
FROM MAX WEBER: *Essays in Sociology*

TRANSLATED, EDITED, AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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Preface

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO A. F. Tytler set forth three *Principles of Translation*: To give a complete transcript of the original ideas; to imitate the styles of the original author; and to preserve the ease of the original text. In presenting selections from Max Weber to an English-reading public, we hope we have met the first demand, that of faithfulness to the original meaning. The second and the third demands are often disputable in translating German into English, and, in the case of Max Weber, they are quite debatable.

The genius of the German language has allowed for a twofold stylistic tradition. One tradition corresponds to the drift of English towards brief and grammatically lucid sentences. Such sentences carry transparent trains of thought in which first things stand first. Friedrich Nietzsche, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, and Franz Kafka are eminent among the representatives of this tradition.

The other tradition is foreign to the tendency of modern English. It is often felt to be formidable and forbidding, as readers of Hegel and Jean Paul Richter, of Karl Marx and Ferdinand Tönnies may testify.

It would hardly do to classify the two traditions as 'good' and 'bad.' Authors representing the first believe in addressing themselves to the ear; they wish to write as if they were speaking. The second group address themselves to the eye of the silent reader. Their texts cannot easily be read aloud to others; everyone has to read for himself. Max Weber once compared German literary humanism to the education of the Chinese Mandarin; and Jean Paul Richter, one of the greatest of German writers, asserted that 'a long period bespeaks of greater deference for the reader than do twenty short sentences. In the end the reader must make them over into one by rereading and recapitulation. The writer is no speaker and the reader is no listener. . .'¹

¹ *Vorschule der Aesthetik*, p. 382, Sämtliche Werke, Vol. 18 (Berlin, 1841).

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It is obvious that this school of writing is not what it is because of the inability of its practitioners to write well. They simply follow an altogether different style. They use parentheses, qualifying clauses, inversions, and complex rhythmic devices in their polyphonous sentences. Ideas are synchronized rather than serialized. At their best, they erect a grammatical artifice in which mental balconies and watch towers, as well as bridges and recesses, decorate the main structure. Their sentences are gothic castles. And Max Weber's style is definitely in their tradition.

Unfortunately, in his case this style is further complicated by a tendency to Platonize thought: he has a predilection for nouns and participles linked by the economic yet colorless forms of weak verbs, such as 'to be,' 'to have,' or 'to seem.' This Platonizing tendency is one of Weber's tributes to German philosophy and jurisprudence, to the style of the pulpit and the bureaucratic office.

We have therefore violated the second of Tytler's rules for translators. Although we have been eager to retain Weber's images, his objectivity, and of course his terms, we have not hesitated to break his sentence into three or four smaller units. Certain alterations in tense, which in English would seem illogical and arbitrary, have been eliminated; occasionally the subjunctive has been changed into the indicative, and nouns into verbs; appositional clauses and parentheses have been raised to the level of equality and condemned to follow rather than herald the main idea. As Weber has not observed Friedrich Nietzsche's suggestion that one should write German with an eye to ease of translation, we have had to drive many a wedge into the structure of his sentences. In all these matters, we have tried to proceed with respect and measure.

But we have also broken the third rule: Whatever 'ease' Weber may have in English is an ease of the English prose into which he is rendered and not any ease of the original work.

A translator of Weber faces a further difficulty. Weber frequently betrays a self-conscious hesitancy in the use of loaded words such as democracy, the people, environment, adjustment, etc., by a profuse utilization of quotation marks. It would be altogether wrong to translate them by the addition of an ironical 'so-called.' Moreover, Weber often emphasizes words and phrases; the German printing convention allows for this more readily than does the English. Our translation, in the main, conforms to the English convention: we have omitted what to the English reader would seem self-conscious reservation and manner of emphasis. The same holds for the accumulation of qualifying words, with which the English

language dispenses without losing in exactitude, emphasis, and meaning.

Weber pushes German academic tradition to its extremes. His major theme often seems to be lost in a wealth of footnoted digressions, exemptions, and comparative illustrations. We have taken some footnotes into the text and in a few instances we have relegated technical cross-references which stand in the original text to footnotes.

We have thus violated Tytler's second and third rules in order to fulfil the first. Our constant aim has been to make accessible to an English-reading public an accurate rendering of what Weber said.

* * *

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One of our translations, 'Class, Status, Party,' has been printed in Dwight Macdonald's *Politics* (October 1944) and is included in this volume by his kind permission. We are grateful to the publishers, Houghton Mifflin Company, for permission to reprint a revision of Max Weber's paper given before the Congress of Arts and Science, St. Louis Exposition of 1904.

Responsibility for the selections and reliability of the German meanings rendered is primarily assumed by H. H. Gerth; responsibility for the formulation and editorial arrangement of the English text is primarily assumed by C. Wright Mills. But the book as a whole represents our mutual work and we are jointly responsible for such deficiencies as it may contain.

HANS H. GERTH
C. WRIGHT MILLS

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Introduction

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

I. A Biographical View

MAX WEBER was born in Erfurt, Thuringia, on 21 April 1864. His father, Max Weber, Sr., a trained jurist and municipal counselor, came from a family of linen merchants and textile manufacturers of western Germany. In 1869 the Webers moved to Berlin, which was soon to become the booming capital of Bismarck's Reich. There, Weber, Sr. became a prosperous politician, active in the municipal diet of Berlin, the Prussian diet, and the new Reichstag. He belonged to the right-wing liberals led by the Hanoverian noble, Bennigsen. The family resided in Charlottenburg, then a west-end suburb of Berlin, where academic and political notables were neighbors. In his father's house young Weber came to know such men as Dilthey, Mommsen, Julian Schmidt, Sybel, Treitschke, and Friedrich Kapp.

Max Weber's mother, Helene Fallenstein Weber, was a cultured and liberal woman of Protestant faith. Various members of her Thuringian family were teachers and small officials. Her father, however, had been a well-to-do official who, on the eve of the 1848 revolution, had retired to a villa in Heidelberg. Gervinus, the eminent liberal historian and a close friend of her family, had tutored her in the several humanist subjects. Until she died, in 1919, Max Weber corresponded with her in long, intimate, and often learned letters. In Berlin Helene Weber became an overburdened *Hausfrau*, faithfully caring for the busy politician, the six children, and a constant circle of friends. Two of her children had died in infancy. The misery of the industrial classes of Berlin impressed her deeply. Her husband neither understood nor shared her religious and humanitarian concerns. He probably did not share her emotional life and certainly the two differed in their feelings about many public questions. During Max's youth and early manhood his parents' relations were increasingly estranged.

The intellectual companions of the household and the extensive travels of the family made the precocious young Weber dissatisfied with the

routine instruction of the schools. He was a weakly child, who suffered meningitis at the age of 4; he preferred books to sports and in early adolescence he read widely and developed intellectual interests of his own. At the age of 13 he wrote historical essays, one of which he called, 'Concerning the Course of German History, with Special Regard to the Positions of Kaiser and Pope.' Another was 'Dedicated to My Own Insignificant Ego as well as to Parents and Siblings.' At fifteen he was reading as a student reads, taking extensive notes. He seemed to have been preoccupied from an early age with the balanced and qualified statement. Criticizing the rather low tastes of his classmates, who, instead of Scott's historical novels, read contemporary trash, he was careful to add: 'Perhaps it sounds presumptuous if I maintain this position, since I am one of the youngest fellows in my class; however, this circumstance strikes one's eyes so sharply that I need not fear that I am not speaking the truth if I state it in this manner. Of course, there are always exceptions.' He appeared to be lacking also in any profound respect for his teachers. Since he was quite ready to share his knowledge with his schoolmates during examinations, they found him likeable and something of a 'phenomenon.'

Young Weber, 'a politician's son in the age of Bismarck's *Realpolitik*,' dismissed the universal literary appraisal of Cicero as bunk. In his eyes, Cicero, especially in his first Catilinarian speech, was a dilettante of phrases, a poor politician, and an irresponsible speaker. Putting himself in Cicero's shoes, he asked himself what good could these long-winded speeches accomplish? He felt Cicero ought to have 'bumped off' (*abmurksen*) Catiline and squelched the threatening conspiracy by force. After detailed arguments, he ended a letter to a cousin: 'In short, I find the speech very weak and without purpose, the whole policy vacillating with regard to its ends. I find Cicero without appropriate resolve and energy, without skill, and without the ability to bide his time.' The older correspondent, a student in Berlin University, responded by intimating that young Weber was parroting books he had read. In self-defense Weber replied sharply but with dignity:

What you have written sounds as if you believe I had copied from some book, or at least that I had rendered the substance of something I had read. After all, that is, in a nutshell, the meaning of your long lecture. You seek to bring out this point in a form as little concrete as possible because you entertain the opinion that I would mind an opinion which, so far as I myself know, is not true. Though I have summoned all knowledge of myself,

I have not been able to admit that I have let myself be swayed too much by any one book or by any phrase from the mouth of my teachers. . . . To be sure . . . we younger ones profit in general from treasures that you seniors, and I consider you as one of them, have garnered. . . . I admit that probably everything indirectly stems from books, for what are books for except to enlighten and instruct man about things that are unclear to him? It is possible that I am very sensitive to books, their comments and deductions. This you can judge better than I, for in certain respects it is easier to know someone else than oneself. Yet, the content of my—perhaps completely untrue—statement does not come directly from any book. For the rest, I do not mind your criticism, as quite similar things are to be found in Mommsen, as I have only now discovered.¹

Young Weber's mother read her son's letters without his knowledge. She was greatly concerned that she and her son were becoming intellectually estranged. It is not strange that a sincere and intelligent adolescent, aware of the difficulties between his parents and observing the characteristic ruses of a Victorian patriarchal family, learned that words and actions should not be taken at their face value. He came to feel that if one wanted to get at the truth, direct and first-hand knowledge was necessary. Thus when he was sent to 'confirmation' lessons, he learned enough Hebrew to get at the original text of the Old Testament.

Frau Weber worried about her son's religious indifference. She wrote:

The closer Max's confirmation approaches, the less can I see that he feels any of the deeper stimulating influence in this period of his development which would make him think about what he is asked to enunciate before the altar as his own conviction. The other day, when we were sitting alone, I tried to get out of him what he thinks and feels about the main questions of Christian consciousness. He seemed quite astonished that I should presuppose that the self-clarification of such questions as the belief in immortality and the Benevolence guiding our fate should result from confirmation lessons for every thinking man. I felt these things with great warmth in my innermost being—independent of any dogmatic form, they had become the most vital conviction . . . [yet] it was impossible for me to express it to my own child in such a way that it would make any impression on him.²

With this profound and personal piety, Helene Weber suffered under the worldliness of her external family life. Nevertheless, she lovingly resigned herself to the somewhat complacent, self-righteous, and patriarchal atmosphere created by her husband. As an adolescent, Weber had less and less of a common ground with his mother in serious mat-

ters. It was not that he was drawn to his father: the worldly atmosphere of modern intellectual life drew Weber away from the philistinism of his father as well as from the piety of his mother.

Although respectful, he rebelled against the authority of his elders. Yet, rather than take part in the 'frivolous' pursuits of his classmates, the boredom of school routine, and the intellectual insignificance of his teachers, he withdrew into his own world. Such a boy would not submit to the impositions of his father. The thoughtless manner in which his father used his wife did not escape the discerning eye of the seventeen-year-old boy. At one point, on a journey to Italy with his father, he was admonished for not living up to the appropriate degree of stereotyped tourist enthusiasm. Max simply declared his intention of returning home, at once and alone.

The confirmation motto that Weber received was: 'The Lord is the spirit, but where the Lord's spirit is, there also is freedom.' Max Weber's widow in her biography comments: 'Hardly any other Biblical motto could better express the law governing this child's life.'

2

Weber's pre-university schooling came to an end in the spring of 1882. Possessed of exceptional talent, he had had no need to 'strain.' His teachers, however, attested to his lack of routine industry and doubted his 'moral maturity.' Like many nineteenth-century thinkers, he made a rather unfavorable impression upon his teachers. The seventeen-year-old, stringy young man with sloping shoulders still appeared wanting in appropriate respect for authority.

He went to Heidelberg and, following in the steps of his father, enrolled as a student of law. He also studied a variety of cultural subjects, including history, economics, and philosophy, which at Heidelberg were taught by eminent scholars. He accepted provisional membership in his father's dueling fraternity, the father's influence thus bringing him into such circles. From the mother's side, through an older cousin who was studying theology, a son of the Strassburg historian Baumgarten, he participated in the theological and philosophical controversies of the day.

He began his daily routine at Heidelberg by rising early to attend a lecture in logic. Then he 'fiddled around' in the dueling hall for an hour. He sat through his lectures 'in a studious way,' went to lunch at 12:30, 'for one mark'; occasionally he had a quarter of a litre of wine or

beer with his meal. Frequently, for two hours in the early afternoon he played a 'solid game of cards.' Then he retreated to his rooms, went over his lecture notes, and read such books as Strauss' *The Old and the New Belief*. 'Sometimes in the afternoon I go with friends to the mountains and walk, and in the evening we meet again at the restaurant and have a quite good supper for 80 pfennig. I read Lotze's *Microcosm*, and we get into heated argument about it.'³ Occasionally, invitations to the homes of professors gave him an opportunity to imitate the characteristic peculiarities of people known to the group.

During subsequent semesters, Weber joined heartily in the social life of the dueling fraternity, and he learned to hold his own in drinking bouts as well as duels. Soon his face carried the conventional dueling scar. He fell into debt and remained so during his Heidelberg years. The student and patriotic songs he learned during this period lingered in his memory throughout the course of his life. The stringy youth grew into the robust man, broad-shouldered and rather stout. When he visited his mother in Berlin, now a man with the external characteristics of Imperial Germany, his mother was shocked at his appearance and received him with a slap in the face.

Looking back upon his Heidelberg years, Weber wrote: 'The usual training for haughty aggression in the dueling fraternity and as an officer has undoubtedly had a strong influence upon me. It removed the shyness and insecurity of my adolescence.'⁴

After three semesters at Heidelberg, at the age of 19 Weber moved to Strassburg in order to serve his year in the army. Apart from dueling, he had never done any physical exercise, and the military service with its drill was difficult for him. In addition to the physical strain, he suffered greatly under the stupidity of barrack drill and the chicanery of subaltern officers. He did not like to give up his intellectual pursuits:

When I come home I usually go to bed around nine o'clock. However, I cannot fall asleep, as my eyes are not tired and the intellectual side of man is not being utilized. The feeling, which begins in the morning and increases toward the end of the day, of sinking slowly into the night of abysmal stupidity is actually the most disagreeable thing of all.⁵

Weber adjusted to this feeling by having his fill of alcohol in the evening and going through the military routine the next day in the daze of a moderate hangover. Then he felt 'that the hours fly away because nothing, not a single thought, stirs under my skull.' Although

he finally built up his endurance and met most of the physical demands quite well, he never measured up to the gymnastic acrobatics. Once a sergeant shouted at him, in Berlin dialect: 'Man, you look like a barrel of beer swinging on a trapeze.' He made up for this deficiency by perfecting his marching endurance and his goosestep. At no time did he cease to rebel against the

incredible waste of time required to domesticate thinking beings into machines responding to commands with automatic precision. . . One is supposed to learn patience by observing for an hour each day all sorts of senseless things which are called military education. As if, my God! after three months of the manual of arms for hours every day and the innumerable insults of the most miserable scoundrels, one could ever be suspected of suffering from lack of patience. The officer candidate is supposed to be deprived of the possibility of using his mind during the period of military training.⁶

Yet Weber was quite objective; he admitted that the body works more precisely when all thinking is eliminated. And after he received his officer's commission, he quickly learned to see the brighter side of army life. He was well esteemed by his superior officers, and contributed tall stories and a keen sense of humor to the comradeship of the officers' mess; and, as one capable of command, he won the respect of the men under him.

The military year was over in 1884 and at the age of 20 Weber resumed his university studies in Berlin and Goettingen, where, two years later, he took his first examination in law. But during the summer of 1885 and again in 1887 he returned to Strassburg for military exercises. And in 1888 he participated in military maneuvers in Posen. There he felt at close range the atmosphere of the German-Slavonic border, which seemed to him a 'cultural' frontier. His discussion of Channing, in a letter addressed to his mother, is characteristic of his thinking at this time.

Channing had made a deep impression upon him, but Weber could not go along with his ethical absolutism and pacifism. 'I simply cannot see what moral elevation will result from placing military professionals on a footing with a gang of murderers and holding them up for public disdain. War would not thereby gain in humaneness.' Characteristically, Weber does not enter into a theological dispute about the Sermon on the Mount; he keeps at a distance from Channing by locating his perspective in the social and historical situation; he tries thereby to 'understand' and, at the same time, he relativizes Channing's position. 'Channing obviously

has no idea of such matters [war and desertion]. He has in mind the conditions of American enlisted armies with which the predatory wars of the democratic American federal Government against Mexico etc. have been fought.' ⁷ The arguments indicate, *in nuce*, the position that Weber later argues, in the last section of *Politics as a Vocation* and in the discussion of religion and politics in *Religious Rejections of the World*.⁸

It is characteristic of Weber's way of life that in Strassburg his main social experience remained within his family situation. Two of his mother's sisters were married to Strassburg professors; and Weber found friendship and intellectual discourse as well as profound emotional experience in their houses. Some of the Baumgarten family were exceptionally prone to mystical and religious experiences, and young Weber participated with great sympathy in the tensions that these experiences occasioned. He became the confidant of almost everyone concerned, learning to appreciate and sympathize with their respective values. He spoke of himself as 'Ich Weltmensch' and tried to find a workable solution for the several persons involved. And for Weber this meant going beyond ethical absolutism: "The matter does not appear to me to be so desperate if one does not ask too exclusively (as the Baumgartens, now as often, do): "Who is morally right and who is morally wrong?" But if one rather asks: "Given the existing conflict, how can I solve it with the least internal and external damage for all concerned?" ⁹ Weber thus suggested a pragmatic view, a focus on the consequences of various decisions rather than on the stubborn insistence upon the introspective awareness of one's intense sincerity. His early letters and the experiences at Strassburg clearly point to his later distinction between an ethic of responsibility and an ethic of absolute ends.

Weber concluded his studies and took up service in the law courts of Berlin, in which city he lived with his parents. In the early 'eighties, he settled down, a diligent student of law, in the lecture rooms of the eminent jurists of the time. Among them, he admired Gneist, whose lectures directed his attention to current political problems. 'I find his lectures true masterpieces; really, I have wondered about his manner of directly entering questions of politics and about the way he develops strictly liberal views without becoming a propagandist, which Treitschke does become in his lectures on state and church.' ¹⁰

Weber concentrated upon a field in which economic and legal history overlapped. He wrote his Ph.D. thesis on the history of trading com-

panies during the Middle Ages (1889), examining hundreds of Italian and Spanish references and learning both languages in order to do so. In 1890 he passed his second examination in law. He habilitated himself in Berlin for commercial, German, and Roman law with a treatise on what Marx once called 'the secret history of the Romans,' namely, *The History of Agrarian Institutions* (1891). The modest title actually covers a sociological, economic, and cultural analysis of ancient society, a theme to which Weber repeatedly returned. He had to defend one of the finer points of his thesis against Theodor Mommsen. At the end of the inconclusive exchange, the eminent historian asserted that he knew of no better man to succeed him 'than the highly esteemed Max Weber.'

3

In the spring of 1892, a grand niece of Max Weber, Sr., came to Berlin in order to educate herself for a profession. Marianne Schnitger, the twenty-one-year-old daughter of a doctor, had attended a finishing school in the city of Hanover. Upon returning to Berlin after an earlier visit to the Weber home, she realized that she was in love with Max Weber. After some confusion, Victorian misunderstandings, and moral attempts at self-clarification, Max and Marianne announced their formal engagement. They were married in the fall of 1893.

For some six years before his marriage to Marianne, Weber had been in love with a daughter of his mother's sister in Strassburg, who, for rather long periods, was in a mental hospital. She was recovering when Weber gently broke with her. He never forgot that he had unwillingly caused suffering to this tender girl. It was perhaps an important reason for the mildness of his reactions to others who were guilty in the field of personal relations and for his general stoicism in personal affairs. In addition to this situation, another moral difficulty had stood in the way of the marriage. Perhaps because of Weber's hesitancy in approaching Marianne, a friend of his had courted her, and it was somewhat painful to Weber to cut in.

After his marriage to Marianne, Weber lived the life of a successful young scholar in Berlin. Having taken the place of Jakob Goldschmidt, a famous teacher of economics who had become ill, he was in lecture hall and seminar nineteen hours a week. He also participated in state examinations for lawyers and, in addition, imposed a heavy load of work upon himself. He was active in consultation work for government agen-

cies, and made special studies for private reform groups, one on the stock exchange, and another on the estates in Eastern Germany.

In the fall of 1894, he accepted a full professorship in economics at Freiburg University. There he met Hugo Münsterberg, Pastor Naumann, and Wilhelm Rickert. He had an enormous load, working until very late. When Marianne urged him to get some rest, he would call out: 'If I don't work until one o'clock I can't be a professor.'

In 1895, the Webers made a trip to Scotland and the west coast of Ireland. Returning to Freiburg, Weber gave his inaugural address at the University. It was entitled, 'The National State and Economic Policy,' and was a confession of belief in imperialist *Realpolitik* and the House of Hohenzollern. It caused quite a stir. 'The brutality of my views,' he wrote, 'have caused horror. The Catholics were the most content with it, because I gave a firm kick to "Ethical Culture."'

Weber accepted a chair at Heidelberg in 1896, replacing the eminent and retired Knies, one of the heads of 'the historical school.' He thus became the colleague of former teachers, Fischer, Bekker, and others, who still stamped the intellectual and social life of Heidelberg. His circle of friends included Georg Jellinek, Paul Hensel, Karl Neumann, the art historian, and Ernst Troeltsch, the religionist, who was to become one of Weber's greatest friends and intellectual companions, and who for a time lived in the Weber household.

4

Max Weber's father died in 1897, shortly after a tense discussion in which Max heatedly defended his mother against what seemed to him autocratic impositions. Later Weber felt that his hostile outbreak against his father was a guilty act which could never be rectified.¹¹ During the following summer, the Webers traveled to Spain and on the return trip Weber became fevered and ill with a psychic malady. He seemed to get better when the academic year began, but towards the end of the fall semester he collapsed from tension and remorse, exhaustion and anxiety. For his essentially psychiatric condition, doctors prescribed cold water, travel, and exercise. Yet Weber continued to experience the sleeplessness of an inner tension.

For the rest of his life he suffered intermittently from severe depressions, punctuated by manic spurts of extraordinarily intense intellectual work and travel. Indeed, his way of life from this time on seems to

oscillate between neurotic collapse, travel, and work. He was held together by a profound sense of humor and an unusually fearless practice of the Socratic maxim.

Eager to make the best of a bad situation and to comfort his wife, Weber wrote:

Such a disease has its compensations. It has reopened to me the human side of life, which mama used to miss in me. And this to an extent previously unknown to me. I could say, with John Gabriel Borkman, that 'an icy hand has let me loose.' In years past my diseased disposition expressed itself in a frantic grip upon scientific work, which appeared to me as a talisman. . . Looking back, this is quite clear. I know that sick or healthy, I shall no longer be the same. The need to feel crushed under the load of work is extinct. Now I want most of all to live out my life humanly and to see my love as happy as it is possible for me to make her. I do not believe that I shall achieve less than formerly in my inner treadmill, of course, always in proportion to my condition, the permanent improvement of which will in any case require much time and rest.¹²

He repeatedly attempted to continue his teaching. During one such attempt his arms and back became temporarily paralyzed, yet he forced himself to finish the semester. He felt dreadfully tired out; his head was weary; every mental effort, especially speech, was felt to be detrimental to his entire being. In spite of occasional wrath and impatience, he thought of his condition as part of his fate. He rejected all 'good counsel.' Since adolescence, everything about him had been geared for thinking. And now, every intellectual pursuit became a poison to him. He had not developed any artistic abilities, and physical work of any sort was distasteful. His wife attempted to persuade him to take up some craft or hobby, but he laughed at her. For hours he sat and gazed stupidly, picking at his finger nails, claiming that such inactivity made him feel good. When he tried to look at his lecture notes, the words swam in confusion before his eyes. One day, while walking in a wood, he lost his sensory control and openly wept. A pet cat made him so angry with its mewling that he was quite beyond himself in rage. These symptoms were present during the years 1898 and 1899. The university authorities granted him a leave with pay. Years later, in a letter to his friend, Karl Vossler, Weber wrote: "Misery teaches prayer." . . . Always? According to my personal experience, I should like to *dispute* this statement. Of course, I agree with you that it holds very frequently, all too frequently for man's dignity.¹³

One fall the Webers traveled to Venice for 'a vacation.' They returned to Heidelberg and again Weber tried to resume some of his duties, but soon collapsed, more severely than ever before. At Christmas he asked to be dismissed from his position, but the University granted him a long leave of absence with a continuance of salary. 'He could not read or write, speak, walk, or sleep without pain; all mental and part of his physical functions refused to work.'¹⁴

Early in 1899, he entered a small mental institution and remained there alone for several weeks. A young psychopathic cousin of Weber's was brought to the institution, and during the winter, on medical advice, Weber's wife traveled with both men to Ajaccio on the island of Corsica. In the spring, they went to Rome, the ruins of which re-stimulated Weber's historical interest. He felt depressed by the presence of the psychopathic youth, who was then sent home. Several years later, this youth took his own life. Weber's letter of condolence to the parents gives us some insight into his freedom from conventional attitudes towards suicide.

He was a man [he wrote of the cousin] who, chained to an incurably diseased body, yet had developed, perhaps because of it, a sensitivity of feeling, a clarity about himself, and a deeply hidden and proud and noble height of inner deportment such as is found among few healthy people. To know and to judge this is given only to those who have seen him quite near and who have learned to love him as we have, and who, at the same time, personally know what disease is. . . His future being what it was, he has done right to depart now to the unknown land and to go before you, who otherwise would have had to leave him behind on this earth, walking toward a dark fate, without counsel, and in loneliness.¹⁵

With such an evaluation of suicide as a last and stubborn affirmation of man's freedom, Weber takes his stand at the side of such modern Stoics as Montaigne, Hume, and Nietzsche. He was, at the same time, of the opinion that religions of salvation do not approve of 'voluntary death,' that only philosophers have hallowed it.¹⁶

Under the influence of the magnificent landscape of Italy and its historically grandiose scenes, Weber slowly recovered. The Webers also spent some time in Switzerland, where his mother, now 57, and his brother Alfred visited them. Shortly after his mother's visit, Max was able to resume reading, a book on art history. He commented: 'Who knows how long I can keep it up? Anything but literature in my own field.' After three and a half years of intermittently severe disease, in

1902 Weber felt able to return to Heidelberg and resume a light schedule of work. Gradually, he began to read professional journals and such books as Simmel's *Philosophy of Money*. Then, as if to make up for his years of intellectual privation, he plunged into a vast and universal literature in which art history, economics, and politics stood alongside the economic history of monastic orders.

There were, however, repeated setbacks. He was still unable fully to take up his teaching work. He asked to be dismissed from his professorship and to be made a titular professor. This request was first rejected, but at his insistence, he was made a lecturer. He had requested the right to examine Ph.D. candidates, but this was not granted. After four and a half years without production he was able to write a book review. A new phase of writing finally began, at first dealing with problems of method in the social sciences.

Weber suffered under the psychic burden of receiving money from the university without rendering adequate service. He felt that only a man at his work is a full man, and he forced himself to work. Yet after only a summer of it, he returned to Italy alone. During the year 1903, he traveled out of Germany no less than six times; he was in Italy, Holland, and Belgium. His own nervous condition, his disappointment at his own insufficiencies, frictions with the Heidelberg faculty, and the political state of the nation occasionally made him wish to turn his back on Germany forever. Yet during this year, 1903, he managed to join with Sombart in the editorship of the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, which became perhaps the leading social science journal in Germany, until suppressed by the Nazis. This editorship provided Weber an opportunity to resume contact with a wide circle of scholars and politicians and to broaden the focus of his own work. By 1904, his productivity was in full swing again and rising steeply. He published essays on the social and economic problems of Junker estates, objectivity in the social sciences, and the first section of the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Hugo Münsterberg, his colleague from Freiburg days, had helped organize a 'Congress of Arts and Science' as part of the Universal Exposition of 1904 in St. Louis. He invited Weber (along with Sombart, Troeltsch, and many others) to read a paper before the Congress.¹⁷ By August, Weber and his wife were on the way to America.

5

Max Weber's reaction to the United States was at once enthusiastic and detached. He possessed to an eminent degree the 'virtue' which Edward Gibbon ascribes to the studious traveler abroad, that 'virtue which borders on a vice; the flexible temper which can assimilate itself to every tone of society from the court to the cottage; the happy flow of spirits which can amuse and be amused in every company and situation.'¹⁸ Hence Weber was impatient and angry with quickly prejudiced colleagues, who, after a day and a half in New York, began to run down things in America.

He wished to enter sympathetically into the new world without surrendering his capacity for informed judgments at a later time. He was fascinated by the rush hour in lower Manhattan, which he liked to view from the middle of Brooklyn Bridge as a panorama of mass transportation and noisy motion. The skyscrapers, which he saw as 'fortresses of capital,' reminded him of 'the old pictures of the towers in Bologna and Florence.' And he contrasted these towering bulks of capitalism with the tiny homes of American college professors:

Among these masses, all individualism becomes expensive, whether it is in housing or eating. Thus, the home of Professor Hervay, of the German department in Columbia University, is surely a doll's house with tiny little rooms, with toilet and bath facilities in the same room (as is almost always the case). Parties with more than four guests are impossible (worthy of being envied!) and with all this, it takes one hour's ride to get to the center of the city. . .¹⁹

From New York the party journeyed to Niagara Falls. They visited a small town and then went on to Chicago, which Weber found 'incredible.' He noted well its lawlessness and violence, its sharp contrasts of gold coast and slum, the 'steam, dirt, blood, and hides' of the stockyards, the 'maddening' mixture of peoples:

the Greek shining the Yankee's shoes for five cents, the German acting as his waiter, the Irishman managing his politics, and the Italian digging his dirty ditches. With the exception of some exclusive residential districts, the whole gigantic city, more extensive than London, is like a man whose skin has been peeled off and whose entrails one sees at work.

Again and again, Weber was impressed by the extent of waste, especially the waste of human life, under American capitalism. He noticed

the same conditions that the muckrakers were publicizing at the time. Thus he commented, in a letter to his mother:

After their work, the workers often have to travel for hours in order to reach their homes. The tramway company has been bankrupt for years. As usual a receiver, who has no interest in speeding up the liquidation, manages its affairs; therefore, new tram cars are not purchased. The old cars constantly break down, and about four hundred people a year are thus killed or crippled. According to the law, each death costs the company about \$5,000, which is paid to the widow or heirs, and each cripple costs \$10,000, paid to the casualty himself. These compensations are due so long as the company does not introduce certain precautionary measures. But they have calculated that the four hundred casualties a year cost less than would the necessary precautions. The company therefore does not introduce them.²⁰

In St. Louis, Weber delivered a successful lecture on the social structure of Germany, with particular reference to rural and political problems. This was his first 'lecture' in six and a half years. Many of his colleagues were present, and according to the report of his wife, who was also present, his talk was very well received. This was gratifying to the Webers, as it seemed to indicate that he was again able to function in his profession. He traveled through the Oklahoma territory, and visited New Orleans as well as the Tuskegee Institution; he visited distant relatives in North Carolina and Virginia; and then, in fast tempo, traveled through Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, and Boston. In New York, he searched the library of Columbia University for materials to be used in *The Protestant Ethic*.

Of the Americans [whom we met] it was a woman, an inspector of industry, who was by far the most pre-eminent figure. One learned a great deal about the radical evil of this world from this passionate socialist. The hopelessness of social legislation in a system of state particularism, the corruption of many labor leaders who incite strikes and then have the manufacturer pay them for settling them. (I had a personal letter of introduction to such a scoundrel.) . . . and yet, [the Americans] are a wonderful people. Only the Negro question and the terrible immigration form a big, black cloud.²¹

During his travels in America Weber seems to have been most interested in labor problems, the immigrant question, problems of political management—especially of municipal government—all expressions of the 'capitalist spirit,'²² the Indian question and its administration, the plight of the South, and the Negro problem. Of the American Negro, Weber wrote: 'I have talked to about one hundred white Southerners

of all social classes and parties, and the problem of what shall become of these people [the Negroes] seems absolutely hopeless.'

He had arrived in America in September 1904; he left for Germany shortly before Christmas.*

Perhaps the United States was for Weber what England had been for previous generations of German liberals: the model of a new society. Here the Protestant sects had had their greatest scope and in their wake the secular, civic, and 'voluntary associations' had flowered. Here a political federation of states had led to a 'voluntary' union of immense contrasts.

Weber was far from the conceit of those German civil servants who prided themselves in their 'honest administration' and pointed disdainfully to the 'corrupt practices' of American politics. Friedrich Kapp, a returned German-American, had brought such attitudes home to Weber. But Weber saw things in a broader perspective. Being convinced that politics are not to be judged solely as a moral business, his attitude was rather that of Charles Sealsfield, who had, during the eighteen-thirties, unfolded an epic panorama of the birth of an empire-building nation destined to 'take its place among the mightiest nations upon the earth.' Sealsfield had asked, 'Is it not rather a necessary, absolute condition of our liberty that citizens' virtues, as well as their vices, should grow more luxuriantly because they are freely permitted to grow and increase?' Weber might have agreed, after what he saw, that 'the mouth which breathes the mephitic vapors of the Mississippi and the Red River swamps is not fit to chew raisins, that the hand which fells our gigantic trees and drains our bogs cannot put on kid gloves. Our land is the land of contrast.'²³

The key focus of Weber's experience of America was upon the role of bureaucracy in a democracy. He saw that 'machine politics' were indispensable in modern 'mass democracy,' unless a 'leaderless democracy' and a confusion of tongues were to prevail. Machine politics, however, mean the management of politics by professionals, by the disciplined party organization and its streamlined propaganda. Such democracy may also bring to the helm the Caesarist people's tribune, whether in the role of the strong president or the city manager. And the whole process

* Some translations of Weber's letters from the United States are contained in H. W. Brann, 'Max Weber and the United States,' *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*, June 1944, pp. 18-30.

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