be answered by means of an analysis of the history of his texts—which the *Gesamtausgabe* has now made possible.

The new critical edition will probably not resolve all substantive problems of Weber scholarship, since until his death Weber constantly had a tendency to 'lapse back' into developmental-historical figures of thought (for example in his Munich lecture on 'General Economic History' and in his essays on the 'Economic Ethics of the World Religions'). But it is difficult to say what is 'progress' and what is 'regression' here. In the history of the discipline these issues are thoroughly contested and relative. Certainly we should not succumb to the temptation to dissolve Weber's life-work into wholly philological questions. But we must learn to distinguish the two variants of Weber's sociology as they are expressed in the earlier and later versions of 'Economy and Society'. This is not primarily an editorial task; it is an interpretive task. Yet it is a task that will only be accomplished satisfactorily with the publication of the remaining sub-volumes of 'Economy and Society' in the *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe*.

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