

LETTRE À L'ÉDITEUR

READING THE SMALL PRINT,
or THE WEBER/DURKHEIM UNAWARENESS PUZZLE
REVISITED

FOR THE past twenty years the question of whether Émile Durkheim or Max Weber ever referred to each other in print has been debated intermittently in the pages of this journal *. That the topic continues to intrigue is clear from a footnote in Robert Bierstedt's masterly *American Sociological Theory* (1), which accepts and perpetuates Steven Seidman's contention that Edward Tiryakian was remiss not to identify citations to Durkheim in Weber's posthumously published *General Economic History* (2).

It is true that there is a reference to Durkheim's *De la division du travail social* on page 8, note 2 of the German edition, and another to his *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* on page 52, note 1. It is also correct that these two citations do not appear in the English translation by Frank Knight, because he omitted the whole *Begriffliche Vorbemerkung* (Definitions of Concepts) as well as many of the footnotes and references. However, this was not done arbitrarily, as Seidman suggests, but because Knight was aware that the 'Introduction' and most of the references were, in fact, supplied by the German editors (3).

The reason for Seidman's mistaken interpretation is easy to spot: he did not read the German preface, but assumed that it was reprinted in full in the English edition (despite a heading which reads 'From the Preface by the German Editors') (4). Had he so much as glanced at the original preface, Seidman would have found these additional statements:

The editors felt that they ought to elaborate the lecture notes in one important aspect, namely, that of bibliographical citations [...] For this reason, Weber's references to the literature have been expanded, and at the beginning we have placed a short summary of the most useful bibliographical resources, in order to make it easier for anyone who wishes to investigate the various topics in greater detail (5).

* Edward TIRYAKIAN, A problem for the sociology of knowledge: the mutual unawareness of Émile Durkheim and Max Weber, *Archives européennes de sociologie*, VII (1966), 330-336; Durkheim confirme Tiryakian: un échange de correspondance, *A.E.S.*, XIV (1974), 354-355; Steven SEIDMAN, The Durkheim/Weber 'unawareness puzzle', *A.E.S.*, XVIII (1977), 356.

(1) Robert BIERSTEDT, *American Sociological Theory* (New York, Academic Press, 1981), pp. 398-399.

(2) *Wirtschaftsgeschichte: Abriss der universalen Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*. Aus den nachgelassenen Vorlesungen herausgegeben von S. Hellman und Dr. M. Palyi

(München/Leipzig, Duncker und Humblot, 1923).

(3) Cf. Max WEBER, *General Economic History* (New York, Collier Books, 1981), p. xv.

(4) *Ibid.* p. xvii.

(5) *Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, p. vi.

This makes it obvious that the 'Definitions of Concepts' (pp. 1-18 of the German edition) were added by Hellman and Palyi, and we may assume that they were also responsible for all those footnotes beginning with *Vgl.* (i.e. 'cf.');

this includes the one on page 52. It is worth noting, as well, that a small number of citations actually carry a publication date after Max Weber's death, so that it is impossible those references were included in his lectures.

We may conclude, then, that not only was it prudent of Frank Knight to omit those sections which he realized could not stem from notes taken during Weber's lectures, but that Tiryakian is vindicated for having Durkheim claim : 'Entre nous deux ne peut exister qu'un silence de mort' ! (6).

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(6) Durkheim confirme Tiryakian, p. 354.