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FROM MAX WEBER

Essays in Sociology

Translated, edited and with an introduction by
H. H. GERTH & C. WRIGHT MILLS

Founded by KARL MANNHEIM *Edited by* W. J. H. SPROTT

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Founded by Karl Mannheim

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From Marianne Weber's *Max Weber : ein Lebensbild*

MAX WEBER

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, Sämmtliche Werke, Vol. 18 (Berlin, 1841).

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.

* * *

We wish to thank the editorial staff of Oxford University Press for their encouragement of our efforts. Special thanks are due Mrs. Patricke Johns Heine who assisted revisions of the first drafts of chapters IV, X, and XII; and to Mr. J. Ben Gillingham who performed the same task in connection with section 6 of chapter XIII. Miss Honey Toda partially edited and retyped many pages of almost illegible manuscript and we are grateful for her diligence.

We are grateful for the valuable assistance of Dr. Hedwig Ide Gerth and Mrs. Freya Mills. The administrative generosity of Professor Carl S. Joslyn, chairman of the Department of Sociology, the University of Maryland, and the support of Professor Thomas C. McCormick, chairman at the University of Wisconsin, have greatly facilitated the work. Professor E. A. Ross has been kind enough to read chapter XII and to give us his suggestions.

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

Table of Contents

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 patriarchial atmosphere created by her husband. As an adolescent, Weber had less and less of a common ground with his mother in serious mat-