

Max Weber: made in the USA?

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ABSTRACT

There is a reciprocity over the Atlantic Ocean since centuries. Sociology almost appears as an American-German joint venture. The USA have served as an identity giving other to several classic authors in social thought, only to mention de Tocqueville, Max Weber and Gunnar Myrdal. In the case of Weber his months in the USA were obviously formative, to judge from all American examples in especially his political sociology. Moreover, especially Weber's methodology was developed in the USA, in the form of creative extensions by paradigm founding immigrants, such as Schutz, Lazarsfeld, and Parsons, whose Phd was from Heidelberg, while Weber's methodological legacy was only retarded in Germany, where his political aspects and life and work were more in focus. Probably Arnold Brecht's interpretation of Weber's is the most sophisticated and also sticks out as being "above the battle of paradigms". In addition more American thinkers such as C. Wright Mills pay tribute to Weber, whose influence also is omnipresent in political analyses (e.g. Robert Dahl).

Max Weber is often seen as a personification of the German spirit, imprinted by *deutscher Sonderweg* and delayed nation-building. In general that is a fair description, of Weber's context. However, ideas should not be interpreted merely on the basis of context. Formative influences and experiences must be taken into account.

Weber is indeed shaped by a context lost and gone that has to be retrieved, in an attempt at bridging the gap between present and past. His philosophy of science is imprinted by German historicism and a response to its problems. His synthesis of neo-Kantianism and Austrian marginalism is more majestic than innovation. This is relatively well-known. Less well-known is that Weber to quite some extent is a produce of the USA.

This goes for his status as a classic author, which is a retrospective construction that mainly took place in the USA. Even if Weber was a legendary figure in his contemporary Germany it is in the USA he is elevated to the Parnassus, to become the scholarly most important of the "three wise men", Marx, Weber and Durkheim. But it also goes for Weber's original *oeuvre*, inspired as it was by his almost three months American sojourn 1904.

In Germany the memory of Max Weber is cultivated not that much as a live classic author but more as a nostalgic act of reverence for a better and alternative Germany. This is true of the so called Weber-circle after the death of Weber himself. Not only Weber's widow Marianne but in particular Karl Jaspers had a sort of "Lazarus-approach" to Max, in that sense Weber remained alive, rather than as a methodological pioneer. Rather existential and political topics were at the core in Germany. Despite the Weber-circle, which in fact lingered on into the early 1950s, the reception of Weber was delayed, because of a number of reasons, some of them rather obvious.

Weber's life coincided with the Second Reich, Wilhelmine Germany. He was born in Erfurt in Thuringia (although Erfurt politically at the time was a sort of Prussian enclave), in 1864 and died in Munich in 1920. His father was a rather important administrator and also politician, member of both the German and Prussian diets. Max sr was in charge of Berlin's communication system, after the family had moved there when Max jr was age five. So Max grew up in Berlin-Charlottenburg, in Leibnizstraße, close to Savignyplatz, in a house that no longer stands. He early on came to know many important figures from the scholarly and public spheres. These spheres coincided to quite some extent. Professors were state officials as well as public intellectuals, with a significant voice in public affairs.

1. Weber in the USA

That Weber became a big name in the USA while being more put *ad acta* in Germany is thanks to a number of migrants that brought him in their luggage in their *diaspora*. The Finnish-Russian refugee Pitirim Sorokin is one early example of "Weber migration". Weber actually came to be hailed as a founding father of all major social science paradigms, with the notable exception of the Chicago school (for various reasons I don't go deeper into, see Platt 1985).

The Austrian-Jewish Banker Alfred Schütz developed his phenomenological variation of hermeneutics, taking his departure in Weber's ideal-type. He taught at the New School for Social Research in New York, an institution created by the Danish-American Alvin Johnson, as a sanctuary and "transit station" for European refugee scholars, pre-dominantly from the German cultural realm. Arnold Brecht was affiliated with the same institution. He had a career as important German official and experienced a lot of momentous events as an "observing participant", in for instance famous *Preussenschlag* 1932, which was really the end of the Weimar era, when the red Prussian government was unconstitutionally unseated by von Papen. Brecht at a close distance also witnessed Hitler's access to power one year later. Brecht's magisterial *Political Theory* (1959) is not only a very reliable handbook in the research process as a whole but the perhaps best following-up of Weber's methodological intentions, codification of Weber's canon, with its account

of so called *scientific value relativism*. Objectivity and avoidance of uncontrolled value intrusion by making value premises explicit is an often misunderstood qualification of value-neutrality to value-relation, with intersubjectivity. This Weber-Rickert solution is further refined by Gunnar Myrdal, in his *An American Dilemma* and other works.

In addition Talcott Parsons had his PhD-degree from Heidelberg in the mid 1920s, and had actually once met Weber in Munich, in the company of his father, shortly before Weber's death. This is documented by Uta Gerhardt (2001, p 402), although indirectly, referring to a letter from Horst-Jürgen Helle to Uta Gerhardt of 6 April 1994. Parsons represents the other side of trans-Atlantic reciprocity. There are a number of American scholars who have their degrees from Germany before launching an academic career in the USA. So Parsons's functionalistic social action theory has deep German roots early on. Social action as formulated in the early paragraphs of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* is the cornerstone for the perhaps most influential theoretical social science paradigm.

When Paul F. Lazarsfeld developed his modern unified science inspired survey research paradigm at the Bureau for Applied Social Research at Columbia University in New York Weber became a pivotal figure here too, although PFL could build on his own previous investigations of attitudes at *Österreichische wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle* in Vienna as a proto-type. The Weber he could relate to was the interview designs that Weber was involved in from around 1908, in for instance industrial sociology (but not only, see chap 4 in my *Max Weber's Methodologies* from 2002). For PFL electoral behaviour became *Schwerpunkt* (in Vienna milk consumption etc had been more in focus). PFL developed large scale surveys as teamwork. This was not really Weber's "cup of tea" but there are more than embryonic elements in Weber's *oeuvre* only to mention the *Pressenquete* that Wilhelm Hennis finds important. Electoral studies and the role of media in politics became central in PFL's research agenda.

Within various approaches in the sociology of organizations Weber has been the master; both human relation and scientific management schools regard themselves as Weberian, and a balanced judgement might be that the theory of organization has developed in a sort of interplay between the two.

The flamboyant *enfant terrible* of American sociology, C. Wright Mills, also regarded himself as Weberian, which evidently is a label for quite different content. In contrast to for instance the case of Schütz, where the cultivation of the *Nachlass* early on was monopolized (by Berger and Luckmann in Konstanz), controversies over matters of interpretation arouse in Weber's case. C. Wright Mills had a close cooperation with H. H. Gerth and their *From Max Weber* (1946) is still dominating the market (who wrote the "Introduction" remains a matter of controversy). Today we have more recent translations of for instance the famous so called twin lectures. C. Wright Mills was from Texas but Madison, Wisconsin, became his academic Alma Mater. There is a Swedish connection, due to the "Swedish corridor" at the

sociological department. C. Wright Mills's visit to Scandinavia was more a Danish affair; he spent a sojourn lecturing in Copenhagen.

We have not exhausted the account of the migrants with a live Weberian – of sort – legacy. We could include Herbert Marcuse, who challenged Weber's views on formal rationality at the Heidelberg centennial (1964) – but in a mode of ambiguity that reveals a Weberian influence (“heute sieht es aus als ob er recht hatte”). Leo Strauss had Weber as posthumous “sparring partner” in his book *Natural Right and History* (1953), in particular the chapter on “Natural Rights and the Distinction Between Facts and Values”. Strauss was as so many migrants a German Jew but his value objectivism has a lot in common with Catholic philosophy (Robert Spaemann). Natural law and value objectivism are common traits. Leo Strauss has many followers in the USA, also among politicians, and even within the present administration. Also the prematurely deceased Allan Bloom carried a Weberian legacy, or in his case rather burden. According to his *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987) Weber has a significant responsibility for the erosion of moral and civic values and virtues in America, together with Nietzsche and other European relativists and – in Bloom's view - amoral classical authors.

It is a perennial and crucial problem that we need firm norms, to create a civilized society with a sense of community. But we cannot prove the validity of those norms; they are useful social fictions. Human rights are easy to accept but hard to prove.

Even if it seems clear that American social science in the 20s century is “Weberian” it seems to be no unity about what that is supposed to mean. It is almost easier to say what is *not* Weberian. We have mentioned Chicago style sociology, even if Edward Shils was much Weberian and did a lot for the diffusion of Weber's methodology. Shils also carried on the legacy from Karl Mannheim; otherwise he is known for the centre-periphery dichotomy, which became popular in for instance Norway (Rokkan, Österud). Shils had experiences from being a social worker among the coloured people. He later was a collaborator of Gunnar Myrdal in the big “Negro-investigation”. (1) Although Shils was a Jew his career pattern is rather typical also of what we might label Protestant reform creed. Many American sociologists are often priests (or children of priests) or have this vocation as their second choice, if they were not sociologists. This marks a difference to Europe and in particular to the UK, where sociology is more “underground” and a typical sociologist has Manchester jeans and play snooker and watch soccer; does not necessarily have to be a Bohemian but had better cultivate such an image not to stick out.

There is a lot in common to Christian and Jewish culture, and in fact many parents sent their offspring to Shils, who was supposed to give them a good Christian education.

One might add that the religious background of sociology is relevant also in the European context, since vicars in the countryside were pioneering in gathering information about how people lived, social statistics about pauperism. Shils was a

teacher of many in several later generations, including S.N. Eisenstadt. His Swedish contacts also included Torgny T. Segerstedt and Martin P:son Nilsson. Shils had good contacts also in India and he was much engaged in intellectual freedom; for decades the leading figure in *Minerva*, a journal in which also the threats against the autonomy of scholarship in Sweden was under scrutiny. He was not happy about the Jacob Sundberg case at Stockholm University, and he also published two Swedish reports on higher education in the early 1990s.

Max Weber has not come to play the role in *political science* that one might have expected. Naturally his definitions of the state, with its monopoly of legal violence and his types of legitimate rule (*Herrschaft*) is recurring food for students. However, there are in addition some obvious “affinities” between Weber’s (and Michels’s, his young protégée) way to conceive of democracy *vs* efficiency and later theories in the USA. Robert Dahl’s reformulation of democracy to “polyarchy”, competition for power between elites, is quite Weberian, and the same goes today also for Stephen Turner’s recent *Liberal Democracy 3.0*. In general “Norwegian” so called iron triangles also have a Weberian imprint (corporatism in the form of “Kameraderei” between experts, lobbyists and politicians); actually clearly reminds us about Michels’s analysis about iron law of oligarchy, with its goal-shift, from original purpose to maintenance of the organization itself as main goal, a process in which prophets become popes and revolutionaries administrators. This can also be discussed in terms of “routinization of charisma”.

In foreign policy both Morgenthau and Kissinger appear as quite Weberian but they are not exactly ostentatiously so (see Mazur 2004 and Smith 1996).

One might further add that Wilhelm Hennis’s attempt at a “Greek” Weber, regaining him for a classical political philosophical discourse relating to Plato and Thucydides, has a great following in the USA, in contrast. One reason for this might be the strong legacy in the USA from city state “republicanism”, the Greek strand mediated via Switzerland. If one sees somebody reading Plato or Aristotle in an airport one can bet on it, it is an American.

Weber has, moreover, a role to play also within anthropology. Here one might recall Donald N. Levine’s investigations of the Amhara people in Ethiopia, and their non-Western concept of rationality. Levine is specialized on Simmel and his Weberian link is well worth mentioning since his book does not mention Weber in the title (*The Flight from Ambiguity*), which is a bibliographical mishap. Levine has also written one of the very best essays on Weber’s concept of rationality, in *Sociological Inquiry* (1981).

One might, however, say that Talcott Parsons is the pivotal figure, the by far most momentous one for the American reception of Weber’s ideas. The paradox is that his flawed or at least extended and/or “creative” Weber-interpretation secured Weber his position on the Parnassus of classic authors; simultaneously to some extent impeded his reception in political science.

It is thanks to Parsons that Weber becomes “Weber” and that a habit to read Weber through Durkheimian spectacles is established, while Weber’s own identity as a sociologist is pretty weak, one might almost say a retrospective construction. Of course Weber is a sociologist, of sort. But he is even more a law scholar, historian and economist. Both Durkheim and Simmel are more sociological in a genuine sense of the term, dealing with cultural phenomena and phenomena under the surface, while Weber basically is a rationalist, or even arguably sort of rational choice theorist. Weber is less sophisticated than his protégée Simmel, but more testable and in that sense more “scientific”.

Weber has inspired political analysis and perhaps in particular Hans Morgenthau. The school of power realism depends on Weber – and Hobbes. Weber evidently plays a role for Francis Fukuyama, also in his recent books on economic development. This might be less noticed in Weberian circles. Weber is almost inevitably an inspiring source for theories about The End of Ideology and various convergence theories, through his Dystopia about the human being as caught in a disenchanted and dull “iron cage of rationality”, a metaphor which is really an erroneous albeit fortuitous translation and with roots in Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. However, Weber also emphasizes the role of ideas, the unintended role of religious belief structures for material wealth and prosperity and revolutionary technical innovations that transforms also our everyday life and are universal and irreversible in character (Schroeder and Swedberg 2002 and Robert K. Merton 1938). While Fukuyama’s famous work on *The End of History* has the “rational” Weber as a source it is more the sociologist of religion that inspires the later works on *Trust* and *The Great Disruption*. In both cases it really is about history of religion and economic history, albeit with different time horizons. It is also a typical Weberian antinomial structure – one out of many - that he simultaneously manifests the death of ideas and the momentous role of ideas.

Above does not exhaust the topic. The reception history also includes for instance a couple of colloquia, with Bob Antonio (Kansas), Ronald Glassman (New York) and Vatro Murvar (Wisconsin) as driving forces. It includes the research done in Florida, by Stephen Turner and Regis Factor, underpinning the role of jurisprudence for Weber’s views on explanation. Weber plays a role for Randall Collin’s conflict theory. Reinhard Bendix at Berkeley has influenced several Californian Weber scholars, including Collins, but also Guenther Roth. Werner Cahnman and Leo Löwenthal also deserve mentioning. They had both in their youth experienced Weber’s ambience, in Munich and Heidelberg. They contributed to the diffusion of knowledge of his work. Lawrence A Scaff (Detroit) has played a significant role in both America and Europe and has done research on Weber’s political sociology and Weber’s American travels. He has inspired some of Hennis’s works. This list can be prolonged a whole lot. Jeffrey C Alexander’s neo-functionalism builds on Weber, in the wake of Parsons. Leo Strauss of course had a

(negative) relation to Weber, as had Allan Bloom, who saw the European classics as the root of demoralization and “relativism”.

Stephen Kalberg has recently translated Weber’s classic work on the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, which was much needed since Parsons’s old translation was not top quality. It is odd that it survived as long as it did (see Kalberg 2001). (2)

We must not forget that Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma* is a Weberian application. He has a whole chapter on value premises and the method is really a *politruk* (political commissar) variation of Weber-Rickert value orientation. Values should be relevant and significant to serve as points of departure for policy analyses – and have to be made explicit in order to avoid uncontrolled value intrusion. Although Gunnar Myrdal is a very well known public intellectual and still today has a considerable omnipresence in the American scene, it is less noticed that his Carnegie book actually is an elaboration of Weber-Rickert and their view on objectivity in social research, *Wertbeziehung* (value orientation) as a qualification of value freedom. Explicit points of departure should help us avoid uncontrolled value-intrusion and provide a starting point for rationalization of value-hierarchies. Weber saw culture as the norm-sender while Myrdal had a more “social movement” attuned solution, rather typical of social engineering in the 20th century, with its close connections between political power and intellectuals. (3)

2. American influences on Max Weber

The role of religion brings us over to the other, and somewhat neglected, aspect of Weber and America, namely his journey to the USA, with all ensuing formative influences.

2.1 Protestantism and Capitalism

Already at age eleven little Maximilian had received as a gift Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography. “Advice to a young tradesman” is part of this book. The book was a gift from Friedrich Kapp, according to Guenther Roth (2000: 119). Roth is a German-American scholar from Darmstadt who once published the classical work *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany* (1963) and in recent years has dedicated most of his time to write Weber’s family-history (see also Roth 1987 and 1995). Franklin’s text is very illustrative to how originally otherworldly goals are transformed into routines and with momentous inner-worldly consequences. What originally was a form of “religious book-keeping”, to collect credits for the day of judgement, becomes a good method to obtain bank credits. Religious people are believed to be reliable and trustworthy. Why pay back a loan if you don’t believe in

honesty and good virtues? Trust is a presupposition for a functioning banking system, and for commercial life in general. In Asia there is a deficit of individualism and little respect for private property – and the idea of corporate firms came late. Business relations tend to be more personal.

America is the *Schlaraffenland* of religious (Protestant) sects. The very origin of the first states was small-scale religious communities, such as the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or Utah. The pioneers landing at Plymouth Rock in the 1620s were refugees from the UK, trying to find a place for religious freedom. Swedes might recall the Bishop Hill colony that was a kind of “communist” Protestant Utopian community in Western Illinois. Some of the sect-communities still survive, for instance a number of Amish communities in predominantly Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana. The Amish are Mennonites trying to resist Modernity, making them an oddity, still dressing like farmers used to 200 years ago, not using TV, radio, telephones, etc.

There are many indications that seemingly confirm Weber’s Calvinist thesis, about a link between the Protestantism Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. John D. Rockefeller was keeping book over his expenditures and his warm religiosity had several manifestations. His favourite hobby – expect for philanthropy – was to be a Sunday school teacher for children.

“Weber’s thesis” has been much debated. There are numerous alternative explanations to the Breakthrough to Modern capitalism. Weber’s views were controversial from the very beginning and competed with Karl Marx’s and Werner Sombart’s. Marx thought that the enclosure movement in the UK, when the land was cleared from “squatters” to allow for more rational agriculture was the momentous “kick” that brought events forward, also creating the recruitment groups for the new industrial proletarians. Sombart in his huge *Der Moderne Kapitalismus* (six volumes) gave an account of many contributing factors, such as the Jews as “proto-capitalists” in basically barter economy. In Weber’s *oeuvre* we find the idea about the Medieval city as a sort of pre-capitalism, a market starting to flower in late medieval days, after having gone lost in late Antiquity, which is the topic for Weber’s famous and quite materialistic essay on the social basis for the demise of Roman culture, which he explains with small scale family farms taking over after latifundias based on a fresh inflow of war prisoners to become slaves, as a precondition for the city market culture, getting back to barter economy (Weber 1896).

The original accumulation of capital could also perhaps be the result of monasteries combined with celibacy, leaving a lot of legacies to the Catholic Church. Some of that took place in Inner Asia and not merely Europe. This less ethnocentric “take” is also manifest in Andre Gunder Frank’s (1998) ideas about a “communicating bowl”-situation between Europe and the Far East that resulted in a take-off in Europe, instead of for instance China. We also have the Papal revolution in the 12th and 13th centuries, with its rationalization of Roman law, increasing calculability in

law enforcement. The strong Gregorian popes have their part in the Modernity-process (Harold Berman 1983).

These examples of course by no means exhaust the topic of capitalist take off into early Modernity, triggering off the irreversible process of rationalization that Weber had such an ambiguous attitude towards. There might be multiple routes to Modernity, but it was in Western Europe it indeed did happen, even if the finer details could be discussed, such as the relative importance of the capitalist “rehearsal” in Northern Italy or the importance of The Netherlands compared to England, etc.

Weber’s thesis is quite simple: *Der Puritaner wollte Berufsmensch sein, wir müssen es sein*. Through an ascetic life-style, saving money for the future, and hard work, etc, in short the petit bourgeois virtues Franklin pleads for in his “Advice to a young Tradesman”, we honour God and have a good position on the day of judgment, to be sorted among the white sheep getting to heaven instead of hell. The Puritan striving for eternal life unintentionally triggers off an inner-worldly process of rationalization and Modernization, bringing about the squirrel’s wheel Modern man can hardly escape. One might say that Weber just like Marx appears as very ethnocentric. However, Weber dedicates most of his research from 1906 onwards to underpin his Calvinist thesis, by use of comparative method, the logic of which is visible for instance in Weber’s famous letter to von Below (June 1914, see Weber 1988, pp 21-2). Weber’s two essays on *PESC* from 1904/05 is part one of his three volume *GARS* (Collected essays on the sociology of religion). However, undoubtedly Weber’s main problem is to find out about and explain the peculiarities of the Occident. (4)

Many preconditions for a breakthrough existed in several places. It is a fascinating problem in history to explain how small fractured Europe with so many religious “civil wars” could become so dominant in such a short period of time, to dominate the whole world. Modernity knows no limits and this has been even more recognized in post-Modernity debate. McDonaldization and www and e-mail are merely indications. There is nothing un-inevitable in what happened.

To Weber there is no causal orthodoxy involved. There are many pre-conditions required, only to mention the availability of energy resources. In addition a combination of individualism and security is required (rational calculations, individual self-interest without asocial egoism) and facilitates a capitalist take-off. These virtues are only to some extent cultivated in the East. But where they are cultivated the result is often striking, such as in the Japanese case. The USA is also a very useful “control group” due to the importance of the Protestant sects, escaping suppression in Europe.

2.2 *The Trip to St. Louis*

Weber saw the role of the belief in pre-destination more clearly in the USA than in Europe. Success in business is a sign of being among the selected. Weber visited St Louis – and several other places in the USA – in 1904. Hugo Münsterberg and Albion Small had invited many German scholars to a conference (World Congress of Arts and Sciences) coinciding with the World exhibition 1904, which took place in St Louis (Louisiana Purchase Exposition). Münsterberg was a German-American psychologist and the latter one of the original founders of the Chicago school. A lot of reunions took place, between former teachers and pupils. Several of the American pioneers in sociology had their degrees from German universities, in particular from the Berlin university, where they had attended Gustav von Schmoller's lectures in political economy (*Wirtschaftslehre*, *Nationalökonomie*). In *St. Louis Monthly Republican* it was reported that “the World's greatest thinkers, philosophers and masters of industry” gathered “to discuss plans for advancement of mankind”, and in *St. Louis Dispatch* one could read that “Wise men at World's fair, Solomon and Socrates could get many valuable tips by attending” (quoted from Rollmann 1987, p 376).

Weber travelled with his wife Marianne and Ernst Troeltsch, who was his neighbour at the shores of Neckar in Heidelberger Ziegelhäuser Landstrasse, in a villa that now belongs to a local Weber society. Troeltsch and Weber were close friends and in fact Troeltsch's works on the crises of historicism retrospectively defines Weber's methodological problem agenda, of value polytheism in post-Enlightenment. Weber experienced New York, and hit Chicago after a tourist excursion to Niagara Falls and Buffalo. The American big cities made quite an impression on Weber, with their hectic, vitality and steaming energy. In New York he was impressed by the skyscrapers and the Brooklyn-bridge at rush hour, and the German-Jewish culture (see e.g. Roth 2005). In Chicago he is caught by the “melting pot” and multiculturalism, with Greeks as shoeshine boys, Germans as waiters to Yankees, Irish in charge of city politics, and newly arrived Italians, Poles and Swedes doing the dirty jobs, as bricklayers, digging ditches, etc. He visits the stockyards and witnesses pigs becoming sausages and canned pork in few minutes. He is impressed by the elevated train around “The Loop” in downtown Chicago. The youthful optimism and the high pace in the - for better and worse – human jungle of American big cities has an imprint on Weber. Weber's reactions are known. Marianne Weber's biography has an account. There are in addition a huge number of letters, to Mother Helene and others. (5)

Weber travelled all the way to the frontier out West, to Guthrie in Oklahoma, where he must have been just as displaced as an Indian chief in a Heidelberg seminar. Weber's Western visit was brief; he felt uneasy when his host (a local newspaper man) challenged a political opponent to a revolver duel. Weber had little fear for duels, he had himself twice almost got into duels in Germany, once in defence of his wife's honour, and he was proud of being *satisfaktionsfähig* (on Weber's attitudes, see e.g. Sam Whimster 2000). Weber was by no means a coward. He

was evidently sad when he was not accepted as an officer at the front in the Great War; instead had to run war hospitals close to Heidelberg. But for some reason Weber found the “climate” in Oklahoma City less appealing and left, resulting in some headlines in American newspapers: “‘Gun play’ scared German professor. Leaves Oklahoma City instantly when editors drop words for weapons”, as *St. Louis Dispatch* wrote. My hypothesis is that Weber simply did not like to be associated with such a trigger-happy person, as his host turned out to be.

Weber also travelled the South. He visited Booker T Washington’s college for coloured people in Tuskegee. He also visited relatives in Mount Airy, in the borderlands between North Carolina and Virginia, close to the Blue Ridge Mountains, not that far away from Asheville and the hillbillie boondocks we associate with Dolly Parton and movies such as “Deliverance”, and places such as Ober Gatlinburg, in the vicinity of Smoky Mountains. Weber’s relatives had changed their names, from Fallenstein to Miller. This visit is important and has attracted considerable attention among Weber scholars. (6)

Weber had recently recovered from a long and very inhibiting period of illness, a nervous breakdown that started back in 1897 and made him a “tourist in life” for about half a decade, with numerous sojourns at Italian resorts, etc. Actually Weber’s lecture in St Louis was his first appearance before a larger audience in seven years. His lecture was on “German agricultural policy now and then”, a topic more intriguing than it perhaps sounds; also a continuation of his empirical research in the mid 1890s.

Weber was now ready to start out on new projects, and in fact 1903-05 is the time when Weber initiates both *GARS* (with *PESC* as first part), his methodological essays and his writings on Russian affairs as well. 1905 his famous work on *PESC* appears, as two texts in *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft* (Bd 20 and 21) and this turns out to be the beginning of his whole comparative sociology of religion, which to the rest of it only appears posthumously. One year later Weber’s publishes an essay on the Protestant sects, drawing on his American experiences and in particular his encounters with his own relatives in Mount Airy. The essay is a shortcut to Weber’s Calvinist-thesis, more down to earth and sort of anthropological “participant observation” than *PESC* which is hard reading, with all notes. The routinization of original religious motives into something more instrumental is indicated when Weber witnesses a baptizing ceremony for grown-ups. A younger relative tells Weber that it is more a wish to collect credits in the local bank in order to get married and start a firm that dictates the ceremony than religious belief. It illustrates precisely the gradual change of goals that we learn already from Ben. Franklin. Weber also notes how clubs and other civil associations play an important role for the sort of “networking” that the sects used to monopolize. This retrospectively makes Weber a classic author also for “civil society” (*Vereinswesen*).

I should add that Weber’s impressions are very similar to my own, when I visited American relatives in Boynton Beach, FL, and LaPorte, IN. The Presbyterian

Sunday school for grown-ups somehow seemed to have a role for the cohesiveness of the WASPish community and their businesses. The Kiwani lunch with speech on some social topic was quite overlapping, and the social exchange seemingly filled pretty much the same function.

Even if everyday experiences are telling and seminal for the creation of hypotheses it might nevertheless be the case that Weber was misinformed about Mount Airy, the meaning of the baptizing ceremony misinterpreted by the younger relative. Bill Swatos jr, a priest in East Moline and sociologist at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, has done field research with his students. They found out that relatives were still alive – and that they could tell that envy dictated the interpretation by the young relative, who made it more profane than it really was (Swatos 1982). However, it is a congenial misunderstanding, “improved truth”. The Sect-essay is a very good shortcut to the early parts of Weber’s *GARS*.

Webers also visited New Orleans where they find the heat hard to take (in October!). They also toured Washington DC and George Washington’s home Mount Vernon. They went to Boston and Harvard, which is a national institution with roots back to 17th century.

Weber enjoyed America and the Americans. He found them naïve as children but also able to tackle any up-coming problem. The Americans in their turn liked Weber, whom they regarded as a “jolly good fellow”, as one of the younger relatives said. Weber himself said that he had not received as much stimuli since his student days.

3. *The American Influences*

It could be questioned how deep the US-influences on Weber really were. Judgements vary. There are strong echoes of Ferdinand Kürnberger’s *Der Amerikamüde* in Weber’s depictions of the noisy hectic in American life – and they also have central sources in common (Ben. Franklin). In addition Weber returns to real life – after a handful of years when he merely existed – already around 1902 and the plans to take over *Archiv...* together with Sombart and Jaffe are taking shape already then.

It is nevertheless obviously the case that Weber was very fond of American examples, both in his scholarly and political writings. Weber’s “political sociology” (a somewhat amorphous term) about religion, transformation and social stratification is quite “American”. Party system and political leadership are also areas where Weber takes impression from the USA, as well as the role of the university and its organisation. America has a high degree of omnipresence in both so called twin-lectures from 1917-1919, Weber’s “swan songs”. The notion of “machine politics” as well as modern mass democracy employs American examples. Just like his predecessor de Tocqueville also Weber combines his

interest for US affairs with an interest in Russian affairs and they both deal with associational life, what is today mentioned as “civil society”, a re-born concept from Scottish Enlightenment. I don’t go into details here but even from a “scanning reading” of the famous twin lecture on “Politik als Beruf” and “Wissenschaft als Beruf” the American impressions should be manifest, only to mention the example of Andy Jackson as the first plebiscitary leader in a modern mass democracy and the contrasts between the American and the German university systems. Influences have become easier to measure in recent years, when we can use the find-function on full text downloads, such as Weber’s collected works from Potsdam (they are not complete, but include *GPS*, *GAW* and *GARS*). But also without such a systematic search it is clear that the USA serve Weber as an “identity giving other” in a positive sense. This is a common phenomenon, the same goes for de Tocqueville, Myrdal, and many others.

Of course Weber is “made in Germany” and he is very German, yet very American, in the sense that he incorporates the American influences in his analyses. There are also British influences. The UK had for long also been an “identity-giving other” in German self-understanding. Weber’s French Huguenot legacy plays a role. So do his contacts with Schwabing Bohemians in München and Ascona, as documented by Ulrich Linse and Sam Whimster. So do his contacts with young Russian refugee intellectuals in Heidelberg. Etc. But I would suggest that America compete with Mother Helene as a major formative experience, alongside work-life experiences as a lawyer and a teacher in commercial law. We, moreover, have the personal British link, the family connections laid bare by Guenther Roth in his magisterial book on Weberian family history (Roth 2001). Weber here appears as more of a “Would-be Englishman” and a representative of “kosmopolitanisches Bürgertum”, rather than a German patriot. True is that the British experiences, for instance the travels, are significantly underplayed in Marianne’s biography.

4. *USA and Europe: Communicating Bowls?*

But what can we learn from Weber’s American connections? I think the basic observation is the mutual reciprocity, which is a long story with deep roots. The *Auseinandersetzung* some years ago between Jeffrey Alexander and Richard Münch appears as exaggerated. (7) American social science had a life of its own but all the time European influences, for very natural reasons, had a major impact. Sociology in general was highly stimulated by the discovery of new continents and civilizations. In the case of America we also had an experimental situation, in so far that the USA in short time repeated the various sociological stages in the development to what the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers would call “polished” or “commercial society”. “Out West” trappers were followed by ranch owners and cowboys, who in their turn were followed by homesteaders, followed by “Fordism”

and the society of mass production and mass consumption. In addition a lot of ethnic tensions in new cities among immigrants provided an object of research with later relevance for a still more static old Europe, where people were born into a place in society and did not create anything new. The communicating bowl situation is today gradually changing, when the USA become more Asian and less WASPish, in the wake of LBJ's new immigration laws and the NAFTA-agreement. One might say that Ben. Franklin was a great "European" and the USA formed the first European union. This will not lose relevance immediately – but California is looking West and Texas south, and these states are increasingly important within the union. Tampa Bay area in Florida was always part of Havana's hinterland.

In intellectual history questions such as "Why is Swedish – and European - social science so American?" are very well motivated. The immigration laws from the 1920s maintained the USA as the New World, Europe and in particular its religious non-conformist sects moved to the New side. "Non-Caucasians" had a lower acceptance level. I think most WASPish European visitors (Scandinavians and Germans included) have experienced how welcome and popular we are in America. However, I don't think this applies any longer to Los Angeles and Miami, places where the minorities now form the majority. In the dark visions of Samuel P Huntington this change might become momentous, when Europe becomes one power with a stronger (united) voice in international politics, perhaps with its own secretary for foreign affairs. In the clash between civilisations the USA and Europe may no longer remain allies. Antagonism over the Atlantic Ocean perhaps will though very likely be restricted to the usual wars of trade, only intensified.

There is, for instance, no department for the study of European Affairs at University of Florida in Gainesville, but huge departments for both Latin American affairs and African studies. Europeans have a strange ethnocentric bias, to take it for granted that Europe is in the middle of World map and that everything good and important comes from Europe and Western civilization. There might be some good historical arguments for this (Charles Murray 2003) – but also some good counterarguments (A G Frank 1998, more moderate S N Eisenstadt, Wittrock and Arnason, see for instance Wittrock, 1999). Moreover, it is changing in any case. Modernity certainly did arise in Europe and counterfactuals about where it might alternatively have happened, "hadn't it been for..."...have restricted relevance. But already in the European Renaissance we find American influences; from the conquistadors impressions from Tenochtitlan (in today's Mexico), which was a neat and well-organized place until it was destroyed by Spanish Barbarians In particular in social science it would be erroneous to believe that it is a European legacy, despite that all major classic authors are Europeans. For sure, Samuel Pufendorf, Thomas Paine, John Locke and J J Rousseau influence the fathers of the American constitution. Both Jefferson and Franklin took impression from European sojourns. Many European intellectuals took part in the liberation war against the UK and in particular French and US-American developments are mutually dependent. Saint-

Simon was an active participant in the American Revolution, just to mention one prominent example. However, many experiences, of modern mass democracy, party life and professional politicians, migration, ethnic tensions in cities, etc, etc, are phenomena the Americans experience before the Europeans. This is partly due to the Metternich system as a successful containment of new social movements in Europe, where four empires imploded only after WW1. Until then feudal forms of government dominate. Andy Jackson who gained power in 1829 was a de Gaulle, a “Caesaristic” leader whose popularity among the masses rested on military success. Today’s communitarian wave in the USA (Sandel, Etzioni, Putnam, etc) is really a re-export of originally Greek ideas practised also in Switzerland; and in Straussian circles in today’s Chicago virtues from Antiquity are very much alive, for instance at the Olin center where Allan Bloom was active, and Nathan Tarcov still is. To a certain extent the Americans have – also in their self-perception – been the better Europeans.

The interdependence between Berlin and Chicago is a well research phenomenon. Again, most pioneers in the Chicago school of sociology had German degrees. Since the scholars within the German younger historical school pioneered the discourse on the public sector we here also find an explanation why Chicago sociology somehow is more state attuned than the general American creed would make us expect.

Despite Europe and the USA having common roots, such as Western Christianity and Enlightenment reason, the political culture is otherwise very different, with regard to propensity to risk taking, mobility, paying taxes, etc, etc. Already in the Western world we find multiple routes to Modernity and secularisation/rationalization. The state has decisively a more dominant role in nation building and Modernization, in particular in the North-Western European welfare states of today, where taxation, wars, national Bible translations and state churches were the driving forces, combined with the rise of a national administration, a civil service tradition originally of domesticated middle level nobility background, as a tool of state power against feudalism. In the USA legitimacy is based in the rights of the individuals and the colt revolver and the barbed wire, together with the hanging oak, built civilization “Out West”. California is a good example, with its rather extreme direct democracy (see Boorstin 1967).

Visiting Europeans, such as Bryce, de Tocqueville and Gunnar Myrdal, also Adorno & Horkheimer, often provided the problem formulations while the Americans were good at finding the solutions. Already the first pilgrims to Massachusetts actually wrote a contract for their commonwealth. The pilgrims were pioneers also in Modern constitutionalism, even before Hobbes and Locke had formulated their ideas and Napoleon had modernized European constitutions and saved to posterity the liberal constitutional legacy from the French revolution. But the American success relates to small-scale communities, local civil societies, while the national level is not really supposed to function that well. (8) A personal

reflection is that the fact that the system is dysfunctional on the national level in “New Rome” is probably something we citizens in smaller countries only should feel happy about. The factors increasing the credibility of the USA as Leviathan in a still basically Hobbesian world order are roughly the same as cripple the USA in dealing with some huge domestic problems. No centralized and ethnically relatively more homogeneous state, let’s say France or China, could play the same role on the world scene.

The many affinities between Weber and Tocqueville have not gained the notice they deserve among scholars of intellectual history, although this is changing. (9) Weber’s concept Caesarism has several roots, and also some in Tocqueville’s writings, less noticed by posterity. Caesarism is a variation of plebiscitary leadership and refers to a technique to appeal directly to the masses, above the head of the legislature.

Weber was no “religious” – value-rational - democrat but nevertheless a pioneer for parliamentarianism and democratisation, promoting the development from an *Obrigkeitsstaat* to a *Volksstaat*. His democratic creed is very explicit, in particular in “Wahlrecht und Demokratie”. But his correspondence with for instance Michels also indicates that it is a functional *Vernunftsdemokratie*, related to the options of human kind to remain an autonomous cultural being, rather than any Lockean principles. There is of course something puzzling with a scholar whose positions make him simultaneously a forerunner of Nazism and a pioneer of modern democracy. But there is no necessary contradiction involved. Weber’s “decisionism” and retrospective democracy with its stress on accountability – pretty well caught in the famous conversation with Ludendorff after the war – could be extended in various directions (pp 146-7 in Eliaeson 2000).

Weber did not really see Western rationalization as a precondition for modern democracy, but rather as a threat. It is somewhat difficult to understand how various evolutionist convergence theorists, such as W W Rostow, can invoke the authority of Weber, whose dark visions have rather little in common with Condorcean optimism, the idea of progress.

However, Weber saw socialist planning in what we later labelled command economies as a greater threat. His quarrel with Schumpeter in Landtman’s café in Vienna indicates this. (as witnessed by the diplomat and banker Felix Somary p in his autobiography). They were pretty much like of one mind, cognitively, but with different evaluation of the impending Soviet full-scale experiment of expert rule and social engineering. To “Schumpy” it was an interesting full scale experiment and comparative case while Weber more carried the burden of hardship on his shoulders. His ideas are explicit in the speech “Socialism”, delivered to Austrian officers after the war, with its warnings for a monopoly of both the means of administration and the means of production in the same hands. (10)

Returning to the topic of social science: American social science is leading and ahead of the crowd. Going through the history of various disciplines, such as sociology and political science, the general picture is that what happens in America is repeated in Europe with a certain time-lag, and with a certain adjustment to the European context.

Of course there are a number of differences to take into account, such as the role of social movements, which never got that strong in the USA. There was little need for a strong labour movement since the Americans from the very beginning got for free what the Europeans had to fight for, in the struggle for modern mass democracy. European class society also made it less natural for a poor but gifted young man to go for a corporate career, since it could well happen that the newly arrived immigrant boy rose to the top to become CEO, while in Europe it was easy to realize that such appointments were made behind locked door and based on family connections, which made a career in state agencies and trade unions more attractive and natural.

The leading role of America depends not only upon meeting some problems first but also has to do with resources, that Rockefeller and other philanthropists invested money in new universities and sponsored empirical survey research, about what was going on “under the surface” in modern industrial society. The university of Chicago was founded 1893 with money from the Laura Spellman-Rockefeller foundation. Gunnar Myrdal’s Negro-investigation was financed by Carnegie. Etc.

American money also is poured into Swedish social science. Gösta Bagge’s professor chair in Stockholm in social policy was financed by Rockefeller. (11) Kaiser Wilhelm institute in Germany (later renamed after Max Planck) was also supported by American money.

Reversed American social science is shaped by immigrants, often diaspora scholars. Relatively few leading sociologists are of old American origin. Homans is one exception. Otherwise first or second generation immigrants are dominant, only to mention the examples of Shils, Merton, Coser, etc, etc.

Znaniecki’s role for the Chicago school is well-known. Ever since the failed revolution of 1848 there have been several waves of intellectual refugees coming into the USA. Almost the whole Frankfurt school moved over. H H Gerth played a significant role for the diffusion of Weberianism and many American scholars I meet claim they are pupils of H H Gerth, whose relation to C Wright Mills was complex.. (12)

Often The New School for Social Research in New York served as a transit station for all refugee and their faculty was almost exclusively of foreign and mostly German stock, not only Jews but also for instance Arnold Brecht, a state official who elaborated “scientific value relativism”. (13)

Alvin Johnson (see his autobiography from 1952) was industrious and had rich friends and could create an independent institution that has meant a lot for the USA-European contacts, still today.

Probably a certain distance (detachment and secularised perspective) is only good for the study of society for the purpose of explanation, to be able to watch one's surrounding social reality with the innocent eye of a child or a visitor from outer space. This seems to be confirmed by several indications. In the German cultural realm the Germans in Bismarck's Germany were more synthesizers, while their colleagues in Vienna were more innovative. The reason is that the German historicists took part in nation building while the Viennese situation was different in that regard and it did not seem natural to identify with the power. In Austria the intellectuals were often Jewish and with a background in for instance Moravia (Freud, Popper, etc) and also novelists like Robert Musil typically had a certain distance to the worldly powers. The Jews were in a double marginalized position, which might explain their success in social science. In Wilhelmine Germany with its Bismarckian *kleindeutsche Lösung* the intellectuals and in particular the historians were part of nation building and imprinted by *deutscher Sonderweg*, in so far as historicist romantic reaction against Enlightenment rationality is part of German peculiarities, including a considerable imprint upon Weber's problem agenda. Weber himself is also more of a sponge and "mediator" (Cf. Kaesler 1988, pp. 213-216) than an innovator. He is, moreover, no genuine classic author in the sense that could be said about for instance Hobbes, the "Newton" of social science. He is a mediator, with a central position "at the crossroads" on both sides of the Atlantic, although his original context is more of majeutics, to release a nation, into its "imagined community". It is no surprise then that the modern discourse on the welfare state and its institutions arose in Germany, as a part of nation building (Zuckerbrot und Peitsche). This harmonizes quite well with Robert Wuthnow's (1989) ideas about creative ambiances.

We here touch upon the proper pursuit of intellectual history, how to approach and understand the classic authors, and how to make use of them. (14) We cannot go into any detail here, but evidently that context and formative experiences also matter, as do origin and context. It also seems clear that American trips give European scholars an energizing "kick".

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List of abbreviations

Weber's work:

GARS = Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie.

GAW = Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre.

GPS = Gesammelte politische Schriften.

MWG = Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe.

PEKA = The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

WuG = Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft.

"Einleitung" = "Einleitung" till "Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen" (ingår i *GARS*).

"Vorbemerkung" = The first pages in *GARS*, vol 1.

"Zwischenbetrachtung" = "Zwischenbetrachtung: Theorie der Stufen und Richtungen religiöser Weltablehnung", part of *GARS*.

"Freiburger Antrittsrede" = "Der Nationalstaat und die Volkswirtschaftspolitik. Akademische Antrittsrede. Freiburg i. Br.", part of *GPS*.

Other abbreviations

<i>AJS</i>	= <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>
<i>APSR</i>	= <i>American Political Science Review</i> .
<i>ASR</i>	= <i>American Sociological Review</i>
<i>FAZ</i>	= <i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</i>
<i>FZ</i>	= <i>Frankfurter Zeitung</i>
<i>IJPCS</i>	= <i>International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society</i> .
<i>KZfSS</i>	= <i>Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie</i> .
<i>TdKH</i>	= <i>Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns</i>
<i>ZfP</i>	= <i>Zeitschrift für Politik</i>
<i>ZfS</i>	= <i>Zeitschrift für Soziologie</i>
<i>Archiv</i>	= <i>Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik</i> .
<i>Verein</i>	= <i>Verein für Sozialpolitik</i> .

Good bibliographies over Weber's oeuvre has been done by Käsler (orig. published in KZfSS 1975) and Riesebrodt (in *Prospekt to MWG*).

For a good bibliography over the secondary literature, see Seyfarth. Constance & Schmidt, Gert: *Max Weber Bibliographie: Eine Dokumentation der Sekundärliteratur*. Stuttgart: Enke, 1977. It is based on the collections at the Weber archives in Munich.

For a documentation of the Anglo-Saxon secondary literature, see Kivisto, Peter & Swatos Jr, William H: *Max Weber. A Bio-Bibliography*. New York; Westport, Conn., London: Greenwood Press, 1988. This is a very useful source, since it contains short, *abstracts* over the contributions and also an overview of the various German collections of sources and their availability.

Notes

(1) He remembered young Jan G Myrdal quite well, "that dreadful kid, they should, have beaten him more when he was young", as Shils said to me (conversation in Chicago 1987) in what is a typical "shilsism".

(2) There is also a new British translation Max Weber. *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism and Other Writings*. Ed., translated, and with an introduction and notes by Peter Baehr and Gordon C Wells. Penguin Books, 2002.

(3) See Sven Eliaeson: "Gunnar Myrdal as a Weberian Public Intellectual" (unpublished manuscript), and E Stina Lyon: *Researching Race Relations: Myrdal's American Dilemma from a Human Rights Perspective*. London: South Bank University: 2002. ISBN: 0 946786 35 6.

(4) The main theme in Stephen Kalberg's recent edited Weber-volume (Weber 2005).

(5) The originals are in Berlin-Dahlem, in Weber's *Nachlass* at Geheime Preussische Staatsarchiv, in Archivstrasse. Copies are kept at STABI (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek) in Munich. The copies are machine written and served as source material for Marianne's Weber-biography. This rich material has not yet been fully utilized.

(6) The sect-essay is translated into English (Loader and Alexander 1985).

(7) Here I abstain from details, since it was an exchange over time in the Newsletters from ISAs RC16, Theory Research Group.

(8) This is a point in Lipset (1996) and I recall Sam Erwin saying precisely this in a seminar in Upsala in the mid 70s.

(9) Main references are Dorrit Freund (1974), Kalberg (1997), Offe (2004) and Kaesler (2004).

(10) Weber's lecture on Socialism was held twice, since it was repeated in München. English translation in for instance J E T Eldridge (ed): 1971, pp 191-219.

(11) See Andreen, Per G: *Bagge får tacka Rockefeller* (Bagge thanks Rockefeller). Sthlm: Univ. Socialhögskolan, 1987. ISSN 0281-6288; 3.0.

(12) This was a feuilleton in *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* a handful of years ago; I abstain from detailed references.

(13) Arnold Brecht is most well-known for his *Political Theory* (1959) but also wrote an autobiography, full version in two German volumes and a condensed English one volume version (1970).

(14) "Quentin Skinner and his Critics" could be a headline for this nexus. There are lots of references. I abstain from details.