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**Wolfgang Schluchter, Die Entzauberung der Welt. Sechs Studien zu Max Weber. Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009, IX+154 pp.**

(doi: 10.2383/35879)

Sociologica (ISSN 1971-8853)

Fascicolo 2, maggio-agosto 2011

**Ente di afferenza:**

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## Book reviews

### **Wolfgang Schluchter, *Die Entzauberung der Welt. Sechs Studien zu Max Weber*. Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009, IX+154 pp.**

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The author, who retired from his chair at Heidelberg in 2006 but remains active both in that University and on German academic scene, is probably the foremost contemporary authority on Max Weber's "life and work." He has been from the beginning a member of the editorial board of the Max Weber Gesamtausgabe – a massive and apparently never-ending publishing undertaking with a somewhat tormented history; has edited and co-edited several volumes of it; is currently charged with nothing less than its edition of *Die protestantische Ethik* and related studies. His impressive list of publications includes very numerous items relating to Max Weber, including many available in several languages – books, journal articles, essays in collective works, many of these edited by Schluchter himself. All these writings reveal Schluchter's unequalled mastery of the sources, primary and secondary, and his ability to develop arguments which are both pointed and highly sophisticated.

The dimensions and the substantive significance of all these contributions to weberian scholarship are universally recognized, though they have inspired some envious comments, among these a sobriquet a wit coined for Schluchter – "Max Weber als Beruf". In fact, his production addresses a considerable number of other authors. His first book (1968) discussed Hermann Heller's work, his second (1972) dealt with several contributors to the theme of "bureaucratic domination". His recent (2006-2007) two-volume book *Grundlegungen der Soziologie. Eine Theoriegeschichte in systematischer Absicht* covers several major figures in the history of social theory, "classical" and modern. It does so in a highly "interpretive" manner, revealing the author's original, penetrating engagement with the respective bodies of work. (May I just mention the chapter titles in the first volume, which characterize Marx's social theory as "sociological Hegelianism," Weber's as "Kantianizing sociology," and Durkheim's as "sociological Kantianism"). Furthermore, in other recent contributions Schluchter has addressed topics as different as the nature and consequences of the pre-1989 "dualism" between West and East Germany, or contemporary terrorism. Finally, Schluchter is not, as the volume itself and the thematic diversity of his scholarly production may suggest, engaged exclusively in research and publishing; in fact, he has been and continues to be seriously involved in academic institution-building, both in Germany and abroad.

The short volume under review, however, is a further, substantial contribution to the large corpus of publications which could be labeled Schluchter on Max Weber. Let us consider briefly the book's content. The expression "disenchantment of the world" (to adopt the most frequent translation of *Entzauberung*) is apparently of Weberian coinage, though probably inspired by a Schiller poem. Curiously, though, after surfacing in Weber's writings in 1913, subsequently the expression appears rarely in later ones. However, the imagery it evokes and the associated concerns acquire greater and greater significance in the writings from the last few years of his life, e.g. *Wissenschaft als Beruf*,

and the 1920 edition of *Protestantische Ethik* (see both the main text and the “Zwischenbetrachtung”).

As its subtitle indicates, this relatively short volume is not a monographic treatment of the notion itself of *Entzauberung*, but a collection of essays (some probably presented as *Vortraege* at conferences and other scholarly occasion) loosely connected not so much with that notion as with two phenomena it points to. For, as the opening essay, “Entzauberung der Welt’: Max Webers Sicht auf die Moderne” usefully points out, the main historical manifestations of *Entzauberung* are indeed two. First, religion in various ways disenchant the view of the world and of the humans’s position within it embodied in magic (in the West this happens in a progression culminating, in Weber’s view, in Calvinism and associated creeds). Then, modern science complements and radicalizes the disenchanting work done by religion. Clearly, then, *Entzauberung* itself should not too straightforwardly associated with (indeed, translated as) secularization. It does have, of course, secularizing implications and consequences, but these should not be overstated. As Schluchter sees the matter, science displaces religion from the central position it had long held, but does not and cannot entirely replace it as way of attributing meaning to existence.

The book elaborates this position in two chapters. Chapter 2 deals with various aspects of one essential (indeed, according to some interpreters, *the* essential) component of Weber’s post-1910 – his comparative-historical essays on world religions. Schluchter has already masterfully analyzed these writings in previous works, including some available in English. I shall just note one aspect of this chapter, revealed by its title: “Ideen, Interesse, Institutionen: Schluesselbegriffe einer an Weber orientierten Soziologie.” The notion of institution, if I am not wrong, plays in Weber’s conceptual system a somewhat minor role, at any rate in comparison with the central position it holds in other major social theorists. Its significance for Weber has been emphasized, however, in the work of Rainer Lepsius, himself a major Weberian scholar and for a long time Schluchter’s own colleague at Heidelberg; perhaps its deployment in this chapter can be seen, among other things, as the latter’s homage to the former.

At any rate, this chapter is the first in the volume where Schluchter performs what one might call his signature act. This consists in the following: Schluchter often summarizes his own sustained, sophisticated and sometimes demanding arguments by means of neat tables and diagrams. Here the tabular location of this or that concept within an ensemble arranged into rows and columns, and/or the connections posited among them by arrows, indicate which concept leads to what other concept, or what significantly different, mutually exclusive, variants a concept may present within a theoretical discourse or an ideological development. Schluchter has been doing this, most skilfully, in many of his writings (including other “studies” in this book), each time offering his reader a streamlined yet comprehensive view of the main points of whatever argument he is advancing.

The next chapter also deals with Weber’s writings on religion, but chiefly with his first major contribution to that theme, *Die protestantische Ethik* of 1904-05. It is focused on the critical response that study first provoked, and on the difference that response made to the 1920 edition of PE. There Weber did not concede much (if anything) to his critics, but the account he took of their arguments, and of course the massive work done on other religions over the previous few years, bore much fruit (see for example the *Vorbemerkung* to the 1920 edition).

The two chapters that follow focus on two major aspects of that massive process of the modern rationalization of existence which the notion of *Entzauberung* (present only occasionally) points to. Schluchter discusses first the process whereby modern, Western capitalism develops into the universally dominant phenomenon within the economic sphere, imparting to it its distinctive dynamics. As concerns the theoretical dimension of this process, he highlights the relationship between economic sociology and economic history on the one hand, economic theory on the other, chiefly within Weber's work but also in other authors.

The second major aspect of modern rationalization concerns not the economic, but the political sphere. Schluchter deals with this chiefly by means of a close analysis of *Politik als Beruf* (1919), on the strength among other things of the extensive editorial work he has devoted to this text (and the "companion piece", *Wissenschaft als Beruf*) in one volume of the *Gesamtausgabe*. This topic engages him in a particularly close analysis of difficult questions raised by Weber's emphasis on leadership, on the role played by personal charisma in the context of modern, state politics, and on the possible forms of its institutionalization. The contrast between the ethics of *Gesinnung* and of *Verantwortung* also get attention.

The final essay (chapter 4) addresses a rather different theme from the previous ones, which as we have seen dealt with three spheres of experience – religion, economics, politics. Here the focus is instead on Weber's set of basic sociological concepts which most of us know from the opening pages of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. Schluchter, however, emphasizes that Weber had expressly confronted such a theme on various occasions, but chiefly in an essay published in LOGOS in 1913 ("Ueber einige Kategorien der verstehenden Soziologie") and had continued to grapple with it in other texts. Mostly, these were somehow connected with the making of WuG, but their content had to some extent been set aside in the portion of it he edited for publication shortly before his death. I say "somehow" and "to some extent" to convey the difficulty of the philological questions raised by the relationship between the final version of *Economy and Society* and those texts which preceded that version, and made more complicated, in this chapter, by the reference also to the 1913 essay. Marianne Weber's edition of WuG (1926) and Johannes Winckelmann's editions subsequent to World War Two addressed the first (and larger) problem in a way which Schluchter has repeatedly and most explicitly judged to be inadequate and misleading.

His argument (which inspired the editorial approach to *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* embodied in several volumes of the *Gesamtausgabe*) is articulated as follows in this book: "WuG is neither a book in three parts (Marianne Weber) or in two parts (Johannes Winckelmann) but a project which has come down to us in different versions [and] in different conceptual languages." In this final chapter Schluchter articulates such a view in a painstaking and detailed manner that I personally found (I confess) both exhaustive and exhausting. Fortunately, toward the chapter's end he conveys the substantive gist of it – in particular Weber's typologies both of action orientations and of action coordinations – by means of a synoptic scheme of great clarity.

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Seen as a whole, this book makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of Weber's work in general, beginning of course with those moments and aspects of it which one may connect with the notion of *Entzauberung*.

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