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## II. Review Essay

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# How Well Do We Know Max Weber After All? A New Look at Max Weber and His Anglo-German Family Connections<sup>1</sup>

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Guenther Roth's study places Max Weber in an intricate network of ties among members of his lineage. This paper presents core findings of Roth's analysis of Weber's family relations, discusses the validity of Roth's core theses and some of the implications of his analysis for Weber as a person and scholar, and addresses how Roth's book may influence future approaches to Weber's sociology.

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**KEY WORDS:** Max Weber; history of sociology; classical sociology; German history; Guenther Roth.

“How well do we know Max Weber?”—When the late Friedrich H. Tenbruck (1975) raised this question almost thirty years ago, he had Weber's scholarship in mind. The analysis of Weber's oeuvre and the debate over it, fueled by a steady trickle of contributions of the *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe*, has not abated since. Thanks to the *Gesamtausgabe*'s superbly edited volumes, we now know more about Weber the scholar than ever before, even though the edition's combination of exorbitant pricing and limitation to German-language editions has slowed its international reception.

Tenbruck's question might be applied to Weber's biography as well. Here, too, the *Gesamtausgabe*, particularly with the edition of his personal letters, has been a valuable tool for research.<sup>1</sup> Yet the fact remains that what we know about Weber *the person* derives to a significant extent from

<sup>1</sup>Review essay of Guenther Roth, *Max Webers deutsch-englische Familiengeschichte, 1800–1950. Mit Briefen und Dokumenten* [Max Weber's German-English Family History, 1800–1950: With Letters and Documents]. Tübingen: Mohr, 2001.

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Marianne Weber's biography of her husband. When Marianne Weber published her *Lebensbild* in 1926, she expressly conceived it as a hagiography, intended for a public in Germany that, in her view, had not fully appreciated her husband's political wisdom or recognized his lasting contributions to social science. The result was a perceptive grand overview of Weber's career, but it was marred by a plentitude of omissions and equivocal statements about Max's thoughts and relationships. A second, abridged edition appeared in 1950 before a third edition in 1984 restored the original text, adding a valuable index of names and finally revealing the identity of some persons in the Weber circles who had remained behind a veil of abbreviations and vague references. A good English translation by Harry Zohn was published in 1975, and by now the text is also available in Italian, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish translations. This largely idolatrous account, together with Marianne Weber's edition of Max's youthful letters in 1936, constitutes the bedrock of more recent attempts to bring about a more critical modern biography. Unfortunately, when judged by the dual standards of adding to the existing knowledge about the person *and* contributing to a better understanding of his life, these attempts have not been stellar—some even failed abysmally.<sup>2</sup> This situation led Dirk Käsler (1989) to observe that Max Weber's fuzzy and glossed-over biographical image was badly in need of re-focusing. His assessment of the rather foggy picture that we have of Weber's life still stands.<sup>3</sup>

Yet a first glimmer of light was already visible on the horizon by the time Käsler made his assessment. It appeared in the form of an essay Guenther Roth wrote to accompany Zohn's translation when it was re-issued with a different press in 1988; in a slightly expanded form, he published it in a German paperback edition of Marianne's biography the following year (Roth 1988, 1989). As one of the most distinguished Weber scholars, Roth had focused on Weber's political and economic sociology and its contexts and not extensively pursued biographical genres. However, his essay was light-years ahead of anything previously written about Marianne and her life. It depicted Marianne Weber as one of these "dutiful wives," as Roth put it, who, together with groups of "pious daughters," paid tribute to their departed husbands and fathers by establishing literary expressions of gratitude and deference in their honor. It also made clear that Marianne Weber was a scholar in her own right. As a faculty wife and through her family connections, she had access to academic lectures (by men) and intellectual circles at the university that would otherwise have remained closed to her, and she made the most of it: first with a work on Fichte and socialism, then with her main treatise, a study of the legal status of wives and mothers in the course of Western history (to which Max also made important contributions). She took on Georg Simmel's patriarchal notion that "objective culture," consisting

of knowledge and material artifacts, was a cultural sphere that belonged to men alone. She also published on issues concerning sex and marriage and was active in the German women's movement. Roth skillfully connected Marianne's political, cultural, and intellectual pursuits to the world around her as it changed from imperial Germany to the Weimar Republic, the Nazi regime, and, finally, the early post-World War II era, with a special emphasis on those women who were closest to her. All the while, Max the spouse moved from center to periphery—perhaps a first in Weberian scholarship.

Roth's essay had important consequences and implications. For the study of Marianne, it set a high bar, not only for those who focus on her as a sociologist but also for those who address the role of the "women founders" in sociology more generally. No doubt Roth's work helped give an early jumpstart to an important direction in scholarship that continues to this day.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, his strategy of combining the study of motive and character with a depiction of interrelationships and generational milieux provided the methodological blueprint for his further inquiries. Further examining the lives of the people positioned in various orbits in Weber's family constellation in a series of essays in late eighties and nineties, Roth explored the much-neglected political and familial role of Max Weber's father, correcting Marianne's picture and that of others. Roth's exploration of Weber's family lineage led to his provocative but controversial argument that Weber modeled his argument in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* on his own wishful thinking that Germany should be more like England—an argument to which I will return below. All these efforts have now culminated in a densely written, voluminous tome of more than seven hundred pages. Published in German under the title *Max Weber's German-English Family History, 1800–1950: With Letters and Documents*, in its aggregate it is truly unlike anything published on the subject matter since Marianne's account three-quarters of a century earlier. But is also very difficult to access, especially for those who are not well versed in the German language and intimately familiar with the intricacies of the social and political history of (mainly) mid-to-late nineteenth-century Germany.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the list of people whose lives are illuminated in this book is extraordinarily long, as Roth brings into relief persons who are "far out" on the family tree. On many occasions, aspects of their lives—familial, economic, political—are not presented in a coherent, comprehensive narrative but rather segmented out into small, loosely connected sections of the book. Hence, in the following I pursue a dual strategy. First, I present core findings of Roth's analysis of Weber's family relations. Given the genuine novelty of many of his findings, and the fact this is likely a remote subject for those who do not count themselves among the die-hard Weber *aficionados*, the presentation is largely descriptive in nature, though it cannot cover nearly as many people and periods as

this book does. Second, I discuss the validity of Roth's core theses and some of the implications of his analysis for Max jr. as a person and scholar. Finally, I venture some thoughts about the ways in which Roth's book may influence future approaches to Weber's sociology.

### **FAMILY RELATIONS AND CONNECTIONS IN WEBER'S FAMILY AND LINEAGE**

The book reveals an intricate network of ties among members of Weber's lineage. One might describe this network, difficult to chart as it is, as radiating spheres of kin with affinal and consanguinal ties to each other across different generations and geographical locations. Different chapters in Roth's book address different ties in the configuration, but, interestingly enough, the overall picture that gradually emerges as Roth retraces these family spheres is not one that necessarily has Max and Marianne at the center. Rather, if one allows a certain simplification, it seems it was the Fallenstein sisters rather than their husbands who constituted the backbone of the Weber lineage.

Ida, Henriette, Helene, and Emilie Fallenstein were the four daughters of Georg Friedrich Fallenstein and Emilie Souchay. The parents also had two sons, but both died early, one as an infant and one at a young age during the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. The marriage was Georg Friedrich Fallenstein's second; he had six surviving children from his first marriage. The oldest of them was only sixteen when their mother died, and the occurrence of premature parental death would repeat itself for the children of the second marriage when Georg Friedrich died in 1853, leaving Ida (the oldest at sixteen) and her siblings fatherless.

Fortunately for all these children, their father's death did not bring about financial destitution. On the contrary, they could rely on support from monied kin, even though neither the sometimes gruff Georg Friedrich, who grew up an orphan and was probably afflicted with manic depression, nor his first wife had significant assets from their own family lines. Financially speaking, Georg Friedrich struck gold when he married Emilie Souchay, an heiress to the tremendous fortune accumulated by her father, Carl Cornelius Souchay. Carl Cornelius was the son and only child of the preacher of the French-reformed congregation in Frankfurt, whose flock of Huguenot ancestry included many successful businessmen. Souchay became a member of the council of elders of this congregation, but his life style was that of un-ascetic secularized-Huguenot-cum-free mason. Familiar with the world of business from early on through his father's ministry and connections, he is characterized by Roth as a prototypical "adventure capitalist." Carl

Cornelius Souchay adopted the proverbial motto of “live and let live” and combined speculation, carpet baggery, smuggling, and plain-old savvy trading and finance into a form of art. His vast cosmopolitan, multi-layered commercial activities included import/export trade and merchant banking. These activities were supported and subsequently expanded by some of his children, grandchildren, and members of related families, mainly the Beneckes, the Schuncks, the Bunges, and the Webers, who became part of the kin network through marriage. The family enterprise, while not free from occasional, sometimes catastrophic, setbacks, included owning and operating a slave plantation in Cuba and spanned Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, and Antwerp. It even extended into Russia, Italy, Argentina, and the Far and Near East. The kin network’s successful entrepreneurship, which reached its apex in the second generation of the Souchays, Beneckes, and Schuncks, was not engendered by, nor gave expression to, crass materialism. Instead, it was balanced with considerable engagement in charitable organizations throughout the generations. True to the gendered nature of the public and private spheres of the era, this realm was dominated by the female members of the kinship network who, by maintaining interpersonal bonds, “bound” the various branches on the family tree together. The Souchays et al. were also patrons of and contributors to the arts; in this regard, the most prominent family member was the composer, conductor, and pianist Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, the spouse of one of Carl Cornelius Souchay’s grandchildren.

Thus the Fallenstein sisters, the principal heirs though by no means the sole benefactors of Emilie Souchay’s estate, stood in a line of a very wealthy families and their affiliated kin. Whereas the children from Georg Friedrich Fallenstein’s first marriage became widely dispersed in different countries while still benefiting from Emilie’s patronage, Ida and her female siblings proceeded along a somewhat different path. They all married men who established themselves as *Bildungsbürger*. Ida married the historian Hermann Baumgarten, Henriette, the theologian Adolf Hausrath, Emilie, the geologist Ernst Wilhelm Benecke. Max Weber Sr., Helene’s husband, was the only non-academic of the four. However, he held a doctorate without having written an actual thesis and in his younger years envisioned an academic career by seeking his *Habilitation* in public law and *Staatswissenschaft* before choosing a career as a politician. Two of the four men came from affluent families: Ernst Wilhelm Benecke was part of the Benecke line in the larger family network, and Max Weber Sr. derived from a family of merchants. Both Max Sr.’s grandfather and father operated a linen export company, and his brother Carl David Weber founded a factory for linen weaving in Oerlinghausen that generated the sizable assets that Marianne Weber—“adopted” as a favorite daughter by Carl David though formally his grandchild—would

inherit as a main benefactor. None of the men, however, would ever make nearly as much money in their professions as their families earned through the interest payments and benefactions from the inherited Souchay assets. Nor would their salaries have been sufficient to allow them to inhabit the grandiose bourgeois villas they either built or inherited.<sup>6</sup>

This peculiar financial situation begot its own dynamic in the Fallenstein sisters' families. Ever the arch-typical imperial German patriarchs, their husbands wanted to exert what they saw as their god-given authority over the assets they now legally owned. The sisters, on the other hand, often had in mind more charitable purposes for their monies than their husbands, and on many occasions appear to have resented that their husbands' requests for an early and sometimes even increased distribution of their share in the inheritance be spent on material comforts. Such conflicts over the transfer of assets *inter vivos* from generation to generation and the purposes toward which these assets were used also occurred between fathers and sons. None of them figures more prominently than Max Weber Sr.'s constant concern for the demands of Max and his other children on his wallet.<sup>7</sup>

As portrayed by Roth, the Fallenstein sisters showed both courage and accommodating civility in their dealings with their own family members and related kin. They could not match their husbands in either formal education or public status, but they read much and deeply, and arranged things often wisely if quietly in the background. For Helene—but also for similarly situated women in the family line such as Elisabeth Fallenstein, her step-sister from her father's first marriage who married the prominent Baden politician Julius Jolly, or the upper bourgeois Marie Benecke from the Benecke-Mendelssohn Bartholdy side of the family in England—this role included opening her home as a gracious host to some very prominent figures in German political, social, cultural, and economic life. Ida and Helene were particularly close. It would not have occurred to either of them to challenge the putative rights of the respective *pater familias* directly. Although in this circle the husband demonstratively disregarded his spouse's privacy in insisting on reading her letters, the sisters somewhat ingeniously got around this measure of social control by attaching notes to the formal letters. These notes contained more open and less guarded messages, and they could be removed from the letters without raising suspicion. Throughout the book, Roth relies on such letters, many of which he himself unearthed and rediscovered in private collections, as his primary sources, which he skillfully complements by extensive reference to biographies, memoirs, and other materials, some recent and many long-forgotten.

Another important factor in the family dynamic of the Souchay-Fallenstein line was that both Ida and Helene shared the interest of their mother in the writings of the theologians William Ellery Channing and

Theodore Parker, proponents of a union of liberal faith and reason, the author Frederick William Robertson, and the Christian socialists Charles Kingsley and Thomas Carlyle. As in Emilie Souchay's case, the sisters' studies of this literature reflected their embrace of a type of Christian religiosity that was very different from the stern Calvinist outlook that has been—wrongly—attributed to Helene. Here, and in many other instances in the book, Roth corrects such an erroneous view gently but without directly engaging those who have proposed it. As he suggests, Ida and Helene may have been steered into this direction of enlightened spiritualism by their experience of early and sudden child loss.<sup>8</sup> However, they were restrained by their husbands in their inclination to support charitable causes and the liberal social reform politics advocated by Paul Göhre and Friedrich Naumann. In Ida's case, she was perhaps overprotective of her daughters, two of whom would reside in their adult years in a hospice under a physician's supervision due to a nervous disorder that was probably more aggravated than alleviated by the mother's attentiveness to them; but she succeeded in imparting her socio-religious outlook in at least some her children. Helene, on the other hand, failed. Her hopes of bringing young Max, her oldest, back into her religious fold by enlisting her nephews Fritz and Otto Baumgarten to report to her on his religious interests were in vain. None of her other children, nor her beloved daughter-in-law, Marianne, would follow her in this regard, and perhaps as a reaction, she became ever more the saintly "Franciscan" (Marianne's words) of the family.

If Helene came to see charity as her vocation, other vocations also figured prominently in her family. For her grandfather, it was, of course, business, for her husband, politics, for her son Max, social science. Addressing politics, Roth sheds much more light on the successful career of Max Sr. than on his son, whose own forays into politics in the aftermaths of World War I failed. In yet another remarkable piece of scholarship, Roth presents a picture of Max Sr. that greatly clarifies the fuzzy and distorted image of him left by Marianne. In 1862, at the young age of twenty-six, and already engaged to the then eighteen-year-old Helene, Max Weber Sr. succeeded in gaining election to a twelve-year position as a salaried city councilor in Erfurt after a short stint in journalism. This not only made him socially acceptable as a spouse of a Fallenstein daughter but also provided a springboard for further inroads into professional politics, which Max Sr. appears to have pursued more out of opportunity than true passion. A supporter of National Liberalism and its party, though always more of a nationalist than a liberal, Weber was a pragmatist more or less at the center of that political movement. In 1869, he was elected to another twelve-year position, that of a city councilor in Berlin, which he would hold for two consecutive terms. In that year, he also became a member of the Prussian diet for the

constituency of Erfurt, an office that lasted until 1882. Moreover, Weber represented Coburg, Magdeburg, and Braunschweig in the imperial diet from 1872–77 and 1879–84; in 1889, his campaign to return to the diet proved unsuccessful. At the time of his death in 1897 at the age of sixty-one, Weber still held his seat for the constituency of Halberstadt in the Prussian diet, to which he had returned in 1884. Roth shows him to have been, on both a national and an international level, generally a supporter of free trade liberalism, true to his family background and connections. Yet his position was not doctrinaire, and on several occasions he supported the interests of the national state rather than the conflicting interests of capitalists and economic liberals. When affluent parents sent their children abroad for studies or commercial apprenticeships before their fifteenth birthday so that they would be exempted from eligibility for the draft into military service upon their return, he supported those who rejected this special provision. He was ambivalent about whether to support the government's efforts at colonialization abroad (ostensibly to catch up with other European powers in that regard) or to pin his hopes on the economic alternative to this policy, namely to foster the establishment of German trading companies in these territories. Lastly, to counter the westward movement of German peasants in East Prussia and their replacement by Poles willing to work for less, he appears to have supported a defense of German national interests in the East through a series of economic and socio-political measures. Less than a decade later, this issue would be revisited by his son, about whose views we still know far more than his father's.

Just as Helene was attached to her older sister Ida, Max Sr. was on very close terms with Ida's husband, his brother-in-law and intimate friend Hermann Baumgarten. Like so many others, Hermann too becomes the subject of an intricate portrait in Roth's book. The son of a pastor, he happened to be Ida Fallenstein's piano teacher after being invited to the imposing Fallenstein house for a summer as an apparent reward for having come to the public defense of the left-democratic liberalism of his protégé, Georg Friedrich Gervinus, a resident of the Fallenstein house at the time. Twelve years apart in age, Hermann and Ida married the following year, in 1854. Although the two shared a Prussian patriotism and for some time appear to have had a happy marriage, fissures in their socio-political views became starkly obvious in the later stages of Hermann Baumgarten's career. After having been a professor of history in Karlsruhe for a decade, Hermann Baumgarten was sent on a significant educational mission to Strasbourg in 1872. Its purpose was to Germanize the newly-annexed Alsace by educating the formerly French subjects and students in all things German at the newly-founded university. The mission was a complete failure, and Baumgarten found himself detached from his environs, German



politics, and the socio-cultural interests of his wife. In Roth's depiction, he was a cultural Protestant who combined his own version of *Kulturkampf*, a predilection for a uniform imperial Germany, with a distaste for Alsatian cultural traditions. Ida, on the other hand, was quite different, in that she showed an interest in the Alsatian population and was active in local charitable causes and critical of the Germanizing politics toward the region.

Formal letters, on which Roth relies quite heavily, have a tendency even among relatives not to dwell on personal conflict and scandal. The same is generally true for memoirs. In a few places in Roth's book, however, a darker side does come to the fore. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the relationship between young Helene Fallenstein and the aforementioned Gervinus, which Marianne Weber had previously hinted at in gloomy terms. Although Roth does not provide all the details,<sup>9</sup> he goes beyond Marianne's circumscribed remarks, and the sordid tale his sources tell is riveting. It goes back to the year 1859, when Helene Fallenstein returned home from a finishing school and came under the influence of Gervinus, the mentor of her brother-in-law Hermann Baumgarten. Gervinus, still a well-established political and academic figure at the time, had been friends with Helene's father, Georg Friedrich Fallenstein, who died a few years earlier. Gervinus was under the impression that the ailing Fallenstein had commissioned him before his death to take his role as an educator of his daughters. In this combined role of educator and quasi-replacement father, and married without children at fifty-four years of age, Gervinus came to see Helene as the daughter he never had. Their relationship, however, did not stop there. It also included, with certainty, sexual harassment (as we would say today) of increasing intensity over a period of about a year, and perhaps came close to sexual assault. Helene, who may have contemplated suicide over Gervinus's actions, used an invitation from her mother to Berlin the following year to flee from this situation, told members of her family about it, and hurried into an engagement with Max Weber Sr.—“her Max”—at the age of sixteen. Before that, Gervinus's knowing wife, Victorie, did not confront her husband about the inappropriate relationship but “worked on” Helene instead, trying to instill in her the virtues of moral purity and chastity, so that Helene could successfully fend off her husband. Humiliated by this situation, the remorseless and embittered Gervinus, who blamed a loose and precocious Helene for all of this, left the Fallenstein house and moved away with his wife. Helene, on the other hand, showed a remarkable resiliency in the face of adversity.<sup>10</sup>

Helene is also involved in a second episode mentioned by Marianne Weber and clarified by Roth. The episode is the famed encounter between father and son Weber, which Roth terms “the family catastrophe of 1897.”

While Helene's youthful experiences with Gervinus helped turn her into an early German feminist, it did not change the fact that she had to accommodate her husband's wishes when she wanted to visit their children and relatives. Roth's book contains stark reminders not only of the patriarchal right of husbands to be in control of the finances but also of their success in establishing custody of their children in case of a breakup of the marriage. This legal situation tended to curtail women's struggle to make decisions independent of their husbands. In Helene's case, the increasing distance between her and Max Sr. made it appealing for her to spend more time with their children without her husband's prior approval and consent—a development Max Sr. seems to have resisted. While Helene remained committed to her marriage due to her Christian conviction and concerns for her children, her impulsive son confronted his father, who stubbornly insisted on his right to approve of any future regular extended visits of Helene to Max and Marianne in Heidelberg. Max Jr. may have held a grudge toward his father for a considerable time, as Weber Sr. had been unwilling to finance an independent household for his son, which meant that Weber Jr. was almost thirty when he was finally able to leave his parents' home for good. The showdown in Heidelberg ended with the son showing his father the door—a treatment at the hand of a child that, as older Germans will still remember, constituted a fundamental loss of honor for the parent. A week later, the father left Heidelberg, still on speaking terms with his wife but not reconciled with her and his son. He died in Riga on 10 August 1897, his death perhaps, as Roth thinks, the ultimate outcome of cirrhosis. A year later, Max Jr. tumbled into the abyss.

### **MAX WEBER AS A SCION OF A COSMOPOLITAN BOURGEOISIE**

Scholars interested in Max Weber, and only Max Weber, may come away somewhat disappointed from reading Roth's book, at least after a cursory reading. Intended neither as a Weber biography, nor actually an anti-Marianne piece of scholarship, it contains only two chapters that expressly deal with Max: one is a short chapter on the nascent relationship between Max and Marianne and their early marriage, the other on Max as a bourgeois who was both cosmopolitan and a nationalist. Beyond that the book may serve as a quarry to those who mine for nuggets of Weberiana. If they dig deep enough, they will find pieces of gold, including a brilliant if brief discussion of Weber's alleged philosemitic anti-semitism and his involvement in Protestant social reform. But it is the theme of Weber between cosmopolitanism and nationalism that deserves the most scrutiny. Its exploration was Roth's ultimate motive, I think, for writing the book. His findings, he argues,

are important for our understanding of Weber as an economic sociologist, specifically his *Protestant Ethic* thesis. They also have implications for how we regard Weber as a politician and scholar of politics.

To put Roth's argument in a nutshell, Weber was the scion of a newly emerged international bourgeoisie whose anglophile leanings led him to search for and find in the outlook of ideal-typical rational-methodical Britain businessmen of putative Puritan ancestry an imaginary liberal alternative to the authoritarian nationalism of imperial Germany. Who by now is not familiar with Weber's famous phrase, expressed in a letter to Adolf Harnack, that what he hated in the German nation (as well as in himself) was the outcome of the fact that it had never gone through "the school of hard asceticism" (Weber 1990: 33; on 5 February 1906)? In Roth's depiction, Weber benefited materially from being a member of a network of capitalists who had help found and expand the first truly global and multi-ethnic form of capitalism—the first "globalization" of the economy, subsequently crushed by the implosions of successive world wars. The fruits of his English-capitalist fathers' endeavors, the argument goes, allowed Weber to live the life of a scholar and *rentier*, and he expressed his gratitude to his late kin by sanitizing their economic actions and motives in his constructions of ideal types of capitalism and projecting these actions and motives back onto a better, English past. Hence, given all this, why should we be surprised to see historians shred to pieces the theses presented in the *Protestant Ethic*?

Roth's argument is by no means implausible. Those who disagree with Roth's interpretation have so far chosen largely to ignore it, and there has been little debate over its merits ever since it was first proposed about a decade ago (Roth 1993a). There are different layers to this argument, which I will turn to in the following: the similarity between late-nineteenth-century capitalism and capitalism a century later; the novelty of the family capitalism Roth portrays; the contrast between the ways in which Weber in his writings depicted and "remembered" the capitalists in his family and their actual motives and economic behaviors; the depth of Weber's anglophilia; and the ways in which Weber's cosmopolitan side meshed with his political views.

Roth is in good company with some economic historians in claiming a remarkable similarity between the first globalization of the economy achieved before 1914 and the level of world market integration again seen from the 1980s onward, which in both cases includes a multi-ethnic component. But there are those who disagree, for the world economy in 1914 showed less of a convergence, had much smaller trade flows and less financial and monetary integration than has been the case in recent decades. Moreover, few if any cultural historians and geographers would argue that at any time in the past has there been as much technologically mediated interpenetration of cultures as exists today (see, e.g., Bairoch, 1993; Baldwin and Martin, 1999;

Bordo, Eichengreen, and Irvin, 1999; Tomlinson, 1999). Roth therefore all too quickly and uncritically, it seems, subscribes to a view that papers over those differences.

Yet this criticism does not harm the integrity of the core of Roth's argument. For even if the world economy leading up to World War I was less integrated, it may still constitute the first international economic playing field for a new cosmopolitan bourgeoisie. But was the type of family capitalism whose relevance for the Weber-Fallenstein-Souchay lineage Roth depicts so extensively indeed a new, "modern" form of capitalism pursued by Englishmen and a few Germans? Here, too, some skepticism may be in order. Consider the following characterization of family capitalism in England, with the temporal references removed:

[B]usiness was concentrated in a few hands. Although the great merchants usually had multiple interests, most trades were controlled by family networks. . . . Although business revolved around the extended rather than the nuclear family, merchants were interrelated in every trade and the organization chart of any firm reads like a genealogy. In the Levant Company, the active traders. . . were the grandsons of the founders. Kinship was the basis of many partnerships; client lists and correspondents were passed on between generations. . . . Different generations and relatives of business families tended to live in close proximity, although the frequency of communication reflected both temperament and place of residence. The bonds of kinship, though flexible, remained strong and embraced all economic and functional groups; the business family operated within a bilaterally extended, dense, tribalistic network. Although immediate relatives received priority, 'cousinage' bridged the oceans and obligations were recognized without any sanctions.

The depiction of a networked family capitalism that is given here, one might think, applies quite well to the Souchay-Fallenstein-Weber lineage. The author of these passages is Richard Grassby, the formidable economic historian, but the world he describes is not nineteenth-century England. In fact, it pertains to English capitalism in the seventeenth century, and the omitted temporal reference is to the 1630s, not the 1830s (Grassby, 1995: 64, 90, 329; see also Cressy 1986). Thus, the family capitalism of the Souchays was not so historically new after all but had its roots in much older and established practices. Admittedly, the network of related enterprises Roth describes for the Weber lineage is more extensive and its nodes are farther apart than is the case for the capitalism analyzed by Grassby, but Roth clearly understates the traditional remnants in what he terms the new "age of a cosmopolitan bourgeoisie." Given the greater uncertainty of the times and fewer opportunities to deal with economic risk by diversifying, such familial insurance policies, especially if they frequently included, as was the case in Weber's family, marriages among cousins and other close relatives, certainly made sense. The modern cosmopolitan bourgeoisie of today, which is able to diversify its assets by investing in different stock companies, no longer needs to undergird its economic endeavors with a familial floor.<sup>11</sup>

Roth is entirely correct, on the other hand, when he contrasts salient capitalist practices in Weber's lineage with the ways Max and Marianne Weber represented them—or rather misrepresented them, whether intentionally or not—in his writings and her biography. In theory, Weber distinguished between different types or modes of capitalist acquisition, mainly between the “political capitalism” engendered by turning a capitalist enterprise into an adventure and the rational methodical capitalism he associated with modern vocational man. For Weber political capitalism, consisting of the making of predatory profit through the exploitation of political opportunities such as carpet baggery, exploitation by force such as in slavery, and extra-ordinary deals with political authorities (smuggling with the use of bribes, for example), lacked the long-term orientation and persistence of rational capitalism. Like engagement in purely speculative financing and trade, it lent itself to the pursuit of the leisurely life of a *rentier* existence. With the inevitable “slackening” of the acquisitive drive came its replacement with an ostentatious enjoyment of riches, since the notion of vocational duty was lacking—hence the absence of asceticism.<sup>12</sup> Roth convincingly shows that Max and Marianne rewrote, obscured, or omitted family history to portray their ancestors in a different light than the historical record warrants. This pertains to what Roth terms the “Bielefeld” and the “Frankfurt” spirit of capitalism. The “Frankfurt” spirit is embodied by Carl Cornelius Souchay, the son of a Huguenot pastor and mentioned previously, who was quite a bit more than the gentlemanly capitalist with an interest in the arts Marianne made him to be. His endeavors fit the characteristics of “political capitalism” to a tee, and he was not the only one in the lineage who left a large fortune and an impressive estate to his heirs. Yet Max Weber did not mention him by name at all, though one might add, to strengthen Roth's argument further, that he made plenty of references to Huguenots as the carriers of the spirit of capitalism. The reputation of the Huguenots, Weber reported, gave rise to the seventeenth-century adage “Honest as a Huguenot,” and they succeeded as ascetic capitalists in the Huguenot diaspora, where they helped reinvigorate the capitalist spirit in places where other Calvinist groups were slouching “toward living off one's income, social ostentation, and a corresponding degree of consumption” (Weber, 2001: 244 n. 126; 2002: 314). To remain consistent, it seems that Weber would have had to argue that the enlightened Carl Cornelius Souchay had already disburdened himself of the influence of his religious heritage.

The “Bielefeld” spirit of capitalism refers to the economic motives of Karl August Weber (part owner of the linen export company of Weber, Laer & Niemann in Bielefeld that was founded by his father) and his oldest son, Carl David Weber, a brother to Max Weber senior and grandfather to Marianne Weber, who founded the linen factory “Carl Weber & Co.” in

Oerlinghausen. Both Max and Marianne portray Karl August as a leisurely capitalist satisfied with a certain level of income, thus neatly fitting Weber's category of a "traditionalist." On the other hand, they point out that Karl August's son Carl David Weber took charge of a process of rationalization in his own company, which he imbued with a strict profit orientation, a commitment to the most modern technology, and a methodical, no-nonsense approach to doing business. The contrast of this modern capitalist par excellence and his father could not have been greater.

Roth ingeniously deconstructs this discourse. What actually happened was that Carl David wanted to avoid a three-year military service in the Prussian army, so he left for the duchy Lippe-Detmold—a fact the Webers did not wish to admit—and founded the Oerlinghausen factory. Carl David's father had indeed been a traditionalist, by Max Weber's definition, who together with other linen traders found their livelihood eroded by the flood of English textiles after the Napoleonic period. When the Prussian government forced industrialization through technological innovation, they resisted it. Nor did Carl David switch to high-volume production. Instead, favoring quality over quantity in his manufacturing business, he organized a type of cottage industry that employed thousands of impoverished weavers. As Roth (p. 254) notes, "He was mostly interested in the work discipline and abstinence of his weavers, but he afforded himself a daily bottle of Moselle. Until the end he resisted the construction of a mechanical weaving factory that his grandsons Georg and Richard [Müller] opened, but not before 1903." It was money from this enterprise that provided the financial windfall to Max and Marianne in 1907, when Carl David died.

What about Weber's Anglophilia, ostensibly so deeply felt? If unequivocally true, one would expect Weber to have visited England often and held all things English in high esteem. Such esteem would have found expression in his writings, both scholarly and private, and speeches that dealt, either directly or indirectly, with the English economy and English culture and politics in past and present. With the publication of the *Briefe* and several volumes of the *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* that contain and put in context Weber's political (and more general) writings and speeches, the sources that allow an examination of this topic are probably more ample than ever. Roth sheds a little more light on Max and Marianne's three visits to England. In terms of their frequency and duration, they pale in comparison to Weber's visits to Italy, where he chose to recover from his mental breakdown after 1900 and which he sought out as a place to rest and detoxify himself in the later part of the decade. In spite of Weber's legendary ability to learn a foreign language very quickly, Weber's command of the English language was also less than stellar. Apart from this and the ubiquitous analysis of

English-German family and business connections, there is no further inquiry into the extent of Anglophilia in the book. This is unfortunate, particularly because there is little if any examination of Weber's views toward Britain in the literature beyond what Roth himself previously explored in a section of an earlier essay. There, Roth (1993a: 83) depicted Weber as someone who sometimes "sounded as if he were half English" and an admirer of the English Puritan legacy, its democratic institutions, and its role in international politics. Roth presented a persuasive case for Weber as a fairly unabashed admirer of English governance, both domestic and on the field of world politics, but in regard to the economic sphere, Roth had far less to say. He emphasized Weber's admiration for the "steely Puritan merchants" in the *Protestant Ethic* yet provided no further analysis of Weber's view toward the modern successors to these merchants, the instrumental-rational modern businessmen. In this regard, Weber's views seem more ambivalent, as is clear from his impressions when he encountered capitalism in its then most progressive stages. This pertains not so much to England's economy as capitalism in the United States, exemplified by Manhattan's cityscape of skyscrapers and the hustle and bustle of Chicago's stockyards, which Weber encountered during his visit to the United States in 1904. It is regrettable that this section was at best only partially included in Roth's book. This omission constitutes a missed opportunity, for Roth would have had the newer publications of Weber's letters and studies at his disposal. Hence, the last word on Weber's Anglophilia has not been spoken.

Finally, in regard to Weber's familial embeddedness in the international merchant bourgeoisie, Roth points to another important issue that affects how we see Weber. Weber is known for his rabid nationalism, particularly early in his career, when it found prominent expression in his Inaugural Address at the University of Freiburg.<sup>13</sup> The social Darwinist views he espoused were largely directed toward eastern nations, particularly the Poles, less against other industrialized countries. There seems to be consensus in the scholarly literature that Weber later in his life tempered these views, even toward the Poles. But at that later stage of his career another problematic issue in his political views came to the fore: his endorsement of plebiscitary leadership democracy as a way for Germany to mitigate the otherwise inescapable rule of bureaucrats greasing the wheels of politics. Focusing on this endorsement, Wolfgang Mommsen's dissertation in 1959 shattered Marianne Weber's portrait of Max as a pillar of political reason, for Weber could be understood as having provided, albeit unintentionally, an ideological framework for the powers of darkness that took over in Germany in 1933. Since then, Mommsen (1984; 1989) has revised his earlier views and reestablished Weber closer to the camp of liberal democratic

politics by emphasizing the “antinomical” structure of his thought, which combined a preference for leadership by charismatic political figures at the expense of mass participation in governance with a more liberal political policy.

Roth’s analysis largely supports those who wish to put Weber back on the national liberal side of the spectrum of nationalism and liberalism in politics (see particularly Kim 2002). He argues that the cosmopolitanism in Weber reigned in the latent (and sometimes, manifest) authoritarian, militaristic, and imperialist political aspects of Weber’s thought. In his view, the nationalist Max Weber was enough of an economic liberal to set his hopes for Germany on free exchange and market enterprise rather than power politics and an imperialist and militarized form of capitalism. In this regard, Weber was a true modernist and, in the internationalist tradition of the Souchay-Fallenstein empire, a champion of peaceful competition versus a militarized state-controlled economy.<sup>14</sup> However, this position did not prevent Weber from advocating both economic protectionism in trade with what he considered lesser nations and subsequently ethnic exclusion in economically related demographic politics (see Roth 2002). This point should be viewed against a background of a general reasoned skepticism by Weber in regard to the future of modern culture and society.

Nevertheless, this is clearly one of the more intriguing arguments of the book, which has already received some criticism from Mommsen himself (2002). While it will hopefully stimulate further research, the larger question remains whether Roth has actually demonstrated that Weber’s understanding of politics, the economy, and culture in general can, in some sense, be derived from his family background. The question probably does not have an affirmative answer, for the relationship between family background as a predisposing factor and the actual views held by Weber seems tentative, at least at times. Moreover, this perspective cannot account for the fact that Weber changed some of views during his lifetime, or that Max Weber Jr., Alfred Weber (his oldest brother), Otto Baumgarten (his cousin), and Eduard Baumgarten (Otto’s nephew), to name a few members of the larger family, all adopted different views on various topics, despite the fact that they all derived from more or less the same lineage, though at different points in time. It might be more illuminating to think of this relationship in terms of an elective affinity that varied in strength depending on the topic of Weber’s views and the specific socio-cultural context. But even if phrased this way, Roth’s argument remains important. In future analyses of Weber’s works, scholars might want to pay close attention to the issue of how Weber’s positions reflect his familial affiliations.



## CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

The previous remarks could only provide a glimpse of the seventeen chapters of Roth's book, which benefits immensely from the rich texture of his writing. The book truly represents a labor of love, and there can be no doubt that as a whole it constitutes a brilliant, extraordinary piece of historical scholarship. With it, Roth returns to his early roots as a political sociologist studying the past, as he did in his dissertation and first book, in which he inquired into the Social Democratic labor movement's failed integration into the national community in imperial Germany (Roth 1963). The dissertation was written under the guidance of Reinhard Bendix, the doyen of American Weberians at the time. Like Bendix's writings in the later stages of his career, Roth's latest work appears to have moved away entirely from a type of sociology that emphasizes investigations designed to establish general patterns and toward the historically grounded examination of individual cases. Roth thereby purposely encroaches upon the discipline of history; yet the response from some historians, that he did not go far enough in his biographical research to carry through a thorough exploration of a historical figure in the context of his or her time (see Jansen 2002: 159), is ill founded. If anything, for an analysis of people and events that are still of relevance today, Roth's book impressively shows the benefit of an approach that does not focus on an individual but thematizes wider contexts and connections, a type of inquiry for which the Souchay-Fallenstein-Weber line is well suited. His examination of the intersection of family history and the family members' views on capitalism, the nation-state, and religion is thought-provoking, even if some of the relationships are overstated and more tenuous than he claims, as argued above. Many of these issues, such as Weber's views on England, warrant further research. The book itself is beautifully set, but it would have been appropriate to include a detailed subject index; inexplicably, only a name index is provided. I also would have liked to see a much larger selection in the appendix from the original sources Roth found and used, though this would have made the book even more voluminous.<sup>15</sup>

For the realms of American and German sociology, I predict different responses. German sociologists with an affinity to the classics will appreciate the book, but it will also be read by a larger German audience with an interest in the history of their country. The interests of American sociologists in German history, on the other hand, are naturally not nearly as strong. There, we may see a short- and a long-term response. The short-term response, I believe, will be a close reading among a very narrow circle of Weberians (which has probably occurred by now), but the general practitioners of academic

sociology will ignore it, save perhaps for some treasure-hunting in the book for a few facts about Max Weber that were previously unknown. For the latter group, the fact that Roth chose to publish the book in German certainly does not help. In the long run, as more of Roth's arguments and findings find their way into the literature, his book may well be recognized as one of the most outstanding studies in the field of Weberian studies, and this may well be true regardless of the nationality of the reader. To understand the history of classical sociology, we must still know our Weber. To understand the history of the Weber family, we must, from now on, know our Roth.

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## ENDNOTES

1. See Weber 1990, 1994, 1998. The *Briefe 1913–14*, announced for 2002, was still in press as of the writing of this article.
2. Attempts at a better biographical understanding of Weber include Fügen (1985); Kastinger Riley (1991); Krüger (2001); and Sukale (2002).
3. See Hennis (2000) and the more recent remarks in Käsler (2001).
4. See, e.g., Gane (1993), Wobbe (1998), and Honegger and Wobbe (1998). In their generally valuable overview of female pioneers in the discipline, Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley (1998) include a chapter on Marianne Weber, but it is perhaps the weakest of the book. In fact, it is an example of how *not* to do it: while citing obscure sources, the authors do not acknowledge Roth's essay and make brief references to a greatly abridged version of it instead. Subsequently, their sketchy examination of Marianne's work turns into an exercise of heroine worship.
5. Readers who do not read German will have to make do with a series of writings by Roth in the English language, all of which are important preliminaries to his book. See Roth (1988–89; 1993a; 1993b; 1997; 2000).
6. Roth gives Emilie Souchay's wealth as approximately 1.1 million marks (conservatively estimated) at the time of her death in 1881 and Helene Weber's as about 750,000 marks in 1900, whereas Marianne's inheritance was 350,000 marks. In comparison, Max Weber Sr.'s own "earned" yearly income never much exceeded 10,000 marks. Given that the remuneration for Weber Sr.'s professional career would easily yield ten to fifteen times that amount today (or five to seven and a half times that in Euros or dollars), one can easily grasp the affluence of the family.
7. See Kaelber (2003). Much of the information pertinent to this issue that I present there derives from Guenther Roth's research.
8. Nothing is noted about the fathers' reactions. Did they experience much less grief than their spouses, or did the rigid gender norms suppress their expression of grief? The sources do not provide an answer.
9. In the following, I have relied on Jansen (2002), who supplements Roth's account with a lengthier treatment of the episode. The conclusions of the two scholars are very similar, however.
10. It is incredible from today's perspective that, in all of this, Hermann Baumgarten appears initially to have remained supportive of Gervinus, even though it was his wife Ida in whom Helene had confided. Hermann Baumgarten wrote a two-part letter to Gervinus. In the first part, he accepted the warped account of his beloved mentor. In the second part, an addition made eleven days later after further conversations in the family had taken place, he then took Helene's side. The letter was never sent, presumably because Baumgarten still had a great deal of respect for Gervinus (or, as one might say, lacked the courage to confront him).
11. Such strategies may constitute a legacy of established practices by economic and political elites in the early modern age of dealing with uncertainty by relying on "secure" factors such as families and allies, as Richard Lachmann has argued: "Elites in early modern Europe, unlike the stock market investors of today who seems to be the archetype of the rational actor, rarely had the opportunity to use momentary information advantages to cash out their positions at the expense of less informed buyers. Elites were invested, socially and economically, for the long-term. Elites dealt with their lack of information by forming dense and enduring alliances that were hard to break. The Florentines' mixing of marriage,

- business, and office and the English gentry's linking of religious and political patronage and marriage and business ties were strategies to ensure that allies remained allies by so raising the cost of defection that information about new opportunities and better strategies could not and would not be acted upon" (Lachmann, 2003: 15). See Lachmann (2001) for a further analysis of this strategy to value allies over assets.
12. See particularly the "Sociological Categories of Social Action" in his *Economy and Society* (Weber 1978: 164–65). Swedberg (1998: 47) uses slightly different categories; his analysis here is imprecise.
  13. See, most recently, Barbalet (2001).
  14. Of course, the influences on Weber go beyond his immediate family. Early in his career, Weber's socio-economic views were in close agreement with those of his mentor Levin Goldschmidt, who supported liberal economic policies. In retrospect, it is impossible to deny that had such policies predominated over fervent militarism in international affairs, Germany (and the rest of Europe) would have been immeasurably better off. Roth shares this view. Its chief proponent, Niall Ferguson (whom he cites), has since gone further and presented a revisionist account of England's political and economic foreign policies in that era that tends to gloss over the negative aspects of such empire-building.
  15. In fact, I would welcome an entire volume with such selections. This might give Roth the opportunity to correct the cross-references in the genealogical tables, several of which appear to have gotten mixed up.